

Open Education 2030

JRC-IPTS Call for Vision Papers

Lifelong Learning

Open Education: multilingual, user driven and glocalised

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The multilingual, user driven and glocalised components will be catalysts in shaping future Open Education.

Open education, as a societal demand that overcomes barriers to learning and development of personal and professional skills, is a reality, together with similar-minded initiatives such as open access to knowledge and more recently MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) aimed at large-scale participation via the web regardless of the learner's location, status, age or origin. Along the same lines, initiatives around the Open Educational Resources (OER)¹ movement aim to make resources that are useful for teaching, learning and assessment purposes freely accessible, openly formatted and openly licensed in a lifelong learning perspective. More recently, going beyond simple access and display in a repository, the emphasis is put on the re-use of freely available OER and their repurposing in new lifelong learning contexts. This conceptual change signifies a step forward in the maturity of the Open education movement and takes concrete form via the shift from OER to Open Educational Practice (OEP)², as demonstrated in the 2011 study authored by EFQUEL, the European Foundation for Quality in E-learning³.

On the one hand, OER and OEP at the forefront of world policies in education...

The European Union has shown a growing interest in the "Open" component in the education and training field through many recent initiatives. One of these, the 2012 European Commission Paper on *Rethinking Education*⁴ recommends that "[t]echnology, in particular

¹ We borrow the OER definition stipulated at the 2012 UNESCO Paris Declaration, according to which OER are "teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work".
Reference: UNESCO (2012). 2012 Paris OER Declaration. World OER Congress, Paris, June 2012.
http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/Paris%20OER%20Declaration_01.pdf

² Defined as practices which support the production, use and reuse of high quality open educational resources (OER) through institutional policies, which promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path. OEP address the whole OER governance community: policy makers, managers and administrators of organizations, educational professionals and learners."
http://www.icde.org/en/resources/open_educational_quality_initiative/definition_of_open_educational_practices/

³ Camilleri, A., Ehlers, U. 2011. Mainstreaming Open Educational Practice. Recommendations for Policy. Report of the OPAL consortium, http://cdn.efquel.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Policy_Support_OEP.pdf?a6409c

⁴ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1233_en.htm



the internet, must be fully exploited. Schools, universities and vocational and training institutions must increase access to education via OER". The Commission is planning multi-level action on OER (through policymaking processes, new European funding schemes, engagement with stakeholders, and local, regional and national initiatives). This is also emphasized through the European Commission "Opening Up Education" initiative⁵ and has been pointed out very recently, in December 2012, at the Ministries of Education annual meeting⁶.

The UNESCO Paris Declaration adopted by the first UNESCO OER World Congress in June 2012 and the European Union initiative on "Opening Up Education" invite governments and educational institutions to develop policies for OER and OEP. The initiatives for MOOCs became the most talked-about educational innovation of 2012, and the rapid uptake of MOOCs indicates the possible impact of using OER and Open CourseWare (OCW) in education. Coursera, which started in April 2012, claims in February 2013 to have almost 2.7 million "courserians"⁷. Udacity, another initiative started in 2012, claims to have about 500 Udacity Meetups in cities in all regions of the world. In late 2012 initiatives for MOOCs had also been taken in Europe, such as Future Learn. However Open Education is neither only about MOOCs nor about institutional-led OER (or "big OER" according to Weller (2010)⁸), it is also about OER that are individually produced materials, shareable by practitioners, a point that we discuss in the next section.

...and on the other, a very heterogeneous OER landscape.

Despite the growing interest in OER/OEP, the field is still under-explored. This is the view of OER experts. For example Fred Mulder, UNESCO Chair in OER, claims that we have a long road to travel before reaching ultimate global realization⁹. It also surfaces from the current state-of-the art of OER/OEP, for which only three dimensions will be briefly discussed.

On the user appropriation level

OER uptake is still lagging behind, with OER repositories and metadata catalogues not getting off the ground as expected. Independently of the reasons that may hinder OER uptake, OER repurposing and uptake in new learning and teaching contexts is slower than expected, raising questions about ways to empower learners and teachers to be more engaged (among numerous publications in this field two recent ones: Conole, 2012¹⁰ and 2013¹¹).

