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Why Diverse Faculty Voices Matter and How to Sustain Their Engagement in Open Education Practices

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Abstract: Open education resources provide accessible materials which are cost effective, inclusive of diverse experiences, and allow for continual updating. This case study analyzes three areas of consideration for tertiary faculty's recruitment and maintenance in open education practices (OEP) including organizational culture, monetary compensation, and time management. Librarians and other OEP advocates who include diverse faculty positively influence student success.

Keywords: Tertiary education; open education practice; open education resource; faculty

Warum vielfältige Lehrende wichtig sind und wie man ihr Engagement in offenen Bildungspraktiken aufrechterhält

Zusammenfassung: Open Educational Resources (OER) bieten zugängliche Materialien, die kostengünstig sind, vielfältige Erfahrungen berücksichtigen und eine kontinuierliche Aktualisierung ermöglichen. Diese Fallstudie analysiert drei Aspekte, die bei der Rekrutierung und Bindung von Hochschuldozent*innen im Rahmen von Open Educational Practices (OEP) berücksichtigt werden müssen: Organisationskultur, finanzielle Vergütung und Zeitmanagement. Bibliotheken und andere Akteure, die OEP fördern wollen, können gute Bedingungen für Studienerfolg schaffen, indem sie vielfältige Dozent*innen einbeziehen.

Schlüsselwörter: Hochschulbildung, offene Bildungspraxis, offene Bildungsressource, Lehrende

1 Introduction

Open educational practices (OEP) provide the opportunity for students to access high quality education materials at no cost to them or their institution. With continually evolving

content, they provide current and reliable resources for teachers.¹ These resources are only as diverse as those who create them. Open educational resources (OER) create opportunities for students beyond cost savings, they open doors to student success.² If OEP advocates wish to connect to as many diverse student populations as possible, they need to incorporate diverse identities in the OER creation process and get the resources into classrooms.³ European tertiary education institutions must consider a variety of ways to entice and sustain diverse faculty participation in open education processes. From authorship to classroom adoption of resources, faculty's academic expertise across disciplines and varied life experiences strengthens the breadth of information OERs provide to students. This case study analyzes three areas of faculty's work including organizational culture, monetary compensation, and time management. These elements should be considered when stakeholders seek to incorporate diverse faculty perspectives in OEP processes.

Why would we want to ensure diverse faculty are not just recruited but maintained in the creation process? Curriculum de-colonization matters when it comes to students connecting with the material and subsequently succeeding in academics.⁴ Having diverse teacher demographics positively influences the students they teach as well.⁵ Students have expressed their desire for curriculum reflective of their diverse identities and experiences to improve their learning journey outcomes. Sakata et al. (2023) research at a British university found Black and Minority (BME) students yearned for representation in their curriculum. They found "making higher education curriculum relevant to BME students would thus offer more equal and just academic experiences to all students".⁶ Other research also finds diverse perspectives in all academia strengthens curriculum and applicability to more student populations.⁷

1 <https://oercommons.org/>.

2 Aronson and Laughter (2016), Colvard et al. (2018).

3 Arday et al. (2021), Sakata et al. (2023).

4 Arday et al. (2021).

5 Goldhaber et al. (2019).

6 Sakata et al. (2023) 407.

7 Esbensen (n. d.), Chu and Huang (2024).

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The open education resource creation process typically relies on higher education academics to outline, write, and edit content, but the relationship between higher education institution organizations and faculty employees is complex. Within a campus' organizational culture OERs' perceived pros and cons could influence whether faculty are willing to participate in OEP. Organizational culture is analyzed first in this case study, with special consideration for workplace psychological safety.

