Opening up for OpenLearn: issues in providing open educational resources

Conference or Workshop Item

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Opening up for openlearn

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Open Content Initiative: openlearn

- $10m+ two year programme
  - supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Strands
  - Academic
  - Technical: Production
  - Technical: Tools
  - Research and Evaluation
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making educational resources freely available
openlearn research

• Producing:
  – How to transform for open content?
  – What tools do we need?
  – Can we bring in content from the world?
  – Do we give new life to things the world values?

• Learning:
  – Do we have users?
  – Can we reach the world?
  – What do they do?
  – Does anyone learn anything?
Activity system (Engeström)
Design view

Tools: Workshops/ meetings/ guidelines/ advice

Subject: Academic
- Rules: Models/ Suitability/ Research/ Faculty satisfaction
- Community: Open University/ Colleagues/ Hewlett/ interested world

Object: Open content
- Division of Labour: openlearn team/ Volunteers
Implementation view

Tools: XML editor, Moodle, Pro-forma, Transformation forms, eRoom, learningspace, labspace

Subject: Academic

Object: Openlearn unit

Rules: Integrity Model, Guidelines, Proposal targets, Steering group

Community: openlearn team, wider OU, World, Collaborators

Division of Labour: Academic team, Media team, External editors, Contracted staff, Faculty liaison, OU staff, Volunteers
Analysed producer contradictions

- Academic team/ Media team and OU staff – who has final sign off
- Users- XML Editor
- Models for unit production
- Proposal targets

- Remove the sign-off process: improve after release
- Add in other formats and models
- Include new factors in the targets

Rules: Integrity Model/ Guidelines/ Proposal targets/ Steering group

Community: openlearn team/wider OU/ World/ Collaborators

Division of Labour: Academic team/ Media team/ External editors/ Contracted staff/ Faculty liaison/ OU staff/ Volunteers
Does the analysis help?

- Behind the scenes: based on observation
- Presentation tool to others: feedback and refinement
- Method for recording factors: neutral view
- Applied in other situations and projects
- Remains to be validated for this case
openlearn research

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How we will work with others

• Collaboration with Brazil:
  ➔ translation of openlearn units
  ➔ cross-cultural issues (context, language, institutional discourses and policies)
  ➔ Two phases: implementation 1 and 2
  ➔ Method: drawing on ethnography and action research
  ➔ Disruptive?
  ➔ Formal and informal learning
Summary

⇒ Activity theory can provide a useful mechanism to understand complex practices within openlearn and help us to identify contradictions;

⇒ The challenge for us is to balance applied research (fast feedback) and academic research in order to develop a greater understanding of the field.