

Nicole ([00:07](#)):

I don't want to call this the last episode based on how my involvement in open projects has snowballed since I first co-designed in OER. And based on the fact, I'm still curious about different aspects of open education. It's really hard to just tie a ribbon around this podcast and click submit. That being said, pausing to reflect on the conversations and how my thinking has changed is important. So in this episode, I connect again with Verena and Heather to discuss some of the topics that had come up. Because I participated in the creation of an OER and in a graduate level class that integrated OEP with Heather designed by Verena, our conversations tend to go back to designing, learning experiences, using the principles of open education. If I take a long look back at my career as an educator, my focus on designing authentic learning experiences has always been a foundation to my approach in the classroom.

Nicole ([00:57](#)):

I remember years ago, attending a conference in Rio de Janeiro and hearing about design thinking and that just clicking with my focus on authentic projects. I've developed activities in my own elementary room where students co-design with me, but before the ed tech ethics class, I had never experienced that type of learning in higher ed. I think that's why I became so fascinated with the design of this course. And then with open education. I wanted to learn more and understand open the same way I wanted to dig into design thinking or inquiry or authentic tasks in my elementary classroom by doing and talking to those in the know. From a student's perspective, I felt challenged and empowered through the process of creating a non-disposable assignment. I felt my research skills and understanding of research also improved drastically. I see open education as a disruptor to our current system, but I really wanted to know more about how experts in the field and other students had navigated the obstacles put in place by these systems. So let's jump into Heather and Verena turning the questions on me and discuss how, what I've learned through connecting with the open community can be reflected back onto how one might design for open learning.

Verena ([02:03](#)):

So what have you learned, Nicole? That's what we want to know.

Heather ([02:06](#)):

What was your biggest aha? What was like the biggest like takeaway?

Nicole ([02:11](#)):

There are a couple, I think a big one and it overlapped a few times, but definitely came through, talking to Alan. it was I can decide how much I want to share and that's not set in stone. So it can fluctuate depending on my context and situation that I'm currently in. So if I decide to just share by commenting on other people's blogs and not writing my own - that's okay. If I want to share by creating resources and putting them out freely for teachers and I'm able to - that's okay. But if I'm not in a position where I can do that and it's not positively impacting me or I'm gaining something out of sharing, it's okay to, to not do that and just still participate in the community. There's, there's different access points in different ways of getting involved. So I think that was a big one. Alan is, has been great. And now almost everybody's brought Alan up in other podcasts. So I feel like he is the Sage. He knows what he's talking about,

Verena ([03:18](#)):

Nicole, how does that work though? Like informal learning context. So for example, in our course, when you started, I had to design for -we didn't do the blogs with your group, but we did with the next group, for example, but we did, like we did do the Twitter, you know, edit, there were, there was always a choice, but there were some expectations and formal online or open online contexts that aren't necessarily there when you're participating in an open community and learning. Can you expand a bit on that and what you learned about the differences, like what you think about as a teacher or educator as an open, like, what are the differences between being an open educator teacher and participant?

Nicole ([04:01](#)):

I think if you're designing to include open activities or OEP, then as a teacher or as an instructor, it's a little bit more challenging because you're having to give a range of options to meet where those learners are at. So like I said, there's going to be some days or some weeks or months or where I'm in a context where I'm able to share more openly or I'm able to actively participate more so. And so your students are in that exact same position. So as an instructor, especially if all of your students are new to open a new to OEP, it becomes challenging because you have to design for a range of access points and you have to be okay, I think with understanding and, and then just being open and being like, I can't do this right now, but that again, and we've talked about it.

Nicole ([04:50](#)):

And this came up talking to Dr. Brown to a lot of that. When you bring in an instructor, student relationship, it becomes about the relationship. So if you develop a strong relationship with your students or your willing to work with them, and that's the whole concept with co-design, and then you're really understanding where they're at. Versus me just existing, outside of being a student and wanting to participate in this, I have more control. And particularly timeline-wise, I can decide, like I haven't been on Twitter because I've been so crazy busy in the last few weeks, but it doesn't mean I can't pick it up again, or I can't jump back into it, but it's on my terms, not, not within the time limits and framework of a course. Does that make sense?

