

‘The Open Education Revolution: Sharing Nicely’

Delia Browne

What is Open Education?

- Open education is about expanding educational opportunities worldwide by facilitating the sharing and re-mixing of educational resources.
- Institutions and individuals are increasingly sharing digital learning and teaching resources over the Internet without cost. These are known as ‘open education resources’.
- Open education websites include an array of resources such as curriculum material, lesson plans, classroom activities, lectures, homework tasks, assignments and quizzes.

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration

- In September 2007, open education enthusiasts met in Cape Town to share view points and claim their commitment to the open education movement. The aim of the meeting was to spark dialogue and action in promoting open resources, technology and teaching practices in education through out the world. This resulted in The Cape Town Open Education Declaration, an official statement of principle, strategy and commitment to the open education movement.
- The Declaration has been signed by hundreds of people and institutions, including learners, educators, authors, schools, universities, publishers, unions, professional societies, policymakers, and governments.

Open Education and Creative Commons in the International Sphere

- There is an array of open education resources available online. Some are small communities of teachers who share resources while others are huge repositories of courseware and classes.
- Most of the online open education resources are produced in the USA, with some emerging out of the UK and South Africa. Popular open education sites and tools include Curriki (www.Curriki.org), OER Commons (www.oercommons.org), Connexions (<http://cnx.org>), Openlearn (www.openlearn.open.ac.uk) and Teaching Ideas (www.teachingideas.co.uk). These initiatives all use Creative Commons (CC) licences to make their material available to the public. CC licences are flexible and recognized around the world.

Open Education in Australia?

- Open education is not commonplace in Australia. There has been limited activity in building open education repositories in the tertiary sector.

- The movement in Australia is better characterized as ‘free for education’. ‘Free for education’ resources allow educators and students to freely copy and use resources for educational purposes, but do not permit the resources to be modified and shared.
- There are several free for education initiatives in Australian Schools. These do not qualify as ‘open education’ projects as they are specific to Australian Schools and do not apply to all educational institutions. They include:
 1. *National Education Access Licence for Schools (NEALS)*
 - NEALS is a licence between the education departments of the various states and territories, DEEWR and the Catholic and Independent schools sectors which allows Australian schools to copy and communicate each other’s print and digital material for educational use free of charge.
 - NEALS was primarily developed to remove Education sector publicly funded materials from Part VB Statutory Licence remuneration (photocopy/online use of print and artistic works).
 2. *The Learning Federation (TLF)*
 - TLF delivers high quality digital resources to schools through education department intranets. It provides access to cultural material from:
 - Museum Australia
 - National Sound and Film Archive
 - Australian Children’s Television Foundation
 - National Library of Australia
 - The Australian VET sector has developed a licensing regime for educational institutions known as AESharnet. Like CC, AESharnet provides standard public licences to copyright owners, some of which permit the modification and sharing of derivative works. Depending on the AESharnet licence used, material released under an AESharnet licence may be ‘open education’.

Barriers to Open Education in Australia

- For the open education movement to spread in Australia, jurisdictions and/or School/TAFE institutes need to create and populate online content repositories which act as teaching and learning exchanges between educators and students. In building these repositories, legal, economic and social barriers arise.
- **Legal:** Education resources are produced daily by educational bodies and departments, non-government curriculum units and teachers. Copyright in these resources belong to the body and/or department as the employer of the creator.

- Further, these resources may contain third party material, i.e. material which belongs to another person or institution, which may lead to inadvertent copyright breaches.
- **Economic:** Concerns arise over the potential commercialization of educational resources and others benefiting from a resource they have not contributed to financially.
- **Social:** Anxiety about others using and modifying a resource due to a sense of personal ownership and control over that resource.

Solution:

- Current policy will need to be changed to assist education departments and bodies to overcome these barriers and advocate the commercial and social benefits of open education. These include maximizing the use and re-use of tax payer funded resources; savings made on money spent on purchasing new resources; reduction in copyright fees paid under the statutory licence schemes; and participating in the equalization of educational resources internationally.
- Business rules and procedures will need to be developed to provide guidance on copyright management and compliance in producing open education resources.

Creative Commons and Other Open Licences

- CC licences have greatly facilitated the growth of the open education movement internationally. Indeed, CC licences are recognized as a viable and practical solution to managing copyright in the digital era.
- CC licences are standard and free public licences which are compatible with other open licences. In this regard, CC licences are well suited for low value, high volume licensing. Further, they are complemented by meta-data which allows for the easy identification and reuse of CC works.
- The noncommercial license option also allows creators to maximize the distribution of their work while retaining control over the commercial use of their work.
- The National Copyright and Creative Commons Australia have produced new practical guides on Creative Commons for teachers and students. This guide will help identify the best CC licences according to the required educational use and sharing of material