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'To implement or not to implement a policy on OER - that is the question'

## Student Dissertation

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## WED: 'To implement or not to implement a policy on OER - that is the question' (Oliver Sterland)

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11 February 2015

OER (Open Educational Resources) exist in a variety of guises including: 'bottom-up', informal artefacts described as 'granular' by Weller (2011); targeted projects which are externally funded by bodies such as JISC; or institutionally supported MOOCS which enjoy internal resourcing.

Research also suggests that different stakeholders within an HE institution may have conflicting motivations with regards to OER. For example, 'champions' of OER amongst teaching staff may be concerned with quality enhancement, whilst management teams are more likely to look to the monetization of MOOCs as branding or recruitment tools (Nikoi and Armellini, 2012)

Yet despite diverging priorities, Yang et al. (2008) crucially maintain that the sustainability of OER relies on the adoption of an OER policy by senior management within an institution.

This presents a paradox, since HE directorate is also faced with a series of significant disincentives around OER. Olcott (2012) observes with regards to teaching staff: 'unfortunately, most of our global colleagues are not waiting in anticipation for the next best OER to enter cyberspace'. There is also considerable uncertainty around copyright amongst academics (Yang, 2008) and the 'holy grail' of repurposing OER is by no means a 'given'. In short, the scale of culture change necessitated by the organised introduction of OER is daunting.

Likewise, the return on investment for directorate is unclear, other than for MOOC-related courses. OER creation, repository curation and additional training are costly, and the OER Research Hub (2012) is ambivalent on both financial return and quality enhancement. Elsewhere, commentators speculate on a potentially divisive 'participation gap' which could result from differing technological abilities amongst staff (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012).

So how is that certain institutions seem then to be successfully embracing OER? After all, according to the OER Research Hub map, (OER Research Hub, 2012) the UK has the second highest concentration of OER in the world after the United States.

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8 January 2015

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OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' Online Conference 2015

The conference contributor had previously written a mock, 5-year OER implementation policy for his own institution, Regents University London, as part of the OU H817 course. Through a 'networked' approach he now seeks to understand how OER may have gained momentum in other private HEIs based in the UK. Comparison will also be made with the public sector in an attempt to understand whether PEST factors may affect the environment differently. In particular, the contributor is interested to determine whether a 'bottom-up' or 'top-down' management strategy (or some combination of the two) has been instrumental in successful adoption .

The artefact for presentation at the conference will be in multimedia format using the free online toolkit, Xerte, designed by Nottingham University.

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### ARTEFACT - 'OER Decision Maker'

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[M.M](#)

5:00pm 17 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Oliver I remember this poster very well as I teach English and loved the Shakespeare nod. You mention that 'champions' of OER amongst teaching staff would be concerned about quality enhancement - I think teachers in Northern Ireland are only beginning to scratch the surface of what OER can offer regarding lots of aspects of our practice (of course, quality enhancement included). I will be interested to see how your artefact offers ideas for how to implement OER successfully. I suppose my presentation could be linked here as I am sort of using an OER to see if CPD for teachers can be enhanced?! Ps sorry to post this on here but would I have your permission to quote some of the comments you

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left on my padlet regarding my classroom footage? It would really assist in my presentation if I could.



[Rachel O'Connor](#)

7:09pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This topic really interests me Oliver. In a lot of our discussions on this module and I know in my own organisation it seems to be a given that we should have OER and there should be policies in place regarding this. However, none of the things I have read while researching my project really seemed to have touched on the question in your title. Should we implement an OER strategy. I am probably in the cynical camp and from my experience feel a bit like OERs and MOOCs etc are 'buzz words' of the moment and this is why organisations are jumping on board with them and I question whether they are really thinking through all the aspects.

Looking forward to hearing more about what you have discovered and seeing your artefact.



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

1:16pm 4 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Oliver

OER is that open educational resources or online educational resources? Might be good to clarify for conference just incase you have interlopers in the audience such as me:)

I suspect knowing whether to implement or not could have a different outcome depending on which side of the fence you are sitting on.

A new teacher might welcome additional resources whilst more experienced teachers may be wary about the quality of content.

Then you may need to convince the administrator holding the purse strings by lobbying a cause in his cost benefit analysis study.