Verena ([05:33](#)):

Yes, I was curious if you found the same, I don't know, design principles that I've had to follow as well. So yeah. When we're talking about what was common amongst -

Nicole ([05:47](#)):

Are they the same?

Verena ([05:49](#)):

No, sorry Nicole. YES! They are the same and - we've never had this conversation, which is your point. When designing the ed tech ethics course, I literally had to design for every student and thinking about that as like, it's not a joke, the learning pathways part, the individual learning pathways. And so that's why it's essential to connect with the students because you need to ask what a learning pathway looks like for them. And I think, well, maybe both of you could expand on that a bit, but I, if I didn't have those

conversations, I wouldn't know what you needed in order to finish the course, really finish the assignment.

Heather ([06:44](#)):

Yeah. But I think the elements of like, what was huge was that constant feedback and that constant connection of just regularly checking in having the discussion and both of us adjusting where we needed to adjust, really helps that process. As well as our relationship, Nicole, being able to talk about our side and, and navigate the course, that way was very, very helpful as well.

Nicole ([07:18](#)):

Right. It expanded it out. It just didn't rely on the teacher, but I think that's also within the design and, and within using open principles, if you create a community, then there's no way one instructor, especially if you get larger classes, ours wasn't enormous, but I think it was still (and Verena you can, can let me know on this) I feel like it was still a lot more work than a regular course would be and took a lot more time and effort. So I think in developing a community and really working on building relationships, and we already started to have that, because again, this is the third course of four. So it had started in the, the first and it started at the previous year. But I think if you've got that good community, it spreads that out. So you're not just having to rely on the instructor because that's a lot.

Verena ([08:08](#)):

And I think for me, my question always is, can you start open learning design as an instructor? If you don't have a network already, if you don't have a personal learning network and that's what you were talking about with Alan some of the other people that, that you connected with. If I didn't know them and didn't have those connections, I think it would be a lot more difficult to even consider an open learning design because I am dependent upon my open community to support my students in a way that I don't have to be, if I didn't choose to use open educational practices.

Heather ([08:44](#)):

So-so modeling it. Right? Like you, you shared your connections and your, your journey of open, partly through this course too, it's it was modeling what truly open is.

Nicole ([08:59](#)):

I'm trying to think of any way you could work around it. If you didn't already have that set up. I still think there are bits and pieces you could pull in, but to have a full blown experience, like particularly something like Twitter because of your connections, our Twitter chat was a more valuable experience. It was, it had more depth to it. So I'm trying to think of ways that you could bring this in. I mean, I still think even if you didn't have an open network, if you wanted to just, and I always call it the gateway drug, but if you just wanted to make a press book and an OER, you could feasibly do that. Would it be as powerful? And would you have as many participatory activities that involves OEP? I'm not sure. I'm having a hard time off the top of my head thinking like how to integrate that without a massive network of people.

Verena ([09:48](#)):

Yeah. That's exactly it, Nicole. So there are two elements. There is the design of the co-design of your individual chapter, right? All of you, and you're all doing different things in different ways, but at the

same time, there were participatory activities that were intentionally offered and supported in different levels. So that the goal was that you would feel more confident in sharing with others, whatever sharing looks like for you. And that took months, but that wouldn't have worked if you just did one, but we would have always finished the textbook to some, the, the OER to some extent. So you, you benefited from both sides, I think. But I think there's a difference there. And I, and I don't entirely get it. And I think that you could just have the open participatory activities and you don't need the press book. Right. Like that would be a different. This course happened to have both. And I, I don't know. I would argue that that helped. I believe that that helped you as students feel more confident in sharing what you finished and accomplished with the world.

Heather ([11:00](#)):

Yeah. And I also think it helped us in our masters journey. Like I think it really helped certain elements we could take into the research year that we participated in as well. So not just us as people and, and growing in OER, or sorry, open education, but in also in just being good scholars and learners and contributors to the world.

