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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openlearners say...

“ I think openlearn is a superb concept. I find the project exciting in a practical, philosophical and theoretical way!”

Rachel MacDermot, Children’s Workforce Learning Network”

spotLight on: William Wilberforce
March 2007 marks two hundred years since a Parliamentary Bill was passed to abolish the slave trade in the then British Empire, but how much do you know about William Wilberforce? Read more...
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

Object: Open content

Rules: Models/Suitability/Research/Faculty satisfaction

Community: Open University/Colleagues/Hewlett/interested world

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
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
• 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?
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.