



## OER? What OER? Integrating Video OER in a Teacher Education Programme

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### ABSTRACT

The *Food for thought* series is an Open Educational Resource (OER) in video format created by teachers and students in Higher Education (HE) for the academic community. The series offers open, bite-size, just-in-time initial and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers in HE. Voices and perspectives from practitioners around the globe are shared and provide a broader perspective on learning and teaching. The series shows how OERs can remove barriers to learning and professional development (Butcher, 2011) and be brought into mainstream teaching and the learning landscape in HE through academic development activities.

The *Food for thought* series has been used systematically in a variety of academic development activities within the University of Salford and elsewhere. In this paper, we focus on how the series has been integrated within the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) and specifically the module Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (LTHE) to promote reflection on own practice and model the use of OERs. The evaluation of this integration is shared here. The impact of the *Food for thought* series on student learning and the role it played in raising awareness and use of OERs are explored. Recommendations are made about how this series could potentially enable wider use, re-use, and adaptation for local needs (Lane, 2012) within other professional development activities.

**Keywords:** OER; teacher education; Academic Development; PgCert; videotemplates; and uploading files.

### Context

Academic development units have moved centre stage in institutions and provide initial and continuing professional development of staff teaching in Higher Education. The landscape of academic development activities is changing and observations that technologies are underused in academic development activities (Donnelly, 2010) could soon belong to the past. More and more HEA- and JISC-funded as well as DIY projects linked to Academic Development provide a range of OERs and examples of Open Academic Practice utilising digital technologies and collaborative and networked learning approaches that provide useful resources to busy academics while modelling learning and teaching in the Digital Age.

Academics engage in research and are used to engaging in related conversations with colleagues and in peer reviews. Teaching seems still to be practised mostly in isolation. Benfield and de Laat (2010, p. 196) note that collaborative knowledge building is something that perhaps goes against “the tradition and practice in higher education that favours individuality and competitiveness”. However, Palmer (2007, p. 148) reminds us that “we must spend more time talking to each other about teaching”, which will help teachers grow collectively and enable learning with and from each other. The author developed the Teaching and Learning Conversations (TLC), which brought academics together face to face and online to share expertise and learn with and from each other. Through the series, resources were created that enabled asynchronous engagement through recorded TLC sessions and Slideshare presentations in the spirit of Open Educational Practice (OEP). Findings of this initiative confirmed that this type of CPD for teachers was valued and that technologies have the potential to engage more academics in diverse and bite-size staff development activities (Nerantzi, 2011).

Through the process of making, individuals and groups can share ideas, thoughts, reflections, and expertise and advance their own understanding, knowledge, and skills in a particular area (Gauntlett, 2011). The participatory web and social media as well as networked technologies we have in our pockets are shaping new ways of communicating and collaborating within the teaching and learning landscape (Conole & Alevizou, 2010). The digital tools now available extend opportunities for creators to make, disseminate and interact with digital content using a variety of social platforms, including video, more easily and faster, inexpensively and more widely as in many cases minimal technical skills are required (Hall & Wright, 2007; Martin & Siry, 2012).

Mayer (2005, p. 31) notes that “people learn more deeply from words and pictures than from words alone”, and he links this to the fact that humans process information via an auditory and visual channel. Mayer developed the Theory of Multimedia Learning based on this dual information process, its limited capacity, and the selection and filtering process. He proposes that multimedia activities that are designed based on how the human mind works can create more natural and powerful learning experiences. Video combines still and moving pictures as well as words and sound. The pedagogical value of video is increasingly recognised more widely in education but also more specifically in teacher education (Masats & Dooly, 2011; Cullen, 1991), especially if video activities are modelled and used to trigger reflection, engagement, and conversations (Nerantzi, 2013). Jordan (2012, p. 24) notes, for example, “that the use of voice, particularly where augmented with moving image, can support learning in many ways. There are affective aspects; the way audio and video can help us to connect with people and emotions, and more practical benefits connected with the richness and reliability of information capture.” However, it must also be