Secondly, monetary compensation for higher education faculty in the Western European higher education system is seen as influencing increased faculty OEP process involvement. Tangible financial compensation could provide impetus to participate in open educational resource creation and adoption. Increased pay has been shown to positively influence faculty's expected role execution.⁸

Thirdly, compensation for faculty's participation in open educational resource creation and adoption does not have to come in monetary form. Formal acknowledgement of the time it takes to execute open educational resource design, construction, implementation, and updating processes can occur by faculty's employer organizations. Formal recognition can be via course load or designated committee assignment.

2 Population

The research population of this case study is tertiary education faculty employed in colleges or universities within the European Union (EU). Within the EU education system, formal education occurring after secondary, or American high school level, is often referred to as tertiary education. In this case study, due to information being drawn from global sources, the terms higher education and tertiary education should be viewed as interchangeable.

In 2022, "there were 1.49 million people teaching in tertiary education across the EU".⁹ Gender proportionality for tertiary education faculty varies amongst different European Union countries. Countries such as Greece, Czechia, and Italy had more than 60 % of their teachers identify as male, while there were more women tertiary educators than men in countries such as Belgium, Romania, Finland, and Bulgaria.¹⁰

Inclusion of faculty who are migrants, or from migrant families, in OEP is vital to ensure their culturally relevant stories are reflected in higher education curriculum. As of

2023, the higher education achievement rate for 25–34-year-olds in Europe increased for the 9 years prior "in virtually all countries and by more than 7.2 percentage points at the EU level".¹¹ Also, 25–34-year-olds considered migrants (they and their parents were born outside of the reporting country) were 7.5 percentage points less likely to have achieved higher education degrees than students who they themselves and their parents were born in-country, according to data consolidated from EU country specific information.¹²

Faculty identity definitions are difficult to generalize across the EU. The European Commission's report on teaching diversity¹³ stated diverse identities indicators included migrant background, foreign background, ethnicity, cultural diversity, and minority background. The report analyzed disparity between teachers' and learners' migrant backgrounds. The report indicated countries reporting high disparity between the teachers and learners were Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Countries with education systems reporting low teacher and student migrant background disparity were Hungary and Slovakia.¹⁴ Without culturally diverse faculty in higher education, barriers remain for students who need assistance in connecting with materials through curriculum interpretation by their culturally attune faculty.¹⁵

3 Theoretical framework

The Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) theoretical framework is useful for this case study in that according to Cameron "organizations that flourish have developed a culture of abundance which builds collective capabilities of all members".¹⁶ Universities' OEP advocates can work together by supporting diverse faculty participation in a variety of ways. Browning et al. note the importance of looking through a positive lens as "this constructive orientation can be discerned when participants make their contributions solution focused, future oriented, and collaborative".¹⁷ This key notation of collaboration between stakeholders is a theme throughout POS and thus, this analysis. The focus of faculty participation in OEP and crafting an outlook towards a future oriented around supporting student success also drives this analysis. Instead of focusing

⁸ Forbes (2025).

⁹ Tertiary education statistics (n. d.).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2024).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Donlevy et al. (2016).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Aronson and Laughter (2016).

¹⁶ Cameron (2013) 19.

¹⁷ Browning et al. (2012) 572.

on the negative effects of curriculum inequities, the focus of this case study is why positive change is necessary in the education system, as well as guidance for how to attain the positive change, through diverse faculty participation.

This case study provides an analysis of higher education faculty's participation in the open education resource creation and adoption process. The purpose of this study is to identify aspects of higher education faculty member's workplace which support their participation in creation of OERs, as well as incorporation of OERs sources into their classroom. It discusses the unique needs of faculty whose participation benefits OERs in many ways and, ultimately, positively influences student success. OEP project managers, content creators, and other stakeholders can benefit from this study by better understanding the value of the varied experiences faculty bring to the resources and creating frameworks for inclusion of all faculty.

