



Lifelong Learning Programme



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Report on in depth case study: BCcampus

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Executive Summary

This study is conducted within the frame of the POERUP project, funded by the lifelong learning program of the European Commission (POERUP, 2013). The POERUP project aims to enable the development of policies to stimulate the uptake of open educational resources. Within the POERUP project, partners from the Open University of the Netherlands, Sero Consulting, the University of Leicester and the University of Athabasca collaborated to gather the data with help from the OEP initiatives under investigation. The analysis in this report is of the case study conducted by Athabasca University on BCcampus.

1 The brief

This is Deliverable 3.3 of Work Package 3 of POERUP. The Deliverable Title from the proposal is:

Report on in-depth case study – by Athabasca

The Work Package title is:

The role of Community in OER

The brief for the Deliverable states:

In-depth analysis of a case study, an initiative chosen from a set of two focussed on primary schools, two on secondary schools, two on universities and one other (as listed in D3.1). This will describe the characteristics and dynamics of the community or communities behind the OER initiative, the target group of study being the end-users-producers-consumers within the OER communities. The case study is likely to be from Canada but this will be decided in consultation with other partners.

The OER community will be analysed using Social Network Analysis methodologies. The report will give insight into:

- *The number, role, characteristics and competences of the key players within the community*
- *The dynamics and structure of the community*
- *Driving forces behind the community*
- *Critical organisational factors.*

The report is aimed at OER initiative managers, co-ordinators, stakeholders and policy advisors.

2 Short description of case study

This information was primarily compiled from information available on the BCcampus Website: <http://www.bccampus.ca> and a short case-study template exercise conducted by Prof. McGreal.

The list of anchor partners can be found here: <http://wikieducator.org/OERu/Home>

BCcampus is a publicly funded organization that aims to bring together B.C.'s post-secondary system and make higher education available to everyone, through the use of collaborative information technology services. BCcampus was established in 2002 by the provincial government to provide British Columbia learners, educators and administrators with a web-based portal to online learning programs and services across the B.C. post-secondary system. For ten years BCcampus administered an online program development fund (OPDF), which in 2012-13 has been re-purposed into Canada's first publicly-funded open textbook development project. It also explores and develops shared services, facilitates the distribution of best practice knowledge, provides professional development and training, and manages a collection of shareable online instructional resources and tools for educators.

Aim and goal

BCcampus brings together existing online resources to ensure maximum convenience and value for publicly funded online education services. It fosters collaborative design and engineering of new courses, services, and tools to reduce duplication and incorporate best practices into online instruction. And, it ensures that educators have the systemic support resources they need to provide quality online instruction.

3 Organisational Model

BCcampus is a systemic entity, a meta-level service provider that works across the post-secondary institutions of B.C. Its mission has been to achieve synergies through collaborative, multi-institutional activities that benefit students, institutions, instructors and staff across the British Columbia post-secondary system. These strategies align with systemic priorities and emerging needs.

The B.C. government provides financial support for BCcampus, and its mandate is to support post-secondary institutions in the effective use of technology for learning.

BCcampus' three lines of business reflect the areas of influence in which the organization can play a leadership role in the context of higher education in British Columbia:

- Student services and data exchange: In its Student Services and Data exchange services, BCcampus is expanding and renewing key information infrastructure of value to the B.C. educational system. Specifically, it is federating common online student services and facilitating open data exchange and reporting.
- Collaborative programs and shared services: In Collaborative Programs and Shared Services, BCcampus is creating synergies and reducing costs through online collaborative programs and shared educational services supportive of institutional needs using a business model approach; increasing the number of online “tools,” web conferencing systems, LMS, and library services. This includes video hosting, curriculum management and tutoring systems.
- Curriculum services and applied research: In Curriculum Services and Applied Research, BCcampus is contributing the development of an open future for teaching practices and educational resources; developing and sharing educational resources and expertise by promoting open and accessible networks and educational practice models. Wherever possible the use of OER and open applications are encouraged, particularly through a major collaborative project in open textbook adoption, adaptation and creation.

Who is involved (teachers, students, etc) and if possible who are known key players?

Post-secondary administrators, faculty, instructional designers, educational technology specialists, information technology professionals, students and instructors are involved. The key players are the staff of BCcampus along with their campus contacts. Staff descriptions are available at <http://www.bccampus.ca/who-we-are/>

What has it produced and how is this disseminated?