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/documents/consult/open_en.pdf

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20121211b_en.htm

⁷ A TED talk by Professor Daphne Koller, co-founder of Coursera and Professor at University of Stanford, highlights the impact of Open Education and Open CourseWare
http://www.ted.com/speakers/daphne_koller.html

⁸ Weller, Martin (2010). Big and little OER. In: *OpenED2010: Seventh Annual Open Education Conference*, 2-4 November 2010, Barcelona, Spain. <http://oro.open.ac.uk/24702/2/926FFABC.pdf>

⁹ Mulder, F. 2012. "OER will need 20 to 30 years to reach its ultimate global realization"
<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/es/node/121733>

¹⁰ Conole, G. 2012. "Opening up content". Ministerial Conference "Opening up education through technologies: Towards a more systemic use for a smart, social and sustainable growth in Europe" Oslo, 9-11 December 2012.

¹¹ Conole, G. 2013. *Designing for learning in an Open World*. Springer

On the language level

A 2013 investigation¹² of the languages in which OER are offered shows extremely low representation of languages other than English. While Japanese and Chinese co-exist in OCW and OER repositories (although in a much lower percentage than English), other European languages are extremely scarce, despite the fact that learning and teaching in/of languages, including less used languages¹³, is a priority at European level¹⁴. Due to their lower numbers of speakers and learners, less used languages have limited capacities for developing OER at the same speed and intensity as dominant languages. For governments and institutions representing less used languages, OER offer opportunities to lower the costs of education, to better meet students' needs and to innovate in education. But OER also challenge less used languages and the culture of their communities, in particular since OER on a global level are dominated by materials and initiatives offered in a few languages, in particular English. This situation puts pressure on less used languages due to the risk of their cultural dependence on dominant languages. This situation affecting quality of education is an issue faced by less used languages in their attempt to keep up with current global developments, where major languages have the capacity to be present in the OER landscape and have an impact on a global scale.

On the European policy level

Despite the fact that the working paper on Opening Up Education¹⁵ highlights the need for coordinated policymaking at a national and European level, the policymaking exercise on national context has not had the same vigour and impact on national OER uptake so far, with heterogeneous results across countries. A few flagship initiatives of national wide OER/OEP policies are the OER Sverige consortium¹⁶ and The Nordic Open Education Alliance (later to be moved to Nordic OER¹⁷).

How will Open Education in 2030 in Europe be or What Open Education in 2030 do we want?

Confident in shaping the future according to changes we want to see in the world, to paraphrase Ghandi, this section expresses some wishes, simply outlined here. To start with, the very term 'OER' may soon be outdated and replaced by a term better able to encompass the dynamics emerging around content. The acronyms 'OER' and 'OCW' both still have "content" (resources in the one, courseware in the other) as their focus point, making them concepts that are too static for the human activity blossoming around OER.

¹² A research group on this topic has been set up on the initiative of the author. Due to forthcoming research and publications in the field, more information can be given informally.

¹³ This refers to languages that are not commonly taught, regardless of whether or not they are official languages of the LLP participating countries, 'regional', 'minority' or migrant languages, where projects can help to improve the quality of teaching of these languages, improve access to learning opportunities, encourage the production, adaptation and exchange of learning materials and encourage the exchange of information and best practice in this field. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/glossary_en.html

¹⁴ Education Ministers adopted *Council conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility* http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126373.pdf which stress in particular the importance of providing continued support for language learning at all levels of education, of broadening the choice of languages on offer, of improving the quality and relevance of language courses, and of introducing innovative ways of learning languages - all areas in which European cooperation can play an important role.

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/documents/consult/open_en.pdf

¹⁶ <http://oersverige.se/>

¹⁷ www.nordlet.org and www.nordicoer.org

Multilingual

Against the primarily monolingual OER landscape (see previous page), multilingual resources represent a pressing need to combat linguistic/cultural hegemonies and to valorise one of Europe's landmarks: the multilingual and multicultural European character. This will also strengthen the European workforce by offering learning and training possibilities to face the need for language skills. This can be done both by a more active engagement of speakers of European languages in the creation and adaptation of resources in their lifelong learning context and also through more robust technologies, to facilitate sharing of multilingual metadata. Europe must preserve and enrich content in less used languages to combat the risk of linguistic/cultural dominance by English, the language in which the most powerful OER players operate such as the US, Canada and Australia.

Glocalized and blended

Social computing¹⁸ enhanced by location-aware possibilities will push towards a more “glocalized” engagement with OER/OCW, not only by multiplying the reach of digitally located networks with locally located ones. The biggest challenge of location based social networking technologies is to match global and local levels, examples of which are Coursera and Udacity Meetups. Web 2.0, especially in terms of change (or disruption) in the learning attitudes now possible (User Generated Content (UGC), horizontal content distribution, openness) will certainly be a driving force in educational innovation (Redecker et al. 2009¹⁹).

