Design Options for Open Learning with Formal Credentialing

SHORT DESCRIPTION
This “open education action lab” session aims to provide a brainstorming workshop discussing some preliminary findings and key issues raised in the 2015 OERu (Open Educational Resources University) input evaluation, particularly relating to the design practices of open online learning with formal credentialing and accreditation. Coordinated by the OER Foundation, OERu is an independent, not-for-profit organization with 36 participating Higher Education institutions worldwide, making higher education accessible to everyone by offering free OER-based online courses and “affordable ways for learners to gain academic credit towards qualifications from recognised institutions”. The evaluation aims to assess different design options and identify major challenges. The goals of this workshop are to report the lessons we have learned, facilitate discussions, and obtain feedback into our initial findings. On completion of the workshop, participants will have an in-depth understanding of design options and business models for open learning with formal credentialing as well as the major challenges based on the OERu practices. They will also have opportunities to share their own practices and insights.

PROPOSED LENGTH
90 minutes

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Maximum participants 20.

INTENDED AUDIENCE
Participants include open education practitioners, university educators, and learning designers who are interested in open educational designs within institutional contexts, in particular, designing open courses that meet requirements of formal credentialing and accreditation. No specific level of technical expertise required.

OBJECTIVES
- Introduce preliminary findings of the 2015 OERu (Open Educational Resources University) input evaluation, regarding design options and practices of open online courses with formal credentialing and accreditation;
- Discuss the key design issues raised in the evaluation and brainstorm insights and solutions with global open education professionals;
- Provide participants with opportunities to share their interpretation, insights, and experiences, which will shape/inspire the OERu practice as well as other open education approaches;
- On completion of the workshop, participants will have an in-depth understanding of not only the OERu design practices, but also the institutional contexts for open education design;
We expect that participants will use the workshop as an inspiring and constructive step for further developing their open course designs as well as global networks for collaboration.

BACKGROUND
Coordinated by the OER Foundation, OERu is an independent, not-for-profit organization with 35 participating Higher Education institutions worldwide, making higher education accessible to everyone by offering free online courses and “affordable ways for learners to gain academic credit towards qualifications from recognised institutions” (McGreal, Rory, et al. 2014). The 2015 OERu evaluation follows the CIPP (context, input, process, and product) evaluation framework (Stufflebeam 2003) and focuses on “input analysis” at this stage. The evaluation aims to assess different design options and identify major challenges in online curriculum developments, nominating open courses by participating institutions, open business models, open governance, and other aspects. Issues raised in the evaluation process are not unique for OERu and will have relevance to other practitioners designing open education. The practices of OERu and the evaluation process provide a valuable and resource-rich starting point for critical and constructive discussions in the wider global open education community.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION
The workshop includes presentations and sub-group discussion. It offers an introduction to OERu developments and its 2015 Input evaluation as well as opportunities for all participants to explore relevant design issues through discussions. The participants will be split into up to three sub-groups. Three topics will be discussed. Under each topic, the sub-groups will discuss for up to 10 minutes and each will present back to the whole group. The facilitators will give a short instruction at the beginning of each topic and a summary at the end. The activities for sub-group discussion include commenting on preliminary findings, short questionnaire (some selected survey questions used in the OERu evaluation), sharing good practices and challenges, and brainstorming ideas on practical solutions and future trends. A proposed timeline is as follows.

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<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Welcome and Intros</td>
<td>In the informal part of this session participants will have a chance to introduce themselves and briefly mention any previous experience in designing open courses with formal credentialing.</td>
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<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The workshop starts with an introductory presentation that briefly overviews the models and practices of OERu, the process and preliminary findings of its 2015 Input Evaluation. It is followed by a short Q&amp;A session.</td>
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<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Sub-group discussion 1: design options for assessment and credentialing of online learning</td>
<td>The first topic is “design options and approaches for assessing and credentialing online learning”. The participants will assess and comment on the possible design options on curriculum design, course development, and assessment for open learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Sub-group discussion 2: business models for open education initiative</td>
<td>This session will look at the open business models for a sustainable open education initiative. It is based on the practices and challenges of OERu, but participants</td>
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will be invited to discuss their own experiences, challenges, and recommendations.

| 20 minutes | Sub-group discussion 3: Open education and established institutions | The last topic is about good practices of integrating open courses with “traditional” learning and teaching in the established institutions, not only the accreditation and credentialing of online learning, but also using open courses to improve the digital capacity of the “traditional” system. The future trends of open education will also be discussed accordingly. |
| 5 minutes | Conclusion | Wrap up and final comments. |

**FACILITATOR BIO**

**Professor Mike Keppell**

Professor Mike Keppell is the Executive Director, Australian Digital Futures Institute (ADFI) at the University of Southern Queensland. Mike has a long professional history in higher education in Australia, Canada and Hong Kong. He was Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Flexible Learning Institute at Charles Sturt University, and prior to that was Head of the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Technology at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. His research focuses on learning spaces, blended learning, learning oriented assessment, authentic learning and transformative learning using design based research. Mike has edited two books: Instructional Design: Case Studies in Communities of Practice; Physical and Virtual Learning Spaces in Higher Education: Concepts for the Modern Learning Environment. Mike is a Life Member of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ascilite). Professor Mike Keppell is leading the 2015 OERu Input Evaluation and will be the principal facilitator for this workshop.

**Dr Xiang Ren**

Dr. Xiang Ren is a research fellow at the Australian Digital Future Institute (ADFI), University of Southern Queensland. He has a background of scholarly publishing and open access scholarship. Xiang has spent more than a decade working in academic publishing industry as senior editor and sales director. He is an active advocate of open access and a well-known columnist on digital publishing in China. Xiang completed his PhD at Queensland University of Technology with an outstanding doctoral thesis award. His doctoral research looked at open and networked initiatives and the digital transformation of scholarly publishing. Xiang has published a number of research papers and articles with leading journals and professional media on relevant topics. His current research interests include: open access scholarship, open educational resources/practices, digital publishing, and Chinese digital media. Dr Xiang Ren is conducting the 2015 OERu Input Evaluation and will be co-facilitator for this workshop.

**REFERENCES**