4 Faculty incentives

4.1 Organizational culture

Organizations strengthen faculty identities through being a reputable organization and the faculty themselves thereby strengthen the organization's identity by executing their educational product well. These essential communicative, physical, and relational aspects are vital in maintaining the organization's identity in greater society but also the employee's identity within the organization.¹⁸

Both parties have macro level concerns such as how their interests' function in relation to the greater whole, as well as micro level concerns for how interpersonal interactions further their own interests. It is important to note that feeling and understanding their organization's culture can provide successful outcomes for addressing issues in the organization such as comfort with OER use across courses. Coyle notes that successful organizational cultures "are energized and engaged, but at their core their members are oriented less around achieving happiness than around solving hard problems together".¹⁹ The logic for this study is thusly based in the premise that a successful higher education institution's culture benefits from being rooted in building a successful stakeholder collaboration for the problem of student success due to resource accessibility barriers.²⁰

4.1.1 Communication

Effective communication between OEP stakeholders is an important aspect of POS. Librarians, who have vast knowledge of open education academic resources, and faculty, in need of open education resources for their courses, can work together through established communication lines. Not all faculty may be familiar with the OERs, which is where communication outreach by open education advocate librarians can fill a gap throughout academic departments.

Communication between faculty and OEP librarians can take on different forms. OEP librarians can communicate via webinars throughout the academic year. Webinars can give faculty guidance on OEP to include OER in curriculum, the open education options available, how to participate in resource creation, and funding availability. Also, OEP librarians can meet with individual faculty to assess their needs and recommend resources. A low-cost method of communicating OER options to faculty is listing resources with active links on the school's library webpages.

To bridge organizational culture communication in the context of open education resource use, librarians can guide faculty to a clear understanding of the benefits of open education resource use. Keeping lines of communication open between librarians and faculty instilling a collaborative dynamic "will be associated with greater commitment from internal and external collaboration participants"²¹ thus benefitting the entire OEP process and even the organization itself.

4.1.2 Psychological safety

Nembhard and Edmondson describe what is known as psychological safety as "individuals' perceptions related to the degree of interpersonal threat to their work environment".²² Collaboration between employee and employer is a key component of psychological safety in the workplace.²³ Interdisciplinary collaboration has also been shown to be advantageous to faculty "by increasing social ties (e. g., building meaningful relationships), standing as a site of joyful collaboration, and fostering a sense of group identity among collaborators from across campus".²⁴

Tertiary faculty who wishes to revise their courses to incorporate OERs yet deviate from required resources may

¹⁸ Harquail and Brickson (2012).

¹⁹ Coyle (2018) 55.

²⁰ Pryor and Steinberg (2023).

²¹ Dibble and Gibson (2011) 720.

²² Nembhard and Edmondson (2012) 491.

²³ James and Wooten (2012).

²⁴ Pryor and Steinberg (2023) 828.

need assistance from OEP advocates such as librarians. In the reverse situation, faculty forced to use OERs in their courses but are uncomfortable with them for whatever reason, may not feel comfortable contradicting use mandates. POS provides insight into how to address these conflicts. Conflicting parties should work to overcome their differences through “communicating effectively” as well as “demonstrating concern”.²⁵ Acknowledging the other parties’ concerns in open education resource creation, adoption, and maintenance is essential for building trust which will thus create stronger bonds between groups.²⁶

OEP advocates experiencing conflict in their organization should document the steps from where they are currently to successful open education resource creation and implementation. This documentation can then be communicated by advocating parties to opposing parties through webinars, faculty meetings, human resources, and even social media. Through the lens of POS, communicating information about OEP by orienting the focus on future student success through diverse faculty inclusion, is essential for future positive change for the whole organization.

Addressing conflict can be difficult in any organization. Faculty may not have a solid relationship with their colleagues or department chairs to express their concerns over OEP use or desire to get involved in the OEP. Providing a safe space or confidential process for faculty to communicate their concerns supports the relationship between employee and organizations. Organizations with greater higher levels of psychological safety function better than other firms.²⁷ Faculty psychological safety can be accomplished through an organizational culture which provides opportunities for employees to voice concerns about open educational resource creation, classroom incorporation, and use.

