Summary
This paper is focused on the main aspects of an experience that took place from September to December 2013. It deals with the implementation of a course developed by the OportUnidad project, referred to as Principles and Strategies of Open Education for a Teaching Innovation (PREA, for its acronym in Spanish). This experience allowed assessing the proposal and resources created throughout the project, as well as their benefits for Latin American universities that might want to use open education. In fact, the analysis of this paper is mainly aimed not only at assessing the implementation of the course according to the opinion of the moderators and participants from 47 higher education institutions from Latin America, but also identifying improvement areas for future course editions, which will be available to the global community.

Key Words
Open Education, Open Education Resources, OportUnidad, Latin America, Innovation, Teacher Exchange.

Areas
Teaching impact and open education policies.

Sharing, collaborating, networking, forming learning communities, forming alliances … terms that might be related to open education. In fact, the OportUnidad Project is intended, based on the actions and resources that are the result of a two-year effort, to make these words become commitments and actions in every Latin American university.

OportUnidad
The OportUnidad project is co-funded by the European Commission with the participation of 12 universities (4 in Europe and 8 in Latin America) and its main objective, as set forth in Compendium of European and Latin American case studies and interviews on open educational resources and practices, is to bring the use of Open Education Resources (OER) closer to the educational practices in Latin American universities by developing a common higher education area between these two major sectors (Inamorato, Cobo, and Ferreira, 2012, p. 11).

The selection of UNED as one of the 8 partner universities in Latin America responds to its previous experience in projects from the European Commission and its 36-year experience
in distance learning, which represents a highly valuable precedent for the contributions it might make in each stage of the project and thus in the specific deliverables in each stage.

Like its participation in the OCW project, UNED’s participation in this initiative has several benefits; however, one of the most important benefits is to build and propose, together with other higher education institutions, core guidelines and actions to integrate OERs in different university areas and departments.

Moreover, as a result of this project, there are several available products that universities can use so that their participation in the open education movement through the use, readaptation, and creation of OERs is significant and successful. Some of the elements currently available are:

- The *Compendium of European and Latin American case studies and interviews on open educational resources and practices*, a paper containing the most important breakthroughs in this area for the above-mentioned region.
- A *Regional Agenda* for the integration of OERs in different institutional areas and departments; this agenda provides a more detailed scenario of the open education movement.
- The proposed *Road Map*, conceived as a tool to determine which road to take in each of the higher education centers regarding the work with OERs.

The opinion of most participants who submitted the assessment of these resources is highly positive. In the case of the Compendium, most of them stated that it should be available in the course platform and in other areas as well; moreover, they think it is a good option to learn about the success cases of other higher education institutions in the open education movement.

In the case of the Regional Agenda and the Road Map, most participants believe that they are necessary and valuable inputs, particularly for those who are starting to submit proposals in these areas. Nevertheless, others believe that they are difficult to use and understand; therefore, it would be important to consider the possibility of giving an induction about the objectives and contents of these resources.

Another deliverable of this project that might be considered highly complex is the course on open education aimed at university officials; this course addresses theoretical and practical aspects of OERs and Open Education Practices. The purpose of the course is: “to promote teaching practices based on open education principles within the Latin American university education context” (OportUnidad, 2013, par. 3). It was intended to make participants join the open education community in order to take on the commitment to share papers, resources, solutions, and perspectives with others.

In fact, UNED and Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) were entrusted with proposing and implementing the components of this course, specifically, the course design, the course outline, the guidelines for national moderators and course participants, the dissemination plan, and the course implementation through a pilot study that anticipated a maximum of 160 students. The course ended on December 13, 2013.
Below are some of the main characteristics of the course, which can be consulted in the project website [http://www.oportunidadproject.eu](http://www.oportunidadproject.eu).

- It had an initial enrollment of 139 participants, of which 84 participants completed the course in 8 Latin American host countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay); with 8 national moderators (tutors), one from each country and 1 international moderator (chosen by UNED).

**Graph 1.** Enrollment of the First Edition of the PREA course, by Number of Participants Enrolled per Country.
Source: Hernández, Sandoval, Sandoval and Valverde (2014)

- 47 Latin American higher education institutions benefited from this course.
• It consists of 80 working hours (from September 23 to December 13).
• The chosen platform is Coursesites, a free platform developed by Blackboard Learn.
• All the materials are available in Spanish and Portuguese.
• The course consists of 5 activities and some of them promote collaboration and participation.
• Before the beginning of the course, participants had an introductory activity to learn and develop a Road Map to work with OERs, by focusing on actions in one or several areas of their educational institution and choosing one or several approaches proposed in the Regional Agenda. Upon analyzing the Road Maps proposed by participants who finished the course, the approaches are as follows:

**Graph 3. Approaches Considered by Participants in their Road Maps.**
Source: Hernández et al. (2014)
• 3 webinars were conducted by lecturers from different universities that are participating in the OportUnidad Project.
• Throughout the course, there was an ongoing assessment of evidence-based education.
• All course materials will be made available to the global community through a license granted by Creative Commons.

**What is the course “Principles and Strategies of Open Education for a Teaching Innovation” about?**

The idea of working with OERs and thus with Open Education Practices is appealing to those who are cast under the spell of such a task. The possibilities and advantages of this task is that those who know it always want to take advantage of it and, therefore, explore it further.

