



Research on Open Educational Resources for Development

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October 2016 Newsletter

Welcome to the October edition of the ROER4D newsletter. Our main article features a report on the recently held IDRC Networked Economies Partners Meeting in Zanzibar attended by ROER4D Principal Investigator Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams; among the many topics discussed, the participants engaged with the IDRC's renewed focus on gender as an area of research interest. We also feature a brief report on ROER4D's attendance at the Asian Association of Open Universities Conference. Since the last newsletter we have also launched a specialised open data collection, and we feature a brief project overview of the initiative. The sub-project researchers are at various stages of the research process with a number now in the midst of their dissemination activities, which is very exciting as it's when the research findings are communicated to potential users and stakeholders. We include updates from five of the sub-projects.

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Gender a focus area of the IDRC Networked Economies program



Participants at IDRC Networked Economies Partners Meeting. Photo by the IDRC, used with permission.

In September 2016 ROER4D Principal Investigator Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams attended the IDRC Networked Economies Partners Meeting in Zanzibar, Tanzania. ROER4D Communications Advisor Sukaina Walji chatted to her about the experience and insights to compile this article.

The Zanzibar meeting was a coming together of many of the IDRC's projects funded under the (relatively) new [Networked Economies Cluster](#) (previously Information and Networks). The meeting was an opportunity for IDRC funded projects to review progress and for the IDRC to communicate its renewed and revised focus.

As well as an opportunity to hear about and engage with the program goals and learning priorities of the Networked Economies program, Cheryl met up with 'old' colleagues from other IDRC projects including Alison Gillward and Chenai Chair from

[Research ICT Africa](#) (RIA), Tobias Schonwetter and Jeremy de Beer from the [Open African Innovation Research Network](#) (openAIR), Becky Hillyer from the [Open and Collaborative Science Network](#) (OCSDNet) and Dal Brodhead and Ricardo Ramirez from the [Developing Evaluation and Communication Capacity in Information Society Research project](#) (DECI-2). IDRC Technology and Innovation Director Naser Faruqi, Program Leader Laurent Elder and IDRC Program Officers Matthew Smith and Phet Sayo were joined by Ed Barney and Stuart Stoneham from the Department of International Development (DFID). New connections included Cher Ping from the new [Digital Learning for Development \(DL4D\) Network](#) and Judith Mariscal from Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) - the other two education-focused IDRC projects.

Participants at the meeting were reminded of the [Networked Economies program goal](#) "To harness digital innovations that create inclusive economic opportunities and advance democracy in the developing world". At the workshop a number of priorities were articulated that encompass a number of planned activities:

- Testing and scaling digital innovations to improve entrepreneurship, education, and democracy
- Connecting the next billion to economic opportunities
- Improving governance of cyberspace
- Gender equality and inclusion in digital development and innovation (cross-cutting)

Integrating gender into research

A key theme to inform the research agenda going forward is a renewed focus on gender and inclusion more broadly. This appears to be as a result of a focus from the Canadian government which is filtering down to organisations and public-sponsored institutions such as the IDRC. A key question that participants were asked to respond to was: "How well are we integrating gender across our programming?" and this question served to frame extensive discussions around how future research plans would accommodate this request. The gender focus is to be enacted through building of capacity of the program and its partners to develop and scale up gender responsive programming to advance gender related outcomes across the program area.

The perceived gap and subsequent planning is based on the outcomes of an

external evaluation of the Information and Networks Program (the predecessor to Networked Economies) which found that less than 10% of sampled research outputs were assessed as being adequately gender responsive and that “Gender programming marks a noteworthy shortcoming in the I&N Program implementation”, while in the case of ‘gender-responsiveness, “it is clear that much work remains to be done” (I&N Network Evaluation).

