

Introduction to selected papers on Open Education for an Open Future

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This *Open Praxis* publishes 10 selected papers among those presented in the 2019 Open Education Global Conference, hosted by Politecnico di Milano (Polimi) and held in Milan (Italy) from November 26 to 28, 2019 (<https://conference.oeconsortium.org/2019>). It is a result of the partnership between *Open Praxis* and the *Open Education Consortium* (now *Open Education Global*), which has led to the publication of special issues related to the conference for six consecutive years.

The Open Education Global Conference 2019 Program Committee, among the proposals that had been accepted for the conference and which had also stated an interest in the publication opportunity in *Open Praxis*, highlighted 45 for the next stage. The best-rated proposals by the program committee, a total of 14, were then recommended for potential publication in this special issue. Ten of them accepted the invitation and submitted the full paper to *Open Praxis*, following the usual submission guidelines. Each paper was peer-reviewed by two experts. Finally, the 10 papers were accepted for publication once they had addressed the additional revisions requested to authors by the reviewers.

The Open Education Global Conference theme in 2019 was “Open Education for an Open Future - Resources, Practices, Communities”, and the contributions were related to three main tracks: pedagogy, roles and strategies. The selected papers cover various topics in relation to these tracks, and were presented at the conference as follows.

Pedagogy, reflections and policies for an open future

The first two papers were included in this conference track, specifically in the “Open education research” topic.

In the first paper (*Are MOOCs Open Educational Resources? A literature review on history, definitions and typologies of OER and MOOCs*), Christian M. Stracke, Stephen Downes, Grainne Conole, Daniel Burgos and Fabio Nascimbeni, from different countries in Europe and Canada, contribute to the conceptual debate about open education. After presenting definitions and evolution of both OER and MOOCs, they focus on quality as a key aspect, and introduce this study as a first article in a series about open education they are preparing. The abstract of the presentation at the conference can be found here: <https://sched.co/ULWw>.

In the second paper (*Assessing the Impact of “Open Pedagogy” on Student Skills Mastery in First-Year Composition*), Matthew Bloom, from the USA, reports on an experience where renewable assignments were used with a group of students, instead of traditional or ‘throwaway’ assignments. He explains, in detail, the process undertaken in the course and the results obtained in the study, highlighting both the strengths and difficulties of this pedagogical shift. The conference presentation abstract is available at <https://sched.co/ULWm>.

Roles and practices to enact open education

Papers 3 to 5 were included in this track, the first one in relation to the topic “Tools, technologies, and spaces that enable, support and spread open education” and the next two related to the topic “Open Educational Practices and curriculum design”.

Kris Joseph, Julia Guy and Michael B. McNally, from Canada (*Toward a Critical Approach for OER: A Case Study in Removing the ‘Big Five’ from OER Creation*), reflect on the role of proprietary software big companies in the production of OER. Their contribution to a critical approach to technology goes through literature review and a case study about an OER project they are involved in; they clearly explain the challenges they have faced when removing the Big Five from OER production and distribution. Their analysis can provide a valuable insight and complexity to the debate about open vs closed technology. The abstract in the conference website: <https://sched.co/ULW0>.

In the next paper, Tannis Morgan, from Canada (*Instructional Designers and Open Education Practices: Negotiating the Gap Between Intentional and Operational Agency*), explores the role of instructional designers as key agents in the collaboration with faculty in course development. She does so through a qualitative study based on interviews in 7 institutions. The results show relevant ideas about the profile of instructional designers, such as their role as OEP advocates or the limited resources and time they have for OEP. The presentation abstract is available at <https://sched.co/ULTv>.

Ada Czerwonogora and Virginia Rodés, from Uruguay (*PRAXIS: Open Educational Practices and Open Science to face the challenges of critical Educational Action Research*), report on a project focused on exploring teaching practices and the integration of digital technologies, which was developed within a community of practice that worked both face-to-face and online. They describe the project dynamics and extract some lessons that can be useful for other academic professional learning communities. The abstract can be read at <https://sched.co/ULTX>.

Strategies for the further development of open educational resources, practices, and communities through cross-boundary collaborations

The last 5 papers were presented in this track. Papers 6 and 7 relate to the topic “Open education meets Sustainable Development Goals”, whilst paper 8 addresses the topic “Open education to bridge the gaps beyond curricular education”. Articles 9 and 10 are innovative practice papers related to the topic “Open connections and collaborations”.

James Brunton, Orna Farrell, Eamon Costello, Lorraine Delaney, Colum Foley and Mark Brown, from Ireland (*Duelling identities in refugees learning through open, online higher education*), present a qualitative study about the narratives of six refugees and asylum seekers who received a University of Sanctuary scholarship for open, online higher education programmes. The interviews lead to a rich set of discourses, and the authors focus particularly on the identity the participants construct as online students, as opposed to the one built as refugees. The presentation abstract can be read at <https://sched.co/ULSN>.

The second paper in relation to SDGs (*Open Education for a Better World: A Mentoring Programme Fostering Design and Reuse of Open Educational Resources for Sustainable Development Goals*) is authored by Tanja Urbančič, Anja Polajnar and Mitja Jermol, from Slovenia. They report on the process and results of the OE4BW, and international online mentoring program for capacity building to use, reuse and deploy OER on topics with social impact according to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. After two implementation rounds, they provide data and reflections on the program, that can inform future implementations. Abstract available at <https://sched.co/ULSH>.

Janet Small, Andrew Deacon, Sukaina Walji, Tasneem Jaffer and Jeff Jawitz, from South Africa (*Building capabilities: Using MOOCs to make transitions in work*) present an interview-based study in order to explore the motivations and expectations of African adult learners who had completed one of the MOOCs the University of Cape Town offers. The authors identify different profiles of learners in relation to the work situation: those who expect to change their job, those who search for development in their current work, and future-oriented MOOC takers. The findings contribute to the visibility of the value of MOOCs and online learning for adult workers. The abstract is available at <https://sched.co/ULT0>.

In the first innovative practice paper, by Urooj Nizami and Adam Shambaugh from the USA (Open Pedagogy through Community-Directed, Student-led partnerships: Establishing CURE (*Community-University Research Exchange*) at Temple University Libraries), the authors present the first steps of a Community-University partnership aimed at facilitating access to information and research services to community organizations. They put an emphasis on the project principles (agency, openness, etc.) before setting some useful guidelines for establishing similar programs. The conference presentation abstract can be read at <https://sched.co/ULRV>.

In the last paper (*Establishing a MOOC quality assurance framework – a case study*), Antonella Poce, Francesca Amenduni, Maria Rosaria Re and Carlo De Medio, from Italy, report on a virtual mobility project that included the development of a MOOC focused on the skills needed to participate in virtual mobility. The authors explain the process how the MOOC was designed to ensure quality. The abstract is available at <https://sched.co/ULRb>.

We expect you will enjoy these readings. We would like to thank the authors and the reviewers for their contributions, and both the Open Education Global and the OE Global 2019 Conference Committee for the partnership and collaboration in the preparation of this special issue.

Also, being this the last issue in 2019, we specially thank all the reviewers who have collaborated in volume 11. Their names and affiliations are included in the full issue and in the journal website (<http://openpraxis.org/index.php/OpenPraxis/pages/view/reviewer>).