

Chapter 4

Learner Perceptions of Open Pedagogy in a Psychology Course: A Case Study on Instructional Design With Open Educational Resources

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ABSTRACT

A research and course re-design project was undertaken to document, evaluate, and report the effects of implementing an OER-enabled pedagogy project in a psychology course within Georgia Southwestern State University. The project involved redesigning alternative and ‘renewable assignments’ in a course using open textbooks to replace some paper writing assignments that are ‘disposable.’ Data was gathered from 42 students enrolled in the course, including surveys, student reviews, and instructor feedback. Results indicated that students prefer the renewable assignments, which helped them better understand the content and prepare for the exams. They also like to be involved in the decision process, such as the choice of assignment, including the questions they created in the exams. Feedback from instructors indicated that effort and time was about the same or slightly more effective in terms of course preparation, implementation, and student performance. However, students’ engagement was increased, and improvements can certainly be made for next semester.

INTRODUCTION

Due to a recent movement in advocating the use of open educational resources (OERs), the conversation around OERs and open pedagogy gained a lot of attention from practitioners and scholars in education. The term “open pedagogy” is not new and has been used in a variety of contexts, including creating

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an informal classroom for children to explore based on their own interests (Mai, 1978), referring an instructor to treat the student as an intellectual equal (Daniel, 2004), and making use of open content (Hodgkinson-Williams & Gray, 2009; Weller, 2014). In general, open pedagogy refers to a concept used to establish a pedagogical practice, which increases flexibility and learner choice over all aspects of the learning processes (Lewis, 1992) and allows the instruction to be more student-centered. Most importantly, there is a shift from a reciprocal learning experience to a participatory culture in the learning process (Corney, 2006; Cullen, Cullen, Hayward, & Maes, 2009). Couros (2010) defined this open teaching as “facilitation of learning experiences that are open, transparent, collaborative, and social” (p.115). Some scholars described the concept of open pedagogy as approaches that involve co-productive and more ‘equal’ roles between ‘instructor’ and ‘student.’ Some conversations of open pedagogy focused more on the experiences of adopting and adapting OERs (Bonica, Judge, Bernard, & Murphy, 2018; DeRosa & Robison, 2017; Hegarty, 2015; Weller, 2014), and how OERs could transform pedagogy (Wiley, 2013; Wiley & Hilton, 2018). Despite all these variations in the dialogues around open pedagogy, they share a common character/disposition that is to provide a pedagogical practice (space) that allow students to participate in and contribute to their own learning. For the purpose of this study, the author uses the definition of OER-Enabled Pedagogy by Wiley and Hilton (2018).

OER-Enabled Pedagogy

There are many definitions of this concept in a variety of instructional contexts, from the incorporation of open educational resources (OERs) into a course, to the social aspects of student involvement, to course redesign with activities that embrace multiple elements of open pedagogy (Cronin, 2017; Hendricks, 2017; Year of Open, 2018). However, they all share some common characteristics. One of the key characteristics is to better engage students by creating real-world products; for example, wiki type projects, whole or partial learning materials (i.e., textbook), supplements (i.e., videos, study guides, quiz banks, learning resources, etc.), instead of “disposable assignments.” (Wiley, 2013) What are disposable assignments? On his blog, Wiley (2013) described disposable assignments as,

Assignments that students complain about doing and faculty complain about grading. They’re assignments that add no value to the world- after a student spends three hours creating it, a teacher spends 30 minutes grading it, and then the student throws it away. Not only do these assignments add no value to the world, they actually suck value out of the world.

Wiley and Hilton further introduced the concept of renewable assignments, an idea that in contrast to disposable assignment as “*assignments which both support an individual student’s learning and result in new or improved open educational resource that provide a lasting benefit to the broader community of learners.*” (Wiley & Hilton, 2018, p. 137)

To further help to distinguish renewable assignments from other assignments, particularly disposable assignments, Wiley and Hilton (2018) proposed a four-component criteria which includes: (1) student create an artifact, (2) the artifact has value beyond supporting its creator’s learning, (3) the artifact is made public, and (4) the artifact is openly licensed. As shown in Table 1 in Wiley and Hilton (2018), these criteria are used “to determine the extent to which a specific teaching and learning practice qualifies as OER-enabled pedagogy, as exemplified by the idea of renewable assignments.” (p. 137)

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