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WP3: Nurture the international policy making process by stimulating the debate on challenges that face less used languages

Deliverable 13:

Working Policy Paper: OER-Challenges and opportunities for less used languages. A global and European perspective

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1. Executive summary

In order to formulate policy recommendations for the uptake of Open Educational Resources (OER) in less used languages (LUL) targeting governments and senior policy makers in the educational sector, ICDE first identified challenges and opportunities arising from OER in LUL using:

- the State of the Art report and its annex (WP2, #10),
- the summary of the main findings from the two international workshops held in Oslo in April and October ,
- The study undertaken by Katerina Zourou, Ph.D. LangOER project manager on “why do OER matter for less used languages?”
- The reflections from the workshop organized jointly by ICDE and LangOER in cooperation with the Open Education Consortium, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 25 April 2014.
- National and international experts’ advice, expertise and collaboration.

A first draft was issued in October 2014, prior to the second international workshop and open for comments/feedback to LangOER project members and experts consulted in the drafting of the brief.

Sixteen experts ranging from policy advisors to language specialists did provide us with suggestions, which were then analyzed, summarized and singled out for further consideration by the ICDE team.

The project team members will issue a final draft (deliverable 15) in December 2014 after revision. The final version is expected to be launched and published officially by the end of December 2014 and will be followed by an information and dissemination campaign (mass mailing to all European Ministries of education, regional associations and LangOER project members)

2. Introduction, background and methodology

The draft policy brief presented here is the very first version of the policy draft, which will be revisited by the LangOER project members, as well as national and international experts before being finalized and published openly.

Background

The LangOER project, consisting of a consortium with 9 partners, is a three-year project (2014-2016) funded by the European Commission. It is focused on enhancing the linguistic and cultural components of Open Educational Resources and Open Educational Practices. The network addresses many challenges, and targets the needs of three main groups: educators, policy makers and researchers.

ICDE is responsible for Work Package 3 which objective is to nurture the international policy making process by stimulating the debate on challenges for Less Used Languages. It targets the policy makers and proposes to identify the main challenges and opportunities arising from OER for Less Used Languages. It also formulates policy recommendations for governments and educational institutions.

Methodology

The draft policy brief has been modeled step-by-step and has taken input from several different sources:

- 1) Workshops and conferences
 - The workshop organized by ICDE and LangOER in cooperation with the Open Education Consortium held in Ljubljana (Slovenia), 25 April 2014
 - The international workshop organized by ICDE and LangOER in partnership with the NordicOER network in Oslo, 28 April 2014, for OER and Less Used Languages
- 2) Literature research - this includes The State of the Art Report published in August 2014, which provides an in-depth investigation of OER more than 20 Less Used Languages.
- 3) F2F and virtual discussions have also been engaged with selected experts (e.g. Martin Weller, an OER expert from The Open University) on the main issues.

The draft policy brief is now available for internal review and suggestions until 6 October. Following these discussions, the recommendations and suggestions will be summarized and issues identified. These will be discussed further at the workshop taking place in Oslo on 14 October.

As a follow-up to the workshop, the draft policy brief will be revised and the final policy brief version 1.0 will be issued by the end of December 2014.

3. The Draft Policy Brief: “Open Educational Resources in your Own Language, in your Way”

Summary

While open access to knowledge and open education is moving higher on the educational agenda all over the world and in Europe under the slogan “Opening up Education”, Open Educational Resources (OER) are mostly offered in the dominant world languages, in particular English. This puts Less Used Languages (LUL) under pressure, and reduces the chances for smaller countries to reap the opportunities from OER.

The overall picture emerging from national approaches to OER in Europe is characterized by diversity and fragmentation. The landscape for most countries surveyed for quality OER in LUL is bleak.

Policy decisions, opening up areas and marketplaces for educational resources and safeguarding interoperability, are key issues for governments and institutions to take the leadership for Open Educational Resources in Less Used Languages.

Several problems do prevent stakeholders from grasping the benefits and opportunities that OER offers but the solutions to overcome these challenges are plentiful and within reach.

Decisions to speed up the changes to more Open Education Resources in own languages will only be possible through policy reform and open collaborative joint efforts inviting the public and private sector in the debate.

Open Educational Resources in own languages *do* offer true opportunities, not only in terms of education, but also in terms of cultural and linguistic identity, employability, sustainability and mobility. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education is a huge asset to create collaborations and international communities for OER. Governments should take the leadership in promoting and facilitating interoperability of OER within and between countries, cultures and languages.

2. Introduction

2.1. The situation

Open access to knowledge and open education is moving on the educational agenda all over the world, including Europe, under the slogan “Opening up Education”. However, Open Educational Resources are mostly offered in English, which challenge learning in countries with Less Used Languages and challenge Less Used Languages in itself.

2.2. Definitions and scope

Open Educational Resources (OER) as stipulated in the 2012 Paris OER Declaration (UNESCO) 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” OERs range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation.

A key component of the 2012 Paris OER Declaration is to encourage the open licensing of educational materials produced with public funds.

OER is a core component of *Open Education* but not synonymous. Open Education is a much broader and a more vague concept with several slightly different definitions:

- Open University, UK, defines its mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.

- Wikipedia says Open Education is a collective term to describe institutional practices and programmatic initiatives that broaden access to the learning and training traditionally offered through formal education systems.
- Open Education Consortium says that Open Education encompasses resources, tools and practices that employ a framework of open sharing to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide.
- Open Source says that proponents of Open Education believe everyone in the world should have access to high-quality educational experiences and resources, and they work to eliminate barriers to this goal.

The European Commission took the “Opening up Education” initiative to stimulate ways of learning and teaching through ICT and digital content, mainly through the development and availability of OER.

In this brief, *Less Used Languages (LUL)* refer to languages, which are either spoken by a limited number of people or dominated by more commonly used languages. Less Used Languages include both regional and minority languages and (small) state languages. In practice, most countries in Europe can regard their national language as “less used” when comparing with the world languages of English, Spanish and French. Approximately 50 million people in Europe speak a regional or minority language, representing 10% of Europe’s population. Many terms are used to refer to “smaller languages” and the linguistic diversity in Europe, making it complex to give a single definition of LUL.

The paper focuses on a situation where the take-up of OER in a countries’ native language is poor, and what can be done to significantly improve the situation. Although the focus is on LUL, countries and cultures with native languages that are not considered LUL will still find the reflections and recommendations of this brief useful.

Policy for OER in LUL is in a crossroad of policies including:

- Language and the use of mother tongue
- OER in Education
- OER in Open Education
- Information and Communication Technologies in Education

These policies have to be considered when suggesting policies for how to significantly improve the take-up and use of OER in LUL.

2.3 Why focus on OER in less used languages?

2.3.1: Importance of mother tongue in education

Mother tongue is a prerequisite for development and learning. It plays a tremendously useful role in the education of a child as a medium of expression and communication. It brings about emotional and intellectual development. Therefore, mother tongue has great importance in education and in the curriculum. Research has proved that learners do perform better if they are taught in their mother tongue. It also helps them build their cultural and linguistic identity, as well as empower them.

This is underpinned by findings in a study of the higher education sector in Norway where 70%-almost 100% of all protected (not OER) educational materials are in Norwegian, only for scientific papers the majority is in English.