acknowledged that video can be an inflexible learning resource, that [does] not necessarily encourage engagement (Bracher, Ottewill, & Shephard, 2005, p. 142) through which active learning might be challenging to achieve (Laurillard, 2002). Also, lengthy videos might contribute to a more passive experience and “may cause the attention to wander” as documented in Hall and Wright (2007, pp. 6-7). It is therefore suggested that videos should be shorter, with built-in opportunities for interaction and activities. This strategy is in line with Prof. Dalton Kehoe’s observations in Young (2008) about the production of video lectures. He suggests a much shorter length than the typical 50 minutes of the face-to-face lecture is required to keep students engaged online and suggests the segmentation of topics and the birth of “mini lectures” which also re-form the format of the lecture in the traditional classroom.

YouTube is a platform to create, edit and disseminate user-generated video content. It would not exist without its users, and, while it might at first appear an extension of television, the difference is that the passive nature of watching television is turned on its head. Everybody can become a producer. Everybody has a voice through participating in online conversations. But why do people like to share? Gauntlett (2011) notes that there is a degree of pleasure responsible for this but also the fact that humans like to engage in conversations and be part of communities, to support and be supported.

Increasingly, videos are made available under a Creative Commons licence and, while editing these might be more challenging than other OER formats, they still enrich the offer and contribute to the collection of resources available to educators and students – to the wider learning community. There is a need to focus on the integrated use of OERs (Conole, 2012) and this is the approach adopted for the *Food for thought* series. The use of OERs is modelled on the PGCAP in a variety of learning and teaching situations, including open educational practice that helps academics and other professionals who support learning in Higher Education to think and re-think about their own practices and identify opportunities to integrate OERs.

A shortage of equivalent OERs in this format around the teaching and learning themes required for the PGCAP was identified in particular, and the author decided to go ahead with the development of this series after careful planning based on a pedagogical rationale and design. She realised that a series consisting of short teaching and learning clips where practitioners and students share their views on current teaching and learning themes and provide opportunities for reflection and conversation would be extremely useful in a variety of teacher education contexts, including academic development activities in Higher Education and her own role as an academic developer at the University of Salford.

## The intervention

The development of the *Food for thought* series started at the beginning of the academic year 2011/12. Since then, over 30 episodes have been released. Each episode is, on average, five minutes long. The series was created to model innovative practice in Higher Education through the use of digital media based on a sound pedagogical design and rationale. It enables academics and other professionals who support learning, as well as the wider learning community, to voice and share perspectives on specific learning and teaching topics and current issues and trends. Engaging with specific episodes of the *Food for thought* series brings learning alive, makes speakers from around the world part of the extended conversations. The series triggers thinking and reflection among teachers and students in Higher Education in a media-rich format about current topics in Teaching and Learning, and models the creation, use and repurposing of OERs within a specific institution and the wider learning community.

The *Food for thought* series was designed as a set of flexible resources to be used within academic professional development

programmes – initially the PGCAP and the core module Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (LTHE), as well as workshop provisions; in and out of class, face to face or online and on the go; for groups or individual learners, for staff and students at the University of Salford and the wider global community.

The series is a cost-effective and sustainable interdisciplinary academic development intervention that has been created using available, familiar, and user-owned technologies and digital tools. None of them require advanced technical expertise. The hardware involved initially a camcorder and later only a smartphone. Software used is PowerPoint and Windows Movie Maker. Digital photographs and music available under Creative Commons are also used for the production of the clips. Filming is done on location and interviewees are briefed in advance of the process; therefore, filming takes between 10 and 15 minutes maximum. On some occasions, filming is done remotely and provided to the researcher via Dropbox. The video structure is achieved using a PowerPoint template for the series which can be easily adapted for specific episodes. The majority of clips require only one take and editing is kept to a minimum. All media is inserted into Windows Movie Maker and made into a clip. The total production time is approximately one hour.