The renewed focus on gender aligns with and responds to some of the assumptions made in the Networked Economies Program goals. The Networked Economies program is about harnessing digital innovations for a development purpose - to promote education, entrepreneurship and democracy and thus integral to this is the call for inclusivity. Thus by “improving understanding of gender relations in emerging digital environments” women and other marginalised communities in the Global South would also be able to access the opportunities of the information society, free from discrimination based on gender, class, ethnicity and sexual preference. The program envisages activities under three main themes:

- **field building** whereby the aim is to establish a gender transformative research network and through supporting research activities and projects to generate outputs to develop a gender transformative research agenda
- **mentorship** for Networked Economies program staff to negotiate and hold partners accountable for gender related outcomes in research, develop and improve gender analysis skills and to support researchers to improve their understanding of gender equality and gender transformative research
- **supplementing existing networks and research projects** to improve gender related research outcomes including providing resources and tools for evaluation and scaling up.

Much of the workshop discussion of the participants was around what gendering in research looks like. While gender can be seen as an important conceptual lens for analysing the complex dimensions in political, economic and social spheres, and many researchers and program planners are likely to be aware of and understand the concept of gender and surrounding issues, the challenge is often around how to integrate a gender lens into a research program. In order for partners to achieve the program outcome of being able to undertake gender transformative research, capacity building is likely to be required and supported.

The workshop saw presentations by gender experts who proposed a partnership approach whereby project experts and gender experts could work together to help

sort through the partners' unique contexts to see what a gender lens might look like. Using the acronym IYDAAGYDLAG (if you don't ask about gender, you don't learn about gender), the gender experts proposed that learning about gender was about asking the questions first around how to design gender analysis or what gender outcomes might look like. In terms of outcomes and what change might look like it is likely that gender transformation could occur both at individual and systemic levels. An individual dimension could see improving access to resources and opportunities formally or more informally through influencing women and men's consciousness around gender. A systemic or institutional dimension might see the enactment of formal policy or laws or at an informal level bring about changes to cultural norms or exclusionary practices.

The workshop participants also engaged with the apparent disadvantage of simplifying understanding of barriers and discrimination women face through only using a gender lens to a given phenomenon. The concept of "Intersectionality" that acknowledges that women face discrimination in multiple and varied ways and to different extents was introduced. This recognises that certain groups of women have multiple issues that include not only gender but could include race, ageism, ableism and/or or sexual orientation. Understanding connections and relationships between discriminative institutions and the different disenfranchised groups therefore requires an intersectional approach. Simply focusing on gender is insufficient to understand the multifaceted nature of discrimination, marginalisation and/or exclusion. These insights and discussions helped orient PIs and researchers to the Networked Economies Program's renewed focus on gender and inclusion.

Going forward and for new project planning, the Networked Economies Program Officers will be asking all projects to undertake more deliberate activities to enable a more indepth analysis of gender and inclusion. To date the ROER4D project has not applied a deliberate gender lens as an analytical approach although case studies within sub-projects are revealing how contextual and situated any interpretation of findings might be. How does one interpret a finding in [Sub-project 8](#) which is a country study of OER adoption in Mongolia? A seeming gender imbalance has emerged where 58% of university entrants are women and that this appears to be as a result of families choosing to send their daughters rather than their sons to university (Zagdragchaa, 2016). In terms of a general gender equality perspective, this might appear to be a positive finding but nuanced interpretations suggest that this imbalance is based more on an understanding of the likely employment prospects of men and the role of women in the education of their families. Further contextually informed analysis and interpretation would be required to understand to tie it to any gender focused outcome.

Sonal Zaveri, an IDRC consultant, is undertaking a gender meta-analysis of a

number of IDRC-funded projects, including ROER4D, for the IDRC Open Development 2 publication. The ROER4D Hub team in Cape Town also will be writing a chapter for this book with a broader focus on inclusion.

ROER4D at the Asian Association of Open Universities Annual Conference



Left to right: Patricia Arinto, Laura Czerniewicz, Shironica Karunanayaka and Sheila Bonito. Photo by Laura Czerniewicz, used with permission.

Members of the ROER4D Network attended the 30th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) held 26-29 October in Manila and hosted by the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU). ROER4D Deputy PI Patricia Arinto, who is the Dean of the Faculty of Education at UPOU, oversaw the planning and organisation of the conference programme, which included a keynote address from Laura Czerniewicz, Director of the Centre for Innovation in Learning & Teaching at the University of Cape Town and Lead Researcher of ROER4D [Sub-project 10.3](#). ROER4D researchers Sheila Bonito and Daryono Daryono along with IDRC Program Officer Matthew Smith also attended the conference.

