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Innovative impact

Open learning activities in Spanish institutional repositories

Currently, the most widespread OER are open textbooks, which are seen as a solution to the access and affordability (Hilton, 2016). However, other less prominent OER, such as learning activities and assignments, have been gaining popularity. These assessment resources (together with essays, quizzes, tests, exams, etc), have been identified in OER repositories (Santos-Hermosa, Ferran-Ferrer & Abadal, 2017).

While educational repositories, such as OER Commons, include specific categories for learning activities and large amounts of them, this kind of OER is a rare find in institutional repositories.

For instance, in the Spanish institutional repositories (REBIUN, 2019) the assessment activities only represent 26.4% of the total number of OER, a small percentage when compared with the more common type: classroom materials (over 60% of the total).

Of this small percentage of Spanish institutions with learning activities collections, the case of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) is the most recent. For the first time, the UOC's institutional repository, O2, includes four collections of continuous assessment activities. This is thanks to a pilot test run with the Faculty of Economics and Business with the support of the Library.

Learning activities as an essential part of OER

According to UNESCO (2002), open educational resources (OER) are any type of educational materials that are in the public domain or introduced with an open license; they range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, activities, tests, projects, audio, video and animation.

Currently, the most widespread OER are open textbooks, which are seen as a solution to the challenges of traditionally published textbooks, such as access and affordability (Hilton, 2016). However, other less prominent OER, such as learning activities and assignments, have been gaining popularity. These are considered an essential part of OER and can be defined as actions carried out by actors participating or interacting in learning processes (Avila Garzon, 2018).

Some appealing examples are open networked activities, such as wikis and web blogs (Ferran-Ferrer, Vaquer-Suñer, Bonich & Santos-Hermosa, 2012), WebQuests (Sadaghien & Marandi, 2016), with-video assignments (Pappas, Giannakos & Mikalef, 2017). Other "traditional" and more knowledge-focused learning activities that require mainly analytical and synthetic strategies, but less active engagement with content and network, also have meaning for students (Negovan & Osiceanu, 2012).

This emergence of open learning activities and assignments may be due to the adoption of the massive open online course (MOOC) model in many universities and the need for follow-up tasks and tools to assess the learning process (Jaramillo-Morillo, Solarte Sarasty, Ramírez González & Pérez-Sanagustín, 2017). Another reason could be the empowerment of learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning process (Geser, 2007) and the conceptualization of open educational practices (OEP) in relation to the collaboration, co-creation and open assessment of learning (Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018).

As for the creation of open activities – and any other kind of OER – this involves the participation of different actors. According to Lane and McAndrew (2010), teachers play the main role in the design of teaching activities, experiences or modules. However, OER producers are not just the designers or creators of OER but also those who interact with these resources (Thoms & Thoms, 2014). In this sense, academic staff and librarians act as producers as well, since they are responsible for creating educational resources that are included in educational repositories (Atenas-Rivera et al., 2012).

Therefore, academic staff, managers and institutions support the work of teachers as the main creators of OER by defining open policies,

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making decisions or launching OER initiatives.

Repositories as OER initiatives

For years, educational resources have been created with a wide variety of tools. Although openness in OER does not depend on the technology, some studies have mentioned the role of different platforms for supporting creators of OER (Hemingway et al., 2011). For instance, educational repositories provide support for dissemination and other collaborative tasks by allowing users to create, edit, share and assess OER.

Therefore, outside the classroom and as extra support, repositories can be environments in which students and teachers access OER, use them and provide feedback for the author to improve the learning content and activities (Ávila Garzón, 2018).

The European Commission (2013) has reiterated that improving the visibility of good-quality OER produced in the EU by 2020 should be achieved through the development of open digital repositories of OER using investment funds.

Currently, a wide range of educational resources has been identified in OER repositories, including assessment materials (activities, essays, quizzes, assignments, tests, exams, etc) (Santos-Hermosa, Ferran-Ferrer & Abadal, 2017). While educational repositories, such as OER Commons, include specific categories for learning activities¹ (“Activity Lab” and “Assignment”) and large amounts of them, this kind of OER is a rare find in institutional repositories.

Although we could assume that educational features are more present in OER-exclusive repositories, which are created to meet educational needs, most available OER repositories are institutional – mainly created by universities and government bodies (Butcher, 2011). Accordingly, here we consider the collection of OER in higher education institutional repositories and, more concretely, in the Spanish ones.

Spanish institutional repositories

The repositories working group within the Spanish Network of University Libraries (REBIUN) has recently published a report about the situation of OER (REBIUN, 2018) which concludes that Spanish universities are showing interest in publishing the educational resources they create, although the vast majority do not have specific policies regarding this issue.

In 77.4% of the cases, these resources are published in open access in the institutional repository. These are followed by other open platforms such as OpenCourseWare and consortium repositories, among others (MOOCs, blogs, video channels, etc).

Similarly, the study points out that assessment activities only represent 26.4% of the total number of OER, a small percentage when compared with the more common type: classroom materials, which account for over 60% of the total. Finally, as for open Creative

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Commons licenses, 62.2% of repositories use the most restrictive form (BY-NC-ND), followed by BY-NC-SA, with others using the more permissive versions (BY and BY-SA).

Learning activities at the UOC's institutional repository, O2

Of the small percentage of Spanish institutions with learning activities collections, the case of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) is the most recent.

For the first time, the **UOC's institutional repository, O2**, includes four collections of continuous assessment activities. This is thanks to a pilot test run with the Faculty of Economics and Business with the support of the UOC Library. The faculty-librarian collaboration consisted in teachers taking the role of creators and pioneers in publishing this kind of resource, and librarians being responsible for assigning metadata and depositing them in the repository.

The new collection of learning activities includes forty items in total, which correspond to fifteen assignments taken from nine different courses and covering subjects such as marketing, microeconomics and accounting. These assignments are available in open access and in two languages. They are taken from past semesters and some also include the answer sheet.

"Our assessment model allows our students to better their skills", stated the dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Àngels Fitó. In this regard, "providing continuous assessment activities from past semesters bears out our assessment processes' educational potential", she added.

In addition, this current Faculty of Economics and Business pilot trial has also been able to answer some student requests to access past tests as a learning model. At this juncture, it is obvious that students have a great impact on shaping universities' vision and encouraging them to adapt and improve their services (Lidice & Saglam, 2013).

Finally, this pilot will help the UOC move forward in its aim to open up knowledge to society through the promotion of learning resources that are free of copyright and accessible at no charge.

Discover the complete OER collections of UOC learning activities here:

- [Business administration and Management](#)
- [Labour relations and employment](#)
- [Market Research and Techniques](#)
- [Tourism](#)