

Open Education Rising Podcast (www.openeducationrising.net)

Hosted by Deepak Shenoy

Transcript of Episode 12: The Open Education Leadership Summit

Paul: It's actually pretty ambitious to be honest, and it's like, is this going to work? But it was really successful. People really engaged and really got excited. The energy level just went way up.

Deepak: Hello and welcome to Open Education Rising, a podcast about growing and improving open education. I'm your host, Deep Shenoy.

That voice you heard at the top is Paul Stacey, the executive director of the Open Education Consortium. He's talking about a really unique event called the Open Education Leadership Summit, which is the focus of our discussion in this episode. The event brought together 176 participants in France. It facilitated conversations across different areas of open education that tend to be siloed, such as open educational resources, open access, and open software. It drew upon leaders, and the participants were from 45 countries from all around the world.

This episode has three sections. The first few minutes are about what the Open Education Consortium does in general. The second section is the description of the Leadership Summit. I wanted to cover this in detail because the approach Paul and his colleagues took could be helpful if you're trying to put together a similar event. Paul describes in detail the roadmap building exercise, which I think could be applied to a number of similar situations. In the third section of the show, Paul and I discuss some of the patterns that emerged from the summit, including implications for topics such as one of my favorites, which is how do we get communities of practice to work around open education. The speakers in this episode have each licensed their comments under creative commons attribution 4.0 international license. Let's dive in.

Hey Paul, welcome to the podcast.

Paul: Thanks, Deepak. Good to be here.

Deepak: Could you start out by telling us a little bit about OEC and what your role is with it?

Paul: Sure. I'm the Executive Director of the Open Education Consortium, which is a global nonprofit member based network focused on supporting open education around the world. We've been in existence for over 10 years. We have quite a diverse set of members, about 240 plus members from over 44 countries. Historically, the members have largely been higher education institutions, but we also have some corporates, some IGO's, some NGO's, and an interesting mix when you look at it globally around the world. And I would say I'm intending to expand membership to include primary and secondary corporates and maybe even individuals going forward. People might know us from some of the big events we do, so let me just mention those very quickly.

Open Education Week is an event that's been happening for many years now. Usually held in March. This year it'll be March 4th to the eighth. It's essentially a virtual convening of everyone who's doing open education around the world and an invitation for them to showcase and share events and activities that they're undertaking to raise awareness about open education in whatever region of the world they're in. And the extent to which those events are being done online enables other people to participate in them. So openeducationweek.org is the website that we use to run that event and it attracts thousands of people and events in many different languages from around the world and it's gotten bigger and bigger every year. So we're really pleased to be the host organizer of such an event that clearly is trying to improve the awareness of and impact on teaching of open education.

Deepak: I've seen advertising already, so people are gearing up for this year. That's pretty exciting.

Paul: Yeah, and then we also do Open Education Awards of Excellence. So this is another thing we've been doing for quite a number of years. We essentially have categories of awards and invite the community to nominate people who are exceptional in various award categories. And then, so like last year we had both individual awards and student awards as well as rewards related to open education resources, open education tools, open education practices and so on. Each year we receive nominations from the field. Those are evaluated a community based group of evaluators and then we actually award trophies and certificates to those who are deemed to be worthy. And that's a really great way of highlighting the exceptional people doing amazing work in the field and showcasing their efforts. And then maybe a couple of last ones, we do the biggest global conference on open education, so it's called OE Global. Last year and it happened in Delft in the Netherlands that

moves around to different places every year. Previous to that it was in Cape Town, South Africa. This year it will be in Milan, in Italy in November.

And then in the North American context, especially in the USA, people might know us for the activities of CCCOER, which provides a lot of support for community colleges all across the US in terms of their use and adoption of open education. And we have, we're in the process right now of establishing a similar kind of what I call regional node in Latin America right now. So that gives you a little sense of who we are and what we do.

Deepak: Fantastic. When we had been talking about prepping this podcast, you had mentioned to me the Open Education Leadership Summit, which was in Paris in early December. I'd love to hear more about that.

Paul: Okay. Yeah, this was quite an interesting event. I'll tell you what, again, this sort of event was new for us. It was the first time we'd ever done the Open Education Leadership Summit. I should say a couple of things right off the top. One is that we did this event in partnership with others and so I'm really keen on adopting a partnership strategy that allows us to do more for open education than what we could do on our own. And so I was really pleased to join forces with the International Council for Open and Distance Education on this event as well as work with the French Ministry of Higher Education Research and Innovation and the French Ministry for Education and the sort of primary secondary level. So we had four big partners at the table organizing this event and I'll tell you a little bit about the purpose of the event.