4.2 Pay

Diversity of voices in OER materials is key to students’ connecting with them, but diversity in the open education resources’ creation is not enough, they need to be utilized in the classroom. Faculty need to be compensated for their time and effort incorporating OERs into their classroom frameworks.

Higher education institutions across Western Europe have varying levels of compensation and faculty’s salary compensation across international borders is not easily

comparable. Intervening compensation factors such as professional development funds, transportation, and cost of living differentials can influence the relative value of a faculty member’s remuneration.²⁸ While European faculty typically earn livable pay and benefits employment packages,²⁹ not all faculty can afford to add in additional projects on top of their required work. The more work faculty do in a day, the less their ‘hourly’ rate is, thus it may be a difficult sell to entice already overworked faculty to participate in open education resource authorship and classroom incorporation. One solution is pay grants for faculty to specifically focus on OEP.

Grant opportunities from government and non-governmental agencies can help fund faculty OEP participation. University’s OEP advocates need support from their organizations for the time and effort needed to procure the grants. Large grants can be spread out amongst OEP participants for individual projects. The OpenOregon Educational Resources organization in the United States³⁰ is an example of grant funded faculty and employers working collaboratively on inclusive resources for student success. Financial compensation was provided for authoring, peer review, editing, and classroom implementation. Adjunct, or part-time faculty, were included thus expanding diversity of voices. European institutions could entice faculty between positions or looking to leave their jobs to participate in OEP with monetary compensation.

Financial support can be in the non-monetary form such as gift cards to online or local retailers. Smaller donations of products or gift cards to OER programs can be utilized for short-term projects such as individual class adoptions, instructor resource supports, or open education textbook updates. Non-monetary compensation may have ramifications for faculty’s income or tax responsibilities, so local and country specific consequences will need to be considered.

Pay highly influences employment decisions for employees³¹ as well. Explicit advertisement of an organizational culture which supports financial participation in OEP such as resource creation and course adoption, may influence a faculty member’s decision to join, or even leave, a university. Substantiating faculty’s effort with supplemental pay is one way to address organizational stability. Faculty have been found to react positively with pay commensurate with their effort.³² Perception of lack of

²⁵ James and Wooten (2012) 890.

²⁶ James and Wooten (2012).

²⁷ Nemphard and Edmondson (2012).

²⁸ Altbach (2012).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ About (2025).

³¹ Rynes et al. (2004).

³² Hoyt (2012).

compensation appropriate to work may negatively impact satisfaction at work and cause faculty to look for other employment.³³ OEP stakeholders who wish to strengthen faculty's participation in the creation of, support for, and use of OERs should compensate them appropriately for their additional work.

4.3 Time

Reworking courses term to term is no easy task. Faculty compensation in the form of time acknowledgement can positively influence faculty's participation in open education resource creation and classroom use. OEP stakeholders can use institutional service requirements for faculty to step away from other job responsibilities to take part of the open education process. Faculty's participation in OEP can be logged in their course load as a one credit course. Also, time spent can be considered by academic departments as a committee commitment. Both of those responsibilities are within a typical faculty's tasking so would not require additional pay compensation, only the commitment of the institution to support the faculty's time and effort. Open educational resource adoption in a classroom is not as easy as swapping out a print book for the online textbook on the syllabus. An avalanche of changes needs to take place, from balancing students' weekly reading volume to incorporating the resource into assessments. Faculty whose work roles encompass course development departmentally are excellent candidates for OEP participation with specific time acknowledgement dedicated to open education resource inclusion. Their understanding of how the open resources can fit together streamline inclusion efforts across the department.

Organizational policies and procedures need to clearly document expectations for all stakeholders including faculty, librarians, department chairs, and human resources. Transparency of responsibilities and expectations means faculty can be involved in OEP without fear of negatively impacting their workplace psychological safety. Female faculty are more likely to be involved in service or committee work than their male counterparts. Porter found in their study of faculty's committee service work that females and faculty of color expend "a disproportionate burden in terms of institutional service" which can negatively impact promotions.³⁴

Clear organizational documentation of the time and effort required for OEP participation is needed to balance gender, ethnicity, and seniority participation inequities.

