

Emotional Ownership as the Key to OER Adoption: From Sharing Products and Resources to Sharing Ideas and Commitment across Borders

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Abstract

Open Educational Resources and Practices (OER, OEP) have been discussed for the past decade extensively. However, in contrast to Open Source or Open Access the initiative has not taken up speed due to a variety of barriers. In this paper, I will elaborate on new ways of sharing towards a participatory approach. Emotional ownership is the key to success and to overcome barriers. In the paper, I will elaborate on the main barriers to OER adoption and elaborate the concepts of emotional ownership and idea sharing. The article looks at the OER development process and provides recommendations how these processes need to be changed and supported to create emotional ownership and improve the adoption of OER and OEP.

Keywords: open educational resources, quality, trust, re-use, trusted educational network, recommender systems

1 Introduction and Background

Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) are seen as a promising concept to reform education and foster educational collaboration and innovation (Atkins et al., 2007). However, in contrast to similar initiatives like Open Source or Open Access, the adoption has still not reached its potentials (Ochoa & Duval, 2009). Many people still hesitate to use OER and even more hesitate to share their own or improved resources.

The main question of this paper is how to create stronger user engagement to increase re-use and collaborative development of OER. How can the concept of emotional ownership help to create user engagement and long-term collaborations?

In previous research, a lot of barriers and adoption obstacles have been identified (Clements & Pawlowski, 2012) amongst them lack of (technical, legal) knowledge, lack of motivation, insecurities on quality and IPR. We have also seen that the not-invented-here syndrome applies to OER as well. In our study, people expressed that they prefer to produce learning materials themselves or they do not trust others in term of quality (Clements & Pawlowski, 2012). Therefore, re-using and adopting freely available learning resources has not yet become common practice.

Contrasting these problems, there are many opportunities and benefits about using and contributing towards OER (Atkins et al, 2007, Pawlowski & Zimmermann, 2007):

Increasing access across borders, reduced cost of material production, establishing teaching collaborations or improving the quality of materials (cf. Pawlowski & Zimmermann, 2007, D'Antoni, 2007). Especially collaborative teaching using collaboratively developed OER is a promising concept but it needs awareness and collaboration capacity (D'Antoni, 2007).

In this paper, I will discuss how to overcome individual barriers by engaging stakeholders. The main idea is to emotionally involve people by active re-authoring open educational resources. The main question is how the concept of emotional ownership can be utilized to increase user involvement in OER re-use and adaptation processes.

I will briefly describe the key concepts and elaborate the concept of emotional ownership. I will discuss how this concept can be used for different types of OER and illustrate this in a case study.

2 Background

Which approaches can positively contribute towards user engagement and thus increase re-use and collaborative development?

As a starting point, different barriers to OER engagement have been discussed (Clements & Pawlowski, 2012). On an individual level, the main barriers are curriculum and didactical differences as well as lack of trust and insecurities regarding quality and copyright issues. Also, stakeholders prefer to develop materials themselves due to the not-invented-here syndrome as well as mistrust. To overcome those barriers, it is necessary to increase awareness (D'Antoni, 2007) as well as trust between stakeholders.

As one approach, stakeholder engagement needs to be increased. The concepts of co-production / co-creation aim therefore at involving stakeholders (educators, learners) in the production process (OPAL, 2011). It is thus necessary to create a community model (Downes, 2007). Communities around OER need to be established to create collaborations and partnerships (OPAL, 2011). However, this does not apply to highly contextualized or complex resources. Many resources can just be used as-is or it is too complex to modify them.

So which approaches can be used to increase user engagement? Stakeholders need to get strongly involved in the re-use / re-authoring process by different means. Mikroyannidis et al (2011) provide mechanisms to recommend appropriate, easy-to-use tools for the adaptation process. Also the concept of co-creation / co-production aims at including educators as well as learners in a collaborative development process.

One approach is not to share fixed, contextualized resources but start the exchange in the idea creation process (DeLiddo, 2010). Therefore, stakeholders do not have to re-use completed resources but they are involved in the development process.

