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The battle for open - a perspective

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Abstract: In this article the author argues that openness in education has been successful in establishing itself as an approach. However, this initial victory should be viewed as part of a larger battle around the nature of openness. Drawing lessons from history and the green movement, a number of challenges for the open education movement are identified as it enters this new stage. The value of openness to education is stressed in that it relates to opportunities for development and the role of the higher education in society.

Keywords: Open Educational Resources

Is it a battle?

In this article I wish to argue that the debate around various issues in open education represents a battle for the nature of openness. Initially then the value of using the battle metaphor will be justified. Some readers will be uncomfortable with such militaristic language, but its use is deliberate and in examining why some of the significant factors about openness are highlighted.

Firstly, there is a real conflict regarding the direction openness takes in education. For many of the proponents of openness its key attribute is freedom - for individuals to access content, to reuse it in ways they see fit, to develop new methods of working and to take advantage of the opportunities the digital, networked world offers. The more commercial interpretation of openness may see it as an initial tactic to gain users on a proprietary platform, or as a means of accessing government funding. Some see the new providers as entirely usurping existing providers in higher education, for instance when Sebastian Thrun predicts there will be only ten global providers of education in the future (The Economist 2012).

The second factor for choosing the term is that, as in real battles, things of value are being fought over. The average cumulative expenditure per student in OECD countries for tertiary studies is 57,774 USD (OECD 2013). In academic publishing Reed Elsevier reported revenue of over 6 billion GBP in 2012 of which over 2 billion was for the Science Technical and Medical publishing area (Reed Elsevier 2012) while Springer reported sales of €875 million in 2011 (Springer 2011). These are substantial markets, and the demand for education is only going to increase, so they represent highly desirable ones in times of global recession.

The third, and final, justification for using the term battle is that, as well as the very considerable spoils that may go to the victor, the axiom about the victors writing history is also pertinent. There is a battle for narrative taking place which circle around the issue of openness. An example of this is the recurrent 'education is broken' meme, and the related Silicon Valley narrative for education (Kernohan 2013, Weller 2012). These both seek to position higher education as a simple content industry, akin to the music business, and therefore can provide a simple, technological solution to this supposedly broken system. These narratives are often accepted unchallenged and deliberately ignore higher education's role in many of the changes that have occurred (positioning it as external forces fixing higher education) or simplifying the functions of higher education.

The term battle then seems appropriate to convey these three themes of conflict, value and narrative. To explore this metaphor then we might say that the initial battle has been won, but it is in the time of peace that many of the struggles continue. After what I will propose is an initial victory of openness, we are now entering the key stage in the longer term battle around openness. There are obviously many aspects of the battle metaphor that are not addressed; it is these three that form the basis for the comparison.

This is not simply about whether we use one piece of technology or another; openness can be argued to be at the very core of higher education in the 21st century. In its most positive interpretation it is the means by which higher education becomes more relevant to society, by opening up its knowledge and access to its services. It provides the means by which higher education adapts to the changed context of the digital world. This view will be outlined below when the value of openness is examined. At its most pessimistic openness is the route by which commerce fundamentally undermines the higher education system to the point where it is weakened beyond repair.

Lessons from elsewhere

Before looking at openness in education in more detail, it is worth considering lessons from elsewhere that can provide a perspective on the current situation in open education. Two analogies can be used to provide lessons for the battle around openness in education. If we view the success of the open approach as akin to a revolution (as argued below), then the history of other revolutions should offer some insights. The first analogy then is that of nearly all revolutions and their immediate aftermath. The French Revolution of 1789 saw an undeniably positive movement to overthrow injustices imposed by a monarchy. But in the subsequent decade there were numerous struggles between factions, a dictatorship and the Reign of Terror, culminating in the rise of Napoleon. While the long term results of the revolution were positive, during the decade and more after the 1789 commencement it must have felt very different for the average French citizen, and during the rule of Robespierre and the Jacobins many must have pondered whether it was in fact better under the old regime. One hears similar observations after more recent revolutions, for instance Russians proclaiming that life was better under Stalin, or East Germans that they preferred the communist regime (Bonstein 2009). More recently we have witnessed the Arab Spring, which over two years on has left many countries facing division, worsening economic performance and violent struggle still.

Many of the participants in a post-revolutionary state would be unified by one thought: this isn't what victory should feel like. The interests of various groups can come into the uncertainty that revolution creates, the old power structures do not disappear quietly, the pressures of everyday concerns lead to infighting amongst previous allies, and so on. It is messy, complex and all very human.