Looking forward to your presentation Oliver.



[Rachel O'Connor](#)

5:05pm 6 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi again Oliver

In preparation for watching your presentation next week I have been looking over your OpenStudio posting and thinking about your journey to the presentation. One thing I noted was that you had not shared that many items on OpenStudio. I am interested to know more about how we have all got on with the open sharing of our work that has been required within H818. How have you felt about trying to be open and share work in progress?

I know I have found it difficult but not because of the fear of criticism (as I thought I might) but more about not wanting to show all my cards because I don't want people not hearing something new at the conference. I felt a bit the same about my poster. I think others have mentioned it in the forums and feeling like they wanted to surprise and excite people on the day of the presentation - if we have shared all the content in advance then is there such an incentive to come and watch?!

As for your artefact it is looking really good and you have obviously taken on board a lot of the feedback from others. In my humble opinion it has come on massively and looks really professional. Well done.

Look forward to the presentation next week



[oliver sterland](#)

2:03pm 9 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Rachel,

Thanks for both very kind comments which are very encouraging coming up to the presentation. Why not so much sharing? I actually wanted to 'assessment bank' on this module just after TMA01 as a result of some home 'stuff' but also a lack of skills in the networking areas required; I felt I almost needed a year to get these up to scratch and then come back.

However, my interest in the research question is still very genuine, and so a sense of frustration that any networking seeds I've sown have come to nothing.

I will crack this area, but it will take time.....



[oliver sterland](#)

2:19pm 9 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Sheila,

Yes OER means 'Open Educational Resources', good point; I was there when you asked 'What's a MOOC?' and observed how it momentarily threw Alison Littlejohn slightly, since there was plenty of 'jargon' yet to come in her presentation. I hereby vow not to look at that chat pane :)

On your other point: "*I suspect knowing whether to implement or not could have a different outcome depending on which side of the fence you are sitting on*", I was taking the 'implementer' to be directorate since they ultimately are the policy-makers.

Sorry that I missed your talk, will catch the recording later.

Regards,

Oliver



[Sheila Greenwood](#)

6:26pm 9 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Oliver

You got the 'royal mention' in my presentation with your idea's on how you might use a resource such as my artefact. Thank you for that.

Not a chance when you are in full flow to watch the chat pane. I suggest not anyway, just continue your thoughts without interruption.

Hope to be home in time to catch your slot on Wednesday evening.

Good Luck

Sheila



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

10:35am 12 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Your questions and comments from the live conference presentation are below:

- ▶ Did you pursue the invitation to present?  
these things often need champions pushing them through
- ▶ we have a map of oer policies here: <http://oermap.org/policy-map/>
- ▶ Good to be reminded that teaching and learning strategies are five year strategies. Timing is important isn't it?
- ▶ you may answer this but have you set up soe analytics to see where people are coming from to this site.
- ▶ Could you ask whether Martin W (Co-Chair of OER15) might mention it ...?
- ▶ Will you extend it to non-private universities? And even beyond to Further Education?
- ▶ depends on the organisation - in US policy-maker movements have become more crowdsourced
- ▶ interesting double loop learning as you are questioning your original objectives and whether you need to change what you originally believed
- ▶ Attending conferences and talking to people in person also helps
- ▶ policy is a big networking thing, difficult to do without putting in the horus talking to those people
- ▶ sometimes it requires being more of an activist for OER - are you prepared to do this?
- ▶ Could you say a little more about editorial and how it influences outcomes?
- ▶ think your tool could be useful Oliver - we are trying to develop a simialr thing at oerresearch hub for different oer users
- ▶ Would also be good to get in touch with ALT-C, maybe use their mailing list?
- ▶ I can understand - it might help to do something similar in another organisation. Then it doesn't have the political implications for you personally.

