Developing Australian Academics’ Capacity: Supporting the Adoption of Open Educational Practices in Curriculum Design

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Developing Australian academics’ capacity: Supporting the adoption of open educational practices in curriculum design

Final report 2016

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http://wikieducator.org/course/Curriculum_design_for_open_education/
Acknowledgements

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List of acronyms used

CD4OE  
Curriculum design for open education micro course

MOOC  
Massive open online course

mOOC  
Micro open online course

OEP  
Open educational practices

OER  
Open educational resources

OERu  
Open Educational Resources universitas

TEL  
Technology enhanced learning
Executive summary

This seed project initiative addressed an identified gap in Australian higher education between awareness of open educational practices (OEP) and implementation of OEP, particularly the production, adaptation and use of open educational resources (OER) to support the design of innovative, engaging and agile curriculum. In response, we aimed to design, develop, pilot and evaluate a free, open and online professional development course focussed on supporting curriculum design in higher education. The specific aim of the course – *Curriculum design for open education (CD4OE)* – is to develop the capacity of academics in Australia to adopt and incorporate OER and OEP into curriculum development, for more effective and efficient learning and teaching across the sector. The open-licensed course has been developed as a micro Open Online Course (mOOC) where ‘micro’ refers to a sub-component of a full course. mOOCs (hereafter micro courses) are a different concept to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which tend to be courses/units, or part of a unit, purposely developed to be delivered to thousands of learners across the world.

The key project outputs comprise the open learning design and the open micro course, *Curriculum design for open education (CD4OE)*. These outputs are informed by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC)/Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) Learning and Teaching Academic Standards and Assuring Learning projects, in addition to recent scholarship in openness, open learning models, open pedagogies, and design for learning. The approach was also informed by our recent participation in, and reflection on, open professional development courses. The resulting CD4OE micro course introduces learners to five open educational practice (OEP) concepts which are explored through five key curriculum design topics, with learning activities centred at the intersections of topics. The priority given to both sets of concepts via this matrix approach sought to present OEP in a contemporary context of technology enhanced learning (TEL) in higher education.

The micro course is licensed CC-BY-SA, and hosted on the Open Educational Resources universitas (OERu) to maximise access, reuse and redistribution ([http://wikieducator.org/course/Curriculum_design_for_open_education/](http://wikieducator.org/course/Curriculum_design_for_open_education/)). The course offers reusable resources to the sector at a range of scales i.e. whole course, components of the course such as topic content and learning activities, in addition to the major tasks (assignments) and their supporting resources. It also offers a transferable, embedded evaluation model in which evaluation data can be generated integral to a final reflective writing piece (subject to ethics approval in this case). At the lead institution, the micro course will be incorporated into a future unit (Curriculum and Assessment Design) in the Bachelor of Education with Professional Honours (Higher Education), demonstrating how an open micro course can be nested within larger existing or future courses.

Open curriculum design in this sense, is based on a conception of learning outcomes as nested within broader sets of unit/subject learning outcomes (and in related courses/programs) to support ‘micro credentials’ and prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) processes. This is a key means through which design for reuse (via open licensing) has been addressed. Similarly, OEP concepts adopted in the course have been
explicitly modelled in an attempt to move OEP theory into practice, again with reuse in mind. Issues highlighted included designing for: culturally diverse learners, diverse digital literacies, multiple institutional settings, open platforms, open licensing; and for responding to the complexity of learners’ personal learning environments (PLEs). The process of designing, developing, piloting and evaluating the micro course applied and built on the ‘learner empowered’ notion of open pedagogy ventured by Smyth, Bossu and Stagg (2015 - in print) by supporting learners to pursue chosen learning pathways driven by professional learning needs and interests, or take a conventional sequenced approach. Further, the course and learning activities are underpinned by a commitment to knowledge co-creation, from which resultant digital artefacts can be utilised in professional practice.

The key themes and issues emerging from the evaluation are summarised as follows:

Participants’ experience of the micro course (and understandings of OEP)
- The micro course was considered an appropriate introduction to OEP in higher education, with sufficient depth to distinguish OEP from OER.
- The micro course made it easier to apply OEP concepts in practice; the development of OER search strategies was also valued.
- There was a perceived lack of peer interaction within the group tools intended to support several learning activities, which resulted in disengagement for some.