The *Food for thought* template and format of three questions and answers in addition to an open question for the audience invite open and shared reflection, discussion, and debate asynchronously via video. The episodes are around 5 minutes in duration and enable engagement and learning on the go as they can be accessed from smart phones and tablets as well as laptops and netbooks. Teachers and students are interviewed and share their views on specific topics linked to teaching and learning. Multiple interviews around the same topic are created to present different viewpoints. Through this approach, similarities and differences in thinking become evident. Good and innovative practice shines through regardless of their viewpoint.

The series is a versatile resource for self-study and quick classroom activities in teacher education with the potential to engage individuals and groups in learning conversations and reflections within formal and non-formal settings. When using video for learning, it is important to create opportunities for viewers to think and critically reflect on what they see and hear (Masats & Dooly, 2011). The pedagogical design of the *Food for thought* series is enabling this through its structure: three questions with short and to-the-point answers as well as the open question at the end invite and extend thinking and engagement. Experiences and viewpoints of others are linked to or contrasted with our own. This can be powerful for learning. It feels as if the person in the video talks to us – to every single viewer – directly, which transforms an otherwise passive video watching experience into an interactive thinking experience, especially with the question asked at the end.

All the individuals interviewed for the *Food for thought* episodes gave their consent to make their interview available under a Creative Commons licence. The whole series is an OER and can be used and repurposed for different learning and teaching situations. Learning with and from each other in the spirit of open, social, and collaborative learning is also a pedagogical concept at the heart of this series. It offers in-time, bite-size CPD to think, rethink and unthink about practices, challenges and beliefs, and enables individuals and groups to engage in wider learning conversations with colleagues from around the world. The series is available on YouTube under a ShareAlike Creative Commons license and is currently used at the University of Salford as an academic development resource to stimulate discussion and debate during the blended and multidisciplinary Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) programme and the Teaching Essentials (TESS) course, offered to academics and other professionals who support learning within the institution, including Graduate Teaching Students (GTSs) and Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) who teach.

The *Food for thought* episodes are uploaded to YouTube and the collection is extended regularly to keep the offer current.

## Evaluation

Relevant episodes of the *Food for thought* series have been integrated fully into the weekly themes of the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (LTHE) module of the PGCAP programme and shared via the online programme space and social media as self-study resources to enable shared reflection on perspectives linked to specific module themes. This evaluation refers to the use of the series in 2012/13 with a specific cohort of 17 students on the LTHE module, its usefulness for student learning, and the effect it had on students' awareness and understanding of OERs and their practice.

A survey was shared with a cohort of students on the LTHE module after completion of the module. Further evidence was collected through observations of use by students in their social media portfolios for this programme. The main findings linked to the use of video and impact of the series on engagement and awareness of OERs are shared below.

### Use of video and impact on engagement

Evidence from survey responses and analysis of reflective accounts in the portfolios as well as classroom conversations suggest that students were positive about the integrated use of video in the *Food for thought* episodes. They found them useful for their learning, and it is evident that they helped them reflect on their teaching and possibilities they would like to explore as a result of the use of the *Food for thought* episodes. The following comment, made by one of the students, summarises well what students in this cohort thought more generally about how this series was used:

*I found them [the clips] very useful and inspiring, not only the content of them, but as a concept. The videos helped explore themes with real people in more detail – like an extended network of expertise. I used the concept of expert videos in my own sessions also.*

Students also pointed out that “it was nice to have a visual format to start with and to have a kind of human interaction” capitalising on the use of video to enable this remotely and asynchronously. Students stated also that the chosen clips fitted well with the weekly themes. The integrated approach seemed to work. It was also interesting that students commented on the length and thought that this was just right. One student noted, for example, that they particularly liked “the length as the clips were easily digestible”. Students also commented positively on the passion the individuals in the clips conveyed for the subject and felt that this was an important factor which kept their attention while watching the clips. They also valued the opportunity to hear different perspectives on the same topic. This seemed to stimulate further inquiry into the generic and subject-specific literature and motivated students to critically reflect on their own understanding, knowledge, and skills and identify opportunities for change. Eighty-three per cent of respondents stated that they watched all the clips to get started on a topic and 30% of these added that they did not respond to the question due to other commitments while 17% stated that they watched them all and responded. These students (three in total) embedded specific *Food for thought* clips and reflected upon them in their portfolios. The question at the end of the clip extended opportunities for reflection and was answered by these students within their portfolio post together with the clip rather than as a comment on the YouTube channel. For example, one student notes in their portfolio when linking reflection on a teaching session with a specific *Food for thought* episode about reflection:

