

OPEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH IN LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE TO DEVELOP A COMMON HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

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Open Educational Resources (OER) may be seen as a part of a larger trend towards openness in Higher Education (HE) and democratization of access to education. Nevertheless, even if a significant amount of OER is already available online, the number of open educational practices is still limited worldwide. The OportUnidad project explores the adoption of strategies and channels that leverage the principles of openness and reusability within the context of educational institutions in Europe and Latin America. This paper details the rationale behind OportUnidad, highlighting its challenges and agenda.

In fact, OportUnidad recognizes the need to embrace integral and also inclusive actions that will be meaningful and relevant for the local beneficiaries. That is why we have envisioned a multilevel and bottom-up intervention which articulates three key dimensions: contents, platforms and the cultural aspects. This action-research will focus on Latin America through a bottom-up approach aiming to develop a common HE Area among Latin American countries and Europe fostering the adoption and pilot open educational practices (OEP) and open educational resources (OER). Openness in HE seems to be the baseline for the equal and democratic access to knowledge. If universities really want to be competitive and to invest in better teaching and research, it is essential that the open sharing of resources is encouraged.

Based on the analysis of best practices worldwide, the project defines the “Open Educational Practices Agenda” which outlines policies and actions to maximise the benefit of the use and re-use of OER for university course development in Latin America as a means of the equal and democratic access to knowledge. Each partner University, including fellow universities, will define an institutional roadmap for the implementation of open educational practices at local/institutional level. It is a declination of the regional Agenda to the local, cultural and institutional framework. It is a local-contextualised plan in a global strategic plan.

It is expected to gain many roadmapping applications, from setting scientific research agendas to technology plans. Partners will also guide the construction of the institutional roadmap(s), making sure that it sets a clear future objective and answers the critical “why-what-how-when” questions that define and explain a clear action plan for reaching the objective.

Local teachers and educators and management staff will participate in an on-line training course designed to provide conceptual and operational tools for the use (and reuse) of OER, and organized in a logical sequence going from the presentation and framing of the OER and OCW movement, until the integration of open practices into mainstreaming activities. More than 60 teachers and educators will pilot the on-line OER course and will be assisted for the start-up of initiatives that integrate OERs into their own courses and practices according to their institutional roadmap.

As a long-term result, the OportUnidad initiative expects to foster the role of universities in providing knowledge not only to their on-campus students but also beyond the walls of institutions to disadvantaged groups (i.e. low income peoples, disabled, indigenous), adult learners, and students coming from non traditional routes. Additionally, an increased level of quality of contents is expected to result from this initiative in the long run.

The OportUnidad project is co-funded with support by the European Commission under the EuropeAid ALFA III Programme. OportUnidad multi-actor includes twelve Universities from Europe and Latin America.