Specific aspects of OEP applied, and benefits/challenges for learning and teaching
- Institutional policies and guidelines were identified as essential for clarifying to staff whether the development of open courses is permitted or encouraged.
- OEP is still not clearly understood by staff, so there is potential to apply the micro course concepts in curriculum design work with staff.
- OEP in practice can open up access to expertise, and between staff in design and development processes.

Critical comments and specific suggestions for improvement
- Greater engagement and knowledge sharing between participants could be achieved if the micro course was embedded within a formal, for-credit program.
- Multiple learning pathways in an open course place require the system to make clear where a learner has already visited within the course.
- The optional nature of open course learning activities places greater importance on designing ‘solo’ options, should peer engagement be lacking.

With a longer term aim of leveraging the micro course in the wider higher education sector, consideration has been given to transferable learning and teaching capacity-building opportunities in the short, medium and longer term. Recognising the funding and employment shifts in the sector, particularly regarding casual and contract academic labour (Marginson, 2013), we foresee greater onus on individuals to manage their own careers and professional learning. In the short term, this positions ‘small batch’, open professional learning as particularly useful, especially if courses are designed for both self-directed and supported learning, and with options for learning to be formally recognised.
Where academic support functions and higher education learning and teaching programs are being scaled back or rationalised, there may also be opportunity in the medium term to embed open micro courses, such as CD4OE, as modules within remaining and renewed programs. In practice, this would mean that multiple institutions could utilise an OER such as CD4OE, while contextualising it for localised needs. The latter reworking is readily enabled by the open platform and open licensing. The project comprised two stages with Stage 1: Design and Development spanning February 2014 – January 2015. Stage 2: Pilot and Evaluation followed on from February – May 2015.

The project methodology was founded on open, collaborative development principles reflecting the emergent status of OEP, and particularly OEP in relation to curriculum design. It was envisaged that the collective expertise of the project team and its critical friends would shape the first iteration of the micro course. Then by targeting pilot participants including academic and educational developers, and other learning and teaching practitioners involved in curriculum design and renewal, further expertise would be captured and overlaid in the course. To this end, learning activities and tasks were designed to generate further ‘knowledge artefacts’ such as curated and peer evaluated collections of OER. The open WikiEducator platform also supported easy distributed access to work-in-progress by both critical friends and OERu partners, with an emphasis on designing for reuse. The wiki-based development further served as a test case for low cost, open course development.
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Chapter 1: Project context, aims and approach

This seed project initiative addressed an identified gap in Australian higher education between awareness of open educational practices (OEP) and implementation of OEP, particularly the production, adaptation and use of open educational resources (OER) to support the design of innovative, engaging and agile curriculum. In response, we aimed to design, develop, pilot and evaluate a free, open and online professional development course focussed on supporting curriculum design in higher education. The specific aim of the course – Curriculum design for open education (CD4OE) – is to develop the capacity of academics in Australia to adopt and incorporate OER and OEP into curriculum development, for more effective and efficient learning and teaching across the sector. The open-licensed course has been developed as a micro Open Online Course (mOOC) where ‘micro’ refers to a sub-component of a full course. mOOCs (hereafter micro courses) are a different concept to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which tend to be courses/units, or part of a unit, purposely developed to be delivered to thousands of learners across the world.

The large majority of MOOCs do not provide clear articulation or pathways towards degrees. The micro course developed in this project was based upon ‘micro credentials’, in which learning is recognised on a smaller scale than in conventional higher education units and courses. The advantage in this case, is that the micro course focusses on contemporary curriculum design, in the context of technology enhanced learning (TEL), and is therefore able to provide just in time professional development for academic staff involved in curriculum design and renewal. It is also designed to be assessed and validated for articulation into larger courses for credit. Such recognition of ‘small batch’ learning, is appropriate for a model of micro course design which brings together learning from across many partners and can be readily adapted and incorporated into professional development programs of different universities.

Methodology

Given the emergent status of OEP, and particularly OEP in relation to curriculum design, the project methodology was founded on open, collaborative development principles. It was envisaged that the collective expertise of the project team and its critical friends would shape the first iteration of the micro course. Then by targeting pilot participants including academic and educational developers, and other learning and teaching practitioners involved in curriculum design and renewal, further expertise would be captured and overlaid in the course. To this end, learning activities and tasks were designed to generate further ‘knowledge artefacts’ such as curated and peer evaluated collections of OER. The open WikiEducator platform also supported easy distributed access to work-in-progress by both critical friends and OERu partners, with an emphasis on designing for reuse. The wiki-based development further served as a test case for low cost, open course development.