A similar approach is discussed from a design perspective by Treviranus (2011) described as the Wabi-Sabi principle. This principle aims at designing resources in an imperfect way that later adopters have certain space to incorporate their own design / pedagogical / technical ideas. Therefore, stakeholders can be involved in an early stage and build new OER.

As a summary, it is common to the approaches presented that users are engaged and involved in different stages of the production / development process. It is also common to those approaches that users build a strong relation to both, collaborators as well as the artifacts they create (such as an OER). The emotional binding can have different reasons such as reputation (Downes, 2007). However, the process how and why users engage in the OER process is still not fully understood.

3 Emotional Ownership to Increase Stakeholder Engagement

Emotional ownership describes the degree that individuals or groups perceive that knowledge or resources belong to them. The concept has been studied in different contexts such as ownership of family businesses (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2012), regarding ownership of knowledge (Jones & Jordan, 1998) or use of emotions for management purposes (Hochschild, 1983). It is common to those approaches that a personal relation is established in a creation process (e.g. a family establishing a business, an individual creating an artifact, a group creating an innovation). The importance of the concept is that there is a much stronger binding to the artifact than to other resources which are just downloaded and / or used (such as a picture taken from an internet search).

So, how can emotional ownership be established? In the following, I will elaborate on the steps towards creating emotionally owned OER from the designers' and users' point of view.

The following figure sketches the design process (cf. Clements & Pawlowski, 2012).

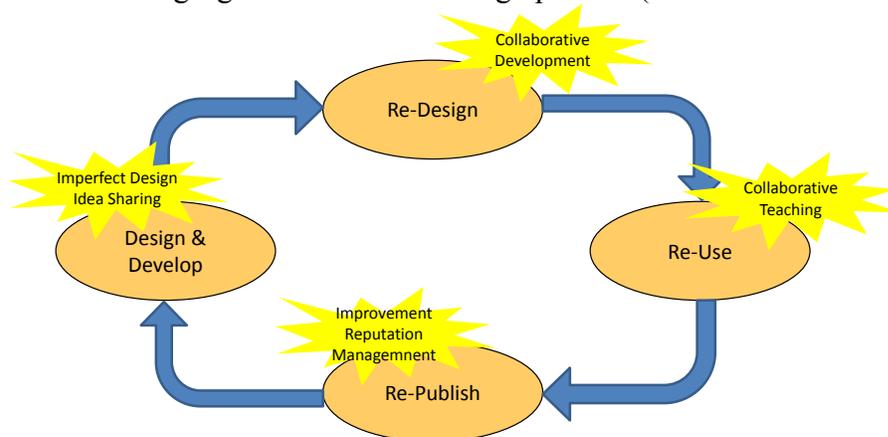


Figure 1: Emotional Ownership in the Development Process

Design and Development Phase

The initial phase is the design and development phase. In a traditional scenario, educators develop learning materials on their own based on their expertise and experience. In an OER scenario, educators search for and modify materials for example in repositories and share those back with the community. The key change in this process is that authors should consider sharing at an earlier stage – sharing ideas and receiving feedback allows to initiate a collaboration process with colleagues. This also means that open instead of proprietary formats should be used to enable easy access and modifications. Furthermore, it is useful not just to share the final end-product but to share prototypes, so that re-users can do the finishing on their own. This makes it easy to incorporate personal preferences and modifications as well as creating the emotional binding to the resource. During the process, it is important to allow feedback by colleagues. This also serves as an initiation of the ownership process: people giving feedback feel that they have contributed and their ideas have been taken into account. Thus, I would recommend the following principles:

1. Share prototypes instead of products
2. Share sketches instead of final figures

3. Leave the design open
4. Use open formats to allow modifications
5. Collect commitments from the potential collaborators
6. Allow and take feedback into account

Re-Design Phase:

