THE OER QUALITY DEBATE: EXPLAINING ACADEMICS’ ATTITUDES ABOUT QUALITY

Cox, G.;

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IDRC Grant/ Subvention du CRDI: 107311-001-Research into Open Educational Resources for Development
The OER quality debate: explaining academics’ attitudes about quality

By
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OEC Global. Krakow, Poland (April 2016)
Glenda Cox

Management (2010-2014)

Transition to Library (2014 ongoing)-Training
Advocacy and Support

Research

PhD 2013-2016

Research on Open Educational Resources for Development
/roar-dee/ - ROAR-for-DEE

GOGN
Global OER Graduate Network
EXPLAINING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CULTURE, STRUCTURE AND AGENCY IN LECTURERS’ CONTRIBUTION AND NON-CONTRIBUTION TO OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
Enabler and Barriers to contribution of OER

The Collective Advancement of Education through Open Technology, Open Content, and Open Knowledge
edited by Toru Iiyoshi and M.S. Vijay Kumar
foreword by John Seely Brown

Creative Commons

Policy

Quality Check

http://www

Context

News

Global OER Graduates Network
Empirical evidence

- Culture
- Structure

Agent
- 14 Academics in 7 Faculties
Institutional Culture

McNay 1995
# Culture and Structure: Quality assurance @ UCT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURE</th>
<th>STRUCTURE</th>
<th>Defining features</th>
<th>What: Focus of quality assurance</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collegial-autonomy and academic freedom</td>
<td>No guidelines for quality of teaching materials, but encouraging policy</td>
<td>Some support</td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Author: Pride of authorship</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
INTERVIEW DATA
Peer scrutiny will improve the quality of teaching materials (n:11)

Why are there still concerns?
- Poor quality materials reflect badly on the institution (n:10)
- Some contributors feel materials good as they are (n:5)
- Quality assurance on OER in the repository (n:9)
- Some feel up to individual to share good quality materials (n:5)
- Non-contributors worried about readiness of materials (n:5)

What about academic freedom?

What kind of check and by whom?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributors</th>
<th>Non-contributors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readiness:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If they’re ready for students to see, then they’re as ready as they’re going to get.”</td>
<td>“They don’t look good enough to put out there”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is responsible?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think that each individual preparing their materials must be sure that their material is substantively correct, sound or critical “</td>
<td>“…double sign off ideally someone a year higher (in the teaching progression)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is more important just to encourage people to share than to police...UCT should just leave it alone”</td>
<td>“Poor materials would get out there is there was no gatekeeper”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Production
QA/Pedagogical
QA?
“It’s interesting, because when you said the word quality, I was thinking...I actually was thinking pedagogy” (Contributor)
Teaching materials ready for contribution

Contributors

Non-contributors

OER suitable as stand alone content

OER need associated pedagogy

Teaching materials not ready for contribution
HOW DO WE EXPLAIN WHY SOME ACADEMICS ARE CONCERNED AND OTHERS ARE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT QUALITY AT ALL?
Margaret Archer

- Social Realism-Sociological theory
Margaret Archer (Social Realism)

“How does structure influence agency?”
Ultimate concerns

...Individuals develop and define their *ultimate concerns*, those internal goods that they care about most (Archer 2007:42)

...develop course(s) of action to realise that concern by elaborating a *project*...

Translated into a set of *practices*
Agents ask:

“What do I want and how do I go about getting it?”

“What should I do?”
Margaret Archer (Social Realism)

Culture 

Mediated process through internal conversations

Structure

Agent (Ultimate concerns)
Internal conversations: modes

**Communicative reflexives:** Those whose internal conversation require completion and confirmation by others before resulting in a course of action

**Autonomous reflexives:** Those who sustain self-contained internal conversations, leading directly to action

**Meta-reflexives:** Those who are critically reflexive about their own internal conversations and critical about effective action in society

**Fractured reflexives:** Those whose internal conversations intensify their distress and disorientation rather than leading to purposeful courses of action
Culture

Communicative reflexives
Autonomous reflexives
Meta-reflexives
Fractured reflexives

Relations

Agent

Structure

Social Powers

Personal Powers

Academic

Context

GOGN
What modes of reflexivity are my participants practising?