A further strand of the methodology involved evaluating the micro course via an embedded evaluation task (detailed in Chapter 3). This was intended to provide a reflective and developmental task for pilot participants, while simultaneously generating evaluation data to inform revision and reworking of the first course iteration. It was anticipated that subsequent published evaluation outcomes could also help inform reuse and reworking of the micro course by others, in developed and developing settings.
The project spanned February 2014 to May 2015, with the approach comprising two stages:

**Stage 1: Design and development (Feb 2014 – Jan 2015)**
- Project team formation and project planning ([http://wikiresearcher.org/Open_Curriculum_Design_Project/Planning](http://wikiresearcher.org/Open_Curriculum_Design_Project/Planning))
- Literature review, drafting of course design principles and learning design concepts
- Initial project meeting (June 2014) to scope project and evaluation
- OER and open platform evaluation, exploration of course hosting options
- Selection of platform and host (WikiEducator/OERu) and outlining of course structure in wiki
- Second project meeting (September 2014) to progress learning design, learning activities and major tasks
- Ethics application prepared, and approval gained for course evaluation
- Planning dissemination of the micro course approach and learning design
- Authoring and wiki development of the micro course ([http://wikieducator.org/course/Curriculum_design_for_open_education/](http://wikieducator.org/course/Curriculum_design_for_open_education/))
- Planning of pilot (recruitment and facilitation strategies)
- Review of micro course by three invited ‘critical friends’ (addressing learning design, learning activities, web usability and accessibility)

**Stage 2: Pilot and evaluation (Feb – May 2015)**
- Invitation and registration of micro course participants
- Facilitation of the five-week micro course during February – March (2015)
- Collection and analysis of the evaluation data
- Submission of proposals and scholarly papers for dissemination of the project outcomes.

**Chapter 2: Project outputs and findings**

The key project outputs – the open learning design and the open micro course, *Curriculum design for open education (CD4OE)* – are detailed in this chapter. Linkages between disciplines, and between projects, are also outlined, in addition to project success factors and insights relating to capacity-building in OEP potentially transferable to other institutions.

**Resources and outputs**

The first output of the seed project was a documented open design for learning (supporting multiple learning pathways and sequenced/sampled approaches), in which five open educational practice (OEP) concepts are explored through five key curriculum design topics, as set out in the topic matrix (Table 1).
### Table 1: ‘Curriculum design for open education’ micro course topic matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Topic 1</th>
<th>Topic 2</th>
<th>Topic 3</th>
<th>Topic 4</th>
<th>Topic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Course overview &amp; learning outcomes</td>
<td><strong>Learning outcome frameworks</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learner contexts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning design for open education</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resources &amp; technologies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assessment &amp; OEP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learners’ guide</td>
<td>2A Socially networked learners</td>
<td>3A Open design</td>
<td>4A The OER movement</td>
<td>5A Open education and assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal and informal learning</td>
<td>Sequence or sample</td>
<td>‘Native’ and open source technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digital literacies</td>
<td>Facilitated or self-directed, self-paced</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A. Openness &amp; open educational practices (OEP)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1B Qualification frameworks</td>
<td>2B Connectivism</td>
<td>3B Learner-led pathways</td>
<td>4B Authentic activities, abundant content, resources and tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nested learning outcomes e.g. course/program/unit/subject/module</td>
<td>Rhizomatic learning</td>
<td>Curating OER</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transformative pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. Open learning pedagogies</strong></td>
<td>3C Evaluating, integrating and adapting resources</td>
<td>4C Search strategies</td>
<td>5B Emerging assessment strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1B Qualification frameworks</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repositories Licences</td>
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<tr>
<td>2B Connectivism</td>
<td>3C Evaluating, integrating and adapting resources</td>
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<td>Rhizomatic learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformative pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C. Locating open educational resources (OER)</strong></td>
<td>3D Co-creating OER via learning activities</td>
<td>4D Reuse, reworking, remixing, redistributing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D. Creating OER</strong></td>
<td>2E Accrediters learners</td>
<td>3E Credit and non-credit options</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>E. Gaining credit for learning</strong></td>
<td>2E Accrediting learners</td>
<td>3E Credit and non-credit options</td>
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</table>
| Learning pathways for each topic enable learners to approach the course sequentially, or sample specific topics based on need and interest. This also supports formal and informal learning, and for-credit and not-for-credit reuse options. Activities were devised around the points of intersection of topics included in the matrix (Table 1). The learning activities and major tasks utilised existing OER, applied to learners’ own contexts and practice, with each activity contributing directly and indirectly to the major tasks. In the first major task, for

Developing Australian academics’ capacity: Supporting the adoption of open educational practices in curriculum design
example, learners located and evaluated relevant OER and curated these for an authentic learning and teaching scenario. Learners’ expertise was shared via peer feedback on the process of OER evaluation and the resultant curated artefact. Wiggio group interaction tools were used to foster sharing within the group, in tandem with the CD4OE site hosted on WikiEducator.

