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Co-designing OER with Learners: A Replacement to Traditional College Level Assessments

Kimberlee Carter (BEd, MA)
Conestoga College ITAL

Camila Redondo, Conestoga ITAL

Correspondence:

Kimberlee Carter
Conestoga College ITAL
Email: kcarter [at] conestogac.on.ca

Abstract
Academic integrity issues in higher education have been reported as increasing during the pandemic and remote learning. Homework sites like Chegg, that provide learners with answers to tests and assignments increased significantly through 2019 and 2020 (Walsh et al., 2021). Open advocates espouse the benefits of replacing traditional assessments which are often disposed of once graded (or arguably deposited to homework sites) with renewable assessments. Katz & Allen (n.d.) suggest that renewable assignments are assessments which are original and encourage learners to view themselves as experts and then offer what they have learned by sharing globally with open licences. Easton et al. (2019) propose that original assignments encourage learners to complete their own work. Examples of renewable assessments range from student created concept videos, test bank questions, and activities (Brown & Jones, 2021). A faculty involved in co-designed Open Education Resources (OER) digital textbook and game simulations projects (with learners) was curious to know if similar OER projects could replace traditional assessments. This presentation focuses on key learnings from the perspectives of both learner and faculty for OER digital textbook development as renewable assignments in college courses.

Keywords: open, renewable assessment, co-construction, renewable assignment, o-Design

Introduction

A program international learner and a program faculty SME were involved in two co-designed OER projects. These projects were funded through the eCampus Ontario Virtual Learning Strategy (VLS) fund. A goal for the faculty collaborator was to take what was learned in these experiences, integrate the learner's perspective, and then consider if OER co-design of digital textbooks could be used to replace traditional assessments in college courses.

Preparing Participants for Open Publishing

At the beginning of the OER projects, learners and faculty attended workshops on copyright and CC licensing, Pressbooks and H5P technology, and accessibility awareness with training on associated accessibility technologies. This laid the foundation for participation and comfort with the resources being published with open licenses. Al Abri and Dabbagh (2019) posit the importance of learner's knowledge of open licensing and willingness to share their work with others as fundamental to using renewable assessments in courses. The learner participant had been involved in creating H5P learning objects prior to the project but found that the training and subsequent project was much more involved than they initially thought and that this was a "pleasant surprise" for them (Carter, 2022).

Perceptions of Participation

Deeper Understanding

Learner and faculty participating in the OER projects both perceived that they gained a deeper understanding of the content, developed their ability to collaborate with others, and enhanced their writing and technical skills. Skidmore (2019) suggests the process of adapting, curating, or creating OER leads to deeper engagement with the course material for faculty. The faculty participant notated that collaborating with learners allowed content to be seen through a different lens and this led to a more meaningful experience then had they developed course material on their own (Carter, 2022).

Identifying Power Imbalances

A critical examination based on our anecdotal experiences identified power imbalances to co-design as collaborators were both faculty and learners. The learner participant notated that even applying to participate in the project was intimidating and dispositional barriers such as confidence with language may be a barrier for other learners to participate (Carter, 2022). If processes were to be replicated in course assignments, learners would be contributing for course grades exacerbating the power imbalance between faculty and learners. DeRosa & Jhangiani (n.d.) posit open educational practices (OEP) that include practical examples like introducing learners to OEP concepts and ensuring learners understand they are collaborators and have choices in their participation such as to share or not share work underpins the tenants of OEP. Faculty participants sensitivity to learner's dispositional barriers and efforts to be inclusive collaborators requires time but is essential.

Building Trust

Faculty participants notated that taking the time to build trust is important when collaborating with learners. If faculty were to replace traditional assessment with a renewable assignment (something learners are not used to) taking the time to build trust with learners would be critical to its success (Carter, 2022). The faculty involved in the projects were learner-centric and made a significant effort to ensure that learners were co-designers. The learner notated that even though faculty participants encouraged feedback from them it was not something that they were initially comfortable with but soon realized that the faculty valued their contribution which enriched the experience (Carter, 2022). Faculty appreciated the perceptions from the students such as to use fewer words as too many words and stories was distracting to learning (Carter, 2022). Learners were involved in the creation of chapter review questions and developing H5P learning objects with those review questions, learners provided a review of faculty content and proposed changes, and faculty made changes based on that learner feedback. Learners seeing their contributions valued and incorporated in the projects strengthened the bond with their faculty collaborators.

Conclusion

Writing an entire textbook in one course semester is not feasible for a one-semester college courses due to time constraints. However, renewable assignments are possible but require starting with manageable projects like creating learning objects, learners reviewing content in existing OER, or working collaboratively to produce one chapter. The learner participant felt that renewable assessments was a better way to demonstrate learning because there was no exam anxiety or memorization of content for an exam (Carter, 2022). An important takeaway from this experience is co-designing with learners means including learners in the decisions and processes early to build trust and to determine if renewable assessments benefit the learner's learning.

Author's Contributions

KC summarized the OTESSA 22 presentation Co-Designing OER with Learners and incorporated into this practical proceeding paper. Researched citations and reference to situate this presentation with other work involved in Co-designing OER with Learners.

CRM participated in designing the presentation, reviewing the proceedings paper, and offering their perspectives as learner to the presentation.

Open Researcher and Contributor Identifier (ORCID)

Kimberlee Carter https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3606-7704

Ethics Statement

Ethics was not required as no research was completed. Both Faculty and learner participants are offering their personal experiences to the proceedings and presentation topic.

Conflict of Interest

The authors do not declare any conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

N/A

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