One interpretation of these national revolutions is that these post-revolutionary struggles are the inevitable growing pains of a democracy, but that the general direction is towards greater freedom. Viewed from an historical perspective they can seem entirely predictable given the sudden nature of change. And this also provides a second, more general lesson - it is after the initial victory, in these periods of change that the real shape of the long-term goal is determined.

If we see the open approach as largely having been successfully adopted, as set out in the next section, then considering other fields where an approach or message has moved into the mainstream can also offer insight. The second analogy therefore is provided by the green movement. Once seen as peripheral and only of concern to hippies, the broad green message has moved into central society. Products are advertised as being green, recycling is widely practised, alternative energy sources are part of a national energy plan and all major political parties are urged to have green policies. The environmental impact of any major planning decision is now high on the agenda (even if it isn't always the priority). From the perspective of the 1950s this looks like radical progress, a victory of the green message. And yet for many in the Green movement it doesn't feel like victory at all. As well as the ongoing global struggle to put in place meaningful agreements on carbon emissions, and the complex politics involved in getting agreement on global, long-term interests from local, short-term politicians, the green message has also been a victim of its own success. The green message has penetrated so successfully into the mainstream that it is now a marketable quality. This is necessary to have an impact at the individual level, for example in consideration of purchasing choices regarding cars, light-bulbs, food, clothing, travel, etc. But it has also been co-opted by companies who see it as a means of marketing a product. For example, many green activists in the 1970s would not have predicted that nuclear power would find renewed interest by promoting its green (non carbon dioxide producing) credentials. Regardless of what you feel about nuclear power, we can probably assume that raising its profile was not high on the list of hoped for outcomes for many green activists.

In 2010 assets in the US, where environmental performance was a major component, were valued at \$30.7 trillion, compared with \$639 billion in 1995 (Delmas & Burbano 2011). Being green is definitely part of big business. This leads to companies labelling products as green on a rather spurious basis. Like 'fat-free' or 'diet' in food labelling, 'eco-friendly', 'natural' or 'green' are labels that often hide other sins or are dubious in their claim. This is termed greenwashing, for example, the Airbus A380 reportedly has 17% less carbon emissions than a Boeing 747, which is to be welcomed, but advertises promoting it as an environmentally friendly option would seem to be stretching the definition somewhat. Similarly BP's series of 'green' adverts aimed at promoting a 'beyond petroleum' message provide a good example of how the green message can be adopted by companies who would seem to be fundamentally at odds with it.

Environmental marketing agency Terra Choice, identified '7 sins of greenwashing' (Terra Choice 2010), analogies of which can be seen in the open world:

1. Sin of the Hidden Trade-off, - whereby an unreasonably narrow set of attributes is used to claim greenness, without attention to other important environmental issues.
2. Sin of No Proof, - when an environmental claim that cannot be substantiated by easily accessible supporting information.
3. Sin of Vagueness - making poorly defined or broad claims so that their real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the consumer.
4. Sin of Irrelevance - a claim that is truthful but is unimportant or unhelpful

5. Sin of Lesser of Two Evils - making claims that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole.
6. Sin of Fibbing - making wholly false claims
7. Sin of worshipping false labels - when a product through either words or images, gives the impression of third-party endorsement where no such endorsement actually exists;

In the IT world the similarities between greenwashing and claims to openness have led to the term 'openwashing' being used. Klint Finley explains (2011):

"The old "open vs. proprietary" debate is over and open won. As IT infrastructure moves to the cloud, openness is not just a priority for source code but for standards and APIs as well. Almost every vendor in the IT market now wants to position its products as "open." Vendors that don't have an open source product instead emphasize having a product that uses "open standards" or has an "open API."

As companies adopt open credentials in education we are seeing the term applied in that sphere too, with similar cynicism (Wiley 2011). Like 'green', there are a series of positive connotations associated with the term 'open' - after all, who would argue for being closed? The commercial co-option of 'green' then provides us with a third lesson to be applied to the open movement: the definition of the term will be turned to commercial advantage.