The undoubted highlight for the ROER4D Network was the awarding of the AAOU Best Practice Award to a paper submitted by [Sub-project 10.6](#) Co-lead researchers Shironica Karunanayaka and Som Naidu titled [A Design-Based Approach to Support and Nurture Open Educational Practices](#). The selection criteria for the Award

specified an innovative practice developed to improve process or method, the potential for such practice to be replicated, impact on the Open Distance Learning environment, and the quality of writing. The paper was one of 13 that had been shortlisted by the conference organisers (comprising a committee of UPOU academics) from a total of 90 papers. The shortlisted papers were then evaluated by an international adjudication panel designated by the AAOU Secretariat based at The Open University of Hong Kong. Six of the shortlisted papers (including the winning paper) were selected by the adjudication panel for the final round of evaluation, which involved a 10-minute oral paper presentation during the conference.

Launch of the ROER4D Specialised Open Data Collection

The ROER4D Network Hub has launched the [ROER4D specialised collection](#) on the [DataFirst Data Portal](#). Comprised of open datasets arising from research undertaken in three of the 18 ROER4D sub-projects, the collection represents the project's growing contribution to open data on Open Educational Resources (OER) and open education in the Global South.

The first of the datasets, "[OER effectiveness in higher education mathematics skills](#)", is comprised of qualitative and quantitative data arising from a study undertaken among first- and second-year university students in Chile by SP9 Lead Researcher Werner Westermann.

The second dataset, "[Faculty perceptions of OER in India](#)", arises from a study aimed at mapping the current preconceptions and behavioural determinants that influence academics' engagement with OER in India.

The third of the datasets in the collection, "[Research into social and cultural acceptability of Open Educational Resources in South Africa](#)", arises from a study by SP4 Lead Researcher Glenda Cox and Researcher Henry Trotter in the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) at the University of Cape Town.

In all instances, published datasets include data collection instruments, dataset descriptions, an overview of de-identification methods, and extensive metadata. Datasets all undergo a multi-phased de-identification approach (conducted in collaboration with DataFirst), and accompanying documentation makes it clear when certain aspects of a dataset have not been shared for ethical reasons. All ROER4D

datasets carry Creative Commons licensing and are shared in CSV, SAS, SPSS, and STATA formats.

A fuller explication of the initiative and details of the datasets is available on the [ROER4D blog](#).

Sub project news round up

Sub-project 4 engages in dissemination activities

The [Sub-project 4](#) team of Dr Glenda Cox and Henry Trotter has been in the process of trying to spin out research articles and conference papers from its ROER4D research efforts. Recently, they published an article in the *International Review of Open and Distributed Learning* (IRRODL) titled [Institutional Culture and OER Policy: How Structure, Culture, and Agency Mediate OER Policy Potential in South African Universities](#) in which they argue that the key determination in whether a policy acts as an enabling or motivating factor depends on the type of institutional culture into which it is embedded.

Now they are busy preparing a presentation to give at the upcoming Open Education Global Conference which will be held in Cape Town in March 2017. In that presentation they plan to highlight the analytical frameworks – especially the [OER Adoption Pyramid and OER Readiness Tables](#) – that they developed for their ROER4D research so that other scholars might see if they are of use for their own research as well.

Lastly, they are busy working with the ROER4D Network Hub to finalise their sub-project chapter for peer review and publication. It involves close interaction with Michelle Willmers and Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams who are ensuring that the work is ready to go public.

Sub-project 5 activities to promote teacher professional development programmes

[Sub-project 5](#) explored whether and how, a bottom-up approach, where teachers ('embedded' within a 'community of learning') actively co-create contextual resources, can support effective OER models. During the second phase of the

project, one of the objectives is to upscale this model in two other states in India and study the experiences of the adaptation in these two states, with the aim to create knowledge products that would enrich the participatory OER adoption model. The SP5 team has been working with the education department of Telangana, which is a neighboring state to Karnataka where SP5 was originally located.

