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"I find the whole enterprise daunting": Staff understanding of Open Education initiatives within a UK university

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Abstract

"Open" initiatives, which focus on increasing access to education, resources, and research, are often practised by individuals rather than universities. However, universities must now produce openly accessible research to comply with research funding and assessment requirements. To encourage staff participation, universities need to understand what participation barriers their staff face.

67 University of the West of England staff were surveyed about how they understood and participated in open initiatives. Four staff gave qualitative interviews about their experiences. This data was analysed to find correlates for participation and to identify participation barriers. Participants valued open initiatives and supported their underlying goal of increased public access. Staff faced many entry barriers, especially around resource maintenance, copyright, and permissions. Universities could reduce these issues by emphasising how open initiatives allow staff to save time and to avoid reduplicating resources, and by creating unified "open policies" that make staff permissions and restrictions clearer.

Keywords: OER; open access publishing; open policy

Introduction

Openness and Open Education

An ecosystem of initiatives based on the principle of openness –the ability to freely create, share and build upon resources– is widely used across teaching, research, and science. The concept of Open Education currently "addresses all dimensions related to operational, legal and visionary aspects throughout the analysis, design, realization and evaluation of learning experiences to facilitate high-quality education meeting the given situation, needs and objectives" (Stracke, 2017).

As this study is based in a university, with participants who are researchers and educators, it focuses on the specific open initiatives used most commonly in research and teaching. These are:

- Open Educational Resources (OER) -- "teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions." (UNESCO, 2012)
- Open licences -- "licences which grant permission to access, re-use and redistribute a work with few or no restrictions." (Open Knowledge Group, n.d)
- Open Access Publishing (OAP) / Open Access (OA) -- "free and unrestricted access to peer-reviewed literature." (Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2002)

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Open Education initiatives allow researchers to use published data in new contexts (Piwowar & Vision, 2013); students and educators to customise teaching resources (de los Arcos, Farrow, Perryman & Weller, 2014); and universities to use OER textbooks that reduce student costs (Hilton, Robinson, Wiley & Ackerman, 2014). Individuals have many motivations for taking part in open initiatives, such as increasing awareness of their work and enhancing their teaching ability. Many people see openness and decreasing barriers to access as valuable to society (D'Antoni, 2009). In previous research on openness, individuals have reported various barriers to their participation in open initiatives. The same barriers often persist across initiatives and over time; they include a lack of information about initiatives, a lack of institutional support when taking part, and doubts about the technical and legal knowledge required to participate (OECD, 2007).

Connected yet Isolated Initiatives

Although Open Education initiatives have been described as a "diverse and unpredictable" range of activities (Farrow, 2016), they build upon and support each other. For example, Open Educational Practice (OEP) describes a movement beyond separate open content, resources and tools towards an infrastructure based on working and teaching openly by default (Schaffert & Geser, 2008). Despite the similarities between individual initiatives and the overall goals of OEP, studies have focussed on initiatives in isolation rather than on their potential connections. However, one recent study attempted to map the connections between current research topics and their shared predecessors (Weller, Jordan, DeVries & Rolfe, 2018). In this study, Open Education could be represented as eight sub-topics which barely overlapped.

Open initiatives are frequently underpinned by shared goals such as increasing access to resources, reducing barriers to education, and increasing people's agency over information. Yet there is little research on whether people's support for these shared goals links to their participation. It is also unclear whether individuals take an all-or-nothing approach to openness, or if they choose to take part in some open initiatives and reject others. As such, investigating if and how people connect different open initiatives could benefit openness research.

Cohesive research on how people understand open initiatives is limited for multiple reasons. The many ideas and terms involved in openness can make defining specific open initiatives complicated, and leave them with multiple competing definitions (Ross-Hellauer, 2016). Open initiatives have been developed over time by groups with different interests, creating conflicts about the meaning of openness and the necessary requirements for a work to be described as open. Hylén (2006) has summarised these conflicts, which include restrictions (which usage limitations prevent works from being open), price (whether open works must be zero-cost), and access (whether requiring people to provide information in order to access resources negates their openness).

