OER Research Hub

OER Impact Map Development Brief

Contents

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1.0 Document Control

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1.1 Version History

Date	Version	Stage	Summary of changes
28/08/13	v0.1	Initial draft	Initial draft by Rob Farrow
28/8/14	v.1.0	Final draft	Final draft incorporates Phase 2 and Phase 3 plans

1.2 Distribution

Name	Organisation/Role
Author(s):	
Rob Farrow	Research Associate
Reviewers:	
Martin Weller	Co-Investigator
Patrick McAndrew	Principal Investigator
Approvers:	
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2. Purpose of document

The object of this document is to describe the technical work that is to be carried out for the development of the Evidence Hub (EH) for the OER Research Hub project (oerresearchhub.org).

3. Summary

The EH will build on the legacy systems developed during the OLnet project to provide a platform for collaborative research, discussion, and dissemination of OER news and reports. The value of this approach for focusing research and attracting collective interest has already been demonstrated both within OLnet (olnet.org) and outside the OER field, but the system needs to be developed and improved in a number of ways, including doing more to facilitate engagement with the target audience(s); a greater range of outputs (including new visualizations) and making the most of automated functions. There will need to be an agreed workflow for researchers using the Evidence Hub as well as on-going revision of effective use of the Evidence Hub as a tool for both research and dissemination.

4. About the OER Research Hub project

The OER Research Hub (OERRH) is a Hewlett Foundation funded project being led by the Institute of Educational Technology at the Open University (UK) (http://www.open.ac.uk/iet/main/). The project provides a focus for research, designed to give answers to the overall question 'What is the impact of Open Educational Resources (OER) on learning and teaching practices?' and identify the particular influence of openness. To achieve these aims the OERRH team are working in collaboration with projects across four education sectors (K12, college, higher education and informal) extending a network of research with shared methods and shared results.

The project combines:

- A targeted collaboration program with existing OER projects;

- An international fellowship program;

- Networking to make connections; and

- A hub for research data and OER excellence in practice.

These activities are illustrated in Figure 1.
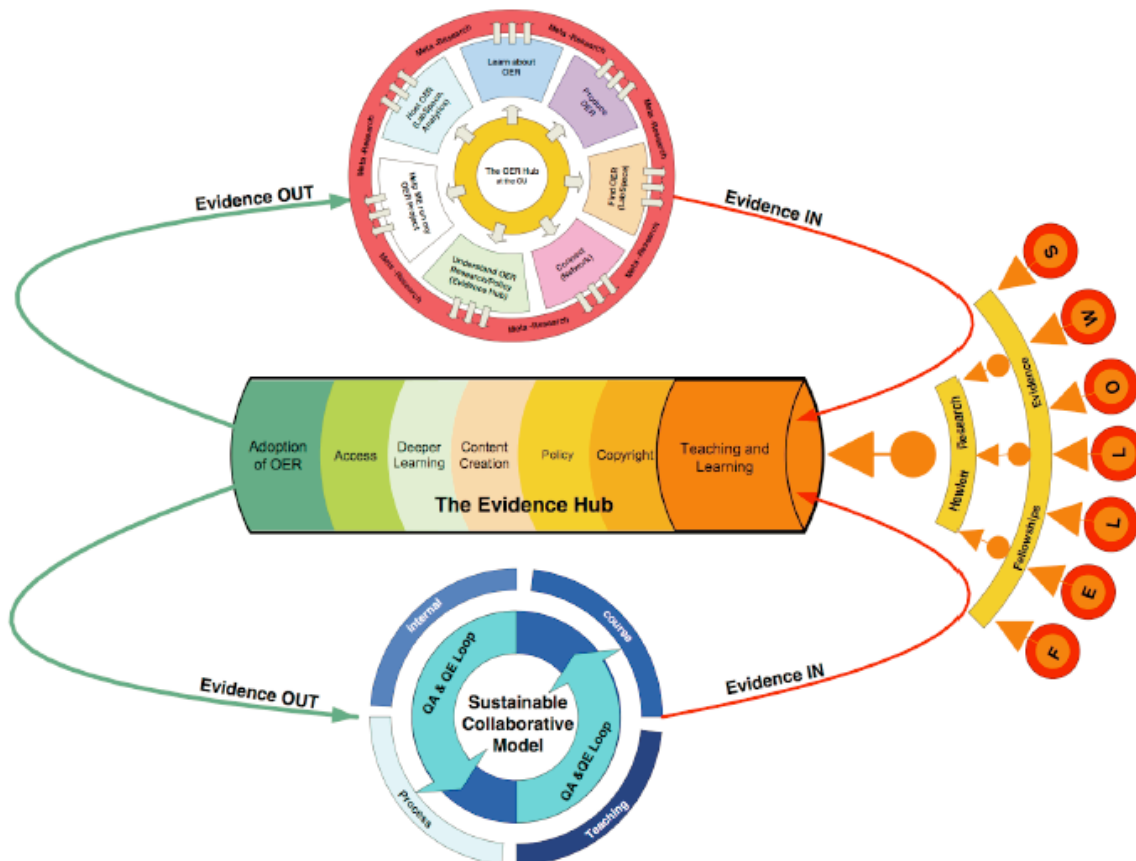
Figure 1: The activities of the OERRH project

4.1   Project objectives

It is aimed that by the end of the OERRH project's research phase evidence will have been gathered showing what works and when in terms of the use of OER in diverse teaching and learning contexts, and that the research team will also have also established methods and instruments for broader engagement in researching the impact of openness on learning. The evidence generated via research collaborations will contribute to this overall aim, whilst providing a legacy for policy change and practice.