Verena ([11:30](#)):

What did you think about some of the themes, um, as you went through Nicole? So for example, I don't know what we could just do them in order or in, for the podcast editing.

Nicole ([11:46](#)):

So right off the top of my head, just especially with you talking about Heather saying it prepared us for that final year. I agree that. A big one that came up in multiple interviews was the concept of imposter syndrome and how imposter syndrome definitely prevents, can prevent people from wanting to share or, from contributing to the open community. And Heather and I have talked about this at length before, because it's something that I definitely struggle with. And it was interesting to see how people that were embedded. I tried to pick and find negative experiences with sharing. And they did even people that are really embedded in the community, did early on, maybe have instances where someone that was loud and obnoxious on the internet, shut them down. And, but they moved beyond that and, and moved past that. So Heather and I have talked about how coming into this, if you're just a student or an instructor, particularly K to 12, because I see it all the time in K to 12, most teachers don't want to share their stuff.

Nicole ([12:52](#)):

And I always thought it was based on this concept of ownership. Like I own it, I made it it's mine, I put work into it. But I also wonder to what extent it's that imposter syndrome. Like I, if I put it out there, I feel like I'm going to be judged or I'm a master's student, I'm not an academic who am I to, to write a chapter on something. So I think that's a big battle in open that if you get through, then you're more apt to contributing to the community and you're stuck and I can not stuck, Stuck is a bad word, but you're embedded in that community at a much deeper level. And if you can't get through that imposter syndrome,, that can definitely block you from, from this community and you're blocking yourself. So imposter syndrome we can, can talk about,

Heather ([13:40](#)):

I think with that, Nicole too, because the way we share is on the internet and people have seen many negative aspects of when things have been put on the internet and people have critiqued it, that feeds into that imposter syndrome. So even though I don't know how many times somebody puts something up from their classroom and people have just torn it apart, I don't know, but we, we can see what other people have done and there's all those bottom dwellers that go in and critique and tear down people. So I think that feeds into it.

Nicole ([14:16](#)):

I'm calling them bottom dwellers from now on. That's great.

Heather ([14:20](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Go for it. But yeah, that's, it is like, you know, there is a bit of vulnerability, or I shouldn't say a bit, a lot of vulnerability when you put your stuff up online for other people to use purposely for other people to go and borrow and take. We have in Alberta on Facebook, actually there's Alberta teachers sharing resources for social studies and science and English, language arts and blah, blah, blah. And even me, I know I've found myself going into people's drives and like trying to look at their assignments and being very critical because I also have high expectations of what I would want my teachers to share what my students have access to. So I go in and I'm like, ah, maybe that's missing something or, you know, you're not assessing the right outcomes here or whatever. So I I've even found myself on the other side, but more as, just that critical friend, I'll take it that way. If like a critical friend versus somebody who's there to tear you down.

Verena ([15:21](#)):

I think it's really interesting in my role and as district administrator and in higher education, the easiest way for us to develop a professional learning workshop to understand OER is to bring people in educators in and, and to ask them to critique something. So I do understand the point. Yeah. Um, and it's something that there is no personal connection to, but I, I do find it interesting that that is the way, the easiest way for us to encourage people to come in is to critique. So I want to learn more about that. Like now that you've brought it up again, because obviously that's affecting people's confidence and wanting to share things. But at the same time, when I have experienced that or had the opportunity to come in and critique, I also switched to a deep appreciation for this person who has created something that saved me hours and hours and hours. So I don't, it doesn't, it doesn't have the meat. It doesn't become a bad thing anymore, a negative thing anymore because I can now adapt it and shape it into something that I can actually use. So that negative criticism has kind of disappeared into, as I say, a deeper appreciation for someone who's taken the time to do some of that work

Heather ([16:36](#)):

You have to balance the two, because you know, the person who shared it with you when they've put in the time and the effort, and then if you share like a valuable critique or valuable feedback, it's not always taken that way. And it's, I think too, because we haven't necessarily been taught how to give and receive feedback or critique. Like I hear critique and there's kind of a negative connotation. So I think that's, that's a bit of the balance too, is people have to navigate being vulnerable in order to keep developing.

