

# The Open Educational Practice Landscape

## 1. Introduction

This document presents and defines the concept of Open Educational Practices (OEP). In short, open educational practices constitute the adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) within open learning ecologies. The creation, use, and re-use of open educational resources, as well as the exploitation of open learning ecologies can be challenging for learners and educators, but also for leaders of educational institutions. Policy makers, as well, often need to be made aware of and understand both concepts, and can play a strategic role in fostering a rapid uptake of OER and enabling a timely adoption of OEP.<sup>1</sup>

The Open Educational Quality Initiative (OPAL)<sup>2</sup> starts from the premise that it is necessary to raise awareness and foster understanding of how open learning ecologies, tools and content can support the use, creation and re-use of OERs. It is evident that the OER movement has begun to move well beyond an initial focus on mere access to practices. The project aims to provide guidance to learners, educators, leaders of educational institutions, and policy makers on how to strengthen Open Educational Practices (OEP) within their specific contexts.

In order to facilitate the awareness and understanding of OEP we suggest three stages:

- Stage 1: Understanding OEP (What is OEP all about?)
- Stage 2: Creating a Vision of Openness and Strategy for OEP (Why do I/ we want to introduce and/or support OEP?)
- Stage 3: Implementing and Promoting OEP to transform learning (Guidelines to introduce and/ or support OEP)

While the first stage is concerned with creation of a definition framework, the second and third stages are designed to help individuals, organizations, and policy makers to put OEP into place. Stage three aims to transform learning strategies and knowledge management with OEP and to widen the participation in the processes of knowledge generation and co-creation. This document outlines the first stage, while separate tools will be created for stage 2 and stage 3 and are not addressed in this document.

## 2. Understanding Open Educational Practices

In the first stage, we provide two matrixes which enable a trajectory of openness. The first one presents the constitutive elements of open educational practice (OEP), and the second one touches on the diffusion of open educational practice. They both allow individuals or organisations to position themselves in a trajectory of OEP and to consider the state-of-affairs of their own OEP landscape:

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<sup>1</sup> In parts the concepts and ideas described in this document are developed as a collaborative exercise of 30 experts in an international workshop at UNESCO in Paris in November 2010.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oer-quality.org>

- i) Matrix 1: Constitutive Elements of OEP  
The extent to which openness in the related context is applied to the use of resources (free for use = OER usage) and the extent to which openness is inherent in learning scenarios and pedagogies (freedom of choosing and using learning models)
- ii) Matrix 2: Diffusion of OEP  
The extent to which OEP is embedded as a common practice in the relating context through sharing and collaboration.

Both matrixes constitute essential elements of a) what open educational practices are and b) the extent to which they penetrate a specific context, e.g., an organization or the actual classroom environment.

## 2.1 Constitutive Elements of OEP

The first matrix suggests different degrees of openness in the usage and creation of open educational resources. The span ranges from “no usage” or “OER usage” to “OER (re-) usage and creation”. With these three stages, the scale covers different realities within organisations and/or individual learning behavior. This dimension of openness in resource usage and creation is set in relation to a dimension of pedagogical practice. The dimension of pedagogical practice is subdivided into three degrees of openness which represent different stages of openness in teaching and learning frameworks. While there is currently no agreed on classification or definition for “openness” of pedagogical models available, research suggest different aspects of openness or freedom in teaching and learning frameworks. The approach which we adopted to classify pedagogical models/ learning activities regarding their openness follows largely Baumgartner’s (2007)<sup>3</sup> approach: teacher – tutor – coach, where the ‘teacher’ represents pretty much the ‘teaching as knowledge transfer’ paradigm and gradually opens up to arrive at a model of learning as co-creation and social practices in the category ‘coach’. While we are aware that this is a simplification of reality we believe still that it is giving prototypical indication of three different and distinct degrees of openness in learning environments. However, other alternative approaches to classifying learning activities have been taken into account and which come to similar conclusions, like Paavola, Lipponen and Hakkarainen (2004)<sup>4</sup> who suggest learning metaphors along acquisition – participation – knowledge creation, Laurillard (1993)<sup>5</sup> or a comprehensive analysis of Mayes and de Freitas (2004) for JISC<sup>6</sup>. Following this analysis, pedagogical levels of “freedom” or “openness” have been conceptualized:

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<sup>3</sup> Baumgartner, P. (2007): *Zen and the Art of teaching*. Communication and interaction in education. Hagen.

<sup>4</sup> Paavola, S., Lipponen, L., & Hakkarainen, K. (2004). Models of Innovative Knowledge Communities and Three Metaphors of Learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(4), 557-576.

<sup>5</sup> Laurillard, D. (1993): *Rethinking University Teaching: A Framework for the Effective Use of Educational Technology*, London, New York: Routledge

<sup>6</sup> Mayes, T. & de Freitas, S. (2004): Stage 2: Review of e-learning theories, frameworks and models. JISC desk research study. Retrieved on 2010, November 17, from <http://www.elearning.ac.uk/resources/modelsdeskreview/>

- “Low” if objectives as well as methods of learning and/ or teaching are rooted in “closed” one way, transmissive and reproductive approaches to teaching and learning. In these contexts, the underlying belief is that teachers know what learners have to learn and mainly focus on knowledge-transfer.
- “Medium” represents a stage in which objectives are still pre-determined and given, but methods of teaching and learning are represented as open pedagogical models. They encourage dialogue oriented forms of learning or problem based learning (PBL) focusing on dealing with developing “Know how”.
- “High” degrees of freedom and openness in pedagogical models are represented, if objectives of learning as well as methods (e.g. learning pathways) are highly determined and governed by learners. Questions or problems around which learning is ensuing are determined by learners (SRL – self regulated learners<sup>7</sup>), and teachers facilitate through open and experience-oriented methods which accommodate different learning pathways, either through scaffolding and tutorial interactions (ZPD Vygotskian inspired approaches) or contingency tutoring (Woods & Woods strategies of re-enforcement, domain or temporal contingency).