These two analogies provide us with three lessons then that can be seen repeatedly across the different areas of open education:

1. Victory is more complex than first envisaged
2. The future direction is shaped by the more prosaic struggles that come after initial victory
3. Once a term gains mainstream acceptance it will be used for commercial advantage

The victory of openness

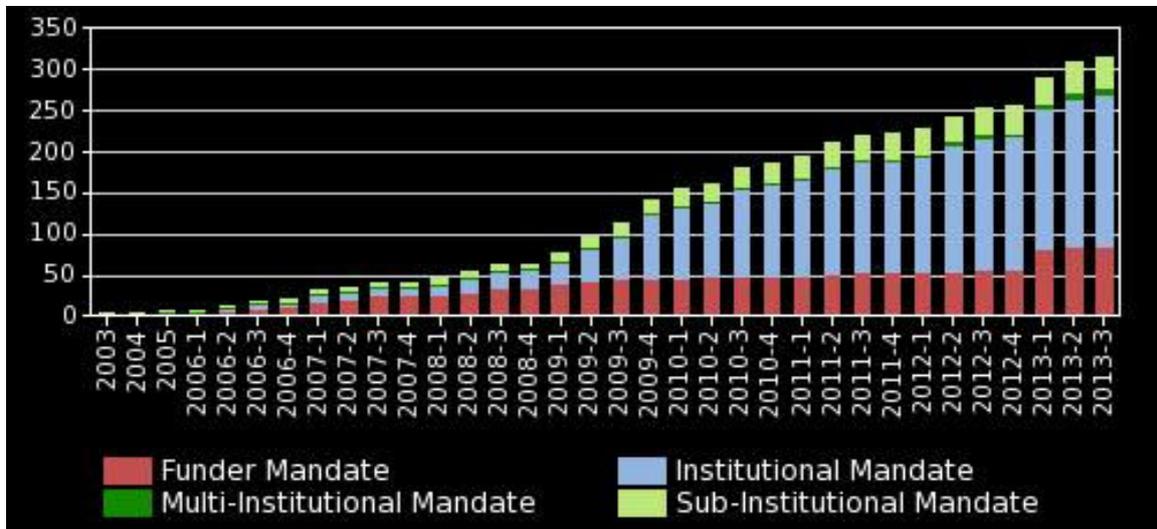
Having established the metaphor of a battle for the nature of openness and the lessons that can be drawn from elsewhere, an analysis of openness in education can now be undertaken.

In many respects the first major battle has been won, which is the recognition of openness as a valid approach. Openness is everywhere in education at the moment: at the end of 2011 a free course in Artificial Intelligence had over 160,000 learners enrolled (Leckart 2012); in 2012 in the UK the Government followed other national bodies in the US and Canada by announcing a policy mandating that all articles resulting from publicly funded research should be made freely available in open access publications (Finch Group 2012); downloads from Apple's iTunes U site which gives away free educational content passed 1 billion in 2013 (Robertson 2013); British Columbia announced a policy in 2012 to provide open, free textbooks for the 40 most popular courses (Gilmore 2012); the G8 leaders signed a treaty on open data in June 2013, stating that all government data will be released openly by default (UK Cabinet Office 2013).

Outside of these headline figures there are fundamental shifts in practices, which can be grouped together as open scholarship (Veletsianos & Kimmons 2012) - academics are creating and releasing their own content using tools such as Slideshare and YouTube, researchers are releasing results earlier and using open, crowdsourcing approaches, every day millions of learners make use of

free, open online tools and resources. Figure 1 shows the number of open access policies including institutional, funder and thesis specific ones since 2003 (from the Southampton University project ROARMap), which can be seen as representative of the growth of openness in general as an approach in education over the past decade.

Figure 1. Open Access Policies (University of Southampton
<http://roarmap.eprints.org/>)



In fact, openness is now such a part of everyday life that it is almost not worth commenting upon. This wasn't always the case, nor was it inevitable or predictable. At the end of the 1990s, as the dot com boom was gaining pace, business models were a source of much debate (much of it justified after the collapse) and similarly with the web 2.0 bubble ten years later. And while many of the business models were fanciful, the traditional models of paying for content have also been shown not to transfer across to the new digital domain. "Giving stuff away" is no longer an approach to be mocked.

Nowhere has openness played such a central role as in education. Many of the pioneers of open movements have come from universities and the core functions of academics are all subject to radical change under an open model, including the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that are challenging teaching and pre-publication repositories that undermine the traditional publishing and review model of researchers, openness affects all aspects of higher education.

