

## **Similarities between Open Source and Learning Development**

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The concept of Open Source has existed for centuries, mostly applying to books and other educational materials. Only recently has it been applied to technologies such as computer software and hardware. Open Source principles guarantee direct access to the information necessary for anyone to create derivative works from the original for personal or professional use.

Open Source principles as applied to software have created a community-based pool of applications and operating systems with quality comparable to, and usually exceeding, the traditional proprietary development processes. The transparency of the development process allows greater freedom to learn and understand methods used by other developers, which in turn allows the developers to create or derive new and better applications. It also gives consumers the opportunity to know exactly what they are getting.

When applying these principles to learning development or the development of Open Source curricula, it should become obvious that, with community involvement and the accountability it provides, the development of learning materials can benefit in much the same way as software has. Iterative development of learning materials by the broader community can only serve to enhance and better the end product.

Collaboration is key. Whether speaking of software, hardware, or learning materials, involvement by the experienced user community will always generate a better end result. Insight and answers are usually found much more quickly from a collaborative effort than from a small team. It is all about finding the “best practices” from which the best products have been created. Open Source allows all users to “make it their own.”