On the map: towards a multidimensional understanding of Open Educational Practices

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On the map

Towards a multidimensional understanding of Open Educational Practices

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Can we connecting the different Opens?

Opening movements that relate to education

- Open Education
- Open Access
- Open Science
- Open Source Software
- Open Data
- Open Government

Openness takes different forms (see Pomerantz & Peek) ... even within Open Education
Do we know our history?

A simple trajectory...

- Roots in Open Access and Open Source
- Creation of MIT OpenCourseWare
- ‘Open Educational Resources’ defined 2002
- The rise of the MOOCs ...

Wait...

- Is openness digital?
- Is there a danger of reproducing our own ‘Silicon Valley’ narrative?
- Has there been less discussion of roots in education itself?
Opening moves in education predate the internet

Late 20th to early 21st Century: increasing massification and mode diversification throughout HE

Latter part of 20th Century: Open universities

19th Century: The Society to Encourage Studies at Home (see ‘The Victorian MOOC’), one-to-one distance tuition by and for women through the post

19th Century: Mechanics’ Institutes (including London Mechanics’ Institute, est 1823, now Birkbeck, University of London)

And further back - see Peter & Deimann (2013)
Openness of OER and MOOCs

Digital ‘Johnny-come-latelies’ of initiatives to open education.

- The openness of OER is linked to free access as well as quite a specific definition of good practice in licensing of intellectual property: a legal openness of content.
- The openness of MOOCs generally is around open (free) access to enrol, although this generally does not guarantee openness of course IP, and gaining credentials usually incurs cost.

... Even within the ‘mainstream’ of OE we are seeing quite different versions of open.
The turn to ‘practices’

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007) placed the notion of practices at the centre:

open education is not limited to just open educational resources. It also draws upon open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues.

A new term ‘Open Educational Practices’ has emerged, which offers an alternative take on openness in education.

A resource can be open because it is openly licensed, but what makes a practice open?
Openness of practice

- OEP is “a broad descriptor that includes the creation, use and reuse of OER, open pedagogies, and open sharing of teaching practices” (Cronin, 2017).
- OEP are “defined as practices which support the (re)use and production of OER … promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path” (Andrade et al., 2011)

So...

- Beyond access: learning as co-construction and sharing.
- Challenges and changes educational cultures, flattens hierarchies.
- A very ‘open’ definition!
Open/Closed as binary

- Binary logic of open vs closed asks us to be unconditionally for open (and against closed)
- Raising the spectre of ‘closedness’ that only openness can exorcise
- This does not provide a conceptual toolkit to comprehend a full spectrum of contextual practices
Open/Closed: opposites, but on a continuum?

An alternative proposal is that we consider a continuum with open and closed at either end.

- Accounting for the idea that some things are more open than others, rather than simply open or closed.
- But this idea works best if we are always thinking about the same kind of thing.

For Edwards (2015) “openness is not the opposite of closed-ness, nor is there simply a continuum between the two...all forms of openness entail forms of closed-ness”.

The Workshop

An interactive way of engaging with openness / closedness in educational practice and how these might take many forms.

Starting with a preamble similar to this one.
Participants were asked to consider:

- In what sense(s) are they open?
- To whom are they open?
- Are they in any sense closed?
Exploring openings and closings

- The intention of the activity was to provoke discussion about different kinds of openings and closings beyond the digital.
- Participants were also invited to add their own case studies.
Drawing on ‘Visitors & Residents’ mapping

https://youtu.be/sPOG3iThmRI?t=3m17s
Adding another dimension

As in the V&R mapping, two axes.

Closed-Open replaces Visitor-Resident.

We asked:

“What might the other dimension for understanding OEP be?”
Workshops took place....

Conferences:

- ALT-C 2017 (Liverpool, UK)
- Learnfest 2017 (Hamilton, NZ)
- SOTEL 2018 (Auckland, NZ)

Invited presentations (London, UK):

- PGCert in HE groups at Goldsmiths and Birkbeck
- MLIS group at City
- L&T seminar at Birkbeck
Dimensions

- free/for profit
- within institution / beyond institution
- technocratic / democratic
- formal / informal
- individual / social
- licensed/unlicensed
- private / public
- corporate / non-profit
- local / global
- centralized / distributed
- objective / subjective

Liverpool, Sept 6 2017
Hamilton, New Zealand, Nov 16-17, 2017

Dimensions

- free/ for profit
- low risk/ high risk
- social/ personal
- short/ long access (expiry)
- commercial/ educational
- personal/ professional
Dimensions

- shared/unshared
- public/private
- layered/unlayered
- hidden/visible
- monetized/not monetized
- fenced/unfenced
- near/far (proximity)

Discussion

- Hidden openness
- Design and user interface
- Demotivating feedback
- Hubris and humility
- Knowledge networks vs. Knowledge societies
- Openness as layered
Summary

- Participation was enthusiastic and engaged
- High level of prior knowledge not required
- Participants inclined to critique the idea that any one other axis/dimension could ever be sufficient
- Tendency to identify elements of closure in the microcases as weaknesses of practice - but this provoked further group discussion
- Always need more time for everything
Conclusions

Openness is not fundamentally digital, despite the fact that in the current era educational practices labelled as open are increasingly likely to be technology-enabled.

When building communities of open practice, it may be more important to focus on the wider purposes of the OER movement:

- What we are intending to create? (a social commons? a community of scholars?)
- What are we attempting to subvert (the values of the neo-liberal university?)

Like other social phenomena, open educational practices are perhaps better understood as contextual and multi-dimensional rather than fitting a simple open-closed binary.
Thank you.

Comments, questions ...

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