The re-design phase is a good point to start collaborations. In this phase, potential collaborators should be contacted and early ideas should be discussed. Based on the raw ideas and prototypes a common use strategy can be developed. This strategy should incorporate which parts of OER are used in common, which parts need to be adapted for the different usage contexts and which roles the potential collaborators can have (e.g. adding individual designs, modifying curricular requirements, translations, cultural concepts). For the international use, the adaptation of cultural and language issues plays a major role. It is important that all participants provide commitments and contribute as the creation and development and in particular the adaptation process creates emotional ownership. This strategy combines the main benefits of OER and the traditional development process: the common development saves development efforts, the modifications and adaptations create the emotional ownership, i.e., each participant has the feeling of having contributed. This phase should consider the following principles:

1. Define a collaboration strategy
2. Define commonalities and adaptation efforts
3. Get authors involved, also just for small adaptations

Re-Use and Re-Publishing Phase

The re-use phase contains the actual usage of the resources – as similar resources will be used, this can also be a starting point for developing collaborative teaching scenarios. Re-use also should take feedback into account. Feedbacks should be shared between the collaborators so that all partners receive positive comments for their efforts as well as improvement suggestions. This appreciation (and corresponding reputation effects) will also increase the emotional ownership towards an OER and the newly created OEP. Both, resource and practice should be shared back to the community or at least to the collaborators. It is also important that success stories are rewarded in some way, either by rewards in the community (“best OER of the month”) or within the group (through personal appreciation). This phase can be summarized by the following principles:

1. Consider collaborative teaching
2. Allow feedback
3. Share positive feedback with all collaborators
4. Plan improvements with all collaborators
5. Share OER and OEP with the community

The process described incorporates previous experiences on co-creation and user engagement (cf. OPAL, 2011). However, the concept of emotional ownership changes collaboration, sharing and feedback processes. It needs to be ensured that collaborators are encouraged, engaged and supported throughout the process. However, once the initial emotional ownership has been created, collaboration will improve and engagement will increase, even in phases of conflicts or stress.

Summarizing the concept, emotional ownership can play an important role in the adoption of OER and OEP. However, new mechanisms of sharing, collaborating and communicating

need to be developed and supported.

4 Case Study: Collaborative Lecture Development

In the following, I will briefly illustrate the concept using a case study approach (Yin, 2003). Given is the following scenario at a university – a new course on knowledge management needs to be developed for a face to face setting (summer school). Lecturer A is responsible for developing and realizing the course. The initial course outline is established by Lecturer A and communicated to the students.

In the first design phase, Lecturer A considers potential resources and contacts also two colleagues. These colleagues agree to provide their (already mature) materials to ease the development process. Based on these initial materials, Lecturer A provides an initial draft (syllabus, contents, draft slide sets) and communicates those to Lecturer B and C. These provide feedback and realize that their own materials can benefit from the collaboratively developed ideas. Lecturer A, B, and C decide to plan the process together. They identify which topics are common and which adaptations are necessary as they are teaching in two different countries. They identify that the key concepts of the lecture are common, only case studies need to be adapted to the curriculum and to cultural aspects. They decide that English will be used as a bridging language, later on translations to German and Finnish will be made. After finalizing three versions of the materials, the course is held in all three locations within 3 months. The feedback is shared, improvements are planned together.

In this case, the sharing process has accidentally created emotional ownership in the process of sharing materials. The sharing process has led to an emotional binding and even to a teaching collaboration. After three years of collaborations, the course has been adapted many times and has been shared with different communities.

This short illustration shows at which points sharing, common planning and feedback sharing is required. The feedback of both groups, lecturers as well as students, has shown that this process is feasible and beneficial for all participants.

As a next step, it is necessary to move the validation from a proof of concept to a quantitative validation including an operational assessment of emotional ownership in comparison to efforts and impact.

5 Conclusion and Future Research

In this paper, I have introduced the concept of emotional ownership to improve the adoption and ease the adaptation of OER and OEP. The development and re-use process has been outlined, identifying main tasks and changes to create and strengthen emotional ownership towards resources and practices.

The brief case study illustrated that the concept is feasible also in accidental collaboration settings. As the main benefits of this paper, key principles of the sharing process and main changes to current practices were identified and operationalized. However, further validations in particular focusing on the assessment of emotional ownership are necessary.

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