Openness has a long history in higher education. Its foundations lie in one of altruism, and the belief that education is a public good. It has undergone many interpretations and adaptations, moving from a model which had open entry to study as its primary focus, to one that emphasises openly available content and resources. This change in the definition of openness in education has largely been a result of the digital and network revolution. Changes in other sectors, most notably the open source model of software production, and values associated with the internet of free access and open approaches have influenced (and been influenced by) practitioners in higher education. The past decade or so has seen the growth of a global open education movement, with significant funding from bodies such as the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and research councils. Active campaigners in universities have sought to establish programmes that will release content (data, teaching resources, publications) openly, while others have adopted open practices regarding their own working, through social media and blogs. This has been combined with related work on open licenses (notably Creative Commons) which allow easy reuse and adaptation of content, advocacy at policy level for nation or state-wide adoption of open content and sharing of resources, and improved technology and

infrastructure that make this openness both easy and inexpensive.

One might therefore expect this to be a time of celebration for the advocates of openness. Having fought so long for their message to be heard, they are now being actively courted by senior management for their experience and views on various open strategies. Open approaches are being featured in the mainstream media. Millions of people are enhancing their learning through open resources and open courses. Put bluntly, it looks as though openness has won. And yet you would be hard pushed to find any signs of celebration amongst those original advocates. They are despondent about the reinterpretation of openness to mean 'free' or 'online' without some of the reuse liberties envisaged (e.g. Wiley 2013). Concerns are expressed about the commercial interests that are now using openness as a marketing tool (e.g. Lamb, 2013). Doubts are expressed regarding the benefits of some open models for developing nations or learners who require support. At this very moment of victory it seems that the narrative around openness is being usurped by others and the consequences of this may not be very open at all.

In 2012 Gardner Campbell gave a keynote presentation at the Open Education conference (Campbell 2012) in which he outlined these concerns and frustrations. "What we are seeing," he said "are developments in the higher education landscape that seem to meet every one of the criteria we have set forth for open education - increased access, decreased cost, things that will allow more people than ever on a planetary scale, one billion individual learners at a time... Isn't that what we meant?" But as he explored different successes of openness his refrain was that of TS Eliot - that's not what I meant at all.

Why should this be the case? Can we dismiss it as simply the backlash when something achieves popularity? Are the advocates of openness merely exhibiting chagrin that others are now claiming openness? Is it just a semantic argument over interpretation that has little interest beyond a few specialist academics? Or is it something more fundamental, regarding the direction of openness and the ways it is implemented. It is this central tension in openness - that of victory and simultaneous despair - that this article seeks to explore.

Higher education and openness

The focus of this article is on higher education. The justification for the higher education focus is that it is the area where the battle for open is perhaps most keenly contested. Unlike some sectors which have had openness rather foisted upon them as a result of the digital revolution, for example the music industry and the arrival of sharing services such as Napster, higher education has sought to develop open practices in a range of areas.

It is this scope that makes it such a vibrant area of study, encompassing publishing, teaching, technology, individual practices, broadcast and engagement. In this variety there is much that is relevant for other sectors too, where one or more of these topics will be applicable, but rarely the entire range. It is frequently stated that higher education can learn lessons from other sectors that have been impacted by the digital revolution (e.g. Shirky, 2012), such as newspapers, but the opposite may be true with regards to openness, that other sectors can learn much from what is played out in the openness debate in higher education.

The following sections will examine the key areas of interest for education with regard to openness and set out the nature of the victory of openness.

Teaching

The advent of MOOCs has garnered a lot of attention recently. Originally

developed as an experimental method of exploring the possibilities of networked learning, MOOCs became the subject of media and commercial interest following the large numbers attracted to Thrun's Artificial Intelligence MOOC. Since then the major commercial player to emerge is Coursera, with two rounds of venture capital funding and over four million learners registered on its 400 courses (Coursera.org).

The idea behind MOOCs is simple: make online courses open to anyone and remove the costly human support factor. Whether this model is financially sustainable is still open to question as it is in the early stages. But there has been no shortage of media attention and discussion, with some observers arguing that MOOCs are the internet 'happening' to higher education (e.g. The Economist 2013).

