On your marks, get set, go open!
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Abstract
In the design and development of digital pedagogies, consideration of the level of ‘openness’ should be an integral part of the process. Bates (2015) recently described the current ‘continuum of technology-based learning’, noting that teaching and learning that does not involve technology, social media, or open approaches, is an increasingly rare thing. Considering the diverse array of educational approaches now claiming to be open, it has been suggested that the term ‘open’ has lost its way – or at the very least, means different things to different people. Perhaps, as Audrey Watters (2014) has suggested, this loss of focus has created confusion in the minds of those wishing to embrace open approaches. A recent US survey showed a widespread lack of awareness of open educational resources (OER) among academic staff in higher education, but a strong desire to use open materials in the future (Alan & Seamen, 2014). So, what can staff do to gain a foothold in understanding OER, and to develop their practice by finding and sharing OER? How can we support and encourage staff who may be at different levels of awareness, understanding, and usage of OER? And finally, in institutions without adequate policy and supporting strategies, how can people get ready to ‘go open’ – not just at an individual or module level, but beyond?

This paper addresses the conference theme of ‘open educational practice’. The methodological approach is rooted in the perspectives of two open educators, both committed practitioners and researchers of ‘open’ – not only in their individual teaching and learning practice, but also in championing openness as a necessary and democratic practice for education, at all levels. Emerging themes and conflicts regarding openness and OER are explored via a literature review (including, but not limited to, previous research undertaken by the authors). These themes will inform the design of (i) a mapping tool which can be used by individuals to locate themselves and their current practice, and (ii) a series of straightforward approaches to OER so that individuals can ‘get using, get sharing, and get influencing’. It is intended that these simple tools will be able to be used by educators at all points on the openness continuum, from those just learning about openness and OER, to those wishing to effect wider change.

References