Finally, open initiatives are often the responsibility of individuals rather than institutions. When the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development investigated how people used OER, they were unable to study universities because so few universities responded to their survey (OECD, 2007). They concluded that university management did not respond because they were unaware of whether individual educators or researchers participated. These factors make studying how people understand individual initiatives difficult, which limits available knowledge about how people might connect multiple initiatives.

Mandated Openness and Plan S

Open Access Publishing has been supported by the moral argument that research should be freely available because taxpayers often fund research projects (Suber, 2003). Currently, UK Research Councils require the researchers they fund to publish in OA journals (RCUK, 2013). The Research Excellence Framework (REF), which measures research quality, only covers OA articles as of 2014 (HEFCE, 2014). This means research must be OA to contribute towards the success of a university, which has made awareness of OAP essential for researchers.

In September 2018 the OAP initiative Plan S was announced to great support from national research organisations (cOAlition S, 2018). Plan S aims to ensure that all research published from 2020 onwards is immediately OA and that academic journals apply fair open licences to publications. For research staff, Plan S could initially create an administrative burden: when individuals prepare to publish a paper in a journal, they will need to be aware of how that journal funds and licences publications. In this context, learning how staff understand and evaluate OA is necessary to know how best to implement OA.

Because open initiatives are closely related ideas with shared fundamental goals, this increased awareness of OA and Plan S is likely to result in increased awareness of and use of other open initiatives such as open licences, Open Data, and Open Science. Understanding the barriers staff currently face when using open initiatives, and the factors that influence their participation, should help to make this essential future participation more accessible.

Study Purpose

We aimed to understand how these staff compared and contrasted multiple open initiatives, and how their use of open initiatives varied. Part of this included looking at their view of openness as a broader concept, such as whether they saw open initiatives as separate ideas or as related ideas with shared goals. We also aimed to explore which participation barriers staff experienced, to establish whether the known issues found in previous studies were still present or whether new barriers had developed.

Method

This study took place at the University of the West of England (UWE). The publicly accessible UWE repository contains >26,600 items, including articles, theses, and datasets, as of January 2019 (UWE, 2019). A UWE Technology Enhanced Learning plan encourages staff to use more open content and open initiatives by 2020 (UWE, 2016). However, no specific policies about openness are in place, beyond adherence to the REF. As such, the information gained from this study may benefit UWE and similar institutions by clarifying what guidance is required in future openness policies.

This study combined a specifically developed questionnaire with follow-up interviews. Interviews were used to gauge how participants felt about working openly and to better understand their opinions on open initiatives. Questionnaires about OER, OA, Open Data and other initiatives exist in previous research, but these measures focus on individual aspects of working openly. This study intended to understand how participants viewed multiple open initiatives, which existing measures could not sufficiently address. A custom measure enabled a wider range of questions that covered both specific open initiatives and general attitudes to openness.

Measure development

Existing questionnaires on faculty awareness and use of open initiatives were pooled then analysed to identify common themes and questions. Questionnaire topics included OER (Mishra, Sharma, Sharma, Singh & Thakur, 2016), open content (Reed, 2012), Open Textbooks (Bliss, Hilton, Wiley & Thanos, 2013), and OA (Tandi Lwoga & Questier, 2014). We removed duplicate questions and statements that were irrelevant to the research question or intended participants. A preliminary set of questions was chosen and then rewritten to present all questions in a consistent tone, as well as to provide a single clear definition of every initiative included. This study used the terms "open content" and "open resources" interchangeably to describe any content made as part of an open initiative.

The final measure contains 36 questions and is available under a Creative Commons licence (Harold, 2018a). A demographics section asked about participants' age group, gender, academic department, role, and length of service. Participants were also asked about:

- Their understanding of six open initiatives including OER, OA, and Creative Commons licences.
- Their agreement with positive and negative statements about the value, importance, and usability of open content.
- Their confidence in creating, licensing, and sharing open content, and their understanding of copyright requirements.
- Their support for some of the principles which underlie openness, such as reducing barriers to resources, increasing access to education, and supporting learning outside of educational institutions.
- Their use of ten different open initiatives including OER, OAP, and research repositories.

