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OERopoly: A game to generate collective intelligence around OER

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Abstract

This workshop aims to enable participants to investigate relationships between open educational resources (OER) projects, user-generated content (UGC), Web 2.0 technologies and associated online learning communities within a collaborative environment. Participants will play a board game called OERopoly where gaming provides them with a grounded and enjoyable experience of collaborative intelligence in action. The OERopoly board game features international OER projects, organisations and their influence on academic practice. During the workshop participants will collaborate and share knowledge on OER by playing a highly adapted version of the well-known Monopoly format. The workshop thus exposes and explores the perceived relationships (both synergies and tensions) between three worlds: OER projects, UGC, Web2.0 technologies and associated online learning communities. Although there is a high international level of interest in OER and associated areas the field is still relatively unexploited in Sweden. The aim of this board game is to introduce participants to key concepts, projects and initiatives and offer the opportunity to share experience of OER and related web 2.0 technologies from their own universities. The focus of this board game,

in stark contrast to the original, is collaboration and collective intelligence. By exploring key concepts and sharing knowledge in a game-based context participants will hopefully be inspired to discover more. This workshop has been devised with the full cooperation of the creators of the original version of OERopoly by Connolly, Makriyannis and Lane.

Keywords

academic practice, collaboration, communities, context, oer, open educational resources, usg, web2.0

Introduction

Learning perspectives for the 21st century and demands for learning in the future will focus more on competences and networking rather than knowledge (New Media Consortium, 2012; Ossiannilsson & Creelman, 2012a, b). Learning will be tailored to the needs of individuals, will be more open, interactive and collaborative, and based largely on resource sharing and use of user generated content (Concede, 2011¹). Openness impacts many areas of education – learning, curriculum, pedagogy, policy, technology, research and financing (Hylan, 2007). The global trend

¹ <http://www.concede.cc/>

towards increasing openness in higher education, particular in the USA, has led to increasing numbers of European institutions distributing lectures and course material via channels such as iTunes U, YouTube Edu and Academic Earth using Web 2.0 technologies or User Generated Content (USG) (Concede, 2011). An increasing number of European universities offer today Open Educational Resources (OER) but there is, however, a general lack of awareness about OER among teachers and an element of suspicion against open publication. Discussions tend to focus on copyright issues and protection of intellectual property (IP) instead of fostering a climate of sharing and transparency. The use of Creative Commons (cc) licenses² is also rather limited at European universities and there is a need to raise awareness among university teachers of the opportunities inherent in its use (Ossiannilsson & Creelaman, 2012a, b).

Activity in Sweden has so far been relatively limited. In the last year there have been two national OER-related projects funded by the National Library of Sweden's OpenAccess initiative, OER resources for learning (Creelman *et al.* 2011) and Model for increased use of OER (Eklöf, 2011). Several repository projects have also been run, such as DigiRef.³ There are more extensive and advanced projects and national initiatives elsewhere in the Nordic region, in particular the Norwegian National Digital Learning Arena (NDLA,⁴ a national OER repository for schools that has gained a high level of

recognition. Once more major initiatives are under way, a Swedish/Nordic version of this board game would certainly be more relevant.

If university course material is made more visible, protected by cc licenses, there will be several benefits for all interested parties: good material will be widely used thus heightening the teacher's and university's reputation, open publication stimulates higher quality, potential students will be able to preview the courses they wish to take and the freely available material will enhance the field of informal learning/lifelong learning. In addition, by encouraging the reuse and sharing of existing resources the teacher's focus shifts from material production to mentorship and facilitation. The future role of the teacher is thus to provide context rather than content (Batson, 2010).

Regarding educational openness Kanwar, Balasubramanian and Umar (2010) emphasize the practice and culture aspects of OER such as empowerment processes, of which the OER movement demands various types. Within a connectivist perspective (Siemens, 2005) Atlee and Benkler (2008) argue for the collective intelligence (CI) phenomenon that emerges at the crossroads of three worlds of Open Educational Resources (OER), Web 2.0 technologies and Online Learning Communities. Building CI for the OER movement means according to Connolly, Wilson, Makriyannis, De Liddo. & Lane, (2011)

"... capturing the richness of information, experiences, knowledge and resources, that the movement is constantly generating, in a way that they can be shared and reused for the benefit of the movement itself. The organisation of CI starts from collecting the knowledge and experience of OER practitioners and scholars in new creative forms,

² <http://creativecommons.org/>

³ <http://www.digiref.se/>

⁴ <http://ndla.no/>

and then situating this knowledge in a collective 'pot' from where it can be leveraged with new 'intelligent' meanings and toward new 'intelligent' goals."

This outlined workshop is based on *OERopoly: A Game to Generate Collective Intelligence around OER*. CI is one strand of the Open Learning Network (OLnet) project (funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation) at Open University in United Kingdom that started in March 2009. The developers of OERopoly are Connolly, Makriyannis and Lane (Connolly, Makriyannis & De Liddo (2010; Connolly *et al.* (2011).

The aim of the workshop is to discover some of these relationships through the use of mediating artefacts in a collaborative environment (de Liddo, 2010). Participants will play a board game called OERopoly where gaming provides participants with a concrete, enjoyable, experience of CI in action. Throughout the workshop different types of mediating artefacts are used to assist users in making informed decisions and choices around game-playing and, therefore, mediate their subsequent gaming activities.