- ▶ We have a big issue with teachers not wanting to share their work. Some staff do not want to share their work on our internal LMS, so I think in my organisation creating an OER would be problematic. I love the project.
- ▶ What was rationale for changing focus from niche private univ adopting OER to broader HE context?
- ▶ i really liked your reflection on it Oliver - getting that reputation so people will respond is a big issue - took us a year to really get that going in oer hub



[oliver sterland](#)

3:07pm 16 February 2015 (Edited 3:18pm 16 February 2015) [Permalink](#)

**Many thanks to all who left such helpful comments; I studiously tried to avoid reading them during the presentation itself, but they've focussed my thoughts a little more since!**

- ▶ **Did you pursue the invitation to present?  
these things often need champions pushing them through**

Not at the time, because I didn't have confidence in the assertions, as I said it was more of an 'intellectual exercise', and I wouldn't describe myself as an OER 'champion'. In fact to an extent it suggests to me a loss of perspective, which is opposite to the OER Research Hub's approach. Not saying I'm a sceptic, however!

- ▶ **we have a map of oer policies here: <http://oermap.org/policy-map/>**

Thanks Martin, I had seen this and found it very useful. Would be interesting to see the drivers behind them and a private/public classification. Maybe I'm missing that?

- ▶ **Good to be reminded that teaching and learning strategies are five year strategies. Timing is important isn't it?**

By 'timing' I presume you mean the 'time taken to implement something' rather than whether something comes along at the right moment, ie. When the movers and shakers are receptive. Arguably both important, of course.

- ▶ **you may answer this but have you set up soe analytics to see where people are coming from to this site.**

Will certainly do this when it's more developed.

- ▶ **Could you ask whether Martin W (Co-Chair of OER15) might mention it ...?**

Sounds dumb, but he's not following me on Twitter, so how? Simon also said: you may like to 'hook up with him in the break', but I wasn't sure how. Oh dear! Not very networked at this stage L

- ▶ **Will you extend it to non-private universities? And even beyond to Further**

## Education?

As you can see, I already did (beyond private universities), although this was perhaps a case of the tail wagging the dog. In other words, I created an online survey for the survey which was open for all to answer and this resulted me in losing the niche 'private' thing.

- ▶ **depends on the organisation - in US policy-maker movements have become more crowdsourced**
- ▶ **interesting double loop learning as you are questioning your original objectives and whether you need to change what you originally believed**

I'm not sure which bit qualifies as double-loop learning, since there was no real implementation stage (i.e the website didn't run long enough, nor was linked to analytics, but it sounds very flattering, thanks!

- ▶ **Attending conferences and talking to people in person also helps**

Yes, I may try to tug at the uni's purse-strings....

- ▶ **policy is a big networking thing, difficult to do without putting in the hours talking to those people**

I'm sorry I would need to go back and see how 'policy' was being used in this context.

- ▶ **sometimes it requires being more of an activist for OER - are you prepared to do this?**

How do I join? Is there a handshake? :) Seriously, I wouldn't want to claim I'm naturally an activist in anything, rather an 'monitor-evaluator' in Belbin terms.

- ▶ **Could you say a little more about editorial and how it influences outcomes?**

Well, as far as my site is concerned, under my 'key issues' tab, by balancing opposite stances, I'm not sure I am furthering the cause of OER significantly. The OER Research hub at least sets up eleven hypotheses which are measured against research. But then I'm sure there are editorial decisions around which hypotheses to include and which research. It's hard to achieve absolute neutrality.

- ▶ **think your tool could be useful Oliver - we are trying to develop a similar thing at oerresearch hub for different oer users**
- ▶ **Would also be good to get in touch with ALT-C, maybe use their mailing list?**
- ▶ **I can understand - it might help to do something similar in another organisation. Then it doesn't have the political implications for you personally.**
- ▶ **We have a big issue with teachers not wanting to share their work. Some staff do not want to share their work on our internal LMS, so I think in my organisation creating an OER would be problematic. I love the project.**



Culture change is the biggest, single obstacle within a single organisation, but not impossible, I'm sure.

▶ **What was rationale for changing focus from niche private univ adopting OER to broader HE context?**

Please see my answer above; I'm not it was a justified rationale and I may still revert. The question of whether there may be significant different attitudes towards OER in the public and private sectors is still the 'elephant in the room' amongst my unanswered questions. Not forgetting that most of the 'radical' c-MOOC courses seem to have originated in Canadian/US private institutions (I think)

▶ **i really liked your reflection on it Oliver - getting that reputation so people will respond is a big issue - took us a year to really get that going in oer hub**

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