Seven staff members acted as pilot participants. Their free-response answers indicated that they understood the survey questions and terminology used, so no changes to question structure were required. Due to the small number of pilots, statistical tests were run in SPSS after completing data collection. A Kaiser-Myer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy returned a value of 0.729, while Bartlett's measure of sphericity returned a significant result to $p<0.001$. Cronbach's alpha also showed an acceptable result of $\alpha = 0.80$, with subsection scores of 0.67- 0.93. As no individual questions dramatically affected reliability, no changes were made. These results indicated that the measure was internally consistent and suitable for further analysis (Field, 2005).

Principal Components Analysis

Principal components analysis was used to identify whether the measure reflected the five factors it was designed to score. A varimax rotation was used to generate the simplest available solution by maximising how many variables loaded on to only one factor (Abdi & Williams, 2010). This analysis generated a four-factor model, where only factors that contained five or more items with loadings above .50 were accepted (Costello & Osborne, 2005). The first three factors met Costello and Osborne's criteria. Although the fourth factor contained only four items, we accepted the factor because all items loaded at > 0.5.

All questions about how participants understood open initiatives loaded onto the first factor alongside all questions about their confidence in using open resources. This factor represented individuals' knowledge of both specific initiatives and how to participate in them, so this factor was named Understanding. The second factor contained nine of the ten questions about participation in open initiatives. This factor was labelled Activity. The third factor contained every statement which expressed positive views about the value, importance, and usability of open content, plus all questions about support for open principles

such as increasing access to education. As this factor represented all support for open initiatives, it was named Positivity. The final factor contained all statements that expressed negative views about the value, importance, and usability of open content. This factor was labelled Negativity.

Overall, the measure clearly identified participants' knowledge of, attitude towards, and participation in open initiatives. However, the measure could not distinguish between participants' general support for open initiatives and their agreement with the shared open principles, which prevented further investigation into their possible connection. Potential explanations for this finding are included in the discussion.

Free-Response and Interview Question Development

The measure included free-response questions so participants could elaborate on their previous experiences with, or concerns about, open initiatives. During data collection the first 30 survey responses were coded and analysed, to look for recurring themes and for any overlooked participation barriers. These responses were used to generate ten interview questions, which are available under a Creative Commons licence (Harold, 2018b). This approach ensured that the interview questions were maximally relevant to the interviewees, taking their different academic disciplines and varying levels of experience into account.

Four participants were interviewed between August 22nd - September 16th 2016, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. After data collection had been completed, thematic analysis was carried out on the full set of survey and interview responses.

Survey Results and Correlations

67 participants fully completed the survey (21 male and 46 female). 33 respondents were lecturers or professors, and 15 were researchers. Other roles included PhD students (seven), technicians (three), and administrators (five). 22 respondents were based in the Department of Biological, Biomedical and Analytical Sciences, 19 in Health and Social Sciences, 18 in Nursing and Midwifery, and five in Allied Health Professions. Participant demographics were not correlated with any experimental variables, which matches previous research findings.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the four identified factors of Understanding, Positivity, Negativity and Activity. Understanding scores averaged 24.76/34, which suggested that participants

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the four identified factors.

	Understanding Score	Activity Score	Positivity Score	Negativity Score
N Valid	67	67	67	67
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	24.76	10.73	16.34	11.24
Median	24.00	9.00	15.00	11.00
Mode	23	8	14	11
Std. Deviation	3.234	5.367	5.324	2.487
Minimum	17	0	8	5
Maximum	34	27	32	18

already had knowledge of open initiatives beyond the information provided within UWE. Despite this, participants' free-response comments indicated a desire for more information about open initiatives. Positivity scores clustered around the centre of potential values, with a mode of 14/32, which suggested that participants generally saw open initiatives as valuable and worthwhile.

However, their mean Negativity score of 11.24/18 indicated many difficulties and doubts about participating in open initiatives. Participants' mean Activity score of 10.73/27 and modal score of 8/27 supported this view. Figure 1 represents how many participants had ever performed each activity, and shows how each activity was irrelevant to 10–20% of participants due to their varied roles. These results suggested that although participants generally believed open initiatives were valuable, they engaged with a fraction of the available initiatives. Understanding scores were positively correlated with Activity scores ($r(67) = 0.319$, $p = 0.008$), which indicated that people with greater conceptual and technical knowledge about open initiatives were more likely participate in them. Despite this, Positivity scores were negatively correlated with Activity scores ($r(67) = -0.244$, $p = 0.047$). Possible reasons for this unexpected finding are included in the discussion.