A paradox for Less Used Languages is that while the Internet offers huge opportunities for learning, less than five per cent of current languages in the world are in-use online. (Kornai) The Internet may be helping the other 95 per cent to their graves, in particular if they are not there.

2.3.2: Importance of Open Educational Resources in Education

Open Education Resources offer an exclusive advantage when compared to educational resources. They allow legal extensive use of the resources free of charge, and offer in exchange greater openness in access to education, increased quality, innovation, creativity and sustainable use.

A key message in the 2012 Paris OER Declaration is paragraph:

“j. Encourage the open licensing of educational materials produced with public funds.

Governments/competent authorities can create substantial benefits for their citizens by ensuring that educational materials developed with public funds be made available under open licenses (with any restrictions they deem necessary) in order to maximize the impact of the investment.”

In this brief, we have adopted an understanding of OER that emphasizes the public funding and open licensing component.

In light of the recently adopted Declaration, Sir John Daniel, former CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning and David Killion, US ambassador to UNESCO, wrote in the Guardian newspaper, July 2012:

“OERs have the potential to solve the global education crisis and contribute to sustainable economic growth”

2.3.3: Importance of Open Educational Resources in Open Education

OER has a key role in the European Commission initiative for Opening up Education. However, not all initiatives for Open Education have OER in its core. Whether Open is Open is not always obvious. When several elite universities in the US launched Massive Open and Online Courses (MOOCs), most of what was declared Open was in reality protected and “closed”, example: Coursera. Most of these MOOCs were not based on OER, but the courses were open in the meaning of free access. However, the content was not free to (Wiley, Green & Soares, 2012):

- Retain – i.e. no digital rights management restrictions (DRM), the content is yours to keep, whether you are the author, instructor or student.
- Reuse – you are free to use materials in a wide variety of ways without expressly asking permission of the copyright holder.
- Revise – as an educator, you can adapt, adjust, or modify the content to suit specific purposes and make the materials more relevant to your students. This means making it available in a number of different formats and including source files, where possible.
- Remix – you or your students can pull together a number of different resources to create something new.
- Redistribute – you are free to share with others, so they can reuse, remix, improve upon, correct, review or otherwise enjoy your work.

“For the first time in human history we have the tools to enable everyone to attain all the education they desire.” (Wiley, Green, & Soares, 2012).

To label what is really Open and what the users rights are might be a first step to avoid the confusion of so called Open offerings that, for example, Coursera provides.

2.3.4: Importance of Information and Communication Technology in Education

UNESCO states that “the use of technology for online and distance learning will become a critical component in the provision of quality education”.

Policies for ICT in education have evolved over the last few decades. In the early stages of policy formulation, access and infrastructure issues were at the heart of ICT in education policymaking. As access gradually has improved, other topics have come to the forefront, amongst them capacity building among teachers and school leaders, digital content, innovation and research. Some countries have dedicated ICT policies for education, while other countries choose to embed ICT in education policy at large.

There are multiple rationales for governments investing in and developing ICT in education policies. According to Kozma, policy rationales span from supporting economic growth and social development

via advancing educational reform to supporting educational management. ICT as a lever for better learning strategies and learning outcomes also has an important role for ICT in education policies.

2.3.5: Importance of Open Educational Resources in Less Used Languages

The UNESCO OER community acknowledges that huge potential (language preservation and revitalization, education and development for poverty alleviation) lies in local language OERs. Until now, there has been a striking omission of any discourse around language diversity, translation or multilingualism within the OER movement largely dominated by English. However, 4.9 billion people out of a global population of 6.7 billion people do not speak English as either a first or a second language.

The overall picture emerging from national approaches to OER is characterized by diversity (Welsh, Catalan, Flemish and Estonian initiatives) and fragmentation (regional languages could be well represented despite a limited capacity in investment and size of population). The existence of OER in LUL is diverse, ranging from considerable resources (Welsh) to none (Frisian). OERs in Less Used Languages are being linguistically and culturally marginalized and are not well spread throughout the education system, putting the quality of education and learning processes at risk.

The establishment of functional national and institutional OER policies in Less Used Languages that encompass and serve education, technology, linguistics, mobility and culture is needed.

3. Challenges for grasping the benefits of OERs in LUL and opportunities offered when hindrances are overcome

The overall picture today displays the lack of explicit national investment (human resources, funding, technical and regulatory frameworks), on policy at ministry level. The lack of open licensed OER in LUL in Europe is striking. However, there are some good examples of less used languages, which are distinguished by policy making at a national level (e.g. Wales, Poland, Estonia and Norway/NDLA). However, even these good examples do not cover the completely educational sector in the countries considered...only parts.

3.1 What are the potential benefits for policy makers in the educational sector in adopting, promoting and incentivizing Open Education Resources in Less Used Languages?

3.1.1. Increased efficiency of the educational system and community

Open sharing speeds up the development of new learning resources, stimulates internal improvement, innovation and reuse. Networking leads to increased efficiency (e.g. Welsh: few committed universities but very efficient). Efficiency will spread throughout the education system from primary schools to research (OERs are right now centred on the upper-secondary sector). Lifelong OER platforms will attract informal learners and will serve as a gateway from informal learning to formal educational programs. Still concerning efficiency, ICT may help conserve the written and oral patrimony through digitalization of the language.

3.1.2. Improved quality of learning and teaching as well as researching

OER can allow teachers to re-mix learning resources, i.e. make the resources fit for pedagogical purpose. The use of OERs in LUL encourages educators and learners to engage in critical reflection and in pedagogical debates that will improve the quality of learning and teaching. Reusable and remixable resources can underpin the importance of teachers as critical human capital for development and curation of learning resources.

Education in mother tongue gives better results and the apprenticeship of other languages is eased when one masters their own/one language first. The sharing of knowledge not only reinforces the content and methodology of the learning/teaching, but also the understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

3.1.3. Cost efficiency

Joint efforts at the national and international level will not only enrich education, but will also make it possible to share the burden of education among the nations. The open use of the educational

resources will avoid duplication and will lower the cost of production. OER reuse will enhance sustainability if ecological and economically viable models are designed and used.

3.1.4 Innovative potential

OERs in Less Used Languages are the tools necessary to answer the call for global leadership and contextualization of resources. Mobile learning can help overcome the digital divide. The education ecosystem is changing, enabling new business models. Mash Books, which are the result of mixing various educational assets (book chapters, videos, audio, charts and so forth) into material used for instructional purpose are becoming more popular. However, changes will only happen if mind-sets shift from competition to sharing.

It is understood that benefits go hand in hand with challenges, especially if we adopt an understanding of OER that emphasizes the open licensing component. Gaining competitive advantage in the Education Ecosystem requires going beyond mere infrastructure (internal) to exostructure (external).

3.2 What are the main challenges for policy makers in the educational sector in adopting, promoting and incentivizing Open Education Resources in Less Used Languages?

3.2.1. The lack of policies, models and frameworks are the key barriers

Almost no European countries with LUL as its national language have a defined policy for OER. Decision of policy is the critical success factor number 1 for OER in LUL. There is no functioning market for OER and resistance from existing players (e.g. publishers). Outside of Europe, the policy uptake seems to be moving faster. Examples are India (national policy), UNISA South Africa and Open University UK (institutional policy), the African Virtual University and OER Africa (cross-country initiatives) and many examples in the US, (e.g. Broward College Online that saves USD 250.000/year by OER textbooks). This is probably partly because of the immediate cost impact of OER, which is not necessarily as strong and immediate incentive compared with parts of Europe, for example the Nordic countries, where education is a public good offered free or to low costs and the living standard is high.

