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...

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

Object: Open content

Rules: Models/Suitability/Research/Faculty satisfaction

Community: Open University/Colleagues/Hewlett/interested world

Division of Labour: openlearn team/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
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.