The paper for the workshop starts with a short introduction. Then follows a brief overview of history and development of OER and Open Educational Practice (OEP). The board game OERopoly is then described and so are the aims of the game (Connolly *et al.*, 2010, Connolly *et al.*, 2011). After that, the aims of the workshop and the workshop design are described and finally conclusions and further recommendations.

Open Educational Resources

Open Educational Resources (OER) may be seen as a part of a larger trend towards openness in higher education including more well-known and established movements such as Open Source Software (OSS) and Open Access (OA). The most important arguments of openness concern free availability over the Internet and as few restrictions for the end-user as possible on the use of the resource, e.g. technical, financial (Hylén, 2007). Furthermore the end-user should not only be able to use or read the resource but also to adapt it, build upon it and thereby reuse it, as long as the original creator is attributed for her/his work. This is regulated in creative common licenses (cc)

The definition of OER is more or less similar to the one used by The Open Knowledge Foundation when they claim that knowledge should be legally, socially and technologically open. The term Open Educational Resources first came to use at the UNESCO conference in 2002 (Hylén, 2007, Atkins, Brown, & Hammond, 2007).

The concept was there defined as:

"The open provision of educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes." (Hylén, 2007 p.1).

Since the development and implementation of OER have spread around the world and also as more research becomes available the definition has been widened (Geser, 2007; OPAL, 2011 a, b). Today in 2012 the concept is more understood as expanding into open educational practice (OEP) and open educational culture (OEC). The drivers for this development are mainly UNESCO and Commonwealth

of learning (UNESCO-COL, 2011a, b) followed in 2011 by the OER university partnership. Kanwar, Balasubramanian and Umar (2010) take the above definition a step further and emphasize the practice and culture aspects of OER such as the empowerment process and that the OER movement relies on various types of stakeholders and moreover that OER includes both material and pedagogical issues. Their definition is as follows:

“The phenomenon of OER is an empowerment process, facilitated by technology in which various types of stakeholders are able to interact, collaborate, create and use materials and pedagogic practices, that are freely available, for enhancing access, reducing costs and improving the quality of education and learning at all levels”.

The concept today has thus to be understood both with a broader and a more extended meaning and has thus an impact on changing perspectives in education and learning, namely to focus more on individuals and on learning.

OERopoly, the board game

The OERopoly board game is played to explore the relationships between the three worlds of OER projects, Web 2.0 technologies and online learning communities, developed by Connolly, Makriyanni and Lane (Connolly *et al.*, 2010, Connolly *et al.*, 2011). By playing the game, participants engage in a process of CI, finding and sharing knowledge of OER concepts and initiatives as well as providing own experience of learning with web 2.0 tools.

The game has been devised by Connolly *et al.* (2010). With their permission we have decided to use the international version for this workshop and not to produce a Swedish version of the game since there have been rather few significant OER-initiatives so far on a national level.

Aim of the workshop

OERopoly is in essence the opposite of Monopoly. The aim is to share knowledge and learn together and there are no winners or losers. We have chosen to play our own modified version of the original (Connolly *et al.*, 2010, 2011) to cater for Swedish participants who are not actively involved in any OER project (the target group for the original version). Furthermore the time restrictions of the present conference do not allow a full version of the game to be played.

The main aims of this workshop are to:

- Raise interest in international OER initiatives
- Share experience from Swedish universities
- Participate in a collective intelligence activity

Workshop outline (In total 100 min)

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

A brief background to OER and the workshop is first explained to the participants followed by an explanation of how our short conference demonstration differs from the original full version. The participants are divided into teams of 2-3 and assigned to a playing table. The rules of the game are then explained.

The game resembles Monopoly in terms of appearance but the principles are very different.

2. Game (60 minutes)

This game centres around sharing knowledge and discovery. There is no money involved and you “earn” properties by gaining knowledge. The various streets,

stations and utilities from Monopoly are replaced by OER projects, organisations and related technologies.

At each table there are players in up to 4 teams of 2-3 people per team plus a facilitator who provides advice on the rules and can contribute to the discussions as appropriate. When a team lands on a particular property they will have to provide three important facts about that OER concept, either from memory or by quickly searching on the net by laptop or mobile.

3. Discussion (30 minutes)

Participants will be given a number of questions to consider about the activity and will discuss and report on these. The question of how appropriate the game form is for promoting discovery and collaborative learning will be raised as well as the applicability of the concept for Swedish OER initiatives.

Conclusion

OERopoly has up till now been used extensively in an international context having been presented at a number of European conferences and used in several projects by mainly the developers. Experience so far indicates that using a familiar game format is an enjoyable and inspiring way of getting oriented in the OER landscape, to share experience and reach a common ground of understanding. The game is ideal as an ice-breaking activity during an OER-related workshop, conferences or introduction to OER, to establish a common reference framework for future discussions. The developers express it as follows: ...”by working together through the game the participants share knowledge about the basic concepts in the field, related projects and important initiatives”.

The game can of course be customized to suit the current project’s environment or national, local context. As there are many stakeholders in the field of OER, this is a fruitful way of gathering representatives from different interest groups to exchange ideas and perspectives about a common area of interest. The game can be replayed again and again and each time new insights can be gained and improved. The game can also be replayed when participants have gained a deeper understanding of the concepts. The game only gives participants a glimpse into the concepts of OER, but by sharing the experience they will be more motivated to continue collaborating to discover more (Connolly *et al.* 2011).

With this demonstration we hope that OERopoly will inspire Swedish universities to use this method to introduce the fundamentals of OER to groups of teachers, librarians and decision-makers. Preferably the game can be adapted to a Swedish/Nordic setting as more OER projects and initiatives are launched.

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