There are lots of increasing numbers of events related to open education, but most of them in my experience are targeted to the practitioner, the Faculty member, the instructional designer, the ed tech person, the media producers, et cetera, who are doing the frontline work, creating and using open education. We wanted this event to be targeted at a slightly different audience, which were leaders. I'll call them leaders in the sense that they are sort of decision makers, the people who are in who are leading these initiatives or have responsibility for them perhaps would be another way of saying it.

So we aimed at three different participants. One would be open education leaders in institutions, so presidents, rectors, those kinds of people. Second target audience were people from government who have responsibility for open education policy or funding. And a third group was made up of what I'll just call leaders from the open education movement. And so those were our three target groups. We were trying to bring leaders together for an event

specifically targeted to them. And we tried to draw upon leaders from all around the world and have as much diverse and inclusive representation as we could, albeit, you know, this is the place based, the event happening in Paris and of course it's got a cost associated to attending it.

The format was a little bit different, partly because of the audience. So I'll just briefly touch on that. But we had, so in terms of that audience, we had about 176 participants from 45 different countries, so pretty big, decent size, including representation from Africa, from Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, South America. And the program really was unique in a couple of ways. I'll just mention them quickly, Deepak, and then stop and see if you have some questions.

One was that we decided to, and this is sort of an agenda that I had, it was unique in its coverage of what we mean when we say open education. So that term has both a historical meaning, but a contemporary meaning. And in the contemporary context, we included in this summit open education resources of course, but also MOOC's, open access on the research side, open science, open data, and even open source software and open source hardware assets used within the education sector.

So the leaders who were participating in this event were invited to, I'll talk more about this in a bit, but we're invited to literally describe their initiatives across any of those areas of activity in open education. It was not at all focused exclusively just on OER. And then the other maybe unique aspect of this event was that it was divided into two parallel but concurrent strands of activities. The first was kind of more your traditional approach to an event like this where we had thematic presentation panels talking about various themes and emerging trends related to open education. But the second strand was the piece that I was responsible for and essentially I decided to try to create an interactive hands on activity that would engage people in defining what their open education work is in a way that they could then show others and potentially engage others with.

And so I created this notion of a roadmap. Actually I'll show you, you'll be able to see this on the podcast, but I'm showing you Deepak a picture of the roadmap, right? And so on the backside, Deepak is like a description of all these different forms of openness. And so when we say open education resources, what are those? You know, when we say MOOC's, what are those? Et cetera. And I call those collectively all those different forms of openness, I call them open assets. Essentially those activities produce assets that are open and available for sharing and reuse by anyone around the world.

So that was one part of the roadmap, but the biggest part of the roadmap is actually this slide, I'm just showing you a blank one. I've got lots of completed ones. This slide, it kind of invited people to document on the map what their activities are in open education. We said like three to five different activities. They may have more than that underway. What we're trying to do is have people describe their open education initiative across four areas. One area is what are the open assets involved in their open education work and so those could be, it could be OER, it could be MOOC's, it could be open access, open data, open science, open source software, open source hardware. Those are the, you know, the sort of assets being created or used within their open education initiative. The second area or facet though was the people and community. So who are the people involved in creating and using these open assets? And those people could be internal to your organization, they could also potentially come from outside, especially in the context of sharing and reuse. And then the third area had to do with documenting the operational model that you use for your initiative and its sustainability over time if you think about it long-term.

And lastly we ask them to document for each open education initiative, what the value proposition and benefits were for that initiative. And so on the left side of the roadmap, people were given space to kind of do that and some time to literally roll up their sleeves, sit at big tables in a huge room with lots and lots of people around, but literally take the time to document what they actually have underway right now. Because these are leaders of, this isn't so much an event for people new to open education, this is kind of more an event for those that have been doing it for awhile and already have things underway. And things were color coded so people sort of documented what they had underway and then we invited them to think forward for a two year period and to kind of show what some of their plans are as they think about moving their initiatives in an active way forward over that period of time.