Nicole ([17:12](#)):

Yeah. I was going to back Heather on that and I think, and this also came up multiple times throughout these interviews, moving through the process like Verena, you've been through this process of sharing and having your work critiqued multiple times, particularly outside of the open community. Well, you're intertwined with it with your PhD, but you've had the opportunity to get through that. Maybe there's been times where it's been a negative experience, but you've moved beyond it. And now you're able to look back and appreciate the people that contributed or built because you've gone through that process, you understand what they went through. And I think that's what you put us in when you designed the course. And so until I'd moved through that process and really created my own OER, went through the scary parts, the vulnerable parts, and put it out into the world, survived a couple of feedback loops and some, some critique.

Nicole ([18:09](#)):

Now I'm more confident because I've gone through that experience, right? And so now I'm able to definitely move through another process. And maybe I could try that more. I could take on a bit more critical feedback or maybe someone who is a bottom dweller and doesn't approach me in the nicest of ways. I have more strategies and I'm able to deal with them in a more positive manner. But I think until you've moved through the process and Alan and I talked in depth, I said, I was a student because I moved through that process. I understand it, it's that whole experiential learning. I'm able to move forward in the open community in a more confident way. And I don't think starting out workshops, critiquing something is a bad idea. It just has to be done really delicately so that you don't deter people. It doesn't become a really negative bashing of, of something someone's put their time and energy and effort into it's, it's approaching it and modeling it. Like we've talked about, man, this person has put tons of time and effort. I respect their work. This is what I really like about it, but how would I change it to suit my needs instead of it being like this massive critique.

Speaker 4 ([19:17](#)):

Yeah, well, you know, I didn't do that, but you're right. There's this fear of the massive destroying. And I know I didn't do that. So I did. Yeah. I didn't take any offense to that, but you've made a really valid point that in order to even get people in the door or educators at the door, we had to do something that was about editing and critiquing. But I really hear what you're saying, Heather, like, how do we rephrase that? The narrative is feedback and feedback loops. And I see that as an instructor all the time, my students have a lot of difficulty in giving and receiving feedback, and we need to do that a lot sooner. I mean, we were just discussing that even with my own children in their school, if you're getting a grade that is not feedback and that doesn't help you, communicate what you need to do in order to learn. And getting that in a grad course is really hard if you've never necessarily had it before and, and how to apply that. I didn't understand the importance of it in the open context. That's what you're bringing up, Nicole, which is fascinating. I'm writing this all down. So thank you.

Heather ([20:29](#)):

I was going to say, so going back to, oh, the people that you were interviewing Nicole, and like, you definitely met with some big people in open education, so I'm sure you felt extra nervous around that. Or maybe even some imposter syndrome with that. Was there that was like really like shocking to you. I think it's funny saying that with open education but was anything shocking,

Nicole ([20:57](#)):

Shocking. No. But I think in a couple areas with a couple people, I wanted more answers and I've realized that there's room for research and we're not there yet. So particularly, and this took me a long time to start questioning around equity and accessibility. It that in the last, I would say couple months has some of those questions have crossed my mind. And that's something that Verena brought in Sarah Lambert and brought in the, one of the best researchers on that area into our class early on. And I just wasn't ready for her yet. And I hadn't clicked yet. So I pose that question to a couple of different, different people. And I realized that we just were just getting into that sort of area. And so I wouldn't necessarily say shocking, but definitely I still have questions. There's still areas with accessibility that I just don't know how this is going to be sustainable, unless we can get things like basic internet, sorted for the majority of people, or we can change our mindset on it.