Higher education-Archer suggests academics should all be meta-reflexives (as their concerns are focused on social issues)?

And meta-reflexives should contribute OER because their concerns about social issues...
Methods

September 2013:
• In depth interviews and a questionnaire (for demographic and technology use information)

September 2014:
• Open ended questions in a questionnaire regarding any change in status and a methodological tool (ICONI)
Internal Conversation Indicator (ICONI)

This questionnaire was developed by Margaret Archer in 2007 and refined in 2008.

It was designed in order to identify a person’s dominant mode of reflexivity, it includes 13 questions.

The ICONI was tested for reliability and it was found that it “accounted for 46.8% of the variance on factor analysis, which compares respectably with directly comparable research instruments employed in social psychology” (Archer 2008:4)
Unexpected results

• Not all meta-reflexives

• And it is not the meta-reflexives who are contributing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Contributors</th>
<th>Non-contributors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-reflexives</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fractured (meta)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified (both auto/meta)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONSIDERING AGENCY AND QUALITY
How internal conversations mediate the actions of agents...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macroscopic structural and cultural factors</th>
<th>Autonomous</th>
<th>Meta-reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stances towards constraints and enablements</td>
<td>strategic</td>
<td>subversive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for approval from</td>
<td>No one/self</td>
<td>Themselves/always critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action orientations</td>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>Self-transcendence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate concerns</td>
<td>Practical order</td>
<td>Self and social transcendence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal conversations</td>
<td>task</td>
<td>value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main institutional impact</td>
<td>Market/work</td>
<td>Third sector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who are the non-contributors of OER:
Altruism focused on the classroom
Belief in the value of teaching
Critical of self and society
Range of Technical ability (not essential)
Most no social media use

Who are the contributors of OER:
Altruism as ultimate concern (Global South)
Ambitious, confident and self assured
Multi task: research and teaching
Critical of self and society
Range of Technical ability (not essential)
Technical ability (not essential for contribution)
Social media use (not essential contribution)
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Altruism as ultimate concern (Global South)
Ambitious, confident and self assured
Multi task: research and teaching
Technical ability (not essential for contribution)
Social media use (not essential for contribution)
Who are the non-contributors of OER:
Altruism focused on the classroom
Belief in the value of teaching
Critical of self and society
Range of Technical ability (not essential)
Most no social media use
CONSIDERING CULTURE, STRUCTURE AND AGENCY FOR THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF OER
## Quality frameworks in the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process/framework</th>
<th>Type (Atenas et al. 2014)</th>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pride of Authorship</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>UCT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning design and layout</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Education specialists</td>
<td>MIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Network of peers</td>
<td>Ghana also Merlot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical tools (Clements et al. 2015)</td>
<td>Technological</td>
<td>Educational specialists</td>
<td>Merlot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tier approach (Masterman &amp; Chan, 2015)</td>
<td>Author and educational specialists and peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIPS (Kawachi, 2014)</td>
<td>Author with some guidance from educational specialists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURE</td>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>Defining features</td>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegial-autonomy and academic freedom</td>
<td>No guidelines or mandate</td>
<td>Limited capacity</td>
<td>Technological-review in repository and/or social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic</td>
<td>Mandate from management</td>
<td>Academics and institution</td>
<td>Policy for OER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>Structure part of process/eg. Distance institution</td>
<td>Curriculum specialists and academic</td>
<td>Policy for OER and quality of materials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What does this mean for contribution?

• Consider culture, structure and agency
• Ultimate concerns drive agents
• Mode of reflexivity helps to explain why academics are so concerned about quality and other aspects
“...: endless assessment of whether or not what they devoted themselves to as the ultimate concern(s) is still worthy...” (Archer 2006:283)
References

Some of the slides were adapted from slides created by Michael Paskevicius: mike.vicious@gmail.com