The course “Principles and Strategies of Open Education for a Teaching Innovation” is an opportunity not only to learn, but also to meet professionals who have common interests and want to freely share their ideas with others. It consists of 5 activities:

- Approach to OER and OEP
- Analysis of the teaching practice
- Adoption of OERs
- Openness and collaboration
- Conclusion and projection

Participants had the following behavior during the development of the different activities:

**Graph 4.** Persevering Participants in Each Activity, by Host Country
Source: Hernández et al.(2014)
Despite the aspects under analysis, for this course there are as many opinions as there are participants. It is important to mention the experience of tutors and participants gathered by the excellent tools developed by the people in charge of the course; in total there were 8 moderators and 28 approved participants who submitted their assessments.

**Table 1. Opinions of Moderators and Participants about Different Topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source: Hernández et al. (2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Submission and Implementation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 8 moderators indicated that they were not satisfied with the chosen platform. They mentioned the number of tasks, but they pointed out that it was burdensome and slow, and that the interaction spaces were “too many clicks away.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**International Moderation**

All moderators agreed that it was excellent, timely, educational, and efficient. It was well assessed because 24 stated their approval of the work done by the international moderator; 3 believed it could have been better, and one person did not answer.

**Activities According to Actors**

According to the tutors, some activities were more motivating than others. The most appealing activities are shown in Graph 5.

**Graph 5. Perception of Motivating Activities**

According to the tutors, some activities were more motivating than others. The most appealing activities are shown in Graph 5.

They said none of the activities were motivating, but the less motivating are shown below:

**Graph 6. Perception of Demotivating Activities**

As part of the activities, participants worked directly with OERs; in this case, they were given 3 options: create, reuse, or adapt. The result was the creation of 2 resources, the reuse of 2 others, and the adaptation of 68.

The participants who worked as a group on institutional projects focused on the following materials:

**Graph 7. Development of Institutional Proposals**

Group Proposals, Activity 4
Assessments

Opinions were divided; 5 moderators said they were well-developed but difficult to use. Others said they were complicated but worked out fine. Most participants (24) said they were appropriate and useful; 3 said they were demanding, required too much guidance and did not support the experience. Also, one participant did not answer.

Methodology

In general, they liked the proposal; some made some suggestions for improvement such as intermediate activities, different times to do the homework, or considering specific issues of regions. Most participants (25) said it fit the course and their needs; 3 said it was difficult, and 1 suggested considering other assessment methods.

Course Length

Almost everybody agreed that it was good, but 1 said that it could be extended for 4 more weeks, and 1 said it has to be shortened. Opinions were divided, like in the case of moderators; 26 said it was good; 1 suggested it should be longer, and 1 said it should be shorter.

What’s left …

An experience like this course has many lessons to learn. Some of them are related to OERs, but others go beyond.

The open education movement is a reality. Higher education institutions cannot afford to miss the opportunity to take greater strides. The immediacy of our life and the almost immediate obsolescence of materials and technology compel us to take advantage of our own efforts and the efforts of others. The openness of this movement and the personal rigor of participants are the tools that strengthen the quality of the OERs that are created, adapted, and used around the world.

In the same way, materials such as those developed by this project are key guides and examples of the possible paths to follow and of the actions that can be taken; and above all, the course is the first attempt to make information and teaching resources on the use of OERs available to the global community.

Improvement is Always Possible

In view of the need to participate more actively in the open education movement and in the use of OERs in different areas, we should always look for a way to improve quality, develop better practices, and refine tools.

In the case of this course which could be taught to other people who might be interested, there are some aspects that need to be improved to obtain better results.

- The platform used for the course has the advantage of being free. Some of its disadvantages are its lack of stability and that loading different necessary sections takes too long. There should be other options, either proprietary or belonging to institutions that want to venture into the use of OERs. Both moderators and participants agreed that there should be a more simple and more user-friendly platform that could meet people’s abilities to use technology. Moreover, there should be an introductory session on the use of the platform chosen each time.
• Encourage participants to finish the course through some sort of an additional commitment to participate in the course. The dropout rate was high during the first experience maybe because the timing was not the best to teach the course because the school year, at least in Costa Rica, was about to end. Moreover, the course coincided with the end of the quarter in different institutions.
• Both participants and moderators suggested a balance between group and individual activities. They also recommended more interaction among peers and more feedback for different activities, particularly, journals and assessment rubrics.
• Improve the guides. In some cases, it is not clear what participants can and cannot do. For example, activity 1 said that the moderator could participate in other forums, but it was not the same moderator designated in each subgroup, it was rather the country’s moderator. These aspects should be improved. Moreover, materials should use the jargon and vocabulary used in the country where the course will be taught.
• The course has a well-established entry profile, and participants should be aware that if they do not fulfill it, there could be some limitations on their performance. There should be a better explanation about its potential problems according to its characteristics, particularly technological characteristics.
• Webinars were additional resources. Their use could be encouraged and improved with the use of platforms that allow a smoother interaction between lecturers and participants. However, this resource is highly valued by participants who made positive observations, particularly about the quality of the information provided.

References
Hernández, D., Sandoval, A.; Sandoval, A. and Valverde, J. (2014). Informe de evaluación del curso Princípios y estrategias de educación abierta para la innovación docente (PREA). San José: This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union.


OportUnidad. (2013). Curso PREA. Taken from: http://www.oportunidadproject.eu/resources/course-prea