MOOCs are just one aspect of how openness is influencing the teaching function of higher education. Before MOOCs emerged, there was (and still is) the successful open education resources (OER) movement. Indeed it can be argued that MOOCs are best viewed as just one element of the OER movement and not as a separate development (Weller, 2013). From 2001 when the Hewlett foundation funded MIT to start the OpenCourseWare site which released lecture material freely, the OER movement has spread globally. There are now major OER initiatives in all continents and OER has formed part of the central strategy for many education programmes from the likes of UNESCO, the Shuttleworth Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett foundation and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The distinction between MOOCs and OERs may be blurring somewhat - for example if a set of OER resources are packaged into a course structure, does that make them a MOOC, and similarly if a MOOC is made available after the course has finished is it then an OER? Related to OERs is the move to establish open textbooks, with the cost of textbooks, particularly in the US becoming a prohibitive factor in higher education participation (Hilton and Wiley 2010). Open textbooks seek to replace these publisher-owned versions of standard texts (for example, introductory statistics) with free, open online versions that have been created by groups or single authors. This is having significant impact, for example the open textbook initiative OpenStax aims to provide free online and low cost print textbooks to 10 million students, and currently has over 200 colleges signed up with projected savings to students of 90 million USD over the next 5 years (<http://openstaxcollege.org/>). As we shall see later however, cost is not the sole, or primary, benefit of openness for education.

Research

There are many ways in which openness impacts upon research, across the full cycle of activities, such as using open media to develop ideas, crowd-sourced approaches to methodology and disseminating findings openly. As with teaching, the victory of the open approach is tangible in a number of ways in the area of research.

Open access publishing has been growing steadily in acceptance as not only a valid, but, rather the best, model of disseminating research publications (e.g. Davis, 2010). Instead of academics publishing in proprietary journals access to which is then purchased by libraries or on article basis by individuals, open access makes publications freely accessible to all. There are different models for achieving this, the so-called green route, whereby the author places the article on their own site or the institutions repository, the gold route where the publisher charges a fee to make the article openly available and the platinum route, where the journal operates for free.

Open access publishing is perhaps the most recognisable aspect of how scholarly

activity is adapting to the opportunities afforded by digital and networked technology. Other practices form what is termed open scholarship and include sharing individual resources such as presentations, podcasts and bibliographies, social media engagement through blogs, twitter and other routes, and generally more open practices, such as pre-publishing book chapters, open reviews and open research methods. The latter can include the use of approaches such as crowdsourcing and social media analysis which rely on openness to succeed. Open scholarship is also providing new avenues for public engagement as academics create online identities that previously would have necessitated a broadcast intermediary to establish.

One aspect of open scholarship is that of open data, making the data from research projects publicly available (where it is not sensitive). As mentioned at the start of this paper the G8 have signed an agreement that this should be the default position on governmental data, and many research funders impose similar constraints. For many subjects, such as climate change, this allows for larger data sets to be created and meta-studies to be conducted, improving the overall quality of the analysis. But in other subjects too it provides the possibility of comparisons, analysis and interpretations that are unpredictable and may be outside of the original domain.

Open policy

One last victory for the open approach has been the manner in which it has been explicitly incorporated into formal policy at all levels. Much of the work around open licensing, particularly Creative Commons, has been initiated in, or influenced by, higher education. Licensing is in the eyes of many one of the true tests of openness, as the ability to take and reuse an artefact is what differentiates open from merely free. Licences are the main route through which broader policy based initiatives can be realised. By adopting a position on licences governments, NGOs, research funders, publishers and technology companies create a context whereby openness follows. The promotion of openness then as an approach, both practical and ethical, has been a growing strand of the open movement based in higher education.

At the time of writing, the Open Policy Network lists 82 global policies (http://wiki.creativecommons.org/OER_Policy_Registry) on open education, and the University of Southampton has 182 institutional mandates and 82 funder mandates relating to open access publishing (<http://roarmap.eprints.org/>). The nature and scope of these vary considerably from hard mandates, to softer intentions, but the interest and growth in policy indicates that it may be the next major development in open education.

This brief overview should attest that openness lies at the heart of much of the change in higher education, and that there is a significant amount of research and activity in this area. One aim of this article is to highlight this activity. It is an exciting time to be involved in higher education, there are opportunities for changing practice in nearly all aspects, and openness is the key to many of these. Key to succeeding in this however is to firstly engage in the changes, and secondly to take ownership of the changes, and not allow them to be dictated by external forces, either through vacillation or a short-term desire to simplify matters. As has been demonstrated by the green movement, the value of openness will not be lost on others.

Why openness matters

In the preceding sections the success of openness as an approach has been highlighted. This section will examine the significance of openness and why it matters in education by focusing on two features: opportunities and function.