The most popular open activities were "creating open content to share with colleagues" (30 participants) and "creating open content to be shared online" (26 participants). The rarest activities were "uploading OER to be shared online" (seven participants) and "uploading results to an archive other than the UWE repository" (eight participants). 21 participants had uploaded material to the UWE repository, and eight had done so "most of the time". Their preference for using the UWE repository over external ones matches a previous study in which staff participated in institution-focussed openness more than public-focussed openness (Rolfe, 2012).

17 participants shared OER with colleagues, while only seven had placed OER online. However, 34 participants said they would be likely to share open content online in future. Many participants

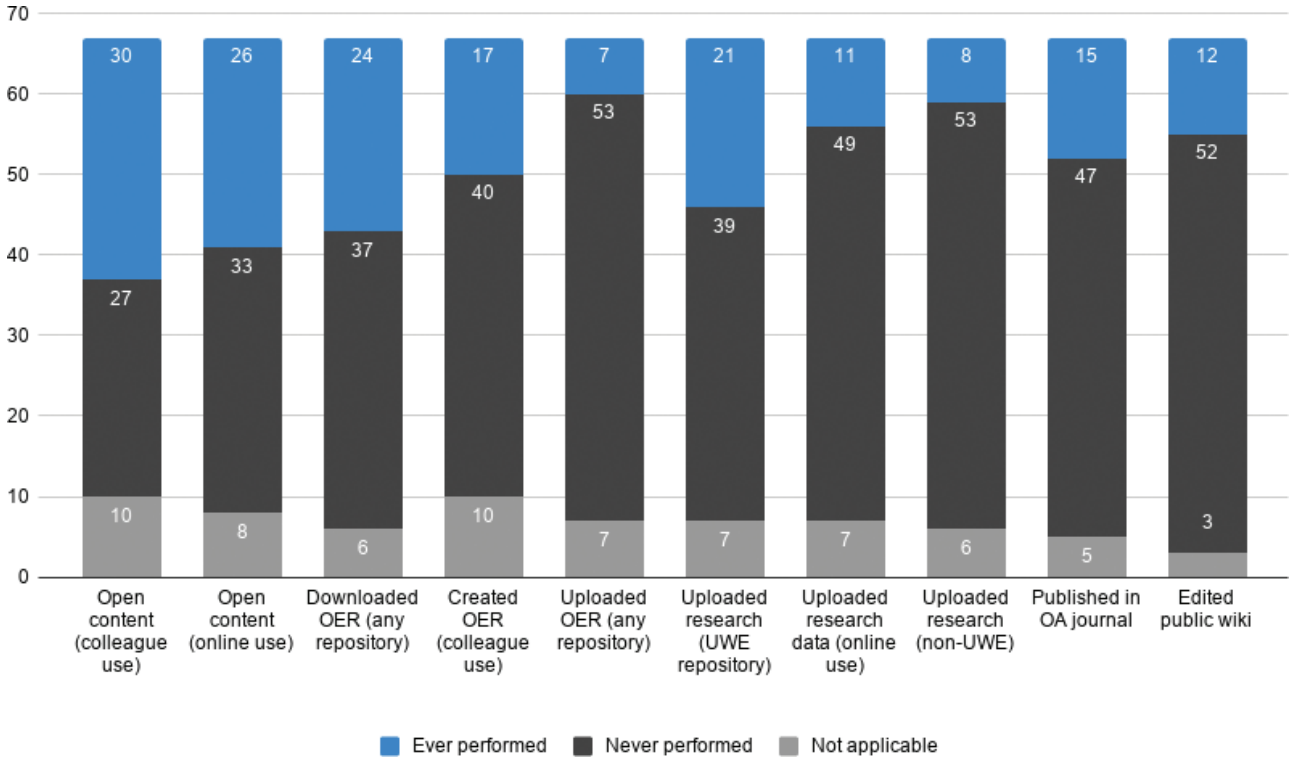

Figure 1: Staff participation in open initiatives.

doubted their technical skills. 35 participants stated, "I am not confident in my technical skill to create or share OER". Licensing was another issue; 45 participants agreed, "It is hard to tell what different licences for content mean, in terms of how they can be used". The prevailing barrier was copyright and ownership; 51 participants did not know who would own open content they created.