Student services: ApplyBC (application service), CoursesBC (online course directory), MyCredits BC (unofficial transcript reporting), Transcript Exchange (official electronic transcript service); federating common online student services and facilitating open data exchange and reporting.

Shared Services: web conferencing, LMS and library services. Also video hosting, curriculum management and tutoring systems. Wherever possible the use of OER and open applications are encouraged.

Collaborative Programs: BCcampus and partner institutions work collaboratively to deliver online programs of study. These programs integrate educational technology so that

students may take online courses and programs from many institutions even though they receive a credential from a single institution.

In Curriculum Services and Applied Research, BCcampus is building an open future for teaching practices and educational resources; developing and sharing educational resources and expertise by promoting open and accessible networks and educational practice models.

Information produced by BCcampus is made freely available on their website and is contained in annual reports and strategic plans. This is complemented by on site and online speaking engagements and collaborative workshops.

Communication

Dissemination and collaborative activities are conducted face-to-face and online using the technologies. This includes online video conferences, discussion groups and workshops.

How many members does the CoP have (approximately)?

BCcampus works with all the post-secondary institutions in B.C. (currently 25) and one college in the Yukon Territory.

To what extent is their communication accessible for research (for both structural interaction analysis and its content)?

BCcampus is an open institution that makes communication for research accessible through its website and through collaborations with researchers. Specifically, BCcampus maintains an Open Educational Resource repository: solr.bccampus.ca.

Are there known topics on OER within the CoP that generate lots of communication and activity (please provide pointers)?

BCcampus has taken the lead in Canada, working with the BC government, it has committed to use 40 open textbooks at the post-secondary level.

See:

<http://www.bccampus.ca/bccampus-to-co-ordinate-provincial-open-textbook-project/>

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2012AEIT0010-001581.htm

<http://creativecommons.org/weblog/entry/34566>

4 Driving forces of the BCcampus network of BCcampus

4.1 Staff and institutional partners

The research conducted within the frame of the POERUP Project focused on what are the driving forces of OER initiatives to get them going and establishing a strong and sustainable network. For each case-study we investigated four domains needed to have a strong network of practice. Here we summarize the results for the BCcampus initiative. These results are based on four interviews conducted with employees from BCcampus and institutional members, all working for the Open Textbook initiative (Open Education Team).

4.1.1 Shared Domain

BCcampus aims to bring together B.C.'s post-secondary system and make higher education available to everyone. So there is a sense of common purpose, but each subgroup has a smaller common purpose that binds them together. BCcampus is a network, with offshoots that can develop into communities. We can distinguish three subdomains: Student services and data exchange, Open education and Curriculum services and applied research. Next to these three domains, BCcampus has an important role to inform the government and at the same time, inform partner institutions about the political agenda of the Government. BCcampus helps to cristalize for the partner institutions what the political goals are. Within the POERUP project we have investigated the network behind the Open Education initiative.

4.1.2 Shared Identity (Open Education Initiative)

To gain a shared framework of values it is important to have a shared identity within the network (Wenger, 1998). The interview results show that the participants see BCcampus network as open, diverse and established. There is no hierarchy in the open network, people work together in co-creation and share knowledge on an equal basis. Within and amongst the partner institutions there is some hierarchy. The bigger institutions are more closely related to the core work of the community than the smaller institutions.

Although people work together in an open and collaborative sphere interviewees stat that here is not yet a shared identity amongst the partners. The hierarchical sphere within the partnership makes it difficult for smaller institutions to share their local issues with the overall partnership and therefor limits their ability to create a shared identity within the overall partnership.

The shared identity is more embedded within different and smaller communities that are part of the Open Education initiative. These communities already exist for a longer time. The interviewees mentioned ETUG as an important community. The Open text book initiative supports these smaller communities and invest in them. Face-to-face workshops are organized f.e. to help to establish a shared identity and even a shared history together.

