

Open Educational Practices

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Open Pedagogy

OER

Open Education

Open Educational Practices

OEP

Open educational practices (OEP) is an umbrella term that includes the creation, use, and reuse of open educational resources (OER); pedagogical practices encouraging peer learning, collaborative knowledge creation, sharing, and empowerment of learners; and systemic and structural initiatives to support and embed openness. The underlying values of OEP match those of open education more broadly, i.e. enabling educational access, ensuring inclusivity, and furthering equity. Examples of OEP include using OER, renewable/non-disposable assignments (where students publish work openly), collaborative annotation, Wikipedia editing, open courses, and engaging in open learning/teaching communities, among many others. Some people use the terms 'OEP' and 'open pedagogy' interchangeably, while others consider OEP to be a broader concept, inclusive of open pedagogy, as the latter focuses primarily on teaching practices (see Open Pedagogy). OEP can be enacted at the level of individual artifacts, modules or programs (via OER, open pedagogy, open textbooks, open learning design) as well as systemically across institutional structures (via open education policies, open publishing practices, reward/recognition structures). Recent OEP research focuses on the importance of critical and social justice approaches, reflecting wider trends in digital and higher education. Such approaches acknowledge the importance of context and power relations and encourage diverse, inclusive, and equitable approaches to openness.

Openness has a long history as a core value in higher education. The use of the qualifier “open” reflects an intentional approach to ensure educational access, inclusivity and equity for all learners. The term “open educational practices” or OEP has been in use since 2007 when it first emerged in the context of research projects exploring how OER could make a difference in teaching and learning (Andrade et al., 2011; Ehlers, 2011; Geser, 2007). The concept of OEP was useful in shifting the focus from resources to practices and processes, thus highlighting the value of learners and teachers engaging in knowledge creation and sharing as collaborative pedagogical praxis (Beetham et al., 2012; Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2020; Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018). As noted by Hodgkinson-Williams (2010): “The move to incorporate ‘practice’ in the definition signifies the acknowledgement that content disembedded from its context is difficult to adapt without some understanding of the pedagogical and epistemological assumptions underlying the creation of the resource” (p. 6)

Although the concept of OEP initially arose from projects exploring the use of OER, OEP is increasingly a “multidimensional construct” (Brandenberger, 2022). Today, based on empirical studies across diverse contexts, it is recognized that not all forms of OEP necessarily involve the creation, use and/or reuse of OER (Beetham, et al., 2012; Cronin, 2017; Czerniewicz, et al., 2017; Nascimbeni & Burgos, 2016). “Expansive conceptualisations” of OEP recognise that OEP may include open content, but also allow for multiple entry points to and avenues of openness, e.g. using open tools and spaces for engagement, collaboration, publishing and/or professional development (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018; Paskevicius & Irvine, 2021). Indeed, as there is no single evident way in which practices can be ‘open’, the use of the term OEP can instead signal the intention to both highlight and interrogate the nature of any educational opening in context (Havemann, 2020).

An increasing focus in OEP research and practice is the recognition that openness itself does not ensure equity. Openness is not a panacea. Awareness, intention, and effort are required to ensure that OEP are respectful of differences, truly inclusive, and equitable (Croft & Brown, 2020; Hollich, 2022; Veletsianos, 2021). As noted by the editors of *Open at the Margins* (Bali et al., 2020a): “we are cautious about rhetoric concerning equity, diversity, and inclusion, asserting that these only have meaning when concomitant processes are genuinely embraced to avoid further marginalizing the marginalized” (para. 6). A number of frameworks, models, and analyses have been developed to support educators in conceptualizing, designing, and implementing OEP using a social justice perspective. Most draw on established social justice theories (e.g. Fraser, 2005; Gidley et al., 2010). These include Arinto, Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter’s (2017) model of OER engagement and associated levels of social inclusion; Lambert’s (2018) framework of social justice principles applied to open education; Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter’s (2018) social justice framework for understanding OER/OEP in the Global South; and Bali et al.’s (2020) framing of OEP from a social justice perspective.

Developing and implementing open education policies is an important aspect of OEP at a structural level. The UNESCO (2019) OER Recommendation called on governments and educational institutions to create supportive open education policies to foster OEP, e.g. to support open licensing of publicly funded educational materials, to enable the use and adaptation of OER, to create communities of practice, and to incentivize “open teaching practices” (Huang et al., 2020). Whereas at governmental levels policymaking suggests legislation and funding, at an institutional or organizational level, policy can exist in official, documented forms, but also in forms which are more informal and dynamic (and therefore, more vulnerable to the winds of change), e.g. through project funding, existence of support roles, or accepted norms of practice. Building on the UNESCO Recommendation and other research, recent work has focused on the need to develop enabling open education policies, with a focus on co-creation (Atenas et al., 2022).

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent campus closures (beginning March 2020) exacerbated and further revealed issues of inequality, particularly digital inequality. Influential organisations called on the global education community to share educational resources as OER in order to “support educators, students and decision-makers” (ALT, 2020) and to help build “more inclusive, sustainable and resilient knowledge societies” (UNESCO, 2020) during a time of crisis. Reports on the use of OER during the pandemic are mixed, with some reports of increased use (CoL, 2022) and others indicating a lack of evidence of formal adoption (Lederman, 2021). There was, however, an observed rise in the use of informal OEP in the form of educators sharing questions and ideas with one another (Havemann & Roberts, 2021).

In summary, the core principle of open education is ‘education as a common good’, i.e. quality education for all. The use of OEP, in all its forms, can promote shifts in mindsets and actions towards openness, thus contributing towards quality education for all, including the systemic changes required to support this.

Related Terms

[Open Pedagogy](#)

[Open Educational Resources](#)

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