There are many ways that the opportunity openness affords could be addressed, but just one representative example will be provided, in the area of pedagogy. In *The Digital Scholar* (Weller, 2011) I set out how digital resources and the internet are causing a shift from a pedagogy of scarcity to one of abundance. Many of our existing teaching models (the lecture is a good example) are based around the initial assumption of access to knowledge being scarce (hence we gather lots of people in a room to hear an expert speak). Abundant online content changes this assumption. A pedagogy of abundance focuses on content however, which is an important, but not sole element in the overall approach. Perhaps it is better to talk of a pedagogy of openness. Open pedagogy makes use of this abundant, open content (such as open educational resources, videos, podcasts), but also places an emphasis on the network and the learner's connections within this. In analysing the pedagogy of MOOCs (and open pedagogy is not confined to MOOCs), Paul Stacey (2013) makes the following recommendations:

- Be as open as possible. Not just open enrolments but use open pedagogies.
- Use tried and proven modern online learning pedagogies not campus classroom-based didactic learning pedagogies which we know are ill-suited to online learning.
- Use peer-to-peer pedagogies over self study.
- Use social learning including blogs, chat, discussion forums, wikis, and group assignments.
- Leverage massive participation - have all students contribute something that adds to or improves the course overall.

Examples of open pedagogy would include Jim Groom's DS106 (ds106.us) an open course which encourages learners to create daily artefacts, suggest assignments, establish their own space online and be part of a community that extends beyond the course both geographically and temporally. Dave Cormier starts his educational technology course (<http://ed366.com/>) every year by asking students to create a contract stating "that each of you decide how much work you would like to do for what grade. Individual assignments are given a 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory' assessment upon completion" (Cormier 2013). Courses such as H817Open (<http://bit.ly/h817open>) and Octel (<http://octel.alt.ac.uk/>) have learners create their own blogs, and this is used for all their solutions. The course then automatically aggregates all of these contributions into one central blog. All of this is conducted in the open.

This is not to suggest that any of these examples should be the default or adopted by others. They are suited to particular contexts and topics. The point is a more general one, in that openness is a philosophical cornerstone in these courses. It is present in the technology adopted, in the resources referenced, in the activities students undertake and in the teaching approaches taken. All of this is made possible by openness in several other areas: resources need to be made openly available, technology needs to be free to use, students need to be prepared to work in the open, and universities need to accept these new models of operating. I would suggest that we are only just at the beginning of exploring models of teaching and learning that have this open mind-set. It is notable that many of these early experimenters in open pedagogy are people associated with the open education movement.

It is this opportunity to explore that is important for higher education if it is to innovate and make best use of the possibilities that openness offers. A prerequisite for this is engagement with open education, whether it is in terms of technology, resources or pedagogy. One of the dangers of outsourcing openness, for example by relying on third party vendors to provide MOOC

platforms, or publishers to provide open content is that the scope for experimentation becomes limited. The pre-packaged solution becomes not just the accepted method, but the only method which is recognised.

We are already seeing some of this, for example Georgia Tech announced collaboration with MOOC company Udacity to offer an online Master's degree. As Christopher Newfield (2013) notes in his analysis of the contract, Udacity has an exclusive relationship with Georgia Tech, so Georgia Tech cannot offer its own content elsewhere. Udacity can, however, offer that content to other learners outside of the Masters. Newfield argues that as they seek to recoup costs and make savings that "the big savings, ironically, come by squeezing innovation - payments to course creators flatten out - and by leveraging overhead"

Even if we accept a less cynical view of this arrangement, the model of companies such as Udacity, Coursera, Pearson, etc is to create a global brand by becoming one of only a handful of providers. Diversity in the market is not in their interest, and so the model of how to create MOOCs, or deliver online resources becomes restricted, whether by contractual arrangements or simply by the presence of pre-packaged solutions which negate further exploration.

This same message regarding the possibility for experimentation can be repeated for nearly all other university functions: research, public engagement or the creation of resources. In each area the possibilities of combining open elements and making use of the digital networked environment allow for new opportunities, but in order to be fully realised these require active engagement and innovation by higher education institutions and academics, rather than external provision.

This brings us onto the second reason why openness matters, namely the function, or role, of the university. Universities can be seen as a bundle of different functions: research, teaching, public engagement, policy guidance, and incubators for ideas and businesses. In times of financial downturn, every aspect of society is examined for its contribution versus its cost, and the higher education sector is no exception here. Increasingly, the narrative is one of a straightforward investment transaction - students pay a certain fee, and in return they receive an education that will allow them to earn more money later in life (e.g. Buchanan, 2013).