As per the priorities of the Telangana education department, the SP5 team is working with their teachers and teacher educators on a collaborative program to develop a [text book and a teacher / teacher educator handbook](#) for implementing an ICT integration program in the state, and these books will be released as OER. During September 2016, a consultative workshop was held at the State Institute of Education Technology (SIET), Telangana with a core group of teachers and teacher educators from Telangana, to prepare an initial design of the textbook and handbook. The participants also discussed the need for an OER portal for the state, which teachers could use for their professional development and in teaching. The [Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia](#) (CEMCA), a unit of [Commonwealth of Learning](#) (COL), is also a partner in this program.

During September, Lead Researcher Gurusurthy Kasinathan also delivered the “Dr. T K Jayalakshmi memorial lecture” on “Reimagining professional development of teachers across levels” at the Institute of World Culture, Bangalore. In his [presentation](#), he spoke on the need for teachers to organise themselves into ‘communities of practice’ for supporting their own professional development. Digital technologies provided easy ways of sustaining such communities through virtual forums and the [Karnataka Subject Teachers Forums](#) were good role models of such communities of teachers. He also explained the possibilities of teachers creating curricular resources for their own needs using free and open digital tools, which would empower teachers and liberate them from being dependent on the education department or school management for curricular content. In the ‘[Karnataka Open Educational Resources](#)’ program, the members of the [Subject Teachers Forums](#) had created and shared OER for teachers across the state, in the English and Kannada languages.

Sub-project 9 dissemination activities in progress

[Sub-project 9](#) Lead Researcher Werner Westermann has been engaging in a range of activities to finalise the project’s final research report as well as undertaking dissemination activities. The research report is being finalised with revisions and fine-tuning in progress. Presentations on the project’s outcomes in Chile include [speaking at a seminar](#) organized by the higher education consortium REUNA as well

as presenting the project results at Instituto Profesional Providencia, the institution where the project was deployed, and presenting findings to officials from the Ministry of Education ICT School's Programme, Enlaces.

Planned dissemination activities include a forthcoming [presentation](#) at the 13th Annual Open Education Conference in Richmond, Virginia, USA, a paper submitted to the The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning IRRODL Special Issue, "Outcomes of Openness: Empirical Reports on the Implementation of OER", and a presentation submitted to Open Education Global Conference 2017. Werner has also been invited to be a fellow investigator in a proposal for the Office for Learning and Teaching Fellowships Programme in Australia, led by Professor Birgit Loch from Swinburne University, Australia.

Sub-project 10.3 team preparing final research report

Members of the [Sub-project 10.3](#) team led by Laura Czerniewicz are now in the last stages of preparing the final research report. The project team, which is researching the impact of making MOOCs and OER on educators' open practices, is analysing early findings which are proving to be very interesting. After working through some revisions, the team has also recently re-submitted a paper "MOOC-making and Open Practices" to the Journal of Computing in Higher Education. The researchers have also submitted an abstract for the Open Education Global Conference 2017, where they intend to present an overview of the project's findings.

Sub-project 10.6 compiling 'Stories' of Impact


The [Sub-project 10.6](#) research team, led by Shironica Karunanayaka and Som Naidu, has completed the final evaluation workshops in mid-June, 2016 at various centres of the Open University of Sri Lanka. During these impact evaluation workshops, the participant teachers as well as the research team members engaged in compiling their "stories" and reflecting upon their experiences during the OER integration process. These stories have been published as a [blog](#), titled "Dreamweaving Open Educational Practices".


Co-Lead Researcher Shironica [presented](#) at the September webinar of the Global OER Graduate Network's (GO-GN), titled "Impact of Integration of OER in Teacher Education at OUSL", during which she discussed the research methodology and early findings of their project. The [YouTube recording](#) is also available.

The research team is currently engaged in finalising the data analysis and compilation of the final report. Several research papers reporting these findings will be presented at three conferences: OURS-2016 (Open University Research Sessions), AAOU-2016 and PCF8, during October-November, 2016.

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