*Watching this video assisted my own reflection about some of the teaching I had undertaken the previous week and I will loosely address Smith's question here. One of my sessions recently was a one hour workshop for a third year research-led module in which all of the seminar groups join together to consider and discuss ideas relevant to the literature and course.*

The student continues:

*From year one our students are generally trained to sit in lecture halls and listen and occasionally write down notes. Fundamentally, information and learning is given to them. However, this workshop session was aimed at encouraging students to produce the information via guided discussion and debate, something they are unfamiliar with. Whilst at the time they perhaps feel they are learning less, on going away and reflecting on the experience they will hopefully come to realise the richness of that experience.*

It becomes evident that the students who captured their reflections on the videos in their portfolios used these to extend opportunities for engagement and inquiry into their own practice.

Overall, nine out of 17 students embedded video in their portfolios and four students created and embedded their own video clips in their portfolios. The use of video by this cohort appears limited. It is, however, typical for PGCAP cohorts as the level of confidence and competence with digital media as well as the level of engagement with the module vary significantly among students starting the programme and also due to the fact that many of the students are new to the use of digital technologies for learning and teaching.

### Awareness of OERs and impact on practice

Survey responses confirm that the *Food for thought* series available as an OER via YouTube is a valuable and flexible self-study offering in video format that can be used in a variety of ways, including accessing on the go via smart devices, embedding into portfolios and reflecting and discussing specific episodes. The survey revealed also that about 50% of students had limited or no knowledge of OERs. For many, it was the first time they had accessed and used an OER. It is, however, very encouraging that all students were positive about OERs and 75% consider or plan to introduce them into their teaching as a result of their engagement with these on this module and the use of this series, while 25% were not sure what OERs are even after completion of the module. Some students also felt that this particular series is relevant to their own teaching, and one student stated “I have already used a food for thought video in one of my own sessions”. As educational practice in the digital age is changing and we play a greater emphasis on openness and sharing, it is important that teacher education programmes play an important role in introducing teachers in HE to the concept of OERs and OEP. Modelling is a powerful and effective teaching strategy (Land, 2003) as also established during this study. Enabling students on the programme who are teachers to experience OERs as a student has enabled them to gain a deeper insight into the benefits and challenges of OERs and also to reflect on their practice and potential use. Open access research is more widely known and practised; openness in teaching and sharing teaching and learning resources is still not a common or widespread practice (Lane, 2012).

Students recognised the value in OERs as learners while also thinking about their role as a teacher. One student stated “I think that any aspect of sharing resources and practice is a valuable way to expand and improve ourselves as teachers and learners. Sharing materials also is inspiring and could also be time saving”. This comment is of special significance and signals a shift in thinking which is encouraging. We still see a large number of teachers spending far too much time on creating resources, mainly presentations, instead of thinking about what the students will be doing in the session. Focusing on designing activities for learning, working smart, and being more resourceful in using existing resources becomes increasingly more important – indeed vital – and this intervention has raised awareness in this area.



## Lessons learnt

Valuable lessons were learnt through the use and evaluation of the *Food for thought* series with a specific cohort of students of the LTHE module of the PGCAP.

- An integrated approach for introducing the concept and use of OERs in the context of a specific programme seems to be more effective than talking about them or pointing to specific OERs in different locations.
- Modelling the use of OERs raised awareness among teachers in HE studying towards their teaching qualifications and made them think and reflect about their own practice and opportunities to use, adapt and create OERs for their students.
- Short video clips with inspirational speakers increase interest and reflection in a specific subject and seem to work well in combination with other resources, perhaps more text-based.
- The opportunity for dialogue with peers linked to specific *Food for thought* episodes was underused. There is an opportunity to extend a dialogue among peers and tutors, and perhaps students could be encouraged to complete the task posting a video comment to the original clip so that responses can be kept together and the conversation can grow and evolve.
- Introducing and widening the use of video requires a flexible and responsive tutor and peer-to-peer support framework that will enable students to build competence and confidence with video in the context of social media.

