

## **OER Impact in Community Colleges**

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### **Abstract**

OER Research Hub (OERRH, 2014) at The Open University provides a focus for research into the global impact of OER by working in collaboration with projects across four education sectors (K12, college, higher education and informal) extending a network of research with shared methods and shared results.

The Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (CCCOER, 2014) is a joint effort by individual colleges, regional and statewide consortia, the OpenCourseware Consortium, and other educational partners to promote awareness and adoption of open education policies and practices to enhance teaching and learning. CCCOER has over 200 colleges in 15 U.S. States (and one Canadian province) who meet regularly to share best practices and identify opportunities for collaboration.

In this poster presentation we share some results from research carried out in collaboration between 2012 and 2013, including a survey of college educators (n=136) and several field research visits.

### **Keywords**

Community colleges, OER, impact, research, evidence, collaboration

### **Research Collaboration**

OER Research Hub is structured around eleven key hypotheses about open education, several of which are under investigation in community colleges. These hypotheses cover many of the areas where there is a recognized need for an improved evidence case. Does OER usage improve teaching, foster institutional policy change, and thus make access to education more equitable? Furthermore, what kind of evidence may be offered for each of these claims? In accordance with the project methodology (McAndrew & Farrow, 2013) a combination of survey research, field observations, structured interviews and focus groups were carried out in different parts of the USA. Between February and May 2013 a survey was developed in consultation between OER Research Hub and CCCOER and initial IRB applications were made. Surveys were live between May and December 2013. During this time period a number of research visits were made to collect data on OER activities. These included colleges in California, Maryland, Washington, and Virginia.

## **Survey Results: Headlines**

Our poster is mainly intended to communicate the results of our research survey. The survey was taken by educators from De Anza College (CA); Foothill College (CA); Houston Community College (TX); Northern Virginia Community College (VA); Roane State Community College (TN) and South Florida Community College (FL). 136 usable responses were recorded.

- Most of the respondents have used some sort of OER, though only around a quarter create OER
- Most report positive effects on their teaching practice as a result of OER use, particularly around peer collaboration and improved subject knowledge
- A smaller proportion (but still in excess of 40%) feel that OER use directly leads to improved reflection on pedagogical practice
- Positive effects were also identified for learners, especially around increased self-reliance, subject interest and experimentation
- There were similar numbers who thought OER wasn't making much of a difference and a core of what might be termed "anti-OER" responses
- There were mixed views about whether OER was saving institutions money, but approximately 2/3 felt that students had saved money
- Around 1/3 believe that OER is improving student attrition while around 1/2 believe it is not having an effect
- Only around half of OER creators have used open licensing
- There is a core of advocates who understand and actively promote OER; they adopt open educational practices and believe it leads to benefits
- Videos and multimedia were the most popular form of OER, used by around 70% of the sample
- YouTube was the most popular site for OER – used considerably more than core OER or MOOC providers
- Relevance, open licensing and institutional/personal reputation were all identified as important when selecting OER

## **Reflections and Next Steps**

Data gathered in this collaboration will be added to the OER Research Hub overall dataset with survey results and key institutional data added to the OER Impact Map. Our wider findings are likely to be of interest to a range of stakeholders, including educators, policymakers and managers with a focus on the impact of OER; accessibility specialists; colleges interested in collaborative research; and anyone who would benefit from a better understanding of collaborative research into technology-enhanced learning.

In the course of carrying out this collaborative work there have been a number of lessons

learned about methods for carrying out research in community colleges.

- Research at community colleges is typically dependent on institutional review board (IRB) approval. Applications for IRB should be submitted in a timely fashion as many boards meet infrequently. The process of application may take considerably longer than anticipated.
- The timing of surveys for faculty and students should also be considered as busy times of year and the circulation of multiple faculty or student surveys can result in lower than expected response rates.

## **References**

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