Nicole ([22:10](#)):

I didn't realize that. I mean, I knew beforehand, cause I've lived in south America that the global south were pioneers in this and really pushing open, but I didn't realize how silenced they were until talking to a couple other people and even starting my capstone project and being like, where are all the other diverse perspectives on this topic? So shocked? Um, no - maybe not shocking, but definitely still have questions. And I'm curious, and I need about four more years of my life to try and talk to everybody who would like to reach out and talk with me, but

Verena ([22:56](#)):

That the equity thing is interesting in two ways, one, yes, we brought in all the key topics in the course, and I still find it fascinating that Nicole and I have had multiple conversations. And I'll say, yes, we did that at this point in the course, and Nicole said, no, I didn't. I'm like, yes, you did. No I didn't. We go forth. And so we will literally go back to the course outline or whatever it is, but I have the digital artifact to support it. Which is interesting Nicole, when you think about like, I can go and I can say, look, this is where we learned about OER or creative commons licensing or social justice. You might not, or the students might not have recognized Dr. Sarah Lambert and the fact that she is leading when we think about, um, in some of the principles of social justice, when considering open learning. But there's multiple other people too, I just, you know, she's one of many, which is great on the topic, but yeah, I think that's part of how formal and informal open learning design can connect though.

Verena ([24:00](#)):

Like as your, as your instructor, it's expected for me to introduce you to new ideas. So you shouldn't feel I guess threatened by that. And more like this is, this isn't really a possibility for, as you said, for future research, this is something that I'm interested in. Don't feel bad about it, but at that way, I mean, I, I'm still learning all about it. It just happens to be that I am with #GO-GN and with this group who literally surrounds me with people learning and taking different perspectives in OpenLearning from around the world, so kudos to them because that's how I was able to bring them in

Nicole ([24:48](#)):

I need to have that "aha" moment later and be like, oh, that's what she was talking about. Like a year after, like, okay, it took a bit to sink in, but I got ya. I get it.

Verena ([24:59](#)):

It keeps emerging. Well, I think the emerging theme that I'm hearing though is open learning isn't something that necessarily can be contained to four months that we had for the course in multiple ways. You didn't finish, you didn't finish your chapter - it took months right? With the editing and everything else. So the product piece, but the process piece, we keep having these conversations and then you'll say, oh, that's how it connects. And that's how learning works. Like even with the kindergartener years later, they'll say, oh, you know, bees pollinate or whatever it is. I just find it fascinating how many things click so long after. And so I'm wondering how to better think about open learning design and open practices as that continuum of little, little pieces and little sections that come into all of our courses in different ways, rather than maybe overwhelming you in one course. Yeah. Spreading it out a bit. And how can we spread it out a bit? Like, do you have some ideas on that that you would do in K-12 or in higher ed or, or do you agree or disagree with me? I just don't think it's a really a four month. I can learn it all kind of thing.

Nicole ([26:16](#)):

No, I think that's why this has become a joke, and it's become the never ending project. So it's been over for over a year, the actual course, but we, I keep finding ways to, create new projects, which is driving everyone insane, but I think that's part and parcel it. And why, and why you have continuous involvement after is because it's enough to peak your curiosity or spark an interest. But it's not enough to obviously in four months. I don't think on any topic you could really get into the nitty gritty of it, especially if you're doing it through an experiential learning like a co-design of a press book. So as difficult as that is, I also think it's why we have, we call it the hive. Why, why students are still continuously involved. One of the reasons.

Heather ([27:08](#)):

Isn't that the goal though, like, as a teacher is to instill within your students, the goal of lifelong learning and, and create that opportunity where the transfer of learning is always happening. The transfer of understanding the concepts, like you're basically creating thinkers, that, yeah, the course was done in four months, but the learning will forever continue to happen. I'm sure people will reflect back. I know I will and continually make connections from what I've learned.

Verena ([27:46](#)):

I'm just suggesting Heather, that, that goes against the current practice in like, when we create a syllabus, you know what I mean? Like when we're thinking about curriculum. Yeah. And, and I'm wondering how open can fit in that.