3.2.2. OER existence, awareness and impact are low or lacking

There are very few OER mapping systems (like POERUP OER Research Hub and LangOER projects) and little research has been conducted on their effectiveness. This hinders policy makers from properly assessing the benefits and potential impacts involved in the development and procurement of OERs in LUL. Lacking sense of ownership of the materials produced/reproduced may hinder wider acceptance of OER. In general, there is a strong need for training and “cultural change” to encourage collaboration and use of OERs. It is a paradox that while Open Access has had a relative rapid take up among Higher Education Institutions in Europe; this is not the case for OER. One reason might be that Open Access papers are peer reviewed, while one has not agreed visible, acknowledged and transparent quality assurance for OER.

3.2.3. Linguistic hindrances to the use and reuse of OER

This is confirmed by a recent study showing that 35% of the users would rather use material produced in their own language and 21% say a main barrier is resources in English only.

The OER practices are more static than open for adoption and innovation. In order to reach multilingual communities across Europe and communities of Less Used Languages, resources must “travel well” and be transferable and adapted to be used in a cultural and linguistic context different from their origin. Translation of OER is only the second best option. Relying on translation of learning material only undermines building the knowledge capacity within your own cultural context. If Open Educational Resources are not offered in Less Used Languages, learners and educators will turn to dominant languages, which in turn will weaken the OERs and LULs.

3.2.4. Gap between policy and practice

Existing gaps can be met with incentives and specific policies. Budget and resources in education are limited, highlighting the need to share and recycle. Low numbers of learners and speakers in LUL is considered as a barrier to the development of OERs and the resources allocated. This limits the speed and intensity of development in comparison to dominant languages. Initiatives are scarce and often initiated at the grassroots' level. There is an urgent need to recognize and scale up these initiatives

from local platforms to global connections. Software and hardware exist. However, they need to be customized (software available in national languages, keyboards adapted to alphabets, etc.) and interoperable at the same time. Small markets for OER can be a challenge, but the strong Welsh and Catalan communities show that OER can thrive and grow despite of small markets

3.2.5. Lack of models that work

A life cycle or value added ecological approach to OER might be useful, particularly in smaller countries and communities. Fragmentation, fear for low quality, lack of incentives, weak market etc. can be met by an ecological approach that can address all issues and value added steps in creating and using quality OER. It should be ecologically (follow the lifecycle), economically, pedagogically and technically feasible and sustainable. Norway has developed such a model for upper secondary education (NDLA) and Poland is following its example. The model builds on that education is a public good and public funds should be used to develop educational materials. This allows for releasing the material under a Creative Commons license and therefore to be open for use, reuse, remix, readaptation and redistribution.

3.2.6 Existing models brake

The knowledge from the print world is being transferred to the digital world while it requires expansion. OERs are still perceived as a threat by the publishing sector. The culture of sharing is not yet understood, accepted and anchored in the education system. There is also a lack of awareness that multilingualism can enrich cyberspace and education. Languages are often considered as barriers rather than assets, and Less Used Languages could find a second life in OER. The language acceptability is not being met in OER efforts to date, as there exist inequities in access to information.

4. Policy recommendations

To create a more favourable environment for having quality OER in LUL, it is suggested that:

- Governments should develop and decide national policies for OER.
- Governments and stakeholders in private, public and the education sector should collaborate to facilitate and contribute to an open area for OER.
- Governments should take up leadership in promoting and facilitating interoperability of OER within and between countries, cultures and languages.

Addressing these three recommendations should deliver a sufficient focused and holistic approach to enable more rapid growth and harvesting from OER, in particular in smaller countries, regions and communities.

Several players have delivered policy-oriented papers that can be used for inspiration in building national policies for OER. E.g. UNESCO's OER declaration, OECD on OER, the European project POERUP and the UNESCO IITE report "Open Educational Resources in France: Overview, Perspectives and Recommendations".

4.1. Governments should develop and decide national policies for OER

To grasp the full benefits from OER and learning in the context of the country's own language(s), governments should develop a holistic and coherent policy for development and use of OER in their own languages. Policies should address critical issues such as funding, capacity building and sharing, as well as possible regulatory issues. Incentives, monitoring and assessment mechanisms should be included in national and institutional policies.

While decision of national policy is the focus of our recommendation, regional, community and institutional policy decision are also of crucial value for take up and use of OER.

Policy decisions for open licensed OER in LUL is regarded as the critical success factor number 1 for take up and benefitting from OER.

Box 1. Example national policy decision: India

In **India**, the government has recently (2014) approved an open license policy to bring all the new digital learning resources as OER under BY-SA licenses. This shows the commitment of the government of India to sharing knowledge resources in the commons and to propelling further reuse, remix and growth of knowledge. It is expected that the content developed will be available as to facilitate localization and adaptation to local requirements all over the country and elsewhere.

www.col.org/blog177

Box 2. Example Open Text books: British Columbia OpenED, Canada

In October 2012, the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education announced its support for the creation of open textbooks for the 40 highest-enrolled first and second year subject areas in the province's public post-secondary system. In May 2014 the initiative received funds for a further 20 open textbooks for skills training and technical programs to support the priorities in B.C.'s Skills for Jobs Blueprint.

<http://open.bccampus.ca/about-2>

4.2. Governments and stakeholders in private, public and the education sector should collaborate to facilitate and contribute to an open area for OER

The OER community and stakeholders with a potential interest in OERs is fragmented and have few arenas that could act as a meeting place for collaboration, funding and development. On national level, governments and national agencies could consider incentives for networks that can act as catalysts for increased collaboration and innovation in OERs. Collaboration should include the possibility of private-public partnerships.

When considering models and concepts for arenas and marketplaces, one should consider building on existing structures, like in the Norwegian example NDLA.

Quality is a key issue for OER, and need a label, a process behind and transparency, as if peer review is for Open Access papers. To have Quality Assurance clear and visible into the life cycle and value chain for OER is a way to address this issue.

Facilitating arenas, areas and marketplaces for OER could build on models that address all steps in the OER lifecycle to stimulate and have incentives including:

- Inclusion of faculty, teachers and the education sector in the lifecycle
- Creation and production of OER
- Use of public and or institutional procurement when relevant
- Quality assurance
- Storing
- User-friendly access
- Identifying new needs for OER

Box 3. Example on a national working eco-model for OER: The National Digital Learning Arena (NDLA) Norway

In 2006, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research put forward a suggested resource allocation of NOK 50 million for digital learning resources in upper secondary education. The county councils were given, by a change in legislation, the responsibility for printed and digital learning resources. The county councils initiated a cooperation to deliver open digital learning resources. This cooperation is today NDLA.

NDLA is a public partnership, co-owned by 18 (out of 19) county councils in Norway. The goal is to cover all subjects at upper secondary level with open digital learning resources (OER) of high quality. NDLA involves the market, the teachers and students in the processes. The current operating annual budget is approximately 8 million EUR.

NDLA is set up as a virtual organization. The administrative resources are pooled from the counties in order to keep the cost at a minimum.

66% of the funding of NDLA is used for acquisition of technology services and digital learning resources from the ICT and content industries.

