

OULDI project

Narrative 22

Patrick McAndrew is a Professor of Open Education with a particular interest and expertise in the research and evaluation of Open Educational Resources (OER) and practices (OEP). His university has led on the OULDI-JISC project, and Patrick has been a member of the university's OULDI-JISC steering group committee since 2008. In 2011 he became the Principle Investigator for an international project which took an established and well received distance learning introductory maths module and re-designed it into a US-facing OER for use by individuals seeking to improve their confidence and capabilities in maths. Aware of the OULDI representation set¹, Patrick asked the OULDI team to produce a set of representations of the original distance learning course so that he and his team could better identify, monitor, evaluate and share the changes made to the module as it was redesigned by the US team. The module was represented using the Module Map², Pedagogy (or Activity) profile³ and the Learning Outcomes view⁴, and a 'wrap-around' report produced to summarise finding:

“So it had got more of a research motivation than a practical motivation to start with. Here was a chance to be able to reflect on a course that already existed and to which we were making specific changes, for a context we knew about [...] it [would] give us a way to record all the changes and show people what it is we're changing and talk about the way in which we can apply this as a model again. So it gives us a way to look at what we are doing which will enable us to be clearer about a process we'd expect to repeat and the things that we'd expect to change rather than treating what we are doing as a one off”.

The representations and report were also used in a further unexpected but significant way as a result of serendipity rather than intent. The completion of the report coincided with a series of important project planning meetings and – although intended primarily for the evaluation team – Patrick presented a bullet point summary of the report's findings and recommendations to the team within the project that was working on changes to the content. Patrick found that this presentation and setting out the conclusions seemed to structure much of the subsequent planning discussion:

¹ For a poster description of the set see <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/OULDI/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/5-views-image.png>

² For description, resources and activities for the Module Map see <http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/33031185/OULDI%20-%20Course%20Map>

³ For description, resources and activities for the Pedagogy Profile see <http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/33031409/OULDI%20-%20Pedagogy%20Profile>

⁴ For description, resources and activities for the Pedagogy Profile see <http://jiscdesignstudio.pbworks.com/w/page/33031528/OULDI%20-%20Learning%20Outcomes%20View>

“The particular timing that occurred was that this report was available just as we were having a week long joint meeting in the US with the people who were actually involved in re-planning the content, and it meant that we used the report with those people. And that had not been the expectation really because we expected to be at a different point entirely when we did this. We expected to be able to have a retrospective look and then we’d be having the refresh of content and then having a look at that. But actually the analysis was able to feed into the process of change”.

Patrick is able to identify both personal and project team benefits of having the representations at that stage:

“I think if we hadn’t done that work on the plane [studying the representations and report before the meeting] we might have had a bit of a shock coming into a meeting where we suddenly felt a lot of people saying “Well, what do you think about this? What do you think about that?” We could actually show people that we had gone through a process of thinking about this. It might have been ok to have done it without a back-up of an actual analysis but the existence of the analysis itself made things feel much more secure”

“I think it had quite a big impact on the confidence of people in the process overall and so I think that some people involved felt very much that they were the only people that understood that there were issues in making this and that perhaps there was an impression that we were saying “this material will work anywhere”, and they were saying “well it’s not going to work right for us and we’re the only people in the room that know that and we’re the only people that realise that this won’t work” and this showed that - no, we understood that there was a difference between where we were starting from and where we wanted to end up and so I think that gave them some greater trust in us [...] I think it helped open up dialogue and a spirit of compromise and a better understanding of what the project was trying to achieve rather than what the content might achieve”.

Additionally, Patrick felt that sharing the representations and report with the wider team enabled a discussion where all participants could discuss change openly and begin to allocate ownership or responsibility for particular design challenges:

“I think people who were working on the mathematics content had felt that they needed to take on board all of the issues they could think of including the change of context, the change from paper to online, how it would be framed and they could see that we were actually identifying the issues to do with that change and I think it helped them to relax – they weren’t the only people that had thought about the need for change and we could say “well some of that is to do with the environment and it’s not to do with the mathematics material”.

Overall Patrick highlighted three impacts of this ‘opening up of discussion’ on the redesign process relating both to effectiveness and efficiency:

“It particularly resulted in perhaps three things happening: one was this bringing out of more generic changes so that they could be dealt with at a level across the project [...]; the second was confirming that some of the issues that had already been spotted were the right sort of things [...]; and the third one was that some of what was planned could be dealt with in lighter-weight ways. What we didn’t want for the project overall was for every change to be done in the most detailed way possible because actually that is not repeatable. If you just took our course as inspiration and wrote another course then it’s not actually doing what we wanted to do and that was very helpful because we could see that that was a real risk at that stage, that people were not paying enough attention to the value that came from the original design and this brought people back to the original design[...] the original extraction of the key issues changed the nature of that meeting; it made it much more effective.”

