

OEPS project report: March 2015

1. Introduction

Opening Educational Practices in Scotland (OEPS) began its work in May 2014. We've found it useful to locate the project in a consideration of the promise and the challenge of Open Educational Resources (OER). The promise, articulated in numerous reports and papers is of free access to high quality education on a mass scale and the potential to redraw traditional boundaries between informal and formal learning. The challenge is that the greatest impact of OER, and Open Education more generally, is currently on those who have already benefited from access to higher education. The aim of OEPS is to develop the practices associated with OER that can be used to support widening participation and transitions between sectors and between informal and formal learning. So the primary focus is on OEP (Opening Educational Practices) rather than OER. OEP is concerned with pedagogy, learning design, structures and support and also with partnership, networks and social models of learning.

What we have done so far in year 1 of OEPS is to:

- Develop dialogue across a wide spectrum of educational and user communities
- Scope what already exists in terms of practice and understanding; this has involved listening hard to multiple perspectives on open education
- Embed evaluation in all strands of activity
- Support and encourage the development of new capacity across Scotland
- Analyse and understand existing practice
- Disseminate good practice
- Develop www.oepscotland.org
- Work on the development a Scottish 'hub' for OEP

In this report we group developments together thematically and map strands of activity against the eight project outputs agreed with the funding council (see Appendix 2). We identify emerging questions and issues and conclude with some overall observations on OEP and OER in Scotland.

2. Developing a network and sharing practice

[Maps to project outputs 1, 2 and 6]

A key objective of the project is to share good practice throughout the education sector and to develop a network of stakeholders and partners. Establishing the network has been a priority and now in January 2015 we are working with thirty-eight partner organisations. At the time of writing these include:

- 12 Universities
- 3 Colleges and 1 pan-College sector organisation
- 6 Third sector organisations
- 1 Football club
- 3 Trade Union organisations

- 13 National or Regional organisations
- 2 Research institutes
- 1 EU funded project

[For full details see Appendix 1].

Each of these partners represents a strand of activity and in subsequent sections we summarise how the strands contribute to the project outputs. Typically work with a partner begins with one or more relatively informal discussions. These often focus on clarifying the nature of the project and assessing the partner's level of engagement with open education. Taken together these conversations are invaluable in helping us to scope a broad picture of the interest and engagement with OER and OEP across Scotland. In some cases partners are interested in exploring what 'open' means in their context and we have developed workshop designs for this purpose. In other instances partners are able to share examples of good practice, which we can work up and share with the sector. Some are interested in the potential of already existing OER to support their work and we are collaborating on the development of practices to support these developments. Finally, some partners are interested in developing OER and new practices and in this case we deliver a series of Learning Design workshops to support the initial stages of development (more on this in §5).

We plan to hold an Advisory Forum every six months. The aim of these events is to share progress and to provide opportunities for attendees to share their own experiences and to feed their ideas into the project. The first forum in October was held in Edinburgh and was attended by 60 people. The next forum is scheduled for March 19th in Stirling. Our ambition is to make these events a place where the widening participation, learning and teaching and educational technology communities meet to discuss and learn from each other about the developing world of open education.

We use the blog www.oepscotland.org and its' associated twitter feed to share progress and information on OEP. Increasingly this site will become a home for short good practice case studies and support for individuals and organisations that are looking for initial insight into the issues surrounding Open Education.

We are choosing to attend conferences and other forums where participation can support the OEPS objectives. So for example we collaborated with the SQA to run a 'Scottish session' at OER14 and we will contribute papers to OER 15. We presented a paper on OEP at the EADTU conference in Poland and made useful links with the Europe wide OpenUpED network. We also contributed a poster to #design4learning14. We will present a paper at the 2015 UALL conference in Glasgow, which is likely to be a focus for the Scottish WP community, and we have a number of papers and posters accepted for the International Enhancement Themes conference on transitions scheduled for June 2015.

We report on a regular basis to the Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee.