Today, NDLA covers 45 different subjects. The long-term ambition is to offer resources within all subjects. Statistics show a substantial increase in traffic on the NDLA website (ndla.no), and the awareness among key constituents is near 100%.

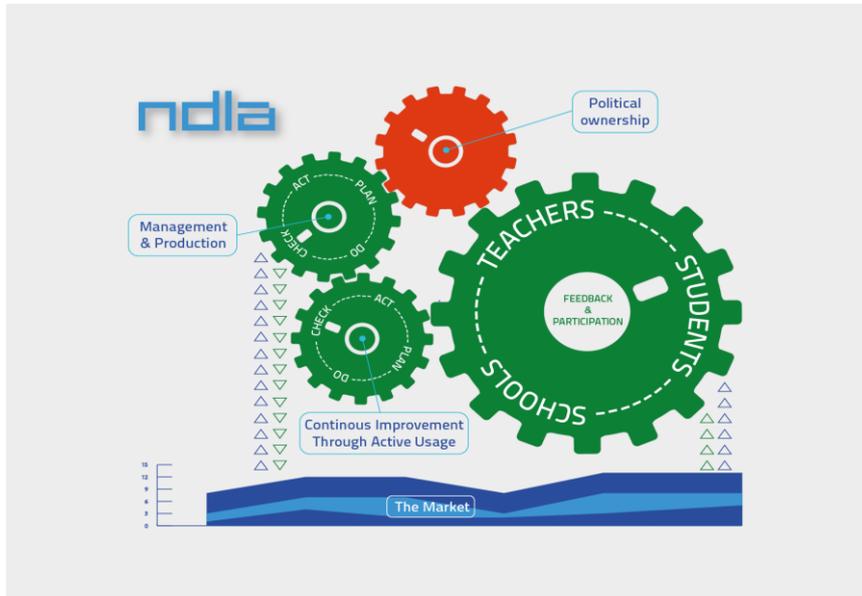


Figure 1: The NDLA example shows how the Political ownership of both the national school system, and a national OER body, now supports a sustainable market for both traditional and open learning resources.

4.3. Governments should take up leadership in promoting and facilitating interoperability of OER within and between countries, cultures and languages

The full potential of OER is attained when users can choose and deliver OERs within the richness of OER, cultures and languages, as well as within and across communities, regions, countries, cultures and languages.

To have full interoperability on all levels, one has to address the following issues:

- Translation: the availability and richness of OER in the large world languages, in particular English, do not hinder. Instead, they provide great opportunities for the development of OER in LUL.
- Cultural adaptation: Licensed OERs can offer the full opportunity for cultural adaptation when necessary.
- Semantics and metadata: Repositories that offer access to OER need to have catalogued OER according to national and international standards, so that OER can be easily recognised and accessed across institutions, countries and languages.
- Platform interoperability: Tools that use OER (e.g. platforms for MOOCs) should offer full interoperability. For example, through standardised import and export facilities for the OER to avoid “lock in” of the resource.
- Accessibility across institutions, nations and marketplaces: OER should be openly available in repositories to be identified, accessed, used and stored in an easy and user-friendly way. Independent of the model for storage, users should have access as if OER in LUL was represented in one repository.

This is a more long-term policy recommendation, which needs to be addressed early by intergovernmental organizations and actors as UNESCO, the EU and others.

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British Columbia Campus OpenED: <http://open.bccampus.ca/about-2/>

Wales Declaration of Intent: <http://www.hew.ac.uk/wales-signs-declaration-of-intent-to-lead-the-way-on-the-use-of-online-education-resources>

What is Open Education: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_education,
<http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/mission>

<http://www.oeconsortium.org/about-oe/>

UNISA OER Policy: <http://www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=27755>

OER at Open University: <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/open-educational-resources/>

<http://langoer.eun.org>

<http://www.poerup.info/index.html>

http://robertkozma.com/images/kozma_comparative_ict_policies_chapter.pdf

4. Summary of comments received from the LangOER project members and experts on the draft

ICDE received comments from 18 experts from all over the world from the Language community but also from the educational sector and policy makers in addition to comments from the LangOER project members.

List of experts who provided feedback on the draft and/or were consulted during the drafting period:

- Igor Lesko, , Operations Manager and Open Education Specialist, Open Education Consortium
- Maxim Jean Louis, Chief Executive Officer, Contact-North, Contact Nord
- Alan , , Director of International Development and Teacher Education, The Open University, UK
- Tian Belawati, Rector, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia, ICDE President
- Ola Stave, Secretary General, UHR
- Øivind Høines, Head,NDLA
- Sylvi Vigmo, PhD/Senior Lecturer, Director of studies, department of Education, Communication and Learning, University of Gothenburg
- Paul Bacsich, Sero Consulting, PEORUP
- Katerina Zourou, PhD, LangOER Project Manager
- Vaiva Zuzevičiūtė, Professor at the Department of Humanities, Mykolo Romero University (MRU)
- Elena Shulman, PhD, European Schoolnet (EUN)
- Rory Mc Greal, UNESCO Chair in OER, ICDE Chair in OER, Athabasca University, Canada
- Martin Weller, ICDE Chair in OER, the Open University, UK
- Kyrre Lekve, PhD, Deputy Director, Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, research and education
- Alek Tarkowski, Lead at Creative Commons, Poland
- 'Robert Farrow, PhD, OER Research Hub, Institute of Educational technology, the Open University
- Ebba Ossiannilsson, PhD, is Project Manager at the Centre for Educational Development (CED), and at the Evaluation Office at Lund University, Sweden.
- David Klotz, Communication officer, ICDE

Suggestions were analysed and singled out. A summary was sent to the LangOER project members and to all participants invited at the second international workshop organized in Oslo by ICDE in October 2014.

General comments: all comments have been taken into consideration. We have received feedback from 18 persons ranging from project partners (4) to external experts (14).

The document is described as “extensive”, “strong”, “very interesting”, “appropriate and directly relevant to policy makers”, “have come far”.

Others described it as “not clear, of too little focus, a pastiche of quotes, bad referencing”, “too general”, “not correlated with EU aspects” but “focus on UNESCO”, “under-referenced”, “too long”

Specific comments:

- A number of people admitted that they were not familiar with the policy making discourse and the drafting of a policy brief.

A separate information mail was sent to the partners on Friday, Oct 3 with a link to a webpage on definitions and examples of policy briefs.

- Definitions and agreement on definitions have to be clarified: OER, LuL, Mother tongue, OE and OEP. Will give our position at the workshop

- Under-Referencing was an issue: In a policy brief, it is important to keep the reader focused on the recommendations. Will do our best to reference all quotes and citations keeping in mind that a policy brief is not a scientific paper.

Issues raised that need clarification (c), action (a) or an answer (an):

- 1) The target group (c): Policy makers in Education at all levels (Longlife learning) and in all sectors (ICT, languages, Research, etc.)
- 2) Top- down or bottom-up approach? (an) Enough to throw the hot potato to each other! Action is needed at all levels. OER are at the intersection between the two approaches and we need to address them both . However, our strategy with the policy brief is to address the policy makers and to lift the OER a level up.
- 3) Form of the policy brief (a): needs an executive summary, a crisp call to action, to be shorter.
- 4) Content needs (?):
 - to be adjusted to be more concise (a),
 - to include references to Opening Up Education and the OPAL project (a),
 - a more business like approach to OER (c/a),
 - reference to OEP in the text ? ref. to Open Translation ?(c/a)
 - reference to the social media in supporting LuL educators ? (c/a)
 - Should the recommendations be accompanied by a plan of action? (c/a)

5. Summary of findings and recommendations from the Working Groups, Expert Consultation, Oslo, October 2014.

Expert consultation, Oslo, October 2014

LangOER project: work package 3 “Nurture the international policy making-process by stimulating the debate on challenges that face less used languages.