However - largely perhaps because it was never intended that the document would be used in that meeting - the representations were not considered key project documents and once the planning meeting was over they went almost entirely unused, and the team went back to a focus on content rather than learning and learner experience:

“Perhaps one weakness was that we didn’t really follow through enough by keeping that document as a key document for that group. They were too busy in a sense so it has dropped back into that background position [...]. I think actually some of the power of the representations have not been used as much as they could have been. I could be wrong, but I don’t think so. I think that almost just the way it happened because it wasn’t planned into the week and perhaps if we’d been thinking more about it we could have made sure there was the chance to fully explain to people how it worked. So people got back onto the content level – they felt more secure, everything went better but it wasn’t “Oh yes, lets go back and see whether we are doing things in the context of the representation”. It would be worth checking with a number of people to see whether they did pick them up but my feeling – well its more that a feeling because I did raise it in a later meeting as to whether the document was being used - but actually only the summaries were being drawn on.”

As a consequence of this Patrick thinks that, although the representations and report can be seen to have impacted on that initial face-to-face meeting, it is unlikely that it will have had any clear and measurable impact on the final OER design. Patrick regrets not pushing the document forward later in the process:

“I do think though that it really was a very good review document [but] I know I used it directly more than other people. I don’t know whether there’s a lesson from that, whether there’s a lesson that it still needs yet another layer of simplification or

communication support to get to people, or whether it was just an artefact of the way that we were working with people in the US [...] we chose at that point to not push the documents as the key thing because people were very busy, but if we'd revisited it in a couple of weeks time to say "could you go back to...". It might have taken very little to just go back and see if this representation could help them move forward and I think that was missed"

Patrick also reported that seeing the approach in action had influenced his own approach to working with materials. Some months later, Patrick was asked to give feedback on another course for a different project and decided to independently use the OULDI 'Module Map'⁵ and report structure to provide a framework for his review.

'At a glance' Module Map

Module title:

CSM

(Some cells in this worksheet are protected. To unprotect them click on Tools -> Protection -> Unprotect Sheet. No password is required)

Guidance and Support		Content and Experience	
Tools and resources	Roles and relationships	Tools and Resources	Roles and relationships
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome from course lead (video) Preparatory: guide, notes Use of platform: video, guide, test Unit by unit guides: guidelines 	<p>Participants have an introductory session to familiarise themselves with the course and the environment. They are encouraged to view and make introductions.</p> <p>Language is fairly formal in the presentations and friendly in the welcome forum.</p> <p>Participants are guided through a mix of group and individual activities with the main output tasks being group based.</p> <p>Quizzes are used to test basic knowledge only. The unit guides describe briefly the activities within units, the content then gives the tasks.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations (with audio) Presentations (PDF) Unit materials (PDF) Unit activities (individual) Unit activities (group) Additional readings (optional) Data sources (e.g. excel) 	<p>Presentations are modelled on face to face sessions with slide only video including audio track. Downloadable versions are slides only without additional notes. The video has not been made accessible (no captioning or transcript). The unit materials are prepared for the course and laid out to help readers identify sections. They follow an active design incorporating suggested activities and also the main instructions for group activities (where appropriate).</p> <p>The additional readings are mainly published papers and reports and are directly available. There is no use of resources that are outside of the Moodle course.</p> <p>Where exercises require manipulation of data sample data sets have been provided.</p>
Reflection and Demonstration		Communication and Collaboration	
Tools and resources	Roles and relationships	Tools and resources	Roles and relationships
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Forum participation Quiz feedback Group work tasks (unit 1 & 5) Feedback from course team on group work (1 & 5) Answers available Progress spreadsheet for end of course certificate End of course forum End of course survey (via surveymonkey) 	<p>Unit tests are to encourage self-reflection and are compulsory.</p> <p>Forum participation must take place in at least 3 out of 5 units.</p> <p>The balance between individual motivation and group contribution is not explicit.</p> <p>The team reports appear to be the substantive tasks and receive feedback from the tutors but do not seem to be part of the assessment for certification.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Forums: main, cafe, units, end of course Group activities Group work sessions 	<p>The forums are divided between units and so depend on participants staying in step with the activity schedule. Compulsory participation is likely to lead to more posts but may limit them in depth.</p> <p>Group activities depend on coordination and work sessions to produce team outputs. The pading of these are not clear and there are no tools to help manage the groups on the site.</p>
<p>Module summary</p> <p>Micro-planning at community and school level emerges as an adequate response of local stakeholders to challenges associated with education provision at local level. Challenges such as persistent disparities in education access, quality of service provision, and learning achievements cannot be addressed through national or regional planning and interventions only. They require localized responses based on a thorough understanding of local realities, and these should be supported by the local stakeholder communities who are directly affected.</p>		<p>Keywords</p>	



This worksheet has been created by the JISC-funded OULDI project.

He found the template easy to use and useful for structuring a review:

"I found the process very helpful in giving a framework for understanding the material. Without something like this I would have kept on going round the course while filling in the template enabled me to know when I had analysed it enough to pick out how it was working and areas for improvement".

This study has shown the value of the OULDI representations as analysis tools and as a basis for communication in quite complex teams.