Heather ([28:02](#)):

You know what, I think it comes down to if, if I think about like our masters journey and the three years that, and this would take a lot of people to be on board, but they all collaboratively build it with that concept of, of understanding. You had a co we had basically three cohorts each like out of each year. But understanding that even though the cohorts were different each year where we still had that same focus of constantly transferring our learning and applying it and building resources and remixing resources and refining resources as we've come to understand and learn more. But it's not, that's not how it is. Right. Like, that's what you're saying. I get it. There was times where we created products, like I've created infographics that just have stayed in my Google drive. Oh. And then maybe a prof asked to use it to show

students as a sample, but that's it - that's as far as it's gone. Whereas I'm loving the fact that my chapter is out there, you know, and, and that maybe somebody else can use it and refine it and remix it. Like, I think that's really, really powerful. That's the goal. Why create something just to create it? Well, just to get a mark, it would be great if, if all departments were on board that way. Yeah.

Verena ([29:36](#)):

So it does sum up, I have some final questions for you. One, what were these values that you feel emerged because you haven't totally told me what they are, these open learning values and what questions? No. Well, I don't think you can define them, but maybe if you could share what you think based on all these conversations you think they are. That's, I'm curious. what questions do you still have?

Nicole ([30:08](#)):

I think trying to define them is a little bit complicated and I'm not totally there yet, but I would say the concept of collaborating, it's all about connecting, collaborating, and helping each other grow. It's this common mindset that we're, we're contributing to each other to build knowledge and to grow and to help each other improve, but it's wrapped up in other things, right? Like knowledge building always comes out of it. Like that's the end goal is you're creating and sharing and building knowledge, collectively. Collaboration and connection and connecting is how you come together to build that knowledge and just being open-minded that, that you always can grow. There's always room to look at something or approach something with a different perspective. Yeah. And that's valuable and is going to help that knowledge building in that community succeed. So I think that would kind of, maybe, I don't think I defined all of that really concretely, but where, what I've kind of heard and questions I still have, I'm still grappling a little bit with the balance between being able to, because I love to create and design and to build learning experiences.

Nicole ([31:24](#)):

So how do I balance my want to definitely share and create openly with also having to make a living. So trying to, to find the happy balance in that and like, how do I, see myself existing in a world where I make money off of creating and developing resources, but I do still want to participate and be able to share and help others grow? So finding my place, there is still something I'm working on.

Nicole ([31:50](#)):

And then I'm still have questions around the whole social justice and equity part of it, particularly looking at what I'm designing and going back in and saying like, am I, is this, am I allowing for other voices to come through? Even in this podcast, I really want to connect with more people from the global south. I want to bring other voices in and, and learn more because if I'm teaching overseas, I want my students. If I'm using open resources, I want them to see themselves in that resource. I want them to be able to connect with that resource. And I don't want them just using something that has been dominated and created by the global north for their standards. I want it to fit with my student's contexts. And so if they're not building it, how do I make sure the open resources and networks are inclusive and allow for them to participate fully?

Heather ([32:45](#)):

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I'm just thinking like this it's, it seems like just the tip of the iceberg, right? Like just like the class things will just keep going and, and, you know, it's like a snowball rolling down a mountain. It's just going to get bigger and bigger and bigger. I think that's fascinating.

Nicole ([33:02](#)):

It's an avalanche

Heather ([33:02](#)):

That's exactly it.

Nicole ([33:06](#)):

That's what Dr. Cronin said, "It's a snowball! I'm like, "I think it's an avalanche."

Heather ([33:10](#)):

Well, it's a snowball that just rolls and gets bigger and bigger and bigger. And there's other things adding to it that, you know, contribute to the thinking. And then other factors that come into play and there's also perspectives, right? Like north versus south, east versus west, there's a lot going on.

Nicole ([33:37](#)):

There's so much going on and so much to learn. Thank you for joining us on our journey into the open so far. Once again, I'd like to thank all of the guests who have contributed their time and knowledge to helping us grow this project. A giant thank you to #GO-GN for supporting this adventure. Into the open was co-designed by Dr. Verena Roberts, Heather Van and myself and full next thing. It took me seven episodes to finally realize you're co-designing until we connect again and get out there and keep the open ed snowball

Nicole ([34:26](#)):

[inaudible].