The expert consultation organized on the morning of 14 October (8:30-12:30) had three momentum:

- A presentation of the working policy paper (draft policy brief) including a summary of the challenges and opportunities for OER in less used languages, of the methodology used to reach a consensus on a set of three main recommendations described in the working policy brief.
- An open dialogue with experts in the field of OER and languages. The invited guests commented on the brief and added some perspective to the draft by deepening in their own area of research/expertise: Searching OERs by language, quality policy on OER in LuL and overview of the situation in a multilingual country: India.
- Working groups were organized to discuss four different issues all related to the draft policy brief: the policy brief in the Nordic context, the three most important recommendations, the use of the draft policy brief and the draft policy brief as a whole: strengths, possible issues and areas for improvement. A rapporteur was designated in each group and did report at the plenum on their findings and recommendations.

Concerning the third part of the meeting, discussion panels were organized from 10:20 to 11:20 in and outside the conference room around a cup of coffee/tea. The participants were divided into 4 groups and each group was given a topic/an issue to discuss. A rapporteur was designated and folders composed of paper, pencils and the questions were handed out. Participants were assigned to a group taking into consideration their field of expertise, interest and the tasks to be achieved.

Hereunder are the pre-determined topics open for discussion:

Group 1: the draft policy brief as a whole: strengths, possible issues and areas for improvement

Group 2: The use of the Policy draft

Group 3: The policy brief in the Nordic context

Group 4: The three most important recommendations

Hereafter are the findings and the recommendations of the consultation:

- The word “policy” may have a negative connotation in some environments. Should we reconsider its use in the brief?
- It is difficult to find a balance between a top-down and bottom-up approach although it has to be found if results in terms of quality and sustainability are to be achieved. Both are catalysts and exert pull-up and pull-down effects that help reach an equilibrium favourable for the uptake of OER in LuL.
- There is a huge difference between OER policies and OER initiatives. Should not be mixed up as their number and scope differ considerably.
- The brief addresses mostly the OER issues and is not specific enough to LuL.
- The target group needs to be defined more precisely: is it meant for policy makers who are convinced about the use of OER in HE or for those who do not know about their existence yet, or those who know and would like to engage more? All in one or not appropriate?
- Multilingual translation and multilingualism are important in Europe. Need to be more stressed?
- The brief is relevant for the Nordic countries. They already know about it but they need an action plan rather than a set of recommendations.

- The Nordic countries could take the leadership as they are ahead right now. We do not have to invent the wheel again.
- Point 2: add Less used languages after OER
- The sustainability component is important. It is included in the eco-model that ICDE urges governments to adapt. Norway has the NDLA model to offer to the community. It actually won the Boltic Award for innovation in 2014. It is a success story but is an initiative and not a policy.
- The importance of including the private sector in the negotiations was highlighted.
- The definition of LuL should be correlated to regional and national policies as well as top-down and bottom-up approaches
- The three recommendations proposed in the policy brief were qualified as relevant, pertinent but should be more precise and crispy.
- The draft as a whole was too long and needs concision.
- The policy brief was the appropriate, common and effective written communication tool to be used in a political debate.

Oslo, October 2014

List of participants:

Paul Bacsich	Project Manager for the PoerUP project and the VISCED review
Ebba Ossiannilsson	Project Manager, Lund University
Dr. Pradeep Kumar Misra	Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Allied Sciences, M.J.P. Rohilkhand University, India
Øystein Johannessen	Deputy Director of Education, Norway
Monique Udnaes	Senior Advisor, ICDE
Vibeke Hoffmann	Administrative Coordinator, ICDE
David Klotz	Information and Communication Coordinator
Vaiva Zuzevičiūtė	Professor at the Department of humanities at MRU (Mykolas Romeris University)
Cor Van der Meer	Researcher. Member of the Consortium Poliglotti4.eu project and of the management team for the Mercator Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. Fryske Academy.
Ioannis Lefkos	Specialist in the use of ICT in Education, Web2learn (private company specialized in e-learning solutions)
Sanita Lazdina	Rēzekne Higher Educational Institution (RHEI)
Valentina Garoia	EUN partnership AISBL, Belgium
Marit Bijlsma	Fryske Akademit
Gosia Kurek	Jan Dlugosz University, Poland
Anna Skrowron	Jan Dlugosz University, Poland
Astrid Høgmo	Director LeadandLive, Norway
Sylvi Vigmo	Director of studies for the linCS-DSES Doctoral School in Educational Sciences and at the Department of Education, Communication and Learning. Goteborg University.
Virtual Participation	
Rory Mc Greal	UNESCO/COL Chair Holder in OER, Canada ICDE Chair Holder in OER
Marcella Matou	Expert, Ministry of Education, e-learning engineer, Lyon, France
Kirk. R. Person	Director of International Affairs, SIL International, Mainland Southeast Asia
Anne Christin Tannhauser	EFQUEL, Belgium
Katerina Zourou	LangoER Project Manager

6. Next step and outputs

The main output of this activity is a working policy brief. A first draft was presented to and reviewed by 18 external and internal experts. The draft is based on the in-depth analysis made in work package 2 and summarized in the State of the Art Report, the workshop jointly organized by ICDE and LangOER in cooperation with the Open Education Consortium, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 25 April 2014 and the two international workshops that took place in Oslo in April and October 2104.

The draft policy brief (deliverable 13): working policy paper: OER-challenges and opportunities for less used languages. A global and European perspective is included hereafter as a link:
http://www.icde.org/admin/filestore/News/2014_May-October/DraftPolicyBrief.docx

The draft policy brief will be discussed and reviewed for the second time by the LangOER project members taking into consideration the suggestions made at the second workshop in Oslo and the ones made by the LangOER partners. The final version will be published in December 2014 according to the plans and will be promoted through an intensive promotional campaign launched by ICDE in early January 2015.

The following additional outputs are also available:

Workshop 1:

- 1) Summary article on ICDE website: http://icde.org/b7C_wRnMWm.ips
- 2) Recording of workshop: <https://connect.uninett.no/p28ti11hrcj>
- 3) All PowerPoint presentations: <http://icde.org/?module=Files;action=File.getFile;ID=3302>
- 4) Blogpost by Tore Hoel: <http://nordicoer.org/adopting-oer-less-used-languages-need-hard-talk-tools-infrastructure>
- 5) Blogpost by Alastair Creelman: <http://acreelman.blogspot.se/2014/04/oer-and-linguistic-diversity.html>
- 6) Photos: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rx1oi465uv2g6mz/fwYGgNVV1k> and <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9k68nr2ots6hm9j/pCwFsl5Lhd>
- 7) Chirpstory stream of Tweets from workshop: <http://bit.ly/1pK9Oxm>
- 8) Highlights from the workshop on Storify: https://storify.com/eu_schoolnet/workshop-on-policy-for-oer-and-less-used-languages?utm_content=storify-pingback&awesm=sfy.co_sUdG&utm_medium=sfy.co-twitter&utm_campaign=&utm_source=t.co

Workshop 2:

- 9) Invitation to all ICDE members to participate in the workshop
http://www.icde.org/en/icde_news/Would+you+like+to+contribute+in+the+OER+in+Less+Use+d+Languages+workshop%3F.b7C_wRrK0R.ips
- 10) All PowerPoint presentations: http://icde.org/admin/filestore/News/2014_May-October/LangOERworkshopallslides.pdf
- 11) Photos: <https://www.dropbox.com/l/XFLbXdyCxdGGKdWuHrlwhr>
- 12) Blogpost by Valentina Garoia: <http://blogs.eun.org/langoer/2014/10/28/successful-partner-meeting-in-oslo>

Workshop 3:

Deliverable 38 e

International workshop on policy for OER and less used languages

25 April 2014, Ljubljana, Sloveni

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4. Slides.....	Feil! Bokmerke er ikke definert.
5. Other material (Invitation, background and news article)	Feil! Bokmerke er ikke definert.