3. Developing a Scottish hub for Open Educational Practice

[Maps to project output 3]

The hub development is a significant project output. We've been conscious of the advice from the first OEPS steering group that we should avoid creating a resource that is not aligned to needs and aspirations in the sector. Critically we've found that while there is significant interest in developing approaches to open education there is not yet strong demand or capacity to create new OER or to reversion existing OER.

A more extended rationale and timeline for the hub development will be available on the website. OpenLearnWorks (OLW) provides the platform for OER created by and with OEPS partners. The OEPS hub is a drupal site that sits above and links to OLW. The primary purpose of the hub is to provide a focus for the development of Open Educational Practices in Scotland. Initially the hub will include:

- Links to a small number of exemplar resources created in partnership
- Tools to support users
- Case studies of effective OEP
- Communities of practice
- A short open course on OER and OEP

The exemplars and other resources on the hub are designed to provide a compelling rationale for OEP development and move organisations on in the direction of further interest in developing the capacity to reversion and create material. In coordination with this development we are improving the usability and functionality of OpenLearnWorks. Over the course of the project we aim to shift the emphasis from raising understanding of OEP, primarily centred on the hub towards active involvement in creation, mediated by the hub and supported by the enhanced functionality of OLW.

4. Developing case study examples and achieving the research outputs

[Maps to project outputs 6, 7 and 8]

OEPS is developing as a multi-stranded project operating across a number of fronts. An outline of the OEPS research strategy designed to meet the project research objectives is available on the website <http://oepscotland.org/research/>. However, we are conscious that the project interventions take place in an education landscape that is changing and that our interventions themselves contribute to change. The process is iterative and extended over the lifetime of the project. Consequently we are embedding evaluation and reflection on our own practice at every stage of the project and in all the workstreams. This evaluative data contributes to the research strand and will also allow us to assess impact against the project objectives.

Practice based case studies; developed in collaboration with partners, form an important part of this activity. Currently we are hosting case studies on www.oepscotland.org. The case studies are aimed at helping individuals and

organisations develop a grounded understanding of OEP. They are works in progress and will be further developed through the research work stream. They will be migrated to the OEPS hub when it comes online.

5. Supporting the development of new content and new practice

[Maps to project output 4]

We are working with partners on a number of OER developments where a need for new content to enable new practice has been identified. There is significant demand for this type of activity and in prioritising exemplar projects we have used the following criteria:

- That they support the achievement of the project objectives
- That they are likely to develop use at scale, significant interest and drive traffic to the hub
- That they enable development of innovative practice
- That taken together they involve partners and users from within and outwith the University and College sectors

There are a number of streams of activity at different levels of maturity. Two illustrative examples that we expect to provide exemplars on the hub are based on work with The University of Glasgow's School of Interdisciplinary Studies and with Parkinsons UK.

End of Life Care – Glasgow University

This work with Professor David Clark aims to develop a series of short OER courses at the cutting edge of developments in the understanding of End of Life Care. The activity is linked to a major Wellcome Foundation funded project. It will draw on and develop particularly rich local and global communities of practice. It is of strategic importance to the health and social care sector, has global reach and impact and capacity to pilot innovative practice in public education and scholarship.

Parkinsons UK

Parkinsons play an important role in education professionals, practitioners, sufferers and their families in the condition. They currently have high quality hard copy materials, which are used in workshop mode and enable learners to achieve SQA credit. The demand for these resources can't be satisfied through the current mode of delivery. We are working together to reversion the hard copy material as a set of badged OER. Parkinsons have been successful in obtaining grant funding for this activity, which enables the development of new practice not least in exploring the recognition of badges.

Other exemplars in development are in the areas of STEM and sustainability.

6. Learning from the practices and approaches associated with already existing OER

[Maps to project outputs 6 and 8]

In developing case studies and resources to support developing practice we have engaged in dialogue and observation of existing OER designed to support

widening participation and transition and have also maintained a watching brief on the evolution of MOOC provision in Scotland.

