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Open Educational Resources: Education for the World? (Outline)

In a lot of countries in the world, education still is understood as being a privilege of some. The abilities of reading and writing often are seen as being individual skills (UNESCO, Adama Ouane) and the governments of such countries do not focus on activities on developing education. Generally, education is understood as the key issue to solve as well national as also international problems, like political or religious extremism, poverty, and hunger. Transforming societies into socially acting ones in which the surviving of the people is not a matter of the best connections, fittest or luckiest, but a matter of self-evidence, requires not only a basic change of thinking regarding the value of and need for more/better education in those countries, but also support from other (developed) countries. But how can we manage to create a world-wide knowledge society, particularly without repeating failures done in the past decades in the field of developing aid?

Open Educational Resources (OER) can play a central role in reaching educational justice in the world (Susan D'Anthony, UNESCO). There already are lots of high-quality OERs available and accessible via various repositories, such as, Merlot or the UNESCO OER Repository. However, our research has shown that although most of those educational resources can be considered being of high quality, a critical threshold in usage is not yet reached (OPAL). One main reason of professionals to refuse reusing OER has been found as well in the contexts of higher and adult education- (OPAL), as also in different school-scenarios (Richter & Ehlers, e-Learning papers): It was the uncertainty if the resources match the educational context and the inability to reach the needed evidence. Our research mainly took place in the European context. In the worldwide context, much more contextual differences are to be expected and thus, more uncertainty and mistrust: Most OER have been produced within and for the contexts of (western) industrialized countries and may not fit into the learners' contexts of many developing countries. In this context, the language gap can be expected being the obstacle that easiest could be overcome. We argue that just providing those resources as a contextualized 'give-away' cannot lead to reach the aim of educational justice throughout the world, but worse, without further action, the gap between the industrialized countries and the developing world may even be risen: Our research (Richter 2010) has shown that when implementing learning in foreign contexts, not taking the cultural context of the targeted learners into consideration can lead to their frustration and finally to a general denial of participation. Thus, even if they were translated to the language of the targeted learners, those resources still could not easily be reused without being adapted to their national/regional context.

By analysing prominent failures in connection with developing aid activities from the past decades, we firstly will show that just providing (even contextually fitting) resources, e. g., construction material or agricultural machines, did not lead to sustainable development in developing countries. It can be assumed that this, in our days commonly accepted insight, also is transferrable to the context of education. In educational scenarios, the result from just offering educational resources may even be less successful, since the initial success of, e.g., temporary providing water through a fountain that later on runs dry, may fail to appear as long as we do not empower the educators within the contexts to conduct the adaptation process, themselves. In this paper, we will outline which contextual aspects need to be taken into consideration and how such an adaptation process can be conducted.

Secondly, we will discuss the use of e-Learning in the context of basic education which differs enormously from those in higher and adult education. The basic problem, particularly in developing countries, is not a lack of people with proper higher education, but the tremendous number of illiterates: In development countries, often, no basic education is available for the general public. **Therefore, not just higher and adult education needs to be provided but particularly also basic education. But to what extent can e-Learning serve as a replacement for face-to-face education in the sector of basic education, particularly when it comes to situations, where the learners, first of all, need to reach such very fundamental abilities like reading and writing? What are special challenges related to this scenario?** We will analyse the state of the art of (pure) e-Learning approaches in basic education, and determine already working solutions and needs for further research. Such research also would help illiterates in the developed world, who often do not dare to admit their disability to the public, and who rather would prefer bridging their educational gap by themselves.

The approach, we present to solve the dilemma of, on the one hand, having lots of freely available high quality educational resources, but on the other hand, not being able to properly implement those in the contexts where they are needed, follows the subsidiarity principle and thus, the concept of "aid for self-help". We will present and discuss key issues that need to be solved and we will outline steps that already can be taken and which further research is needed.