4.1.3 Shared Practice

The dimension *practice* refers to the extent to which the group knowledge is integrated in day-to-day activities and the extent to which the group shows permanent rather than temporarily activities. BCcampus can be characterized by a support driven approach, with a focus on creating and sharing knowledge. The open textbook initiative as part of BCcampus

sees librarians from different institutions working together on knowledge about open textbooks, copyright issues and sustainability of educational materials. They organize workshops around the topic and share their knowledge and expertise with the partner institutions about copyright and educational technologies in general. There is a lot of expertise available within the Open Education team. This expertise makes it possible to answer to the local problems of the institutions. Although the interviewee from a smaller colleges says that it is difficult in larger partnership with big universities and smaller colleges to put the local issues of the smaller institutions on the general agenda of the initiative. They also try to bind partner institutions to help each other in their efforts to develop open text books. Next to the shared practice with the institutional partners, they also share their knowledge with the Government. The staff of the Open education initiative itself works almost full time for the project. Within the partner institutions the implementation of open textbooks and creating e-learning strategies in general is also part of their daily activities, but direct work related to BCcampus is limited to visiting workshops and organizing meetings with the staff of BCcampus. Concerning the copyright issues involved with open textbooks, Creative Commons Licence play an important role in creating awareness about open licence. Within the initiative the librarians, both within the initiative itself and within the institutions play an important role.

4.1.4 Organisation

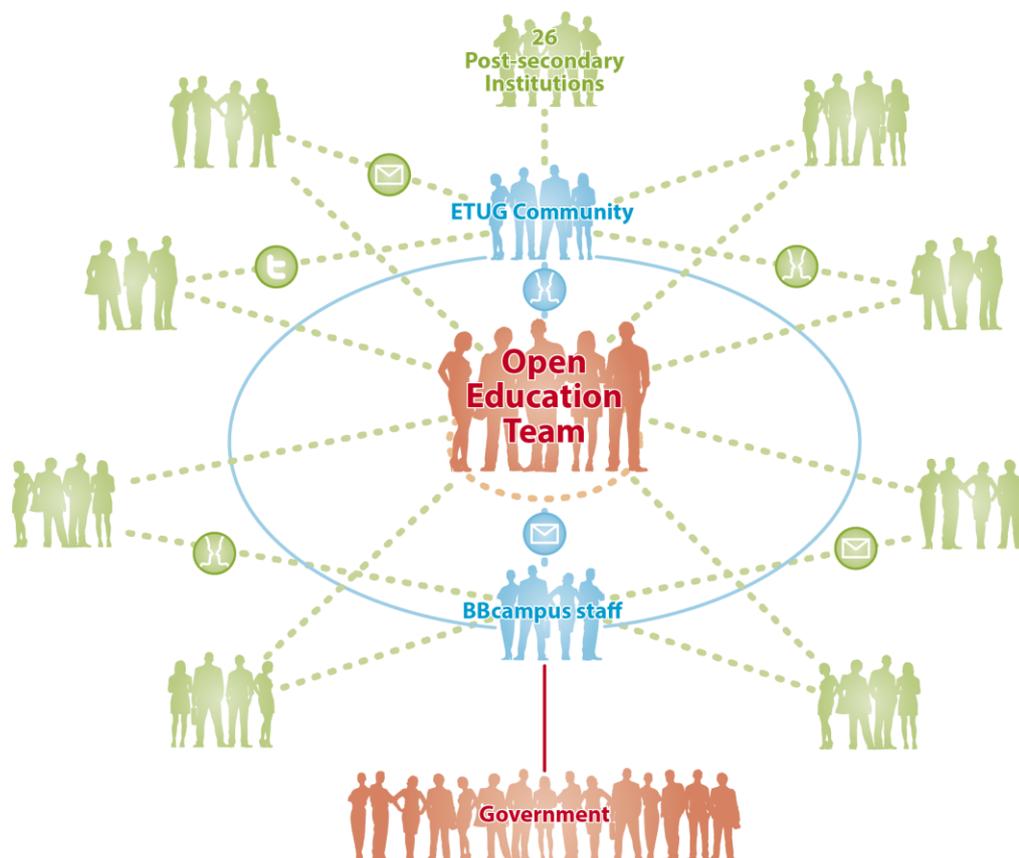
BCcampus Open Education is a complex organization with diversity in forms of networks, (older) communities and smaller teams. The link to regional politics defines the larger agenda and purpose of the overall network - in this case development of OER. Most exchange and work happens within the core group of the Open education team and the older communities. Despite the national or regional origin, the institutional teams and communities often deal with local issues: specific aspects of education or technology applied. When the group transcends this kind of local problems, global issues get to the center of attention, BCcampus where improving accessibility of education is the purpose of the initiative.

