

GO-GN Fellowship Final Report

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Motivation for the Fellowship

In 2016, when I joined the GO-GN network, my PhD project was still taking shape, and I benefited tremendously from the support of the team and conversations with scholars around the world. Since graduating from my PhD program, I have been seeking ways to continue collaborating and engaging with the GO-GN team and global network of scholars. It has been challenging to find concrete inroads while starting a new position combined with the onset and continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic. In normal times we may have had a chance to connect at conferences or other meetings. I was hopeful that a fellowship might provide an opportunity to connect in a more intentional way and continue contributing to research on open educational practices.

Since graduating, I am very fortunate to have obtained a faculty position at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. I work as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in our Faculty of Education. In this role I support future and current educators in the use of technology for supporting teaching and learning. Open educational practices guide this work and I seek to share and develop the literacies of open practices to teachers. I am finding that awareness of open education, open licensing, and open practices are still emerging in the context of teacher education and professional development, especially at the K-12 level. It was this gap that motivated the project to investigate the values and principles most important for early career open educators.

Overview of the Fellowship

Through the fellowship I was interested in identifying some of the foundational values and principles for open education in order to best determine how to introduce future teachers to the field and practice of openness in teaching and learning. Beyond recognizing and using openly licensed content, I would like to explore the types of new or emergent pedagogical practices as well considerations around technology integration that aligns with open education principles.

Previous research has suggested that the use of OER by teacher candidates may be an effective alternative to traditional resources used by K-12 teachers to enhance both student and teacher agency (DeBarger, 2019). This speaks to the need for a greater awareness of OER among K-12 teachers. At the same time, scholars have argued that “teacher educators are well-positioned to evolve future use of open practices within the K-12 curriculum” (Allen & Katz, 2019, p. 318). These practices may involve pedagogical approaches, assessment design, and technology use that is driven by openness in teaching and learning.

I believe that many of the values that inspire the open education movement have the potential to connect with prominent themes in teacher education programs such as accessibility, community engagement, inquiry-driven learning, multimodality, developing a growth mindset, collaboration, mindfulness, and multiculturalism. I would like to explore these through the lens of open technologies, open content, and open pedagogy. The goal would be to identify some of the values, principles, and/or skills required for getting started in open education that could be shared with new or early career teachers.

Research Design

The main focus of the fellowship involved an initial literature review followed by a survey into the main qualities of open educational practice. My initial idea was to build upon the technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK) model developed by Koehler and Mishra (2009), as this encompasses technology, pedagogy, and content while also exploring the intersection of each of these together.

However, I recognize there is a tension in being too prescriptive about identifying foundations in a space of so much complexity and nuance. This was identified in my OER22 proposal as well as during the Fellows Research Special seminar. I also recognize there has been lots of work done in articulating digital literacies for educators as well as in exploring the notion of open educational practices through frameworks by many in the GO-GN network and beyond. Thus, I became less wed to the TPACK model, but will keep it in mind as the data emerges, to see if there might be any synergies identified in the findings.

I designed a short survey to research the main principles and/or values of open educational practice that we can engage new teachers with, by inviting open education practitioners around the world to share their thoughts and perspectives. The survey asked open practitioners to identify the principles and values most important to open education practices in the areas of pedagogy, technology, and content, as well as creating space for principles and values identified outside of these three categories. The survey requires an ethics review at my institution prior to going live that was completed in April 2022.

My goal was to invite participation from open education practitioners around the world, leveraging the GO-GN network to find and attract respondents. I also used social networks to promote the survey widely and shared the work through conference presentations to promote the work further.

Events and Resources

At the beginning of the fellowship, we were invited to share each project with past GO-GN fellows and other members of GO-GN. At the time, my idea was still largely unrefined, and this initial presentation really helped to enhance the proposal among a safe and considerate audience. The feedback provided was thoughtful and kind, yet, rigorous and critical. Several plans changed as a result of this feedback and even my choice of language and terms used were more carefully considered based on the feedback.

We were also encouraged to present at OER22 with regard to our projects, and that opportunity, again, provided significant chances for feedback and refinement. I provided a [pre-recorded presentation, which you can access here](#), and participated in the Discord for the conference where feedback and questions were posed. Through these interactions I met several new contacts who shared a passion for increasing awareness about open education in K-12 contexts. I have plans to present alongside at least one of these new contacts about open education in K-12 in the near future.