And in the process of doing that, we asked them to do one last thing which is, so this is a fairly ambitious undertaking, as you can imagine already. The last thing we asked them to do was to document what they have for others. What is it that their initiative is producing that is potentially beneficial to others in terms of reuse and sharing? What might they receive from others or what might they need from others? What might some other open education initiative provide to them that would be helpful and beneficial? You know, that activity took place over all of day one and at the end of day one we did a bit of, I'll call it networking to enable people to share their maps with each other and to form a network of relationships in a sense with others who are doing work similar to yours.

On day two, we used that sort of affinity grouping and we had a also a big a wall, what we call a wall of collaboration on which people could say, here's some areas of interests that we have in terms of collaborating with others.

Deepak: Nice.

Paul: On day two, we formed working groups that were to create a collaborative roadmap. So you would combine initiatives from individual will roadmaps into a larger collaborative roadmap that blended together the work of multiple open education initiatives. That was sort of the thinking and the plan. It was actually pretty ambitious to be honest. I was like, is this going to work? But it was really, it was a really successful people really engaged and really got excited. The energy level just went way up as you probably know, Deepak from going to events yourself, you know, a lot of times at these events it's that conversation that takes place in the hallway that's kind of really special that you walk away with oh, I really learned something from that. And the relationship connection that you form with with others who then become part of your network, that's kind of the often the highest value thing that happens at these events. And what I tried to do with that is make that central to this event, to structure activity around making that happen and make it a deliberate and intentional aspect.

So on day one at a time you could be going to, it was totally up to you, you can be working on your roadmap or you could go and see panel presentations related to various themes of interest to the work that you're doing.

Deepak: So what are some of the things that came out of it that surprised you either in terms of connections that were made or roadmaps or ideas?

Paul: There were a number actually, Deepak. So and in fact, as I said to you at the start prior to this podcast getting underway. We're in the process of writing up a summary Right now of what happened at this event because it was kind of special from my point of view. So let me share with you some of what's emerging in that summary.

One of the things I was interested in was what are the benefits and value propositions that people are articulating as the reason for doing open education? This is really the first time I've seen so I'll share with you in just a sec what the values and value proposition and benefits are, but this is really the first list I've seen that actually kind of seems comprehensive to me. So at the top of the list, and we have this broken down by percentage, but at the top of the list is access and inclusion. As you know, everyone really believes

in the benefit of open education for that purpose. The second is cost, which is also very popular reason for doing open education, reducing costs. But here's some others, collaboration and community, equity for underserved students. That one's really interesting because in the context of MOOC's, let's say you would say, you know, the participants in MOOC's are usually highly educated, but open education is serving the needs of underserved students and providing an equitable access to education.

Then in the middle in terms of reasons where a student learning outcomes and pedagogy, this is where I think it really starts to indicate that open education is providing a very high value if we're improving learning outcomes and offering innovation around pedagogy, that's pretty exciting stuff. And then towards the bottom, innovation, leadership, reputation, recognition, quality, localization and accountability and transparency. That's a pretty comprehensive list of benefits and values for open education.

Deepak: You had mentioned that you were trying to include a global audience with this. Were there any particular patterns you noticed by regions and I think particularly for myself would be interesting to know what's going on outside North America or even potentially the industrialized west? What are some things that you saw that I think are particularly notable?

Paul: I'll highlight a couple of things just really quickly, I won't go into a lot of detail, but I would say a couple of things. One is I'd say like two thirds of the people named access and inclusion as a value. So that's kind of a very general and broad sweeping benefit that seems relevant around the world. And same, not quite the same percent, but cost savings as well are valued internationally. Forty percent said costs, but 60 percent of those were leaders who came from outside the US. You know, the cost savings aspect of open education is relevant not only here in North America but in Europe, Africa, Asia and so on.

And then a couple of others, this is where it got really interesting from my point of view because historically, especially over the last few years, there's been this huge focus on open education resources as what we're talking about when talking about open education, but at this event when you look at the open education initiatives people are documenting on their roadmaps, like 95 percent of the open education roadmaps identified in working with an on open education resources, but two thirds of the roadmaps listed more than one type of asset that they're engaged in. So it's not exclusive to just open education work that people are doing. A large percentage of people are working on MOOC's. A significant percentage of people are working on open access and open data initiatives, and even open source hardware and

software is a really significant activity in education when it comes to open education.

And finally, if we're thinking about say, you know, how do we distinguish, let's say what's happening in France compared to North America? I would be saying something like, well, open access and open science make up a large bulk of what's been successful in France and open education resources may be less so compared to North America. And here in North America. We really don't even talk about open science virtually at all.