OERS developed in Scotland by the OU, including 'Caring Counts', 'The Reflection Toolkit' and 'Foundations of Self Directed Support' have provided valuable opportunities for study and analysis which we are sharing in published papers and reports and on the website. 'Games On', developed as an OER by Glasgow Caledonian University during the Commonwealth Games also features as a case study on the website.

We have used the newly developed OER 'Rural Entrepreneurship in Scotland' as a vehicle for investigating effective practice with SMEs. This is a challenging area and progress has been slow. We are working with a range of regional rural partners and in March we will run a series of workshops for SMEs in the Lomonds and Trossachs National Park.

Scottish Union Learning (SUL) has a strong interest in the use of OEP to support learning in the workplace. In most cases this involves making use of appropriate OER. We are working on a two-year plan to develop around a hundred union learning representatives as 'open learning champions'. In conjunction with this we intend to make SUL a focus of one of the first hub communities.

We have also been piloting the use of Open Science materials in schools and will be reporting on this work at the OER15 conference.

7. Open Badges, BOCS and transitions

[Maps to project output 5]

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is interested in exploring the links between informal accreditation through open badges and formal credit through the SCQF. There are few examples of the use of badges by the education sector in Scotland with Borders College being a notable exception. 'Caring Counts' was the first badged online OER (or BOC) in Scotland and in fact now has two alternative versions for Carers and for Professionals in the Carers sector to recognise CPD. Badges are also in development for The Reflection Toolkit. The OU has now produced a suite of access BOCS. In anticipation of their release we have been in discussion with some appropriate partners and over the next few months we will be exploring what kinds of practice enable these new free resources to be used at scale.

8. The Scottish Open Education Declaration

[Maps to project output 6]

We've worked with the Open Scotland network to produce and publish version 0.2 of the Scottish Open Education Declaration <http://declaration.openscot.net>. There is a consensus that in the current state of development of open education in Scotland the declaration should remain open for comment and revision.

9. Emerging patterns and challenges

The growth of Open Educational Practice in Scotland requires an increase in use and understanding of OER and OEP and will involve much greater levels of involvement in the creation of new OER content and the reversioning of existing OER content. In the HE sector, outwith the minority of HEIs who are developing MOOCs, we have found relatively little interest in the broader open education agenda and relatively little demand or capacity for the creation and reversioning of OER.

The picture is different in the college sector where the barriers to adoption are much more to do with heavy workloads and lack of staff time and resource. Here we feel that significant progress could be made through a pan-sector approach to develop capacity and understanding that involves the TQFE providers, the College Development Network and college staff that are already engaged in this area. Discussion between these partners is at an early stage but we are optimistic about making progress.

Arguably there is something of a disjuncture between the formal education sectors and wider society. In discussion with organisations like NHS education Scotland, with Third Sector organisations and unions we find a lively interest in the potential of open education and an enthusiasm for developing practice. Barriers to adoption include the sheer complexity and range of choice available, established culture and lack of confidence and low capacity for technical interventions.

Appendix 1

The current list of active partners includes

1. Carers Trust
2. Workers Educational Association Scotland
3. Trust for Conservation Volunteers
4. Highland and Islands Enterprise
5. Crichton Institute
6. Crichton Carbon Centre
7. Glasgow University
8. Edinburgh University
9. Strathclyde University
10. University of the Highlands and Islands
11. Scottish Association for Marine Science (UHI)
12. Scottish Social Services Council
13. Cooperative Educational Trust Scotland
14. NHS Education Scotland
15. Parkinsons UK
16. The Robert Gordon's University
17. Edinburgh Napier University
18. Dundee University
19. West College

