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OER-Open possibilities for learning. A national initiative financed by the Internet Infrastructure Foundation .SE

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Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials available on the Internet. Resources are open and free, and usually under creative commons licenses (cc). Depending on the licenses resources are allowed to be used, reused, transmitted, and also sold openly and freely. Internationally, the OER movement is very strong. In Sweden, however, the trend towards open publication and sharing of educational resources is fairly slow. There is a need to satisfy with both management and teaching staff at Higher Education institutions in the use of and reuse of OER. Within the educational sector teaching staff is demanding support to operate pedagogically and qualitatively with OER. In order to exploit the potentials of OER for students' learning it is not enough to *bring in* small OER:s here and there without bearing the educational and learning context in mind. Precious teacher time needs to be used more contextually for didactically purposes and not just to meet content issues. The idea of this national project is to foster an open dialogue about collaboration on infrastructural issues considering open knowledge exchange on the Internet. During the project period, a number of open webinars across university boundaries are co-arranged, where the use and production of OER are in focus. A virtual platform for Swedish OER initiatives and resources will also be established through the project. The project targets and has special focus on open educational practices (OEP). The project is funded by the Internet Infrastructure Foundation .SE

Öppna digitala lärresurser (Open Educational Resources, OER) är undervisnings-, lärande- och forskningsmaterial som finns tillgängliga på Internet. Resurserna är öppna och fria och vanligen under creative commons licenser (cc). Beroende på licens tillåts resurserna att användas, återanvändas, spridas och även säljas öppet och fritt. Internationellt är OER-rörelsen mycket stark. I Sverige går däremot utvecklingen mot öppen publicering och delande av utbildningsresurser ganska långsamt framåt. Det finns stora behov att tillgodose på lärosätena, på ledningsnivå och hos undervisande personal. Inom utbildningssektorn efterfrågar undervisande personal stöd för att kunna arbeta pedagogiskt och kvalitativt med OER. För att utnyttja potentialen med OER för studenternas lärande räcker det inte med att "plocka in" lite OER här och där utan att se till sammanhanget. Dyrbar lärartid behöver användas mer kontextuellt och inte enbart för att tillgodose innehållsfrågor. Idén med det nationella projektet OER- öppna möjligheter för lärande (2012) och som beskrivs nedan är att främja en öppen dialog via Internet kring samverkan i infrastrukturella frågor som rör det öppna kunskapsutbytet nätet. Under projektperioden samarrangeras ett antal öppna webbseminarier

över lärosätesgränserna där användning och produktion av öppna lärresurser (OER) står i centrum. Även en virtuell plattform för svenska OER-initiativ och resurser kommer att utvecklas genom projektet. Projektet riktar särskilt fokus på en öppen utbildnings praxis (OEP, open educational praxis). Projektet finansieras av Internetfonden SE.

Background

This national project, OER – open possibilities for learning, conducted in 2012-2013 (Schneider *et al.* 2012), builds on the findings and experiences from the project OER - resources for learning (Creelman *et al.*, 2011), conducted during 2010-2011 and funded by the Royal Library (KB). This earlier project attracted great interest and served to establish an extensive network both nationally and internationally. The project showed that a joint action between Swedish universities is both viable and efficient in opening up ways to generate interest in the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) for learning by means of sharing time, skills and resources across institutions. Open webinars with a large number of participants as a collaborative effort of several universities and other organizations are a new phenomenon in Swedish higher education. Through interactive participation and the web conferencing infrastructure provided by SUNET, the Swedish national research and educational network, new interfaces were created between the participants and the Swedish OER movement and development has thus been able to take off. Figure 1, depicting the project logotype.

Figure 1 OER – increased possibilities for learning.

The 2010/11 project developed a website, which has now been given even stronger foothold through the current project's webpage consisting of OER resources, event calendars, as well as general and linked information www.oersverige.se.

The term OER was first coined at the 2002 UNESCO Forum on the Impact of Open Courseware for Higher Education in Developing Countries, organized in association with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The term was 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 noncommercial purposes (*Atkins et al. 2007, Hylén 2005 2007 2012, UNESCO 2002). The main concern was to solve the perennial problem of external educational resources in developing countries where limited funding, computer availability and Internet access, as well as lack of training for students and staff hindered expansion of subscription and use of academic journals and databases (UNESCO 2002). OER include courseware, textbooks, tests, software tools and full courses, among the others. Since the concept was coined a variety of definitions have been explored. One of the most common ones today is the one by COL/UNESCO, which emphasizes processes, stakeholders and pedagogy and not just the resources as such. *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* (Kanwar, Balasubramanian & Umar 2010).