While this is certainly a defensible and logical perspective for many to take, it ignores, or downplays other contributions. Open approaches to the dissemination of research, sharing of teaching resources and online access to conferences and seminars helps to reinforce the broader role of the university. There is nothing particularly new in this, my own institution, The Open University, is well regarded in the UK even by those who have never studied there largely as a result of their collaboration with the BBC, and making educational programmes. These can be seen as early forms of open educational resources. The OU is in a privileged position however with its relationship with the national broadcaster. Open approaches allow all institutions to adopt some of this approach, often at relatively low cost. For example, the University of Glamorgan (now University of South Wales) set up its own iTunesU site in 2010 at relatively low cost and generated over 1 million downloads in the first 18 months (Richards 2012).

Increasingly then we can see that openness helps shape the identity not just of a particular university, but of higher education in general and its relationship to society.

After the victory comes the battle

The nature of the victory of openness and subsequent struggle can be illustrated with an example where the battle around openness is perhaps most advanced, namely open access publishing.

The conventional model of academic publishing has usually seen academics providing, reviewing and often editing papers for free, which are published by commercial publishers and access to which is sold to libraries in bundles. Much of the funding for the research that informs these articles and the time spent on producing them comes from public funds, so over the last decade there has been a demand to make them publicly accessible. This has now become the mandate for many research funders, and many governments have adopted open access policies at a national level which stipulate that the findings of publicly funded research are made publicly available. This has extended to data from research projects as well as publications. Open access publishing is now the norm for many academics, and not just those who might be deemed early adopters, for example a survey by Wiley of its authors found that 59% had published in open access journals (Warne, 2013).

In the UK the 2012 Finch report (Finch Group 2012) recommended that "a clear policy direction should be set towards support for publication in open access or hybrid journals, funded by APCs, as the main vehicle for the publication of research, especially when it is publicly funded". APCs are Article Process Charges; this is the so-called Gold route to open access whereby authors (or the research funders) pay the publishers for an article to be made open access. This is in contrast with the Green route where it is self-archived or the Platinum route, which are journals where there is no APC charge.

In this we can see the initial triumph of openness. Open access has moved from the periphery to the mainstream and become the recommended route for publishing research articles. But at the same time the conflicts around implementation are also evident as is the thwarting of the original open ambitions.

The Finch report has been criticised for seeking to protect the interests of commercial publishers, while not encouraging alternative methods such as Green or Platinum open access (Harnad 2012). In addition the pay-to-publish model has seen the rise of a number of dubious open access journals, which seek to use openwashing as a means to make profit while ignoring the quality of articles. Bohannon (2013) reports on a fake article that was accepted by 157 open access journals. This would indicate that the pay-to-publish model creates a different stress on the filter to publish.

The tensions in the open access publishing world are representative of those in all aspects of openness in education: Incumbents have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo; there are considerable sums of money involved; the open approach allows new entrants to the market; the open label becomes a marketing tool; and there are tensions in maintaining the best aspects of existing practice as we transition to new ones. Driving it all though is a conviction that the open model is the best approach, both in terms of access and innovation. The Public Library of Science (PLoS) for instance, has not only interpreted open access to mean free access to content, but also used the open approach to rethink the process of peer review and the type of articles they publish, for example with PLoS Currents which provide rapid peer-review around focused topics (<http://currents.plos.org/>).

Conclusion

Openness has been successful in being accepted as an approach in higher education and widely adopted as standard practice. In this sense it has been victorious, but this can be seen as only the first stage in a longer, ongoing battle around the nature that openness should take. There are now more nuanced and detailed areas to be addressed, like a number of battles on different fronts. After the initial success of openness as a general ethos then the question becomes not 'do you want to be open?' but rather 'what type of openness do you want?' Determining the nature of openness in a range of contexts so that it retains its key benefits as an approach is the next major focus for the open education movement.

Open approaches complement the ethos of higher education, and also provide the means to produce innovation in a range of its central practices. Such innovation is both necessary and desirable to maintain the role and function of universities as they adapt. It is essential therefore that institutions and practitioners within higher education have ownership of these changes and an appreciation of what openness means. To allow others to dictate what form these open practices should take will be to abdicate responsibility for the future of education itself.

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