Engaging with Open Education

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ABSTRACT

This panel will address key issues and provide empirically-grounded insights on learning about, with, and through open educational resources (OER). Open educational resources are educational materials that are freely shared by those who seek to learn and those who seek to teach. OERs are viewed by many as a revolutionary idea that could create more accessible, equitable education on a global scale; yet, the benefits and challenges of OER adoption in practice are not yet understood. Many OER initiatives are pursuing a vision of education as a 'public good', and international policy agendas on education are shifting from the idea of simply providing access to content, towards the notion of creating 'Open Participatory Learning Ecosystems'; these efforts have outpaced our understanding of how educational systems behave when they become more open. Open education requires further empirical investigation. Each of the individuals on this panel brings expertise that speaks not only to understanding the potential value of OER, but also to understanding barriers and challenges of OER adoption. Speakers will cover issues on:

- Advocacy, policy & development of OER
- Social interfaces and the design of participation
- Mentoring and peer learning in Open Education environments
- Popular perceptions about OER, and attitudes towards sharing and creating OER content

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.3 Computers and Education K.4 Computers and Society

Keywords

Open Education, OER, Collaborative communities, Knowledge Building, Social Learning, Peer Learning, OER Policies

1. PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES

Panagiota Alevizou is a post-doctoral researcher at the Open University's Institute of Educational Technology working within the Open Learning Networks group (OLnet). Funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, OLnet's aim is to tackle gathering evidence and methods about how we can research and understand ways to learn in a more open world, particularly linked

to Open Educational Resources (OER) and to participatory learning communities. As part of her OLnet research she has been analysing the 'mission' and 'collaborative interface' of diverse initiatives and has been interviewing stakeholders and members from the OER community to identify issues around motivation, adoption and (re)use. She will first chart a typology that considers the affordances surrounding participation and community engagement in a diverse body of OER initiatives. She will then continue by problematizing the notion of collaborative communities or 'relational networks' within an OER context, and by proposing a framework that takes into account a number of boundary issues around the design of peer-produced content, including expertise, locus of agency and, pedagogy.

Panagiota's broader background is in media and communications, with a particular emphasis on new media cultures, knowledge systems and learning. She holds a PhD in Media, Communications and Cultural Studies from the University of Sussex. Her interests in open content communities have informed her teaching and prior post doctoral research at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has published on issues of collective intelligence and cultural citizenship. She is preparing a book (*The Web of Knowledge: Encyclopaedias in the Digital Age*) to be published by Polity Press.

Andrea Forte is an assistant professor at the College of Information Science and Technology at Drexel University. Her research examines how people use social media to build new knowledge together. She has designed and built wiki tools to support classroom writing and studied their adoption by students and teachers in high school science classes. She found that when students construct public resources from which others can learn, they engage deeply with science content and think critically about information sources and intellectual property issues. From this perspective, OER represents an opportunity to encourage students to participate as active, responsible agents in education systems rather than as recipients of received wisdom and to reflect on the nature of knowledge and access. Andrea brings a vision of wiki not only as a staging ground for producing texts for the edification of students, but as a canvas on which students themselves can engage in real intellectual work. Andrea holds a PhD in human-centered computing from Georgia Institute of Technology and an MLIS from University of Texas at Austin. In addition to work on education and learning, she has also published on governance and community in Wikipedia.

Katarzyna Kozinska is a doctoral student at the Open University's Institute of Educational Technology, Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology, who was awarded the Charter Studentship linked to the Open Learning Network (OLnet). As part of the OLnet project, her research focuses on exploring the motivational aspects of social and collaborative learning with Open Educational Resources (OER). Katarzyna will talk about the ways in which learners interact with others while learning on OpenLearn, the main types of social

activities and the dynamics of building communities in task- as well as non-task related contexts. Her empirical insights are based on a study entitled: 'Motivations for socio-collaborative learning practices among registered users of OpenLearn – examining community interactions'.

Katarzyna has a Master of Arts in Philology (Applied Linguistics) from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan (Poland) and has recently completed her MSc in Educational Studies at the University of Oxford (UK). Besides Open Educational Resource initiatives, her research interests include technology-enhanced, blended and lifelong learning, as well as collaborative and social learning practices.

Cormac Lawler is a teaching fellow at the University of Manchester. He recently completed his PhD on the experience of setting up and developing Wikiversity, a Wikimedia Foundation project specifically dedicated to OER, a process in which he was centrally involved. Wikiversity was tasked with two main activities: to host learning resources, and to foster learning communities, in other words to be a space for open learning as well as a repository of open resources. Cormac's research has been on the challenges that the Wikiversity community has faced in this process, not least with respect to the tension between defining quality and allowing space to learn in an open, commons-based space. This research has been a collaborative, action research activity, which Cormac feels to be congruent with the wiki context though. This work is informed by socio-cultural theories of learning, mainly activity theory and communities of practice.

Jaroslaw Lipszyc is president of the Modern Poland Foundation (http://nowoczesnapolska.org.pl), board member of the Internet Society Poland and chairman for the Open Education Coalition (http://koed.org.pl/). The Modern Poland Foundation runs a popular program Wolne Lektury (http://wolnelektury.pl/), an innovative Internet library for schools. It is also home for the Free Textbooks project, which aims at creating a full curriculum for Polish schools published under free licenses. The Foundation is also very active in the field of promoting and popularizing Open Educational Resources in Poland. Jaroslaw Lipszyc is also a poet, with three books published and lives in Warsaw, Poland, with his wife and son.

2. RECOMMENDED READINGS

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