The project team’s experience of designing and developing the course, and the decisions taken, are woven into the course via a brief commentary, relating theory to the example of the course. Through this commentary, we highlighted emergent issues in open educational practice, and the challenges experienced in relation to the design of this micro course. Such challenges included designing for culturally diverse learners, multiple institutional settings, open platforms, and the complexity of personal learning environments (PLEs) in action. As elaborated in Chapter 3, this design approach has been disseminated to date at the OLT National Conference (Sydney, June 2014), Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education Conference (Dunedin, December 2014), and the 2015 Open Education Consortium Global Conference (Banff, April 2015).

The major output of the seed project is the micro course – *Curriculum design for open education (CD4OE)* – which is licensed CC-BY-SA, and hosted on the Open Educational Resources universitas (OERu) to maximise access, reuse and redistribution (http://wikieducator.org/course/Curriculum_design_for_open_education/), refer also Figure 1. The course offers reusable resources to the sector at a range of scales i.e. whole course, components of the course such as topic content and learning activities, in addition to the major tasks (assignments) and their supporting resources. It also offers a transferable, embedded evaluation model in which evaluation data can be generated integral to a final reflective writing piece (subject to ethics approval in this case). At the lead institution, the micro course will be incorporated into a future unit (Curriculum and Assessment Design) in the Bachelor of Education with Professional Honours (Higher Education), demonstrating how an open micro course can be nested within larger existing or future courses. Further outputs are detailed in Chapter 3 in relation to dissemination.

The micro course development used existing knowledge by:

- Integrating the outcomes of the ALTC/OLT-funded Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project (2010-11), and follow-on projects undertaken by disciplinary networks e.g. biology, agriculture;
- Drawing on the OLT-funded Assuring Learning project led by Dr Romy Lawson;
- Interpreting and applying international scholarship on openness and open learning (Armellini & Nie, 2013; Bossu, Bull & Brown, 2012; Conole, 2013; Conrad, Mackintosh, McGreal, Murphy & Witthaus, 2013; Kalantzis & Cope, 2010; Weller, 2014), and design for learning (Goodyear & Dimitriadis, 2013, Wappett, 2012);
- Participation in related open education models including the Open University’s OpenLearn units, the UK Association for Learning Technology’s ocTEL (open course in technology enhanced learning), and OERu’s Open Content Licensing for Educators (OCL4Ed); and
- Integrating scholarship on open pedagogy (Smyth, Bossu & Stagg, 2015), digital curation (Antonio, Martin & Stagg, 2012; Flintoff, Mellow & Clark, 2014), in
addition to academic development and professional learning work (Healey, Bradford, Roberts, & Knight, 2013; Marginson, 2013).

Particular aspects of this existing scholarship have been advanced in the process of designing, developing, piloting and evaluating the micro course. The approach applied and built on the ‘learner empowered’ notion of open pedagogy ventured by Smyth, Bossu and Stagg (2015) by supporting learners to pursue chosen learning pathways driven by professional learning needs and interests, or take a conventional sequenced approach. Further, the course and learning activities are underpinned by a commitment to knowledge co-creation, from which resultant digital artefacts can be utilised in professional practice.

With a focus on open curriculum design, the micro course demonstrates a conception of learning outcomes as nested within broader subject/unit learning outcomes (and in related courses/programs) to support ‘micro credentials’ and prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) processes. This is a key means through which design for reuse (via open licensing) has been addressed. Similarly, OEP concepts adopted in the course have been explicitly modelled in an attempt to move OEP theory into practice, again with reuse in mind. Issues highlighted included designing for: culturally diverse learners, diverse digital literacies, multiple institutional settings, open platforms, open licensing; and for responding to the complexity of learners’ personal learning environments (PLEs).
Disciplinary and interdisciplinary linkages

The emphasis on open pedagogy and co-creation processes in learning in this project has fostered fertile intersections between OEP, creative practice and participatory design. This has been progressed through a proposal made to the 2015 UK Association for Learning Technology Conference (ALT-C) titled ‘Design for learning: Connecting participatory design, creative practice and open education’. The aim of this work is to advance design for learning in open education by grounding understandings of concepts such as artefact creation, curation and participatory design in the disciplines to which they are ‘native’. By demonstrating how the conceptual and practical bases of these aspects of creative practice have been contextualised in the CD4OE micro course, there is scope to help articulate definitions and applications of OEP.