Summary of the event

To have input for WP3 “Nurture the international policy making process by stimulating the debate on challenges that face less used languages”, ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the Open CourseWare Consortium, OCWC, (later Open Education Consortium, OEC) organized a workshop as an open session 13:30 – 15:00 on Friday, 25 April 2014, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, as a part of the OCWC Global Conference.

The workshop was coordinated and a presentation made by Gard Titlestad, Secretary General ICDE, and the outcome was summarised by Mary Lou Forward, Executive Director OCWC..

Target audience and impact

Participants at the OCWC conferences are often international experts in Open Education and Open Education Resources. Approximately 15 participants from most regions of the world took part in the workshop which gave input to ICDE's work on the policy paper (policy brief) on OER in Less used Languages..

The workshop participants delivered input to the policy-making process in two buzz-sessions, 5 smaller group discussing the questions posted by Gard Titlestad in his intervention. In the end, the outcome was summarised by Mary Lou Forward.

Outcomes

The summary of the outcome is:

1. Observations with OER and less used languages

Paradox: If you want to produce widely used materials, it makes sense to use English, but if you want to express cultural identity and social issues, produce in local language but it will be used less often.

Imposition of an external/dominant language is both an opportunity to learn another language because it provides more connection to the rest of the world and allows the possibility of migration, but at the same time there's a loss of identity and erosion of culture.

Small language OERs are usually of lower quality. (for example Slovenian OER are less good than others). What are the consequences? If someone can't find good resources in their language they will seek others. Local lang resources may not get enough critical mass to be sustainable.

Importance of open, allows translation and localization of materials.

Less common lang materials can help bridge the diaspora.

MOOCs are being produced in English even if the teacher speaks another common or uncommon language. There's a need to justify the cost of production through a high number of student users, and the audience is largest in English, which is also the language of the biggest platforms.

2. What does this mean for policy?

Look at the role of translation in preserving language. Should policies encourage translation from other languages, like English, into the less commonly used lang? Should materials produced in less common languages be translated into English? Must address the usability of materials that are produced in less common languages or there may not be incentive to continue producing these materials. Translation is more than just changing words from one lang to another. Cultural translation is also important, adding relevant examples, using relevant frameworks.

Some think it's desirable for OER projects to be designed with cultural neutrality in mind. Try to make them devoid of cultural bias. Others think the cultural elements is one of the things that makes OER attractive – the opportunity to learn about culture as well as content through shared materials. Translation of language is not translation of context. It's not that OER should be not culturally bound, but rather that cultural context needs to be explained.

If you produce in a less commonly used lang, you may be excluded from the promise of international conversations unless you explicitly provide that channel. The goal of collaboration with OER is important.

If less common lang OERs are lower quality, it will be hard to improve because materials are not widely accessed for critique. Need to think about some kind of review/approval process.

Incentives for faculty to produce OER in less commonly used languages is important, needed.

Educational impact of OER in general is very small. OER in less common languages may have better uptake if seen as OER for lifelong learning and for the language diaspora.

Design guidelines for making widely adaptable OER will make it much easier to make the adaptations and encouraging to those who want to produce materials in less used languages. Design of OER for easier translation from a technological perspective will help with translation.

Slides presented at the event:

<http://www.slideshare.net/LangOER/how-can-oe-enhance-the-position-of-less-used-languages-on-a-global-scale-34344590>

Invitation



International workshop on policy for OER and less used languages

ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the OCWC are organizing a workshop to be held as an open session 13:30 – 15:00 on Friday, 25 April:

How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?

The event will deliver input to the assessment of the situation for open educational resource around the globe with particular reference to less used languages.

Definitions

Less used languages are languages such as Norwegian, Swedish, Slovenian, Xhosa and Zulu which find themselves needing to contend with a fast evolving educational landscape currently dominated by English. Less used languages also include regional and minority languages.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are defined by UNESCO as any type of educational materials in the public domain or with an open licence. The nature of these open materials means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them.

Scope

Focus on:

- What is the situation when it comes to OER and less used languages?
- What issues arise from that situation - and how could they be met?

Also with reference to:

- How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?
- What policies are favourable to the uptake of quality OER and quality open educational practices in less used language communities?

The workshop will provide input to a working policy paper on OER and challenges and opportunities for less used languages in a global, European, Nordic and national perspective.

Participants

Participants invited to give a short intervention in the workshop should be prepared for a 2 – 5 minutes presentation describing the situation for OER in less used languages in his/her country or region, and suggest which issues that arises from that situation.

Practical information

- 13:30 -15:00, Friday, 25 April 2014
- The workshop will consist of a series of prepared interventions of 2-5 minutes each, followed by discussions

- The language of the workshop is English

Organizers

The workshop is organized by ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the OCWC.

More information on LangOER, supported by the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme, OER and less used languages:

More information on LangOER: <http://langoer.eun.org/about>

More information on ICDE: <http://www.icde.org/en/about/>

More information on OCWC: <http://www.ocwconsortium.org/>

Workshop coordinator: Gard Titlestad, ICDE and LangOER, Titlestad@icde.org

The LangOER project is funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Gard Titlestad

Secretary General

International Council for Open and Distance
Education

Mary Lou Forward

Executive Director

OpenCourseWare Consortium

Background

Background note:

International workshop on policy for OER and less used languages

We are in the beginning of a process to survey, analyse, define and suggest what should be done regarding Open Educational Resources – OER, and less used languages.

Why?

There are great expectations to OER, for example:

“OERs have the potential to solve the global education crisis and contribute to sustainable economic growth”

Sir John Daniel, former CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning and David Killion, US ambassador to UNESCO, The Guardian newspaper, July 2012:

<http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2012/jul/04/open-educational-resources-and-economic-growth>

This statement came just a few weeks after the UNESCO led Open Educational Resources Congress had passed its historic declaration on OER, that calls on governments worldwide to openly license publicly funded educational materials for public use.

UNESCO believes that universal access to high quality education is key to the building of peace, sustainable social and economic development, and intercultural dialogue. Open Educational Resources provide a strategic opportunity to improve the quality of education as well as facilitate policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

The European Commission launched the initiative Opening up Education in September last year. The main goal is to stimulate ways of learning and teaching through ICT and digital content, mainly through the development and availability of OER.

