

Reengineering open educational practices for systemic change

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

The UNESCO OER Recommendation (2019) embraces SDG4, which calls for the international community to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015). The Objective 1 of the UNESCO OER Recommendation (2019) emphasizes the need to strategically plan and support OER capacity building, awareness raising, use, creation and sharing at the institutional and national levels, targeting all education sectors and levels (UNESCO, 2019). We present four initiatives implemented at the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) which addressed this need by raising awareness among relevant stakeholders, providing systematic and continuous capacity building, and facilitating the integration of OER. In this webinar we shall present how we have approached the adoption of OER and OEP to bring about systemic change through these initiatives.

Background

Since 2013 the OUSL has initiated several capacity development programmes to promote the adoption of OER and OEP among practitioners. These include the following projects implemented with support of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), and International Development and Research Centre (IDRC):

1. Integration of ICT and OER into teacher education programmes and capacity building of teacher educators at OUSL [COL-2013/2014] (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2014)
2. Adaptation and implementation of a fully online professional development programme on 'OER-based e-learning' for educators [CEMCA-2014/2015] (Karunanayaka et al., 2015)
3. Impact Study on Integration of OER in Teacher Education in Sri Lanka [under ROER4D project, IDRC -2015/2016] (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2017)
4. Design, development, implementation, and evaluation of continuing professional development MOOCs on the adoption of OER and OEP. [CEMCA -2017/2019]

The key goal of all these initiatives was to develop capacity among practitioners at different levels and educational contexts including schools and higher educational institutions, on the adoption of OER and OEP. These took a systematic approach through carefully designed learning experiences, specifically addressing the objective 1 of the UNESCO OER Recommendation (2019) - *Strategically plan and support OER capacity building, awareness raising, use, creation and sharing at the institutional and national levels, targeting all education sectors and levels.*

Conceptual Framework

Despite growing evidence of integration of OER, certain barriers influence the effective adoption of OER and OEP such as lack of awareness, limited competencies, and conventional mindsets (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2017). Empowerment of practitioners to become active consumers, creators and disseminators of open content is vital, requiring changes in their pedagogical thinking and practice.

Supporting practitioners facing this challenge is possible through a strategic and a systematic approach based on learning theory and design frameworks. A scenario-based approach to learning grounded in situated learning principles (Brown et al., 1989), within a 'learning engine' framework (Naidu & Karunanayaka, 2014), demonstrates an effective strategy to design effective, efficient, engaging learning experiences to augment changes in perspectives and practices towards OEP. Designing such transformative learning which foster the development of skills, insights, and dispositions needed for making self-reflective judgements (Mezirow, 2003), will contribute to enact transformational change in institutions (UNDP, 2011).

Key Research Question

How and to what extent, the capacity development approaches employed to promote the adoption of OER and OEP has resulted in bringing about systemic change?

Methodology

All four capacity development initiatives adopted a strategic design framework based on scenario-based learning (Naidu, 2010) and a design-based research approach (Reeves, 2006). Data was collected using multiple strategies including surveys, concept mapping, in-depth interviews, and reflective journals, employing a more qualitative, realist and a process-oriented approach. Results of each initiative fed on to the successive initiative, enabling refinement of the design strategies and adapt according to the contextual needs.

Lessons learned

These research projects revealed that the continuous systematic approaches and strategies adopted to develop capacity among practitioners has ensued gradual changes in their thinking and practices towards openness, enhancing development of a participatory and a sharing culture. (see Table 1).

Table 1: A summary of the four initiatives

The initiative and its aim	Approach	Results
1. Integrating OER in teacher education Capacity building of teacher educators at OUSL on the integration of OER to design online courses for teacher professional development.	- Analysing current thinking and practices of practitioners - Designing experiences to enhance pedagogical thinking and practices related to the adoption of OER and OEP.	Significant shifts observed in the perspectives and practices of the practitioners towards openness. Faced challenges in understanding the novel concepts and developing OER-integrated online courses.
2. OER-based eLearning Professional development of academics at OUSL in OER-based e-Learning via a fully online course.		The educators gradually progressed towards OEP while applying knowledge and practices in the institutional context. Faced challenges including high workload, and time constraints.
3. Integration of OER in teacher education	- Capacity building interventions on adoption of	Significant changes observed in teachers' OER use, shifting from no/low usage to reuse, revise, and creation of OER. Their

Capacity building of schoolteachers on OER-integrated teaching and learning and ascertaining impacts.	OER/OEP through interactive workshops and/or online learning environments. - Practitioners and researchers reflect to implement solutions to authentic problems.	pedagogical perspectives and practices shifted from content-centric to, context-centric methods. Novelty of the concepts, changing from conventional mindsets, and coping with the cognitive load were the challenges faced.
4. CPD MOOCs Capacity building among practitioners on the adoption of OER and OEP via four continuing professional development MOOCs.		Practitioners developed competencies in understanding, searching, identifying, creating, integrating, and sharing of OER and adopting OEP. Their thinking and practices changed to be more creative, critical, reflective, and collaborative. Challenges encountered include the novelty of the concepts, cognitive load, and time limitations.

The systematic design of capacity building strategies in all initiatives have impacted making significant changes in practitioners’ pedagogical perspectives and practices. Despite various challenges, these collaborative, participatory and reflective processes have led to a transformational change in the adoption of OER and OEP among the individuals as well as the institutions. The transformative capacity development interventions commenced with teacher educators at OUSL, then expanded to other educators in the University, next, moved out of OUSL to involve teachers in Sri Lankan schools, and finally reached a global audience of educators.

Concluding thoughts

Change towards effective adoption of OER and OEP in professional practice is best achieved through a strategic and systematic design of capacity development processes, by creating structured, enabling, and authentic learning environments. Our endeavors initiated at the University level have made a significant contribution in promoting the adoption of OER and OEP in the areas of higher education, teacher education and school education through the capacity development of individuals as well as educational institutions, enacting systemic change.

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