BCcampus also supports smaller and older communities like ETUG. Within these smaller communities there is the actual creating and sharing of new knowledge about educational technologies and open textbooks, there is a collaborative atmosphere, often extending beyond the community itself.

'ETUG is a social bunch that get together for instance to make music. This strengthens the community. During informal meetings experiences are shared. There is a lot of work virtually, so the face to face events add to the community feeling and shared history.'

Within ETUG there are a couple of central actors, that either set things in motion or kept the energy in the community high (by e.g. organizing events). ETUG is also financially supported by BCcampus.

The Social Configuration of the BCcampus



4.2 How to get things done: learning and sharing expertise within the BCcampus network

Most learning happens in the smaller and older communities. The members of the ETUG community are informally bound by what they do together and by what they have learned through their mutual engagement in the community. The participants reported a strong identity around a common agenda or area for learning. In this way, shared learning and interest of the members, together with a shared social and historical context keep the community together. ETUG is also called an idea incubator and gives a lot of inspiration. If we look at technology used to support learning we see a hybrid concept that happens both online and offline. Interesting to see is that within the ETUG community practitioners use a lot of Twitter to stay up to date with each other's works, in addition to regular face-to-face meetings.

Participants in teams within institutions learn predominantly from each other in face-to-face meetings. These meetings are sometimes held by using web conferencing tools.

To learn from the Open education team, people use mostly one to one mailings to ask for specific expertise based on their local problems. There is a lot of expertise available in the core team, based on the diversity of the team, which makes it possible for them to answer local problems and to share innovative ideas and scientific knowledge on both copyright issues as on the technological part. The Open education team tries actively to connect professionals from different institutions to learn from each other.

Due to the close link to the government institutional partners learn through the Open Education team about the political agenda and the priorities set by the regional government. This give them munition to implement open textbooks within their own institution and helps them to set-up an learning agenda.

5 Conclusions

By analysing the social configuration of the BCcampus community as a case study we see that within one community, different social organisations are embedded (institutional teams - core community ETUG and the Open Education team with links to the partner institutions) with different roles, goals and learning platforms. Although the configuration includes different practices and interactional repertoires, network activities take place at all levels within the network. This could be explained by the shared domain and shared identity of the Driving ETUG community, which is facilitated by (but also allows the maintenance of) close and personal learning relationships amongst the members. Additionally, the fact that the sharing of knowledge is well embedded within the institutional teams and that there is an active project coordinator in the role of a network hub adds to the functionality of this OER network. This analysis indicates that, through the investigation of the social configuration of a initiative, valuable insights can be gained into why learning activities about the use of OER are taking place. BCcampus already exists a long time but we see that even the older communities with personal and strong relations are the driving forces behind these initiatives.

The sustainability of BCcampus is supported through:

BCcampus is funded by the B.C. government. The Open textbook initiative has granted a separate funding to produce open textbooks, from scratch or adaptations from existing text books.

Investment in the community is seen as important. They invest in the older communities as the overall BCcampus networks' sustainability is embedded within the older communities like ETUG that supports BCcampus. They invest around 100.000 Canadian Dollars in sustaining the community. They organize face-to face workshops and events f.e. Within the overall network bigger institutions invest more and share with smaller institutions. The partners aim to use the open textbooks to support students who are less able to pay for their studies and as a teaser for new students. Most probably they will not opt for a complete open textbook approach.

5.1 Driving forces

1. A shared domain and shared identity serves as a solid ground for learning and sharing expertise within the BCcampus Network
2. A strong community of like-minded people helps to bind people within the BCcampus project
3. A lot of expertise within the core Open education team makes it possible to answer to local problems within the partner institution
4. A strong core team drives the Open textbook initiative

5. Institutions do not work together intensively but the Open education team tries to actively link institutions to generate more collaboration.

5.2 Barriers: time constraint

Only 7 people participated in the survey, the only barrier mentioned was time, and one respondent said that the colleagues were a bit reluctant to use open textbooks.

See

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&mode=XML&reference=A7-2014-0249&language=EN#title3> for more detailed policy advice.