Adoption and impact of OER in the Global South

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The seeds of this book were planted a long time ago in the hearts and minds of my predecessor, Maria Ng, and wise educational minds like Gajaraj Dhanarajan of Wawasan Open University who supported a research network on Open and Digital Learning in Asia. Building on this earlier research, they helped conceive of the idea of a research network focused on the promise and challenges of Open Educational Resources (OER) in the Global South – which eventually became the Research on Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D) network. I am so grateful they did, because we are now reaping the benefits of those early seeds.

What ROER4D became and accomplished was much more than I think was envisioned in those early days – even with the very ambitious research agenda that was set out. The vision was to improve educational opportunities by supporting the production of influential, high quality research by researchers from the South and for the diverse contexts where the research was done. With the generous support of UKaid through the Information Networks in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa programme, the project grew to reach over 100 researchers in 21 countries. ROER4D, the name of the network, has become synonymous with high quality OER research from a Southern perspective. Furthermore, the research and researchers within the network have gone on to have broader influence – such as helping to write OER policies for provincial education ministries in Sri Lanka and implementing state-sponsored OER portals for teacher professional development in three states in India.

The network didn’t just research openness in education, it leveraged different openness practices strategically and to great effect. This volume being perhaps the most visible manifestation of that openness – an Open Access publication with associated micro-data where possible. But it ran deeper than that. The network embraced and experimented with the possibility of engaging openly throughout all of their work, from their highly inclusive decision-making processes to the degree of sharing and collaboration across the network.

Of course, none of this just happened – it took a lot of work. Often more than anticipated. While ROER4D was a collaborative effort involving many researchers across many time zones, at the centre of it all was the Network Hub, Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams and her dynamic team within the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at the University of Cape Town. The successes of ROER4D would not have been possible without this dedicated and conscientious team who were truly open to learning, exploring new ideas, questioning assumptions, trying new things, and working very hard – and most of all, committed to improving educational opportunities around the world.

This Open Access book is a reflection of this diversity, collaboration, strategic application of openness and diligent work over the last five years. It is a rich tapestry of research, data and insights on the adoption and impact of OER from across a multitude of contexts. If you are interested in Open Education and OER, there is something in this book for you.
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who worked hard to make it happen. It has been a real pleasure to have been a part of this ROER4D journey.

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