Free-Response and Interview Themes

Four themes were identified across the free-response answers and participant interviews. One question asked if participants had previously used any other open initiatives. Participants only mentioned topics that were already included in the measure –open science, OA, and Creative Commons licences– which indicated that no major initiatives were overlooked.

1) Not knowing where to begin with initiatives

Participants frequently spoke of "not knowing where to start" in two separate contexts. Firstly, they were often unsure of how to acquire information about open initiatives or best practices –"I don't know how to go about understanding [open content] in the best way". One participant discussed how the amount of terminology and initiatives impeded their understanding –"I find the whole enterprise daunting and the bureaucracy is putting me off". We asked participations about their confidence in applying permissions to content they created. This question was met with multiple responses of "I'm not really sure what this means" and similar, which suggested that current guidance does not sufficiently explain licensing and permissions.

The second context was how participation in open initiatives interacted with copyright restrictions, intellectual property regulations (IPR), and UWE policy. One participant directly stated "I am restricted by UWE IPR", while others had not participated in open initiatives because they did not know if they were permitted to –"I would be happy to do this but [it] depends on the restrictions set by the IPR contract". Participants expressed fears of going against legal limits or existing policies –"I would want to make sure I didn't breach any legal restrictions on repurposing material". Similar conflicts applied to OA publishing; one participant said that OA "seems very complicated as there are many different levels. [I] do not wish to get in trouble with journals by putting papers online if not permitted."

2) Responsibility, liability, and credit for content

Many participants, even those who strongly supported open initiatives, discussed the risk of plagiarism. Fears of plagiarism led some participants to keep resources solely within local networks –"outside of my organisation I would be concerned that work might get used and not credited". A related concern was over attribution for created resources –"there needs to be a solid method of recognising the originator of the material". Many participants wanted to receive credit for their efforts –"[I] would like users who re-use my stuff to acknowledge the source."

Other participants focussed on the risks in releasing resources for wider use and on who held responsibility for resources after their release. Participants were wary of outdated or inaccurate information; some would only release resources "with the caveat that as soon as I release it they are responsible for keeping the information up to date".

3) Control over which content is shared, and who it is shared with

Many participants viewed sharing content as a personal favour to individuals. Participants with this viewpoint only shared resources with known, trusted recipients, and modified their approach for

specific resources. “[Sharing] entirely depends on the nature of the material”. Other participants were reluctant to share resources in case others used their material without reciprocating, or stole their ideas –”I am comfortable to share as long as colleagues share back, otherwise it is one-sided and unfair”. Another issue was establishing control over materials. Multiple participants wished to have contracts or ownership agreements in place before releasing any created resources.

However, some participants focussed on the collective benefits of shared resources –”colleagues and I are continuously reinventing the wheel - having better systems for sharing [and] storing resources we have developed would make this easier.” Another participant saw the goal of education as more important than individual resources –”If I have already created something for one purpose, re-using it for another purpose to further educate people is appropriate.”

4) Lack of confidence or perceived ability

Participants often doubted their own ability to create high-quality materials. Most participants would only release their best material, rather than works-in-progress, while some doubted that any of their work could be useful –“I would need to be sure I knew exactly what I was doing first”. Although participants in previous studies saw their low confidence in their technical ability as a major barrier, this group viewed technical limitations as a secondary concern compared to their knowledge –”I don’t know how to do [open content] but learning how to use technology is just par for the course with everything we do”.

Interview Results

Four participants wished to give an in-person interview (two male and two female). All four described themselves as lecturers, with varying levels of research experience. One interviewee worked in the Department of Biological, Biomedical and Analytical Sciences, two in the Department of Health and Social Sciences, and one in Nursing and Midwifery. Two interviewees had extensive experience with open initiatives, while two were tentatively familiar with openness. This variety of perspectives and expertise meant the interviewees could offer views on a range of topics beyond the limits of the questionnaire, especially around legal nuances, copyright, and licensing.