Engaging users through technology-enhanced social participation

In line with the “glocalized” dimension mentioned above, Open Education will be more in line with the existing culture of social participation and new models of knowledge creation and sharing. A top-down approach to knowledge circulation as occurred in the formal education sector in the last decades (Katz, 2010²⁰) does not fit current practice any longer, being increasingly based on open, participatory, networked and informal exchange. On the other hand, informal does not mean shallow and superficial (2010²¹): it calls for further investigation of its potential.

Research on Technology-Enhanced Social Participation, a new research field in the Human-Computer Interaction area (Preece & Schneiderman, 2009²²), will be instrumental in moving user-driven participation a step further, in the direction of optimization of shared learning experiences. The “Reader-to-Leader” Framework put forward by Preece et al. can provide a solid grounding for making social participation effective to Open Education, by benefiting also from developments in gamification, namely user engagement and stimulus in collective efforts through recommendation and recognition systems be applied in non-game environments. Attention should be given to avoid the manipulative dimension of crowdsourced gamification, in the sense of companies exploiting users' collective efforts of

¹⁸ Ala-Mutka, K. (2008). *Social Computing: Study on the Use and Impacts of Collaborative Content*. Seville: IPTS/JRC. Cachia, R. (2009) *Social Computing: Study on the Use and Impact of Online Social Networking*. Seville: IPTS/ JRC

¹⁹ Redecker, C., Ala-Mutka, K., Bacigalupo, M., Ferrari, A., Punie, Y. 2009. *Learning 2.0: The Impact of Web 2.0 Innovations on Education and Training in Europe*. Seville: IPTS/JRC.

²⁰ Katz, N. (2008). *The tower and the cloud*. Washington: Educause.
<http://www.cite.hku.hk/events/doc/2008/HongKongCurrentResearch.pdf>

²¹ Ito, M. (2010). *Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out*. (M. Ito, Ed.)*Digital Media*. The MIT Press.

²² Preece, J., & Shneiderman, B. (2009). The Reader-to-Leader Framework: motivating technology-mediated social participation. *AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction*, 1(1), 13–32.

knowledge building without a corresponding remuneration, “[by] tap[ping] the latent talent of the crowd” (Howe, 2006²³). Careful design of Open Education systems will be able to orient user engagement towards learning and collaboration outcomes.

Taking peer validation and social certification seriously

Recognition of skills and certification is an issue in current OCW and Open Education debates. Building on Preece’s et al. “Reader-to-Leader” Framework one avenue full of potential is peer validation and social accreditation (an example in this direction is Mozilla’s Open Badges initiative²⁴). The latest research I am co-conducting in the area of web 2.0 language learning brings to the surface interesting and promising examples of (informal) peer validation that can be useful for (formal) certification purposes²⁵.

Addressing real needs expressed by end users

By taking the bottom up concept of crowd funding²⁶ as an example together with the numerous crowd funding initiatives²⁷ (where an individual idea is backed by peers who acknowledge this idea, providing support and expertise until the idea finds private investment), Open Education can learn a lot from individual needs that become collective when more individuals located all around the world find this need matching their own. In the future it will be possible (at least that is what the author of this scenario wishes!) for professional needs to be expressed by groups of learners (getting together through simple and free digital platforms such as the crowd funding ones) to which knowledge providers will respond by setting up customized courses to meet these needs. End users will be able to express their needs for professional skills, to which providers can respond, by reversing the hierarchical knowledge distribution model and by replacing it with a model aligned to the real needs of groups. Participants and knowledge providers will be able to negotiate the training framework (materials, fees, modes of communication, duration, certification, etc.) to fit the needs of participants.

Valorising the social component of Open Education

Freeing up the dynamic, social component of OER will be the driving force of the future Open Education. Bottom-up, social driven initiatives started at no or very little cost, such as Wikipedia which revolutionized the relationship to human knowledge, its creation, sharing and reuse. This example clearly shows us that the future scenario, in which Open Education will fit real learning and teaching needs, has social participation as its foundation stone.

²³ Howe, J. (2006). The Rise of Crowdsourcing. *Wired*. <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html>

²⁴ <http://openbadges.org/>

²⁵ Lamy, M. N., Zourou, K. 2013, in press. *Social Networking for Language Education*. Palgrave MacMillan

²⁶ Initiated by Michael Sullivan <http://crowdfunding.pbworks.com/w/page/10402176/Crowdfunding>

²⁷ <http://www.crowdfunder.com/>