Deepak: Not yet.

Paul: Yeah, there are distinct differences between how open education is playing out around the world and I found it really quite fascinating to hear and to look at what some of those differences are.

Deepak: Fascinating. Yeah, and I think that, you know, it's interesting because a lot of my professional work has been working with educational systems and OER. I find it interesting sometimes as you go down that road, some of those other things pop up anyway as you get into beyond talking about like flat file textbooks, open software for doing homework managers and things come up. And when you talk about repositories you think, okay, why does OER and open access research have to be in different repositories? Aren't they kind of the same thing? So there may be some on the back end as people get into OER they may find their way to some of those connections you guys were seeing.

Paul: Yeah, I think that's true and my take on it, Deepak, is those different ways of being open in education are largely siloed from one another and rarely talk to one another even. There aren't, I have not been many convenings that try to meld together into one event this kind of view of open education where you're integrating these different forms of openness together. My intent around this is to have the open education consortium do this more and more largely because I think that the underlying principles that are held for each of these forms of openness are more or less the same. Whether we're speaking about open education resources or open access, the benefits and value propositions that we're trying to achieve are very similar and it seems to make a lot of sense to me, at least, that there's potential synergy to be gained by combining.

Deepak: In the US setting because there has been funding in particular states to do more OER and it's really the first wave is focused on just how do we get faculty to adopt OER. And then now there's, I'm hearing more thought

around, well how do we engage with it over time? How do we, what makes it compelling?

And I've myself just started doing a little bit of looking into the open software movement. I have not seen an example of OER where people are as engaged say with parts of Get Hub in some of the work I'm doing, the community practice theme comes up, you know, how do you build a community of practice around OER? So I think there are technical questions around that, you know. Like where does this community take place as it virtual is an in person? If it's virtual, what does that look like? But I think really the one that's been on my mind the most is sort of what does robust engagement look like and how do we facilitate that? And so I imagine I'm really fascinated to read the report because I think there are some fields compared to OER where they may have gone a bit further with that and I think we could learn from that.

Paul: Yeah, and I wouldn't say that that was a key component of what we were engaged with investigating at this event. We look at open education, one of its inherent promises is this opportunity to share resources with others and have them reuse those and improve those in a similar way to open source software historically in the past. But while that's an inherent promise of open education, the extent to which is actually put into practice I think has been less than what many people expected, and I think does jeopardized in some ways the sustainability of the open education movement going forward. We need to see way more of that kind of social practice community of practice to kind of really fully reap the benefits of open education. And you know, this event was an attempt to see, well to what extent is that something people want to do?

It's not easy to do that. It takes time and effort and and I think especially when you're just starting, it's something you don't necessarily entertain, but as you get more mature in your initiatives then it does become more feasible. And so in our context, 90 percent of the roadmaps named things that they have for others that they're willing to share and also identified needs that they could benefit from receiving from others. So there's definitely an appetite there. And also as I mentioned on day two, we moved to this collaborative roadmap approach. You know, the initial concept was that we would do that regionally. We would form regional collaborations, like let's say for the U S or for Europe, but we actually just discarded that idea and allowed them to just organically emerge. And so I was really surprised and impressed with the extent of appetite and interest in multinational, cross regional partnerships and collaboration.

We ended up having 13 different collaborative roadmaps worked on. They all involved participation from different parts of the world. And so you know, that kind of thing is pretty exciting to see and kind of indicates that there is this potential for that to happen.

Deepak: I think with this community of practice idea, I have had, I ask different podcast guests this question, you're not the only one to get it about kind of where does that ultimately end up in terms of the scope? Because you know you could have two universities, let's say, that are both up in I'm in, I'm in Maryland and the United States, so up in Baltimore or then you could have two that are side by side that are very different and so even down the block from each other and they're very different. So their peer may not be the institution that's closest by. So you say, okay, let's start thinking about expanding that sphere. Maybe it's the state level is a good community for around open education. But then you think, is it a region within a country? Is it international? You know who, who finds a peer?

So I'm curious to kind of see when the report comes out, what are some of those groupings, because you know, I think a lot of us have thought about it theoretically, but it's kind of hard to know what do people really want? What's going to stick as far as like a good level of community? And I understand that these days it may be to some extent it can form organically and we don't need to answer that question, but I think you know, in so far as we're thinking about investments, because I think a lot of community, it's connecting people with technology. It's honestly just marketing, too, some of it. Letting people know it's there. So we do have to make some choices. And you know, if you have any further thoughts on kind of what makes for the right level of community and open?