This type of remuneration may also be particularly attractive to non-resident or migrant faculty who may not be legally able to take additional pay beyond their school's employment contract.

Both pay and time considerations for faculty's participation in OEP should be clearly documented. Organizationally sanctioned acknowledgement of the time and effort faculty exude in OEP could even strengthen the organization itself. Organizational cultures which respectfully acknowledge the important work of OEP stakeholder collaborative efforts can become stronger organizations, as research shows that "service collaborations may strengthen interdisciplinary campus communities and advance institutional goals related to interdisciplinarity".³⁵

5 Conclusion

Addressing diverse experience inclusion biases and blind spots in existing curriculum can be achieved by fostering inclusivity which welcomes and supports faculty through OER creation, adoption, and use. Colvard et al. found OERs benefit all students' academic success and provide financial savings. They found OERs "improve course grades at greater rates and decrease DFW [D, F, and Withdrawal letter grades] rates at greater rates for Pell recipient students, part-time students, and populations historically underserved by higher education".³⁶

The purpose of this case study was to analyze innovative approaches for diverse faculty inclusion in OER curriculum development and classroom adoption. POS guided the analysis of how diverse faculty inclusion promotes positive change. Dialogue between stakeholders, instead of the traditional top-down approach to projects engenders pride in the materials.³⁷ This provides humanistic connections to faculty in need to support if conflict arises. Communication between stakeholders is key for the success of OEP as viewed through POS.³⁸ The organizational culture overall benefits when faculty and other stakeholders work together towards positive change for their students. As Fullan notes, society "need[s] to get learners ready for life and reality not just college ready".³⁹ Consideration of the whole student is imperative then. The important connections between students and their education resources can only occur with diverse faculty involvement.

³⁵ Pryor and Steinberg (2023) 828.

³⁶ Colvard et al. (2018) 262.

³⁷ Fullan (2019).

³⁸ Browning et al. (2012).

³⁹ Fullan (2019) 11.

³³ Dolan (2011).

³⁴ Porter (2007) 523.

Monetary compensation could entice and sustain faculty's OEP participation. However, grant applications are time consuming, so organizations need to give OEP advocates time and space to apply for such funding. Organizational recognition and support of open education resource creation, classroom adoption, and use can also come in non-monetary forms, such as incorporating OEP activities in course load or committee work assignments are viable options within European University structures. Giving faculty the option to step back from teaching, committee, or other responsibilities while not being penalized in promotion opportunities or other professional endeavors is positive change.

If the true goal of educators is guiding all students towards academic success, inclusion of diverse perspectives in curriculum so students are better able to relate to the material is a noble endeavor worth pursuing.⁴⁰ Educators, their employer organizations, and support mechanism in the organization need to work together in sometimes unconventional ways to build and freely disseminate inclusive curriculum.

This study recommends future research measure changes in OEP faculty participation for schools who have offered pay or time compensation. Once increases in diverse perspectives in open education resource creation occurs, future research can also more adequately measure effects of academic outcomes for all students.

Student success occurs more robustly if they connect to their learning resources.⁴¹ The more diverse identities and culturally relevant experiences represented throughout the curriculum materials, the more students who can relate to the course. Creation of diverse open education resources occurs through diverse writers and editors, which can only occur if all faculty are able to participate. Faculty involvement in the OEP process can be encouraged and supported by extra pay, committed time allotment, and a supportive organizational culture. Such positive steps create a collaborative environment to benefit the organization, faculty, and students.

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⁴⁰ Arday et al. (2021), About (2025).

⁴¹ Arday et al. (2021), Aronson and Laughter (2016), Sakata et al. (2023).

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