

Open Education (Transcript)

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Hello everybody and welcome to topic two. My name is Alistair Creelman from Linnaeus University in Sweden with our lovely Castle near the campus behind me. I am re-joined for this topic on the open education by colleague and fellow open network learning collaborator in Singapore.

Hello everyone and it's wonderful to be joining yet again on this topic. I am Kiruthika Ragupathi from the National University of Singapore and in this topic. We will be talking to you about open education, so we are going to give you a little bit of a starter here. A short video with some things to think about and then we'd like to hear from you on Padlet with your reflections and questions and we promise we will answer them.

So Kiru, about Open Education by a Park.

Open Education

Yeah, so looking at this photograph what do you think about it? For me it was about enjoying the freedom that the wide open spaces offered... the open space, the Open Road, the Open Access. Having an Open mind to appreciate the enormous possibilities that openness can offer, the vivid imaginations. But it's also thinking about the dangers lurking in those shadows.

Yes, people can be playing games or having a barbeque maybe, or just enjoying each other's company, sharing things and open education can be like this. It can be a Green field, it can be a place where we can share; and enjoy each other's company; and learn from each other. However, on the on the other side of this, this park which has so many positive opportunities by day. Once the darkness falls, it's a very different place and we could see that that's in a way the other side of open education. Sometimes it's dark. There are shadows you don't really want to be there when it's dark and you don't know what could be lurking in the shadows, there is a dark side to the net. There is a flip side to openness and we'd like to introduce some concepts to you about openness.

Openness

There are many different interpretations of openness. It's like in a way, an onion with many layers. How open do you want to be? How open are you prepared to be? There is no right answer. There are many pedagogical models in openness. There are many, many levels to choose between. There's a lot of open material out there. We talk about. Open educational resources, OER. You can find teaching resources, mountains of it in places like OER Commons. Merlot, Openlearn, MIT courseware. You can go through this slide and check the links universities and teachers who are sharing lectures exercises, lab work and so on freely with anyone and you can use them. There are Massive Open Online courses so called MOOCs that many of you have no doubt attended. There are many other models. There's the OER University. There's University of the people that offer low price or free open education with real credentials at the end. And there are courses on course aggregators like Udemy and Skillshare where you can learn microlearning. You can learn short, open online courses in skills that you might need for your work.

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Kiru... Thank you, Alastrair.

Open educator's perspective

Let us just shift our focus towards the open education movement itself. As we know it, **Education is inherently an enterprise of openness, sharing, and generosity.** Within this movement, the perceptions of openness also tends to vary for different groups of individuals. In the rest of this presentation, we will look at two groups: (1) The open educators and (2) the open learners, to have deeper understanding of openness from their perspectives.

From the educator's perspective, open education is characterised by how educators work, collaborate and publish in ways that favours **accessibility, sharing, transparency and interoperability.**

Accessibility is the key to open education. Learning is made accessible by allowing free access, it doesn't cost money to access the learning, the materials, the resources. Barriers are removed and equal opportunities are provided for all who wish to access learning. Accessibility is something that you need to consider at all levels and for all aspects of education. It is also important to ask yourself, who is able to access the learning and who is not? You may also need to consider aspects of closed access such as language, cultural context, and those with different learning needs.

Next is Sharing, and education is always been based upon sharing. **Sharing knowledge doesn't diminish it, like a flame, sharing only spreads.** If I am not sharing what I know, if I am not giving you feedback, if I do not engage in conversations, in the give and take with you, there is no education. In the age-old tradition of education, teacher shared information and knowledge to students. But, we now live in an environment of abundance where knowledge is ubiquitous. Content is so much more accessible, and **our approach to teaching can change, but the value of sharing doesn't.**

Rather than re-inventing the wheel, educators may share their programmes, their curricula, their approaches to assessment, their research. Students on the other hand may share their work, their experiences with each other benefitting from social learning through feedback, discussion and collaboration. **We need to foster openness by fading away or completely removing the hierarchical relation of teachers and learners, and allow for open sharing by enabling anyone to inhabit any role in the discussions.**

The next feature is Transparency. An open practitioner is one who publicly shares his/her practice and thinking, and that is what being transparent is all about. Being transparent in educational practice recognises that students are co-learners and co-creators of knowledge, and that they are not empty vessels but bring with them a set of prior knowledge, and as educators we work with students to retrieve, retain,

reproduce and grow their knowledge. Just like how one can have an open and honest personality, we can also have open and transparent approach to teaching and learning.

And finally interoperability which dates back to the days of open source; where the source code for computer programmes and operating systems were freely shared. Having an open approach to creating and sharing resources to teaching also introduces the aspects of interoperability. Every teacher, every university creates their own resources to guide and inform students of correct academic practices, but the resources from one university could be largely reused and repurposed by another university, if they are shared as open licenses, making it known that they are interoperable across universities. The ability to remix and repurpose openly shared content creates opportunities for large amounts of knowledge to be interoperably used between institutions, and groups and individuals.

Open learners' perspective

From a learner's point of view, **Open Content, Awareness, Accessibility, and association with Communities** are key aspects that one needs to think about.

Open content refers to any kind of content published under an open licence which can be accessed free of charge. Content usually includes teaching materials and other resources that students can access to support their learning.

But it is the **Awareness** that plays a significant role in the success and failure of open access. If learners are simply not aware of the existence of such open content and learning, realising the benefits of open learning becomes virtually impossible.

The third aspect is **Accessibility** which increases significantly when we decouple learning from a specific location (e.g. from the university classrooms), or if we reduce the exclusivity offered to specific groups, and potentially enabling learning anywhere, with anyone, and at any time.

Finally, the **association with learning communities** has a major impact and role in open learning. This will probably be very evident with your own experience in participating in this ONL course and how the ONL community supports open learning. The social networking that you rely on in this course advances the promise of participation and equality while also supporting individual access to knowledge. The formation of PBL learning communities and the larger ONL community enables social dialogue, interactions and communications, (for example via Facebook, Twitter and WordPress) and collaboration (Google Docs).

How open are you?

Recently, Audrey Watters in the book titled "Open at the Margins: Critical Perspectives on Open Education" laments about how the word "open" tends to be added on without really trying to embrace "openness," to their practices or mission. She then asks "Whatever does "openness" mean!" and gave many ways of looking at it. Having many meanings, many interpretations for openness can be a strength, however, it can easily become a problem when the term becomes so widely applied that it is rendered meaningless.

Indeed, so we want you to reflect on this. What does open mean to you? What are the restrictions of openness? What are the opportunities of openness. Write it on the Padlet page and we will respond. So this is just been a little, a little starter about openness. It's a tricky question, OPEN. Does open mean free and what this free mean nowadays? If the product is free, then you are the product they say. Thank you for listening. We look forward to a good discussion.

Thank you for listening.