Participants discussed the balances they maintained when working openly, such as how they dealt with the risks of data being misinterpreted or misused. They were unsure of where the burden of responsibility for data fell. Interviewee #2 asked, “that’s beyond your control but is it your responsibility?” Interviewee #4 argued similarly, saying –“there’s a balance between being free about what you do with [data], and keeping mechanisms of control to protect the end user who may not have the knowledge to make decisions with [that data] themselves.” In a similar study involving American university staff (Belikov & Bodily, 2016), participants struggled to extract high-quality resources from the sea of information available to them. This cohort experienced the same issue, which Interviewee #2 concisely summarised as “there’s a lot of good material out there, I just don’t know how to use it”.

One interview question asked what hypothetical change participants would make to reduce barriers to using open initiatives. Interviewee #1 focussed on information availability: they would improve standardisation and metadata to make resources more accessible and easier to find. Interviewee #4 focussed on information awareness: they would add information awareness and management to the National Curriculum to increase people’s understanding of access, copyright, and sharing resources. Both ideas –metadata and infrastructure, and information awareness– closely link to existing barriers such as discovering resources and using information confidently.

Interviewee #2 distinguished between intentionally open resources and resources acquired by circumventing access restrictions. Their choice was to legalise academic paywall-bypassing website Sci-Hub to increase research access, as Sci-Hub enables access to vast amounts of research using a quicker and often simpler process than official channels. Access data released by Sci-Hub supported their viewpoint; most Sci-Hub users were based in university campuses and so already had institutional access to many of the papers they downloaded (Bohannon, 2016; Bohannon & Elbakyan, 2016). This argument, and its supporting data, demonstrates the importance of speed and simplicity in decisions about using resources. It suggests that for open initiatives to succeed, working openly must be simpler than remaining closed.

Discussion

This study asked university staff about their perceptions of various open initiatives, and about their previous experiences with working openly, to understand which factors blocked staff from participating in open initiatives. We expected staff to experience many of the same participation barriers faced by participants in previous studies. In one previous study, participants' support for principles of openness, such as increased access to education, encouraged them to participate in OER. Based on the many similarities between open initiatives, this connection is likely to apply to the current participants.

Overall, participants did not express any ideological barriers towards participation in open initiatives. They instead faced the same barriers found in previous studies, which centred on practical concerns such as policy and guidance, organisational support, and personal skills or confidence. These findings emphasised that participation barriers often apply to multiple initiatives and time periods, rather than being unique to specific initiatives or institutions. Participants uniformly supported the included open principles. However, their unanimity might have been influenced by the questionnaire: because fewer questions discussed principles, the questionnaire may have provided less room for nuanced opinions.

In this study, staff understanding and participation were associated: the most knowledgeable participants were more likely to engage in open initiatives. In contrast, their level of positivity towards open initiatives was negatively correlated with their participation. As this negative association was identified after data collection had finished, we could not gain further clarification from participants. One explanation for this association could have been naivety –people who had never used open initiatives may have held unrealistically high expectations of them, while experienced users may have developed less optimistic expectations. Another explanation could have been burnout – people with extensive experience of open initiatives may have become less positive over time after experiencing barriers to initiatives or negative experiences with initiatives. Based on this group's survey and interview responses, the naivety argument did not seem appropriate and the burnout argument had limited support.

Participant Variety and STEM-Focus

While we surveyed participants of diverse ages, job roles, and service lengths, postgraduate researchers were under-represented. In a previous study on Open Science participation, principal investigators discussed how their postgraduate researchers experienced both great pressure to publish results and strict limits on their ability to work openly (Levin, Leonelli, Weckowska, Castle & Dupré, 2016). Future research should look more deeply into the unique experiences of postgraduate researchers. Participants in that study also explained how restrictive IPR block researchers from sharing material from industry-linked studies, and how researchers in competitive

fields could feel pressured to hide their data so other researchers did not overtake them. In this context, researchers felt torn between working openly to benefit their community and limiting openness to protect their career.

Industry-backed studies and competitive fields are prominent issues within scientific research, and open initiatives often focus on science subjects. However, resources can often discuss openness solely in terms of science, such as by framing open access as "access to scientific knowledge" (European University Association, 2014). The taxpayer argument for OA also centres on scientific and medical research while excluding other disciplines (Suber, 2004). As a result, staff from other disciplines may view openness as a purely scientific concern and so may see different costs and benefits in openness. Interviewee #3, who worked in a humanities subject, saw their ability to participate in open initiatives as limited because initiatives often focussed on research methods or arguments that were irrelevant to them. Future studies need to include staff from diverse academic discipline to obtain as many viewpoints as possible.

