Open Educational Resources and Change in Higher Education: Reflections from Practice

Abstract

In the last decade in particular, the promotion, sharing and use of open educational resources (OER) have been growing exponentially. However, as with any new phenomenon or paradigm, our knowledge of OER's ramifications and achievements to date necessarily lags behind actual developments. The concept of OER has multifaceted dimensions and implications. For educational institutions, the dimensions are legal, managerial, financial, technical, technological and pedagogical; for practising educators, at stake are ways of teaching that are normative, together with a sense of identity that is both personal and professional. It would be astonishing if research, which by its very nature must be clearly focussed, were able to keep abreast of all such aspects of OER. Although OER activities are taking place globally, most large and well funded projects have been in North America and Europe. As a result, little is known about important questions such as how the more acute levels of resource constraint typical of developing countries impact on demand for OER and on their reuse. The case studies and reflections in this book cover OER practice and policy in a diverse range of contexts, with a strong focus on events in developing countries. However, the focus on experiences from the developing world is not exclusive, as valuable "generic lessons" applicable also to developing countries can be drawn from research in the more developed countries. The world in which the academy and higher education operate has transformed dramatically. How do institutions, in both developed and developing countries, reposition themselves meaningfully within the new information-rich world in which information is accessible as never before? How can organisations such as UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning foster governmental support for OER internationally? How might proponents of OER garner greater governmental, institutional and educator "buy-in" to the principles of open educational practices, and to the policies and programs necessary to realise and sustain OER? The 28 contributors to this book bring to these questions and many others a wealth of knowledge, experience and insights about OER policy and practice at both national and international levels. With some astute caveats, their findings collectively affirm the promise of OER as a way of providing enhanced quality education to potentially greater numbers of students. Policy makers and practitioners will be able to draw many precepts and possibilities from the rich variety of experience and reflection contained within this volume. // Series formerly called "Perspectives on Distance Education."
An overview of OER for higher education and how governance officials can initiate OER at the policy level. OER White Paper (pdf) by the Hewlett Foundation. The foundation's exploration to better understand how its philanthropic can help integrate OER into mainstream education. Perspectives on Open and Distance Learning: Open Educational Resources and Change in Higher Education: Reflections from Practice by Jenny Glennie (Editor), Ken Harley (Editor), Neil Butcher (Editor), Trudi van Wyk (Editor) COL, UNESCO (June 2012). Report on the Assessment and Accreditation of Learners using OER by Dianne Conrad (Author), Wayne Mackintosh (Author), Rory McGreal (Author), Angela Murphy (Author), Gabi Witthaus (Author), COL (July 2013).