



OPENING UP EDUCATION IN SOUTH-MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

A Compendium of Case Studies and Interviews
with Experts about Open Education Practices and Resources:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Introduction

OpenMed is an international cooperation project co-funded by the Erasmus + Capacity Building in HE programme of the European Union during the period 15 October 2015 - 14 October 2018 involving five partners from Europe and eight from South-Mediterranean (S-M) countries (Morocco, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan).

The overarching goal of OpenMed is to raise awareness and facilitate the adoption of Open Educational Practices (OEP) and Open Educational Resources (OER) in the S-M countries, with a particular focus on Higher Education (HE) in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Palestine. OpenMed fosters the role of Universities as knowledge providers not only to their on-campus students but also beyond the walls of institutions, especially towards disadvantaged groups (e.g. low-income peoples, disabled students, people living in rural areas, learners at risk of low achievement, and refugees).

Work Package One (WP1) of the project, led by the OER Research Team at Coventry University, has involved a review of Open Educational Practices and is the focus of this compendium. A survey is included outlining the level of participation in Open Educational Practices (OEP) within the partner institutions, to capture current practice at the time of completion (early 2016), and also to identify the future goals of the participating institutions.

Eleven case study initiatives of current practices in Open Education (OE) globally and particularly in the S-M region are presented. The focus of the compendium is to generate a reliable and evidence-based body of knowledge on OEP in the region to inform the subsequent phases and work packages of the project.

Case Studies of Relevant Initiatives

Synopsis

The following paragraphs briefly summarise each of the following case studies. These are ordered alphabetically by title.

Discover Palestine

This initiative is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), provided by An-Najah National University in Palestine. Discover Palestine is an English language MOOC about Palestinian history, archaeology, culture, and heritage. The case study outlines the content of the MOOC and the processes undertaken in order to design, develop, and implement the course. It also provides a brief reflection of the challenges and opportunities encountered throughout the development of the initiative.
<http://moodle.najah.edu/course/view.php?id=1806>

Edraak

Edraak is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) initiative, provided by the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) in Jordan. It is built on the EdX open online learning platform. There are currently 31 courses on Edraak, which have been taken by more than 435,000 learners. 80% of the courses are developed by Edraak in Arabic, and 20% are EdX courses from international institutions such as Harvard and MIT, translated into Arabic by Edraak. The case study details the history of the initiative, its structure and funding, and outlines how the courses are selected, offered and managed.
<https://www.edraak.org/en>

Jorum

This initiative is a large online repository for discovering and sharing OER for higher education, further education, and skills training, funded by Jisc in the UK. Jorum currently holds over 16,000 educational resources, licensed under Creative Commons, and ranging from single documents to complex packages (e.g. full courses). The case study outlines four successful aspects of the Jorum initiative: multiple stakeholder involvement; engagement strategy; acquisition framework; and openness to change.

<http://www.jorum.ac.uk>

Nafham

Nafham is a free educational website which was started by a group of individuals and is funded by advertising. It hosts and produces video content based on the school curriculum in Egypt and Syria, from kindergarten to 12th grade. Nafham also promotes 'crowd-teaching', encouraging students, parents or teachers to submit a video explaining a subject. The case study outlines the background and the structure of Nafham, with a particular focus on the value of crowd teaching to everyone involved.

<http://www.nafham.com>

OER Commons Arabic

This initiative is a repository of learning objects, developed by the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) in California, and funded by Qatar Foundation International. It holds a range of educational resources at primary, secondary and post-secondary level which come from institutions such as Khan Academy and MIT Blossoms. It also hosts a user community which provides support for students, educators, designers and for the general public. The case study describes the structure and design of the initiative, and the ways in which teachers and instructional designers can evaluate and use the resources provided.

<https://arabic.oercommons.org/EN>

OER Strategy of the University of South Africa (UNISA)

This initiative is an institutional policy for the adoption of OER. UNISA is an open distance learning (ODL) university, with over 90% of its students as part-time. The publication of a governmental White Paper for Post-School Education and Training in 2014 led to the development of an OER strategy within UNISA. The case study outlines the comprehensive planning which took place before the development of the policy, and the importance of top-level support for such a policy.

www.unisa.ac.za/contents/unisaopen/docs/OER-Strate-gy-March-2014.pdf

Open Humanities Press

The Open Humanities Press (OHP) is an open access publishing initiative which seeks to create high quality publications without depending on commercial publishers. It is a not-for-profit company which is predominantly funded by the sale of hard copies. The case study outlines the underlying philosophy of OHP and the principles under which it operates, and focuses particularly on the importance of the free exchange of scholarly knowledge.

<http://www.openhumanitiespress.org>

Open Review Project

This initiative is an ongoing evidence-based review of OER use, predominantly in North America, and is supported by the Open Education Group. Although not an OER initiative in itself, the Open Review Project evaluates empirical studies on the efficacy/perception of OER in HE. The case study outlines the methods used by the Review Project, and summarises some of the conclusions drawn so far from the research which has been reviewed.