Open Educational Practice Policies

Four study participants achieved the maximum Understanding score of 18, suggesting that few staff within UWE possess an extensive knowledge of openness. Two interview participants were experienced users of open initiatives who proactively applied open approaches to their work, published work openly, and informally supported their colleagues. However, most staff were unsure of how to begin using open initiatives. Participants who lacked experience in working openly expressed confusion about the definitions and scope of open initiatives: they did not know where to start learning nor who to seek advice from. The variety of concepts and terminology involved in open initiatives could block people's early attempts to participate, as could their concerns about openness conflicting with copyright and IPR.

Based on this cohort's experiences, relying on experienced staff alone cannot effectively transfer knowledge within a university. Top-down guidance is needed, preferably in the form of guides or policies that clearly define open initiatives and lay out ways for staff to begin using open initiatives in their roles. Policies could also help to dispel concerns around plagiarism and data misuse, by explaining which types of adaptation and reuse are permitted within an institution.

Overarching Open Educational Practice policies, which contain ground rules for creating, storing, and sharing open resources, may help universities communicate about openness more effectively. Although developing overarching policies requires a significant time investment, policies can pre-emptively explain how to approach different types of resources. This can reduce the burden of resources created within complex situations, such as interdisciplinary resources, mixed-media resources, or publications with multiple authors. OEP policies could also reduce potential conflicts with copyright and intellectual property by clearly defining which works and adaptations are permitted. However, as OEP is a recent development compared to other open initiatives, and is not widely used, little research on the consequences of adopting OEP exists. In one group of educators, this lack of available research was itself a barrier to adopting OEP (Cronin, 2017). Future studies would need to pilot and evaluate OEP projects to assess their potential value.

Institutions wishing to create policies or mandates about openness would also need to evaluate how they explain that policy, to ensure all staff groups were aware of how that policy applies to them. OER use requires both lecturer and student involvement, while widespread OA use requires support from library and IT staff; library staff for journal acquisition and research data management, and IT staff for technical infrastructure. One study that compared librarians and researchers in the same universities (Creaser, 2010) revealed a clear communication gap between librarians and researchers.

While 23% of surveyed universities had an OA policy, 75% of researchers from those universities were unaware of any policy. 17% of researchers from the universities without policies assumed a policy existed, while 11% of researchers wrongly believed their university had a policy. In another university that surveyed staff six months after they were first permitted to upload their publications to preprint archives or a personal website, only 25% of staff knew about this change (Xia et al., 2012).

Subsequent studies would gather better information about creating an effective OEP policy by involving academic, library and IT staff. A similar study to this one looked at how academic librarians use and understand open access (Suri, 2018). Most of the surveyed librarians promoted OA and supported others in using OA, but did so sporadically. They often had limited knowledge of OA policies and mandates, which was possibly due to how universities assigned responsibility for engagement in OA.

Conclusion

Although participants strongly supported open initiatives, they faced a range of practical barriers across three main areas; personal skills and confidence, policy and guidance, and organisational support. The barriers discussed in this study had previously been identified in earlier research across multiple open initiatives, and no barriers were unique to this cohort.

Based on the similarities between open initiatives, institutions could make working openly easier for staff by focusing on specific practical ways of framing discussions about open initiatives. Demonstrating the simplicity and speed of accessing open content would encourage the staff who prioritise access to required resources. Emphasising the overall concept of Open Educational Practice and the goals of openness, rather than talking about individual initiatives as separate projects, would make openness more accessible and less daunting to novice staff. Finally, explaining the shared values of open initiatives, and explicitly connecting those values to existing policies and resources, would help to dispel misconceptions about open initiatives.

Overarching OEP policies could effectively demonstrate this unified approach and reduce the cognitive and administrative burden of participation in open initiatives. However, this potential solution requires further research on how to effectively implement and communicate about OEP policies. Studies on openness also need to involve staff from more diverse career levels, and a wider range of academic and non-academic departments, to ensure future policies reflect the varied needs and limitations experienced by university staff.

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