

Open Educational Resources for Virtual Learning: What works and what doesn't

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The development of the knowledge-driven society and the advent of new technologies applied to education give rise to new opportunities in e-learning. The open educational resources movement is at the forefront of the most compelling conceptual innovations in the educational field, by introducing the knowledge – sharing culture to higher education worldwide. These are both exciting and challenging times.

Sharing educational resources for free is in line with other tendencies of sharing, such as the open source software movement and open access publishing. Together, these represent a major opportunity for higher education worldwide to be more inclusive and for new business models to be developed.

The open educational resources movement is growing internationally, and increasingly there seems to be fewer risks to institutions to join in than to stay out (OECD report, 2007). Amongst the motivations to join in are the opportunities it brings of serving as a window into the academic world, and as a result potentialising student recruitment, widening access to otherwise restricted academic knowledge and course content, a chance to test and implement new technologies and finally, to experiment with new models of education delivery.

Open educational resources, however, also present some challenges. The chain OER production- use- reuse can be complex, and require that higher education institutions are prepared for taking the necessary measures to keep a smooth and sustainable workflow of processes.

This talk aims to highlight the main drivers and barriers in this workflow, to include the production process, use, reuse, sharing and sustainability aspects of OER implementation at an institutional level. Mostly, the discussion will build upon the experiences of the Open University own OER initiative, OpenLearn, but also of some of its collaborating partners. This discussion will also bring in data from research, and will provide a perspective into the emerging international policy implications and recommendations to the field.

References

OECD report (2007) *Giving Knowledge for Free – the Emergence of Open Educational Resources*. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/35/7/38654317>. Last accessed on 7th September 2010.