The micro course development also intersects OEP and OER with capacity-building in higher education professional learning. This linkage is elaborated below in relation to insights transferable to other institutions.

Factors critical to the success of the project

In achieving the project deliverables of designing, developing, piloting and evaluating the open micro course, we attribute the outcomes to the following factors:

- Making best use of project team and critical friend expertise i.e. an intellectual capital focus rather than heavy technological investment, and adopting a consultative process with potential participants;
- Making the most of the collaborative nature of open education network, and particularly the support provided by the OERu and other colleagues;
- Evaluating and leveraging existing open platforms and tools;
- Leveraging existing OER; and
- Pursuing a highly relevant topic and genuine professional development need.

We foresee that the full value and success is yet to be realised due to the open nature of the micro course in cases, for example, where the course is reused and remixed – in part or full – and integrated into formal, for-credit professional development programs.

Insights transferable to a variety of institutions

With the aim of leveraging the micro course in the wider higher education sector, consideration has been given to learning and teaching capacity-building opportunities in the short, medium and longer term. Recognising the funding and employment shifts in the sector, particularly regarding casual and contract academic labour (Marginson, 2013), we foresee greater onus on individuals to manage their own careers and professional learning. In the short term, this positions ‘small batch’, open professional learning as particularly useful, especially if courses are designed for both self-directed and supported learning, and with options for learning to be formally recognised.

Where academic support functions and higher education learning and teaching programs are being scaled back or rationalised, there may also be opportunity in the medium term to embed open micro courses, such as CD4OE, as modules within remaining and renewed programs. In practice, this would mean that multiple institutions could utilise an OER such
as CD4OE, while contextualising it for localised needs. The latter reworking is readily enabled by virtue of the open platform and open licensing.

In the longer term we foresee already thriving open learning communities of practice expanding, along with national and international partnerships that underpin an ethos of sharing. Existing communities with whom we have collaborated and shared expertise during this project include the Open Educational Resources universitas (OERu), and the Open Education Consortium (OEC). These communities will be particularly conducive to collaborative OER development for professional learning in higher education, where common needs are identified and limited resources can be optimised.

**Links between the project and other projects**

This seed project is linked to the 2014 OLT-funded project, ‘Students, universities and open education’ (Charles Sturt University, University of Tasmania, and University of Technology, Sydney). This Innovation and Development program project aims to prepare a National Policy Roadmap and evidence-based case studies to support universities in creating, adapting, and incorporating MOOCs and other OER in their technology-based curriculum. CD4OE forms one of the case studies. The seed project also builds on aspects of the 2010 OLT-funded project, ‘Adoption, use and management of open educational resources to enhance teaching and learning in Australia’ (University of New England, Massey University and University of Southern Queensland), pertaining to academic support and capacity-building around OER.

**Chapter 3: Project evaluation, dissemination and impact**

**Evaluation**

While a formal project evaluation was not required for this seed project, an embedded course evaluation was devised as a means of dually supporting pilot participants, and generating data to inform course revision and scholarship. The evaluation was structured within the second major task – the Open Micro Course Reflection – in which learners could opt to consent to their responses also serving as anonymous research data. The reflective writing task (max. 1000 words) was structured to prompt reflection on:

- Course experience
- Applicability of the course to learner’s learning and teaching context
- Scope and relevance to learning and teaching in higher education
- Learning design
- Curation of resources and tools
- Opportunities to connect and share with course colleagues
- Specific improvements for future course iterations.