One seeks solutions for open technologies that grant access to education for everyone and allow:

- students to build knowledge from open and free sources other than their teachers and institutions, and with different methods;
- everyone to engage in learning/study groups, thus creating learning communities beyond their classrooms;
- make personalisation and customisation of education a much easier task;
- teachers to create communities of practice to exchange teaching materials and best practices;
- provide access to a wider range of educational resources across borders and languages.

The recent developments in MOOCs, Massive Open Online Courses, issued as free quality online education from prestigious American universities such as Harvard, MIT and Stanford, have put focus on the great opportunities inherent in Open Education.

The reality is different, at least for less used languages:

“Concerning OER open for adaptation and innovation regarding less used languages, the emerging landscape seems rather static and OER are scarce.”

Sylvi Vigmo, Director of Studies, Department of Education, Communication and Learning, University of Gothenburg – findings to be presented 28 April 2014.

To shed light on this, to map the situation, consequences and analyse possible future perspectives ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with the Nordic OER network are arranging this workshop to discuss:

- *What is the situation when it comes to OER and less used languages?*
- *What issues arise from that situation - and how could they be met?*
- *How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?*

The event will deliver input to the assessment of the situation for open educational resource around the globe, in Europe and the Nordic countries with particular reference to less used languages.

Definitions

Less used languages are languages such as Norwegian, Swedish, Slovenian, Xhosa and Zulu which find themselves needing to contend with a fast evolving educational landscape currently dominated by English. Less used languages also include regional and minority languages.

http://icde.org/b7C_wRnGXt.ips

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are defined by UNESCO as any type of educational materials in the public domain or with an open licence. The nature of these open materials means that anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them. OERs range from textbooks to curricula, syllabi, lecture notes, assignments, tests, projects, audio, video and animation.

<http://unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/open-educational-resources/what-are-open-educational-resources-oers>

The OER phenomenon also embodies the underlying open, creative, cooperative process itself, one that enables continuous rapid improvement in the quality of both learning and teaching

Plotkin H (2010): "Free to learn": <http://wiki.creativecommons.org/images/6/67/FreetoLearnGuide.pdf>

Languages and the Internet – the threat from a digital disease leading to mass mortality? Or an opportunity? Policies as a force for breaking the cycle?

"Of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken today, some 2,500 are generally considered endangered. Here we argue that this consensus figure vastly underestimates the danger of digital language death, in that less than 5% of all languages can still ascend to the digital realm. We present evidence of a massive die-off caused by the digital divide."

"A typical example is Piedmontese, still spoken by some 2–3 m people in the Torino region, and even recognized as having official status by the regional administration of Piedmont, but without any significant digital presence. More closed communities perhaps have a better chance: Faroese, with less than 50 k speakers, but with a high quality Wikipedia, could be an example. There are glimmers of hope, for example reported 40,000 downloads for a smartphone app to learn West Flemish dialect words and expressions, but on the whole, the chances of digital survival for those languages that participate in widespread bilingualism with a thriving alternative, in particular the chances of any minority language of the British Isles, are rather slim."

Kornai A (2013), "Digital Language Death": http://eprints.sztaki.hu/7564/1/Kornai_1_2441287_ny.pdf

However, in a 2009 UNESCO publication on measuring linguistic diversity on the Internet, it is stated that:

"Given the current situation of the planet, the lack of policy for protection against a reduction in biological diversity could harm the collective future. The same question could be asked for cultural diversity, and warrants the team attention. The table (see table at the end of this note) explicates the implications of exposure to and presence on the Internet for each language category. "

Furthermore:

"The main message arising from this table is the need for language policies to be established".

Daniel Pimienta, Daniel Prado and Álvaro Blanco (2009), "Twelve years of measuring linguistic diversity in the Internet: balance and perspectives" <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001870/187016e.pdf>

The latest (2011) statistics of Internet users per language is shown in the table below.

Top Ten Languages Used in the Web					
(Number of Internet Users by Language)					
TOP TEN LANGUAGES IN THE INTERNET	Internet Users by Language	Internet Penetration by Language	Growth in Internet (2000 - 2011)	Internet Users % of Total	World Population for this Language (2011 Estimate)
English	565,004,126	43.4 %	301.4 %	26.8 %	1,302,275,670
Chinese	509,965,013	37.2 %	1,478.7 %	24.2 %	1,372,226,042
Spanish	164,968,742	39.0 %	807.4 %	7.8 %	423,085,806
Japanese	99,182,000	78.4 %	110.7 %	4.7 %	126,475,664
Portuguese	82,586,600	32.5 %	990.1 %	3.9 %	253,947,594
German	75,422,674	79.5 %	174.1 %	3.6 %	94,842,656
Arabic	65,365,400	18.8 %	2,501.2 %	3.3 %	347,002,991
French	59,779,525	17.2 %	398.2 %	3.0 %	347,932,305
Russian	59,700,000	42.8 %	1,825.8 %	3.0 %	139,390,205
Korean	39,440,000	55.2 %	107.1 %	2.0 %	71,393,343
TOP 10 LANGUAGES	1,615,957,333	36.4 %	421.2 %	82.2 %	4,442,056,069
Rest of the Languages	350,557,483	14.6 %	588.5 %	17.8 %	2,403,553,891
WORLD TOTAL	2,099,926,965	30.3 %	481.7 %	100.0 %	6,930,055,154

Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>

Languages and education

The importance of offering education in a nation's mother tongue language/s cannot be overestimated in our time. This is why for example the Nordic countries have agreed on a declaration promoting "paralellspråkighet" in higher education. "Paralellspåk policy" basically means to treat for example English and Danish as equal languages without one of them dominating the other.

A recent report (in Danish/Swedish) published guidelines for "English as an educational language in Nordic Universities – what to do", ref. <http://nordiskparallelsprogsnet.blogs.ku.dk/publikationer/anbefaling-om-engelsk-som-undervisningsprog/>

OER

We have no statistics or clear overview of the production and uptake of OER and Open Educational Practices (OEP).

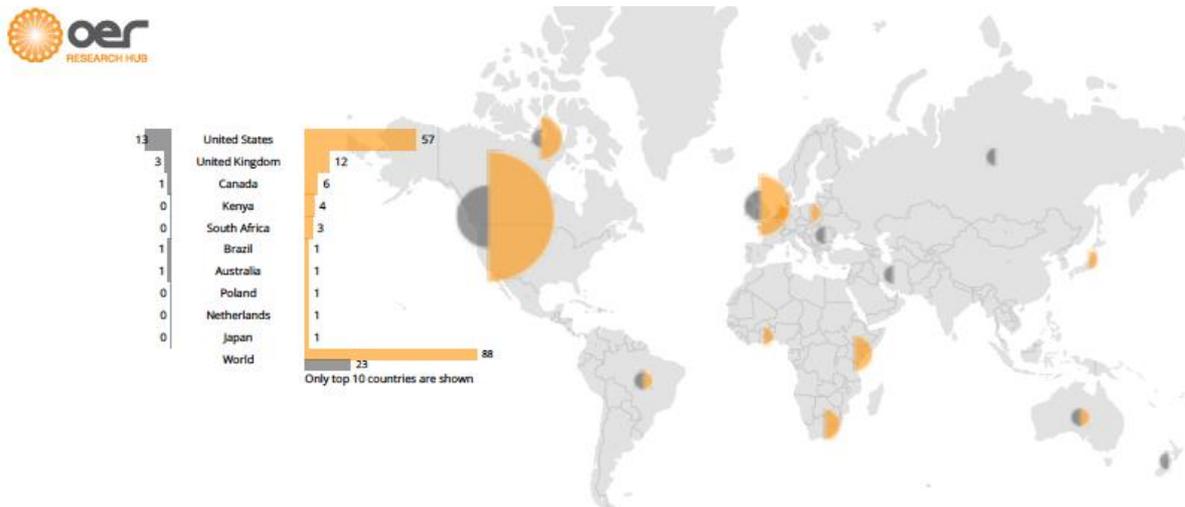
However, we have some indications, for example illustrated by the map below, which illustrate the impact of OER. It is maintained by the OER Research Hub project. The purpose is to help people understand the impact of OER.