In recent years, OERs have grown exponentially and have received increasing attention. Internationally, the OER movement is very strong, especially since the Paris Declaration on OER and since an open sharing culture was adopted in summer 2012 (UNESCO, 2012). In Sweden, however, the trend towards open publication and sharing of educational resources is fairly slow. Swedish initiatives in OER have been appreciated and welcomed from international actors and by projects currently implemented around the world, such as by the OPAL project, by ICDE (2012), UNESCO (2012), the OECD, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the OERuniversity.

The main objective of the current project is increased national collaboration between universities, educational organizations and schools on the use and production of OER by:

• harnessing the potential of the Internet to streamline support to teachers and students, with regard to both quality, technical and search related aspects of OER.
• increasing knowledge about the webinar opportunities as a tool for open learning on the net.
• increasing collaboration on support functions across higher education institutions with libraries and ICT pedagogical units as starting points.
• contributing to sector wide labelling standards, distribution and storage of OER.
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Project Partners
All project partners from the project OER resources for learning, conducted during 2010 - 2011, now participate in the new project, OER - Open opportunities for learning, during 2012-2013. More universities have joined the new project, a total of nine universities involved. Karlstad University is the project coordinator in collaboration with Lund University. Karlstad University is committed to develop blended learning with special emphasis on teacher education. The project thus has strong roots in the university's development and strategy. Special funds are added for technology investments, skills enhancement and development within the university. Karlstad University manages SUNET e-meeting service and acting since 2010 national support centre for other universities. Other constituent institutions and project partners are Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH), University of Gävle (HIG), Jönköping University (JU), Linnaeus University (LNU), the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Mid Sweden University (MIUN) and Umeå University (UMU). All participating universities are included in the national Network ITHU (IT in higher education) and as a special task force (OER) in the network. The project is funded by the Internet Infrastructure Foundation .SE

Project activities
The project will conduct a number of variations of the form "webinar". A combined physical and web event is planned together with UR, on copyright issues and collaboration opportunities. Invited to participate are special national organizations of interest (KB, SULF, SUNET UR, SUHF, VHS, HSV, SVERD, in Swedish). Issues that will be discussed in the webinars are how OER development can be supported, encouraged and developed in a sustainability perspective and how the Swedish copyright law and the so-called teacher's exemption affects national development concerning open educational practices, (OEP). Furthermore, questions will be raised about UR's mission and production facilities and new infrastructural opportunities to foster open dialogue for higher educational institutes' will be discussed.

Webinars 2012 -2013
During the project period, the following webinars will take place as a co-arrangement of the constituent project partners. More and updated information is to be found at www.oersverige.se:
Webinar 1 - Scientists write to be read!
Webinar 2 - Open Learning - Challenges and Opportunities
Webinar 3 - How can I use digital material in my teaching?
Webinar 4 - What are open educational resources and how can I find them?
Webinar 5 - Open Education - an international development in higher education
Webinar 6 - Quality in e-learning?

Webinar 7 - UR - The right to public service materials for educational purposes?
Webinar 8 - The digital library
Webinar 9 - Metadata and standards

The use of existing personal networks as well as open invitations via social media, blogs and journals are undertaken to created awareness for the project. The webinars will also be promoted by SVERD and ITHU. Continued discussion in social media as a follow up on each webinar is encouraged and also part of the dissemination strategy of the project. The webinars will be recorded and made available as OER. Webinars are conducted in the higher education sector wide service for e-meetings, namely Adobe Connect. Each webinar will be evaluated in turn to provide suggestions for improvement of upcoming webinars

A natural part of the project is to make use of a common virtual platform for Swedish OER initiatives and resources. The webinars are recorded and documented and current news, key findings and links to helpful resources and contacts are collected. Project partners at each institution are responsible for dissemination and implementation. Project results will be made available and discussed within the network and at network meetings. The content of this site is licensed under a Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-SA which means that everyone - and not only the Internet Infrastructure Foundation .SE can use the project results.

Discussion and conclusions

The major challenge of the project is to influence decision makers in Swedish education. The first project created good relationships with teachers and librarians, but OER is still an almost unknown concept among university management and the relevant authorities. The discourse in the field points out the need for both a broad interest in openness among teachers while necessary incentives and support from the top.. UNESCO's Paris Declaration on OER (2012) clearly shows that open education is an international concern, and encourages Member States to take action to create a sharing culture within all educational sectors.

This project focuses not only on OER but offers seminars on current educational issues that can stimulate both teaching staff and decision makers. By using transparency as our motto and creating open webinars recorded and made available we hope to demonstrate in a practical way the benefits of openness.

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