Following a thematic analysis of the responses, specific revisions will be identified, and all participants will be informed how their collective feedback has shaped the next iteration of the course.
Additional usage data for the CD4OE site was collected for the duration of the pilot using a combination of Google and Piwik web analytics (the second method proving easier for the course team to access as a site on the WikiEducator platform). The data were collected from the date when the micro course was publicised and participation invited (13 Feb 2015). Regarding evaluation, the analytics complement the actual content generated by participants on the Wiggio group site and the Task 2 responses submitted in Survey Monkey. The Piwik reports enabled tracking of page views and wiki site usage by date as a crude indicator of participant engagement. The page view data also indicated which topics and resources had been accessed the most (and least). These key indicators are summarised in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date range</th>
<th>Analytic tool</th>
<th>Page views (&amp; av. duration)</th>
<th>Most accessed topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Feb –15 Mar (Wks 0–3)</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>1133 (1min 33 sec)</td>
<td>- Key concepts and big ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Course overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Task 1: Curation and peer feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Foundational readings on openness and OEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Mar – 8 Apr (Wks 4–5 to Task 2 due date)</td>
<td>Piwik</td>
<td>95 (3min 26 sec)</td>
<td>- Task 2: Micro course reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>- Task 1: Curation and peer feedback</td>
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<td>- Foundational readings on openness and OEP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Summary of analytic data as one indicator of engagement

As demonstrated in Table 2, visits to the micro course dropped off markedly after Week 3. The shift in the topics most accessed (to Tasks 1 and 2) suggests that only a subset of participants intended to complete these tasks for potential formal recognition, as anticipated at the design stage. While there were far fewer visits in Weeks 4 - 5, the longer duration of visit suggests a small number of participants remained who were engaging more deeply, in order to complete Tasks 1 and 2. Some participants also appeared to begin the course in this latter stage given continued access to the foundational pre-readings. The topics visited by all participants over the whole micro course largely reflect the order within the course structure, as designed. This indicates that most participants followed the suggested sequence, in preference to sampling topics and taking their own pathways.

**Key evaluation outcomes**

A limited number of evaluation responses were received, however, the feedback was considered and highly constructive. The key themes and issues are set out below in relation to participants’ experience of the micro course, the applicability of the micro course to practice, and critical comment and specific suggestions for improvement.

Experience of the micro course (and understandings of OEP):

- The micro course was considered an appropriate introduction to OEP in higher education, with sufficient depth to distinguish OEP from OER.
- The micro course made it easier to apply OEP concepts in practice; the development of OER search strategies was also valued.
There was a perceived lack of interaction between participants using the group tools intended to support several learning activities, which resulted in disengagement for some.

Specific aspects of OEP applied, and benefits/challenges for learning and teaching:

- Institutional policies and guidelines were identified as essential for clarifying to staff whether the development of open courses is permitted or encouraged.
- OEP is still not clearly understood by staff, so there is potential to apply the micro course concepts in curriculum design work with staff.
- OEP in practice can open up access to expertise, and between staff in design and development processes.

Critical comments and specific suggestions for improvement:

- Greater engagement and knowledge sharing between participants could be achieved if the micro course was embedded within a formal, for-credit program.
- Multiple learning pathways in an open course place require the system to make clear where a learner has already visited within the course.
- The optional nature of open course learning activities places importance on designing ‘solo’ options, should peer engagement be lacking.

A more specific analysis of peer interactions in the micro course was undertaken by project partner, Dr Robyn Smyth, who served as a critical observer on Wiggio (the group discussion space). Her analysis corresponded to the conceptual framework underpinning the learning design (Smyth, Bossu & Stagg, 2015 – in print). Through consideration of the daily discussion posts, Robyn highlighted three key points:

1. The teaching context in an open micro course has significant influence on motivation for learning given that participants are not required to participate or complete the course in a particular time-frame or sequence; and are encouraged to seek learning from within the participants as well as use their freedom to roam and mine open online resources.
2. Openness transforms the roles of both the teacher and participants within the learning environment, creating opportunities for participants to become teachers and teachers to become learners.
3. Given the complexity of the curriculum design brief resulting from its openness, it was unfortunate but not surprising that some less experienced participants were overawed by the introductions made by some more experienced designers and needed to be reassured.

**Dissemination**

The project outputs (refer Chapter 2) and evaluation findings continue to be disseminated via the following fora:
The CD4OE micro course has also been made available as an open resource by the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA).

**Impact**

To date, at least 30 people have engaged directly with the course, either as participants, critical friends or reviewers. This group of learning and teaching practitioners has been advised that the course is open licensed (CC-BY-SA) and may be reused, remixed, reworked and redistributed in accordance with this licence. The revised version of the course will also comprise approximately one third of the future UTAS unit, *ELT507 Curriculum and Assessment Design* in the Bachelor of Education with Professional Honours (Higher Education).
Appendix A

Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Education), University of Tasmania
I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name: Professor David Sadler

Date: 26 May 2015
Appendix B

References


