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Gathering evidence of the design, use, reuse and redesign of Open Educational Content

Open Educational Resources (OER) are available globally in many OER repositories. (The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) <http://web.mit.edu/> was the leader with the OpenCourseWare (OCW) initiative in 2002). With seven years experience in the development of OER it is time to evaluate what has worked, why and how we can maximise on the design and redesign of OER for the benefit of learners and teachers.

Open Learning Network (OLnet) is a research project, which started in March 2009. Based on the lessons of experience and evidence, the initial aim of the project is to draw in existing OER and social networked communities to evaluate what types of OER have worked well in terms of learning and teaching. The project will investigate the best ways to develop new OER and redesign existing OER for reuse worldwide. OLnet is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and starts from a base of having a number of partners, to build upon over the three-year period of the project (in conjunction with drawing on existing OER communities). This paper starts by discussing progress since the start of the project.

The focus then moves to the commonalities and differences in developing OER in two OER repositories (OpenER and OpenLearn). This is followed by consideration of potential and actual adoption of OER from these repositories by the school and further education sector.

Questions addressed regarding the potential of OER to the school and further education sector are as follows:

- Could OER material fit into the present timetable of study?
- Might institutions provide assessment for OER material?
- How would material be assessed?
- What policies and procedures would need to be used or changed to allow the adoption of OER material for assessment?
- Might OER material be better suited to learning in cases of non-accreditation?

The findings will be discussed with respect to the African cultural context where research has been undertaken with the higher education sector.

Finally the paper discusses two examples of reuse: one of material from OpenER used by a school and the other a contrasting example from OpenLearn.