OEP are defined as practices within the trajectory, which is delimited by both dimensions: openness in resource usage and creation vs. openness in pedagogical models. Both dimensions can help individuals and organisations to self-assess and position their respective context.

		OER Usage		
		Low No OER (re-) usage	Medium OER (re-)usage or creation	High OER (re-)usage and creation
Learning Architecture	<b>High</b> Social practices, Collaboration, Sharing (Reflection in action), • „open“ objectives • „open“ methods	A	B	C
	<b>Medium</b> Dialog, Procedures, Rules (Know-how) • „closed“ objectives • „open“ methods	D	E	F
	<b>Low</b> Knowledge transmission (Know that) • „closed“ objectives • „closed“ methods	G	H	I

Increasing OEP ↗

**Figure 1: Matrix 1 - Constitutive Elements of OEP**

Using the matrix we can analyze three examples:

7 Carneiro, R., Lefrere, P., Steffens, K., & Underwood, J. (Ed.) (2010), *Self-regulated Learning in Technology Enhanced Learning Environments: A European Perspective*, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

1. **Autonomous Learning without OER:** A high degree of pedagogical openness (project based learning, etc.) and a low degree of OER usages and creation would result in interactive, autonomous learning contexts *without* extensive use open educational resources.
2. **Lectures with OER:** using OER (e.g. a slide set) to give a lecture to students in a directive, knowledge transfer
3. **Open Learning Architectures:** Whereas a high degree in openness in pedagogical models in combination with a high degree in OER usages and creation result in a high degree of OEP in which OERs are used in open learning architectures (e.g. creation of Learner Generated Content in exploratory, autonomous learning scenarios).

## 2.2 Diffusion of Open Educational Practice

OEP essentially represent a collaborative practice in which resources are shared by making them openly available, and pedagogical practices are employed which rely on social interaction, knowledge creation, peer-learning and shared learning practices. Once an individual or an organization has understood the constitutive elements and principles of OEP which were addressed in the first matrix, they can move on and analyze the diffusion of OEPs within their specific context using the second matrix, presented below. We believe that educational practices are never entirely closed or open and that within educational organisations patterns and configurations of educational practices exist which taken together constitute a diverse landscape. This has to do with the diverse beliefs and attitudes towards OER and towards open pedagogies. In order to be able to categorize, assess and position the existing landscape of OEP within a given context (e.g. a learner or a teacher in his/her context) they can be mapped against two dimensions: the freedom of an *individual* to practice open education on the one hand and the involvement of others in OEP, which is expressed in different degrees of shared practices and collaboration. Both dimensions delimit the trajectory of diffusion of OEP for any given context. Matrix 2 shows the different dimensions in combination.

		Degree of involvement of others into the OEP		
		Low Low degree of sharing/ collaboration	Medium Medium degree of sharing/collaboration	High High degree of sharing/collaboration
Individual Freedom to practice open education	High Advanced degree of OEP embedded into learning/teaching	A	B	C
	Medium Some islands of OEP	D	E	F
	Low Little or no OEP	G	H	I

Trajectory of OEP

The dimension, constituting the *individual freedom to practice open education*, is divided into the three stages

- “Low” – means that within a given learning/teaching context no open educational practices are encouraged.
- “Medium” – means that within a given learning/teaching context, islands of open educational practices exist, but are not a shared and common reality
- “High” – means that within a given learning/teaching context, open educational practices are embedded into the reality of all learning and teaching activities.

The second dimension of the matrix deals with the question how the OEP is socially embedded, and whether others are involved in OEP as well. It ranges from a low degree of sharing and collaboration to a high degree of sharing and collaboration within a given learning/ teaching context. Both dimensions delimit the trajectory of OEP diffusion. OEP can be encouraged as an individual activity within a given learning/teaching context, but with only little or medium involvement of others to do the same. In contexts, however, in which OEP are embedded into the reality of all learning/teaching activities and at the same time are shared amongst a larger group, then OEP diffusion is high.

The matrix shows that the trajectory of OEP diffusion is actually limited. It is unlikely that there is a combination of “little or no open educational practices” with “high degree of sharing/collaboration”, also an “advanced degree of OEP embedded into learning/teaching” in combination with “low degree of sharing/collaboration”.

### 3. Conclusions

The matrixes are the core for the first part of a set of tools for three. The tools will be designed to facilitate and guide the improvement of OEP for learners, professionals, leaders of organisations and policy makers.

The matrixes can be used by individuals (learners as well as educational professionals) or organisations to position their practices and analyze their individual *OEP constitution* (Matrix 1) as well as its diffusion (Matrix 2). Within organisations it is important to note that OEP, just like organizational culture, constitutes a status which may be more or less represented.

*Organisations* will be able to use the first matrix to analyze which elements of OEP they already have put in place and which elements of OEP could further be developed. They can use the second matrix to analyze their own OEP landscape, and understand the extent of OEP diffusion within an organization as a whole, or of individual units or members.

*Individuals* (learners, professionals) likewise can use Matrix 1 for understanding better OEP and self-assess and position themselves in order to see to what extent OEP is constitutes part of their own learning/ teaching abilities. They can use the second matrix to analyze the OEP landscape in which they operate, represented in freedom to practice open education and the extent to which it is embedded into an open social sharing and collaborative environment.

*Policy makers* will find that both matrixes will promote their understanding of OEP. These matrixes will help them to analyze how favorable their policies are to support OEP and to inform their decisions.