<http://openedgroup.org/review>

Plateforme Pédagogique - Centre E-learning UIZ

This initiative provides open online education via two Moodle e-learning platforms in a variety of different disciplines. There are 100 courses, with over 21,000 students. The case study focuses on the value of teachers and lecturers in computing and related subjects, outlining the courses provided and the guidance provided for publishing course materials online.

<http://foadm1.uiz.ac.ma>

REDES

REDES is an open access online journal, publishing research in the field of social network analysis. It is the only social network analysis journal published in Spanish, and all texts are subject to a CC licence 4.0. REDES was born out of an online community of researchers on an email list, and is run by volunteers. The case study explores the history of the community which led to the development of REDES, the organisation of the journal, and focuses on the importance of openness and collaboration to the initiative.

<http://revista-redes.rediris.es>

UC@MOOC

This initiative is a platform which provides online access to learning materials for students at Cadi Ayyad University (UCA) in Morocco. It was established in order to resolve the problem of over-large classes, and contains a variety of course materials in the form of podcasts, videos and other resources. The case study outlines the background to the initiative, and provides some statistical details of the courses hosted on the platform. There is also some discussion of the importance of using a variety of pedagogies in order to support the high numbers of students.

<http://mooc.uca.ma>

Expert interviews

A number of experts in OE were asked to comment on relevant initiatives and share recommendations with the aim of facilitating and encouraging the adoption of OEP in the S-M region. The experts, who were identified by the OpenMed partners, are from the S-M region, the EU, and from the wider international OE community.

Interviews were conducted with the following individuals:



Tel Amiel, UNESCO Chair in OER at UNICAMP and Researcher at NIED/UNICAMP

Maha Bali, Associate Professor of Practice at the Center for Learning & Teaching at the American University in Cairo (AUC)

Daniel Burgos, Pro-Vice-chancellor for Research & Technology and UNESCO Chair on eLearning at the International University of La Rioja (UNIR)

Cristóbal Cobo, Director of the Center for Research, Ceibal Foundation, Uruguay, Associate Researcher at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, UK.

Jean-Claude Guédon, Professor at the Department of Comparative Literature, with focus on Internet Culture, Digital Humanities and Open Access Movement, University of Montreal, Canada

Rory McGreal, UNESCO/Commonwealth of Learning Chair in OER, Professor in the Centre for Distance Education at Athabasca University, Canada.

Teresa McKinnon, Principal Teaching Fellow, Certified Member of the Association for Learning Technology, SFHEA, University of Warwick, UK.

Paul Stacey, Associate Director of Global Learning, Senior Project Manager with Creative Commons, US.

Peter Suber, Director of the Harvard Office for Scholarly Communication, Director of the Harvard Open Access Project, Senior Researcher at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, and Senior Researcher at the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition.

Shireen Yacoub, Chief Operating Officer Edraak, Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development, Jordan.

All of the interview recordings are available at the OpenMed YouTube channel and on the OpenMed website at: <http://www.OpenMedproject.eu>.

Outline of Key Recommendations

The findings from the case studies have been presented in terms of five key themes within which a number of recommendations are proposed. The recommendations are summarized in order to provide a reference of work for OER and OEP of work to be done, for example, in relation to considering institutional contributions to the regional agenda and the definition of institutional roadmaps.

Top-Down and Bottom-Up Implementation

- Clarity about the justification for the provision of high-quality OEP and OER in HEIs is required
- Investment in infrastructure will ease process development and ways to transition materials and programmes
- Institutions should organize themselves according to local need
- Piloting course accreditation schemes through institutions may be a useful means of promoting OEP as a reputable form of learning, where national educational authorities do not recognize online education.
- Building on and using what is already out there is an important premise of OEP/OER
- Resources are required to support the upskilling of staff

Supporting Staff in Using and Integrating Open Practices and Open Resources

- Staff need to be supported to problem-solve ways to integrate OER with their official academic learning resources
- Staff need to appreciate that openness has to go far beyond making content publicly available
- Staff development needs should be prioritized
- Incentives are required to engage staff

- The effort and focus required for staff to work effectively in a digital world needs to be better acknowledged

Collaborative Creation in Communities of Practice

- A collaborative approach to the creation of OER needs to be adopted
- If the level of expertise is not available in the institution, or if people in the institution are reluctant to adopt OER, OER advocates should collaborate outside of the institution
- The potential of Open Education to have greater impact can be realized when a consortium of institutions collaborate together rather than something happening within just one institution
- Learning resources, context related, can help to raise the profile of scholarship occurring in the S-M region to inspire and evoke further sharing, collaboration and social commitment

Enhancing the quality of student learning

- Important opportunities for saving money are achievable through developing non-commercial OER while still using high quality content
- OER can support anytime, anywhere learning, offering new communication models and possibilities between teachers and students
- OEP should engage students as co-creators
- Issues of quality need to be carefully considered and managed
- OER need to be accessible to meet a wide range of learner needs including students with learning disabilities
- Understanding how computer-mediated communication works, including how we connect with each other and build trust within networks, is required for effective online intercultural exchange

Licensing of OER content

- Those providing OER should review their licensing approach and work with their institutions, where possible, to formulate guidelines for OER creators.

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