## Further development plans

This preliminary evaluation and the encouraging feedback received about the series made the author think about possibilities for future developments that have the potential to widen access, creation and repurposing of this OER series for the PGCAP and other Academic Professional Development provision.

- Engaging students in the development of *Food for thought* episodes directly linked to their module is something that is being explored at the moment. The co-creation of OERs will help students to learn together through making and investigate further and in more detail OERs, opportunities, challenges, and licensing. Lane (2012) recommends the co-creation of cross-institutional OERs and other stakeholders' involvement. This would mean using available resources more effectively and reducing cost while creating a richer OER offering. This collaborative approach has been used for the production of the *Food for thought* series, as all of the speakers interviewed were external to the programme and contributed to the production of this OER. A similar approach needs to be developed that will enable similar collaborations to happen across a module or programme of studies that would require the involvement of teachers and students working in partnership.
- So far, the majority of clips feature teachers in Higher Education. There is an opportunity to also capture the student voice around specific learning and teaching themes and work in partnership with the local and National Student Union but also students on specific modules and programmes on exploring possibilities for collaboration in this area and extend the databank of *Food for thought* episodes. Furthermore, student engagement could also be extended to the production of the clips using the expertise of students studying towards computer or media related degrees as a live brief. These initiatives are seen as opportunities to nurture academic relationships and create further opportunities for

teachers and students to work in partnership (Thomas, 2012; European Commission, 2013), which has the potential to lead to increased commitment, engagement and sense of belonging.

- The different ways to use episodes of this series in the LTHE module have not been exhausted; we have barely scratched the surface. Some of the episodes could become flipped classroom resources (Bergmann & Aaron, 2012) together with academic papers and be used in tutor and student and peer-to-peer activities such as discussions or debates in and outside the classroom. Such tasks could potentially increase and extend engagement with specific module themes and promote ongoing learning conversations and debates within the community. In addition, this strategy could also prove valuable for our students who are teachers – how OERs could be used and reused in a variety of ways to foster individual and collaborative learning. Modelling versatile uses of OERs will help our students to gain a better insight into these and generate ideas of how they could be used in their practice.

Sharpe and Beetham (2010, p. 90) talk about the Developmental Model of Effective E-learning that leads to the “creative appropriation” through first accessing technologies and resources, developing the skills to use these, and selecting and applying relevant technologies based on a specific need. Through modelling and active experimentation within the context of Academic Development, teachers have the opportunity through meaningful engagement and immersion in such activities, but also reflection, to achieve creative appropriation and transform their own practice and the student experience as a result of making sophisticated use of technologies based on an informed pedagogical rationale that blends in everyday practice.

## Conclusions

Evidence from this study suggests that the OER video series *Food for thought* has been an effective engagement tool for students in the LTHE module of the PGCAP.

Students used the integrated video clips for their learning. They also used specific episodes to reflect further on module themes, before and after the face-to-face sessions, and engaged in conversations and reflections on these in their portfolios with peers and their tutor. Furthermore, the series was of value as it introduced students to OERs and helped them gain a better understanding of these as well as recognise the potential value of OERs for their own practice.

Further development is required to strengthen the use of video as a medium to co-create *Food for thought* clips by students and enable them to learn through the process of making, which can be extremely powerful and effective. It is also important to follow up the impact of the engagement with the clips itself on students' thinking and practice. The researcher will continue working closely with students and colleagues to identify further opportunities to improve this series, widen the use of it for other programmes and development situations, and carry out further research linked to these.

## Biography

Chrissi Nerantzi is an Academic Developer at the University of Salford. She leads the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice. She also supports individuals and teams across the institution to enhance teaching practices, including technology-enhanced learning, assessment, and feedback. Chrissi is also a PhD student in open educational practice. Twitter: @chrissinerantzi

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