Paul: Yeah, I mean that's a really good question and something I think a lot about as well because as the open education consortia, we are interested in providing that kind of community support for the formation of these partnerships and collaborations. And think about it not just from an infrastructure and communications point of view, but from, you know, what is the appropriate topic or area to focus a collaboration on. And so, let me kind of list for you some of the collaborative areas of interests that emerged at the Open Education Leadership Summit. One of them was nursing OER, so this would be a discipline based, a domain based area of collaboration around which you could focus a community of practice. There's lots and lots of institutions involved in scaling up and teaching people to become nurses, not just in the US but around the world. And so the need to have education resources that can be used for that purpose is really high.

And of course, as we know from the current practice, there's a lot of reinventing the wheel over and over again as each institution comes up with its own curriculum. So there's potentially a huge benefit to be gained from having a community build around sharing and authoring nursing open education resources together.

Deepak: Yeah, by the way, that's one that if somebody solves that, I can tell you a lot of institutions that would be happy because it's always talked about, but it's a complicated one from a technical standpoint. So that's a discipline example.

Paul: Yeah, so here's a few more examples. The sustainable development goals that UNESCO has--to what extent can an open education play a role in helping fulfill those 17 sustainable development goals? There was a group of people who believe that they're already producing open education materials that contribute to achieving those goals. And that's quite an interesting one. And another one would be open education policy. So at the policy level. Here we're not talking about, you know, a subject area or something from UNESCO representing a need for the world, but just a government really needing to or even an institution needing to be able to understand how to craft good effective of policy in support of open education or in the global south, open education for rural locations where there's no internet. So my point is that there are diverse ways to think about what's an appropriate topic or area to focus a community of practice around. And I think it's interesting to kind of look at what we did at the Open Education Leadership Summit from that perspective.

And right now another different sort of aspect to that event is that when we saw these collaborative roadmaps being formed around these various areas of open education, we offered to the delegates to help them sustain that collaboration after the event. So some of those collaborations are continuing after the event. So the value of the event persists beyond the days in which it took place back in December. So there's an ongoing value that's potentially long-term.

Deepak: Moments, jump starting those communities, maybe, hopefully.

Paul: Exactly right. Yeah, I mean, so that event was I mean, to be honest, that event was really quite awesome from my point of view. Lots and lots of really interesting things took place there. It was very ambitious. I needed a large team of facilitators to pull it off, you know, when you have that many people, 176 people from that many countries, you have to have a team of facilitators. So I had seven different facilitators helping with the roadmap activity.

And I haven't talked much about the themes for the panel presentations, but they too were, were quite interesting, covering a wide range of topics related to, you know, all the different forms of openness to the new emerging ways in which opened education is being recognized for my credentialing point of view. Lots of, the session dealing with the Commons and what the Commons in historical relevance of the Commons means to education and even things related to language, open education in different languages and perspectives from the global south. So it was a pretty rich array of stuff to partake of at that event and the feedback we've received has been really positive.

Deepak: That's fantastic. Are you all thinking of doing it again sometime?

Paul: Yeah, we're talking about it. There is interest in doing an open education leadership 2, still in the talking stages. But there is also interest in things already happening around using the open education roadmap tool kit as a kind of format for regional workshops. So, people have asked me for the digital file of the roadmaps so that they can produce their own roadmaps and do their own workshops using that format, the structure that I had as a means of stimulating some discussion and planning in their own regions. And so there's some discussion about us doing regional workshops around the roadmap in different parts of the world as well.

Deepak: Fantastic. Paul, thanks so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

Paul: You're welcome. Been a pleasure speaking to you.

Deepak: Thank you.

Paul: Good luck with the podcast.

Deepak: Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of Open Education Rising. If you found this podcast helpful, please let your friends and colleagues know about it. Subscribe to it in your podcast player to be notified of future episodes. You can visit us on the web at openeducationrising.net to get episode transcripts. I'd love to hear your feedback about this podcast, including suggestions for future topics and guests. You can reach me by email at feedback@openeducationrising.net.

This podcast is produced by Savannah Smeltzer. I composed and performed the music. I'm supporting this podcast in my consulting practice, which you can visit at deep-consulting.net. Until next time, take care.