Outcomes of the Fellowship

Throughout the fellowship I've been able to identify some allies and individuals who have similar interests in bringing open education into teacher training programs. I hope to develop these relationships further. Open education in K-12 has been identified as an area of priority by some folks in the open education community.

Based on the limited survey results to date, I can offer a sneak peak into some of the main keywords in the areas of open technology, open pedagogy, and open content that have been collected so far:

- Technological values and principles – ethical, private, equitable, accessible, open source, pedagogy focused, critically reviewed, interoperable.
- Pedagogical values and principles – care, equity, learner autonomy, choice, transparent, participatory, valued outputs, authentic, contributing to global knowledge, power sharing.

- Content/curriculum values and principles – content that supports open learning, democratically constructed, values both expert and beginner, collaboratively created and curated, student involved, relevant, useful, practical.

I hope that once I close of the survey at the end of September, I will be able to share the results of this survey and even publish a paper that looks at open education and teacher training programs. Perhaps once published this will open up more doors for partnerships and collaboration. Presently there is not very much in the way of literature specifically around sharing open education with new K-12 teachers. However, much can be found regarding technology integration in teacher education programs, so I believe this work could make a valuable contribution.



Figure 1 A Word Cloud of Survey Responses as of August 2022

It has been great to reconnect with the GO-GN network. My ‘fellow’ fellows and I have had several conversations throughout this process supporting one another. We have even talked about trying to write something together, as each one of our projects sought to identify the ways that open education might support in less developed areas; Catherine with NGOs, Viviane and I and the area of K-12 education.

This fellowship has really provided me with an opportunity to carefully consider open education in the context of teacher education. This is where I now have an opportunity to make change and inform my own teaching based on the feedback from the global open education community. I very much believe that if we encourage K-12 teachers to work with openness in mind, and provide them with the tools to source, edit, design, and build meaningful learning experiences in their classrooms, their contributions to teaching materials, teaching and learning strategies, and assessment activities can be more readily available to others, collaboratively created, and the projects they engage learners with can be all the more interesting. I will continue to encourage new teachers to design with 'openness in mind' informed by the principles and values shared by the community through the survey I conducted as part of the fellowship.

Risks

I'm not done a lot of work with surveys in the past. However, I certainly have learned that they are not easily done, in terms of getting responses. The survey was promoted widely at the OER22 and OTESSA conferences, via social media, and through the GO-GN mailing list, yet I still didn't manage to get many responses. It may be that the area of interest is too niche, or that there are not many teacher educators thinking about embedding open education in their programming. I don't necessarily see this as a fail, and in fact may reflect a gap in the area.

As I write this final report, I still have not received as many completed responses as I had hoped for. With that said, the contributions I do have are very rich, and I am very grateful to those that submitted. You can sense a passion for open education in teacher education and professional development throughout the responses. I really hope to receive a few more responses before the end of September, at which time I will close off the survey. In any case, I hope to still prepare a literature review and use the responses received to share the project widely through an open access publication.

Support from GO-GN

From the initial meetings to discuss the project through to now, I have felt well supported by the GO-GN team through the feedback offered on the project, assistance with promoting the survey, and support with organizing and planning for presentations. GO-GN also provided support in making the fellowship more visible and open from the start, which I feel has benefited the project greatly. In the beginning, I have to admit that this was uncomfortable in a project with such a short duration. There is a sense of vulnerability in putting your research ideas out there in the world early on. What if it does not make sense, what if I missed something important, what if my ideas get scooped? The reasons to not share early are many. However, I really felt that I experienced gains in the quality of this project, and certainly in my own experience along the way, through constant iteration and open feedback.

Impact of the Fellowship

I will be further promoting the survey in an attempt to get more responses. I then hope to write up the results and further present the findings through conference presentations and a published manuscript. This work will continue beyond the timeframe of the fellowship and I am happy that the work was incubated through my time as a fellow.

Additionally, the learnings from the fellowship will become part of my practice as a teacher educator. I frequently teach a technology integration course with teacher candidates and try to build open educational practices into the curriculum. It would be great if I could share the model informed by this research, with

students directly and get some of their perspectives as well. I've also developed an interest in understanding how teacher candidates might value or interpret openness in their early training and practice. So, there may be an additional thread to this research to explore teacher candidates' perspectives on openness in an education technology course.

The fellowship has been a great opportunity to merge my interest in open education with my new role as a teacher educator. I'm really interested in providing teacher candidates with practical advice and guidance on using educational technology and I believe that coming at it with an open education lens can be a useful way for teachers to think through the ways in which technology is brought into the classroom.

References

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