20. Borders College
21. Glasgow Kelvin College
22. College Development Network
23. JISC
24. University of Stirling
25. Queen Margaret University
26. Glasgow Caledonian University
27. Heriot-Watt University
28. Equate
29. Scottish Union Learning
30. NUJ
31. Ross County Football Club
32. PeopleKnowHow
33. Lomonds and Trossachs National Park
34. The OU Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Curriculum
35. The OUiS Learning Development Team
36. Open Scotland
37. Education Scotland
38. SQA
39. Educational Institute of Scotland
40. QAA Scotland
41. The Glasgow Digital Participation Group.
42. ExpLOERer (EU funded project)
43. The Poverty Alliance
44. The e-learning alliance

Appendix 2

PROJECT OUTPUTS (taken from the proposal agreed with SFC)

1. An analysis of what is currently happening in Scottish tertiary education in the area of open educational practice (OEP) and provide some strategic clarity within the sector. The project should also seek to understand the engagement with open online learning by other organisations outwith the tertiary education sector in both the public and private sectors.
2. An events programme across Scotland to raise awareness of OEP, share current best practice and build a support network of stakeholders and partners. These events will aim to encourage the development of online materials ranging from the openly licensed to the freely available, and to scope the support requirements that would be of value to the tertiary education sector.
3. Development of an online hub to encourage and share best practice in open education. The online hub should have the ability to support discussion forums and social media interaction. This hub would also act as a development test bed for the tertiary education sector in Scotland and other organisations to create, share and use effectively both openly licensed educational resources and their own freely available materials, such as MOOCs, for those not currently involved in a MOOC consortium.

The hub will be hosted on a free, open source platform and in order for the hub to work effectively for other educational institutions, it will be important for the project to gain an understanding of their existing technical infrastructure. Support for the

development of open educational resources will need to allow transferability between different platforms.

With support and constructive engagement from the sector, there is the potential for this online hub to become the first point of call for an organisation wishing to seek advice on developing high quality open educational resources, find guidelines on effective open educational practice and supporting transitions within the learner journey. The project will aim to ensure a sustainable future for the hub to beyond its three year funding.

4. The development of a small number of new and/or reworked high quality OERs which are of particular benefit to Scotland and/or emphasise Scotland's distinctive approach to education provision. These resources would predominantly address key areas of widening participation, learning transitions, schools and rural sustainability. Here the project would seek to work with partners such as Education Scotland (Glow), the College Development Network (Re:Source), the Crichton Institute and other organisations.
5. Through the sharing of best practice, the project will consider issues around quality (of pedagogy and content) and accreditation. By working in partnership with organisations such as the SQA, the project will engage with the badging of informal learning with a view to augmenting Scotland's reputation in education. The project will seek to develop the facility that other HEIs are able to badge their content from the host platform. The potential for badging learning design and the development of a Scottish standard should also be considered, taking into account the work organisation, notably the SQA, have started in this area.
6. As particular pedagogies of open educational practice emerge, the project should give particular consideration to 'open' in its broadest sense, emphasising approaches to learning design that acknowledge and break down barriers to participation in education. Pedagogically sound OERs can be used in supportive learning contexts to go further than providing access to materials but promote digital inclusion and engage new learners who would not otherwise participate in tertiary education.
7. There has been considerable research and evaluation undertaken on OERs and OEP which the project needs to take into account and build upon.¹ The Open University has built up some expertise in evaluation of OER projects and would seek to collaborate with others to ensure there has been a rigorous analysis of the impact of open educational practices delivered through learning analytics and social research methods which will lead to the development of a strong evidence base on which to build any future work.
8. The project will undertake an evaluation of various economic models of openness. To date most of the funding for OERs and OEP has come from the public sector or philanthropic organisations. HEIs have invested in open and freely available resources for reasons of institutional reputation building, long term student recruitment and the potential for reducing costs. This project will explore the role of partnerships in funding open educational practice such as charging fees for support workshops or OER service delivery. It will also evaluate alternative economic models of openness including crowd funding, subscriptions and freemium.

¹ The six summary recommendations in the recent European Commission report *Overview and Analysis of Practices with Open Educational Resources in Adult Education in Europe* (2013) complement the aims of this project and the research from this report will provide valuable evidence on which to base the project's outputs.