The map indicates an overwhelming over-representation of OER produced in English.

All project collaborations address two key hypotheses:

- Use of OER leads to improvement in student performance and satisfaction.
- The open aspect of OER creates different usage and adoption patterns than other online resources

Yellow indicates verification of the hypotheses.



Source: <http://oerresearchhub.org/evidence/oer-impact>

The same picture is provided by the OER Policy Registry, which shows an overwhelming over-representation in policies from the US and UK: http://wiki.creativecommons.org/OER_Policy_Registry

The situation for OER and less used languages in Europe - LangOER

LangOER has surveyed the situation and finds that less used languages face the risk of being linguistically and culturally marginalized. For learning languages and culture, there are few OER available. On the other hand some languages spoken by a great number of people, being quite widespread, still have few OERs.

The overall picture emerging of national approaches to OER is characterized by diversity; incentives for initiatives and explicit connections to ministries and national educational agencies seem uncommon. Some national approaches are connected to online spaces such as blogs and thus signal engagement in OER for less used languages as driven by communities. An OECD Working Paper from 2012 indicates that the emergence of OER is evenly distributed across educational levels. There are few examples of national strategies or policies comprising OER.

Source: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/open-educational-resources_5k990rjhvtlv-en

Strictly following UNESCO's definition of OER, reveals that what is referred to as OER, is to a great extent characterised by typical language learning resources such as dictionaries, online books in digital libraries, repositories, course material on-line, audio and video material, publications about OER, and resources targeting practice of specific linguistic items in exercises.

The framing of OER is generally contextualised together with open education, open learning, access and creative commons licensing. Concerning OER open for adaptation and innovation regarding less used languages, the emerging landscape seems rather static and OER are scarce.

Main findings indicate we lack common ground, the licensing issue is not always made explicit, which restricts uptake. Moreover, OER are connected to open learning, and accessibility as an implicit subcategory. Few national incentives paired with communities' engagement point to the challenge of a shared enterprise focusing on less used languages. In particular, the scope for less used languages indicates a restricted approach regarding the innovative potential of OER.

Future challenges point to language as contextual and cultural, and for explicit national incentives to have an impact. In particular, sustainability and quality for OER for less used languages need be extensively addressed to enable uptake and development. For innovation and for targeting pedagogical challenges, educators' involvement is indicated as integral.

The LangOER network, consisting of 9 partners, is a three-year long project (2014-2016) funded by the European Commission (LifeLong Learning Programme). The partners represent linguistic expertise in the following languages: Frisian, Dutch, Greek, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, and French. Additional European languages are: Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, Estonian, Welsh, Italian, Swedish, English, German and Finnish are being mapped to increase our understanding of the OER landscape.

Organizers

The workshop is organized by ICDE and the LangOER network in partnership with OCW Consortium.

More information on LangOER, supported by the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme: <http://langoer.eun.org/about>

More information on ICDE: <http://www.icde.org/en/about/>

More information on the OCW Consortium: <http://www.openedconsortium.org/>

The LangOER project is funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

For reflection:

Table 1: Categorization of languages for cyberspace policies requirements

CATEGORY	DOES THE INTERNET HERALD AN OPPORTUNITY?
Main spoken languages ¹	The Internet could increase the online presence of these languages, especially during a transition period when the repartition of Internet users by language is not even due to the digital divide. Note: the thesis here is that this transitory period has been over for the English language as of a few years ago.
Official languages covering more than one developed country (like Italian or Dutch)	There is an opportunity to be seized in the virtual world. The "international" status of these languages shall facilitate trust between speakers to create easy cross-border relations.
Official languages spoken in only one developed country (like Norwegian, Greek, Danish or Japanese)	There is a need for a vigorous virtual linguistic policy to support a presence in the virtual world comparable or stronger than that in the real world. Despite having a sense of longevity in relation to the place of such a language in the world, its speakers may feel a barrier for international relations.
Local languages of developed countries (like Sardinian, Galician, Welsh, or Frisian)	These languages are threatened by pressure from both English and their respective national languages. The diagnostic is uncertain without a virtual linguistic policy. Each case varies and depends on specificities, although the case of Catalan is to be followed as a success story, both at virtual and non virtual level.
Lingua franca of speakers of some developing countries (like Hausa, Quechua, Pulaar or Swahili)	A positive future shall be possible where the digital divide is really overcome and virtual linguistic policies are defined.
Languages of a developing country, that actually cover more than one country, but are only used by native speakers (like Aymara, Guarani or creoles)	Theoretically, a positive future should be possible where the digital divide is really overcome. However, there is a presently a correlation between lack of access to computers and the issue of belonging to indigenous communities, which does not give any sign of changing any time soon. The case of Paraguay where Guarani is given resources following its declared status as an official language is to be followed with interest.
Official languages of a unique developing country (like Slovenian or Albanese)	They are under strong pressure from both English and respective powerful regional languages, which could trigger negative prospects in the absence of a virtual policy.
Local languages of developing countries (like Chabacano, Maya or Mapuche)	If the language is provided with the appropriate linguistic tools (and first a normalized and stable system for writing and grammar), a linguistic policy focusing the production of local content could help. However there are not many examples today of this kind.
Languages at risk of disappearing (like Ainu.)	The Internet could, at worst, become a formidable tool to for conservation of the written or oral patrimony; or at best, accelerator of policies for language adaptation.
Languages very seriously at risk of disappearing (like Yagan)	The Internet could at least allow preservation of the patrimony of that language, if digitalization is undertaken soon enough.

Ref: Daniel Pimienta, Daniel Prado and Álvaro Blanco (2009), Twelve years of measuring linguistic diversity in the Internet: balance and perspectives:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001870/187016e.pdf>

News article

Open Education for a Multicultural World

The Open Courseware Consortium launched its new name, The Open Education Consortium, at its recent Global Conference held in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

ICDE, together with the Consortium arranged a workshop at the conference on the theme "How can OER enhance the position of less used languages on a global scale?".

ICDE's open access scientific journal, *Open Praxis*, has also published key papers from the event in its latest issue.



**Rory McGreal, ICDE Chair in OER;
Mary Lou Forward, Executive
Director OCWC, Inés Gil Jaurena,
Editor *Open Praxis* with Gard
Titlestad in Slovenia**

ICDE workshop

Approximately 15 participants from most regions of the world took part in the workshop which gave input to ICDE's involvement in the LangOER partnership. [See related article and links to background documents.](#)

The workshop participants delivered input to the policy-making process in two buzz-sessions and the outcome was summarized by Mary Lou Forward, Executive Director OCWC. The workshop gives, together with the wider workshop organized in Oslo 28 April, input to the drafting of a policy paper on OER and less used languages.