4.2   Project approach: collaboration and openness

The OERRH project operates on a collaborative rather than partnership model. It features a dual research approach, combining both remote monitoring of publicly available data and the development of research instruments which are applied through a combination of direct and facilitated research.

The core group of collaborating projects is as follows:

- The Flipped Learning Network
- Gulf of Maine Research Institute
- The Open Course Library (OCL) in Washington State
- The Community College Consortium for OER (CCCOER)
- Connexions/OpenStax College
- TESS-India
- School of Open/P2PU
- Bridge to Success
- OpenLearn

The OERRH approach to collaboration combines research with practical assistance and it is hoped that this will bring benefits to all involved and will also provide an enhanced flow of research data. The OERRH collaborations cover different sectors and issues, these include: the opening up of classroom based teaching to open content; the large-scale decision points implied by open textbooks for community colleges; the extension of technology beyond textbook through eBook and simulation; the challenge of teacher training in India; and the ways that OER can support less formal approaches to learning. By basing good practice on practical experience and research it is intended that the project will help tackle practical problems whilst building the evidence bank needed by all.

Meeting the challenges of openness requires research strategies which take account of the different aspects of OER impact. In the OER world, the way forward is associated with greater transparency and sharing of educational materials and research. Similarly, a more useful evidence base should emerge through taking advantage of working openly and in collaboration as it allows for the pooling of limited resources and greater scale and efficiency through co-ordinated action.

4.3   Project stakeholders

The project stakeholders will include (but are not limited to) The Hewlett Foundation; The Open University; IET; collaborating projects; the OER Research Hub project team; the OERRH Fellows, OER users and potential users (institutions, educators and formal/informal learners) and the OER and open education movements. Table 1 provides a fuller analysis of the OERRH stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Interest/Stake	Importance
Project management team	Ensuring the provision of the resources that will allow the project to meet its objectives.	High
Project researchers	Professional reputation; ensuring that work is carried out to accepted methodological, epistemological and ethical standards.	High
Project principal investigator & co-investigator	Professional reputation; ensuring that work is carried out to accepted methodological, epistemological and ethical standards.	High
The Open University	Opportunities to develop a better understanding of the impact of OER on their base of teachers and students; contribution to research profile aligns with strategic priorities.	Medium
Institute of Educational Technology	As part of the IET research portfolio, OERRH contributes to maintaining a reputation for leading research into openness in education and in educational technology more generally.	Medium
Collaborating projects	A chance to outsource research needs and better contextualise projects' own work. Good practice can be identified and disseminated. The national/international profile of OER projects can be raised.	Varied according to institutional or operational objectives

The Hewlett Foundation	Getting value for funding input. Ensuring that project stated objectives, outputs and outcomes have been achieved. Furthering knowledge of what works in terms of OER use and development.	High
The OERRH Fellows	Opportunities for professional development; networking & collaboration; novel research opportunities	Medium
OER users and potential users (institutions, educators and informal/formal learners)	Improved understanding of OER impact should facilitate the development of better quality OER and pedagogies which make use of them.	Varied
The OER and open education movements	Raising the profile of the open education movement and of OER generally. Aggregated research should be of benefit to the movement as a whole.	Medium

Table 1: OERRH project stakeholders

More information about the project, its aspirations and techniques can be found on the project blog, which is located at http://oerresearchhub.org/.

4.4   Role of the specified work in the project

The key outcomes of the OERRH project will be:

- *Research*: establishing a greater understanding of the priority research questions on the impact of OER on teaching and learning;

- *Collaborations*: through the research and collaboration program, developing a shared framework that helps both address these questions and enable their research, allowing collaborating projects to benefit from development and advice from the OERRH project team and linked-fellows;

- *Fellowships*: through the fellowship program, enhancing collaboration and communication across OER projects and providing the space and time for understanding of OER-related research issues;

- Establishing and developing an on-going, sustainable OER Hub at the OU for informing decision making in this area.

The OERRH project comprises six work packages:

- WP1: Management
- WP2: Collaborative Research
- WP3: Collaborations and Fellowships
- **WP4: OER Evidence Hub**
- WP5: Evaluation
- WP6: Dissemination

The EH thus has a central place in the project as an online research database and communication platform. The EH will function as a research 'base' with practical outcomes that supports the OER and education communities in understanding the issues and challenges.

A "How to conduct OER research" pack produced first for use in the collaborations and then as a public, openly licensed document and section of the website. The open-license research instruments featured in the pack will include schedules for semi-structured interviews, guidance notes for conducting focus groups (including hypothesis-related topic guides), a bank of survey questions and guidance for the design of surveys incorporating these questions, an analysis strategy for analysis and interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the survey questions, focus groups and interviews, and identification of quantifiable factors either gathered as secondary data or direct analytics;
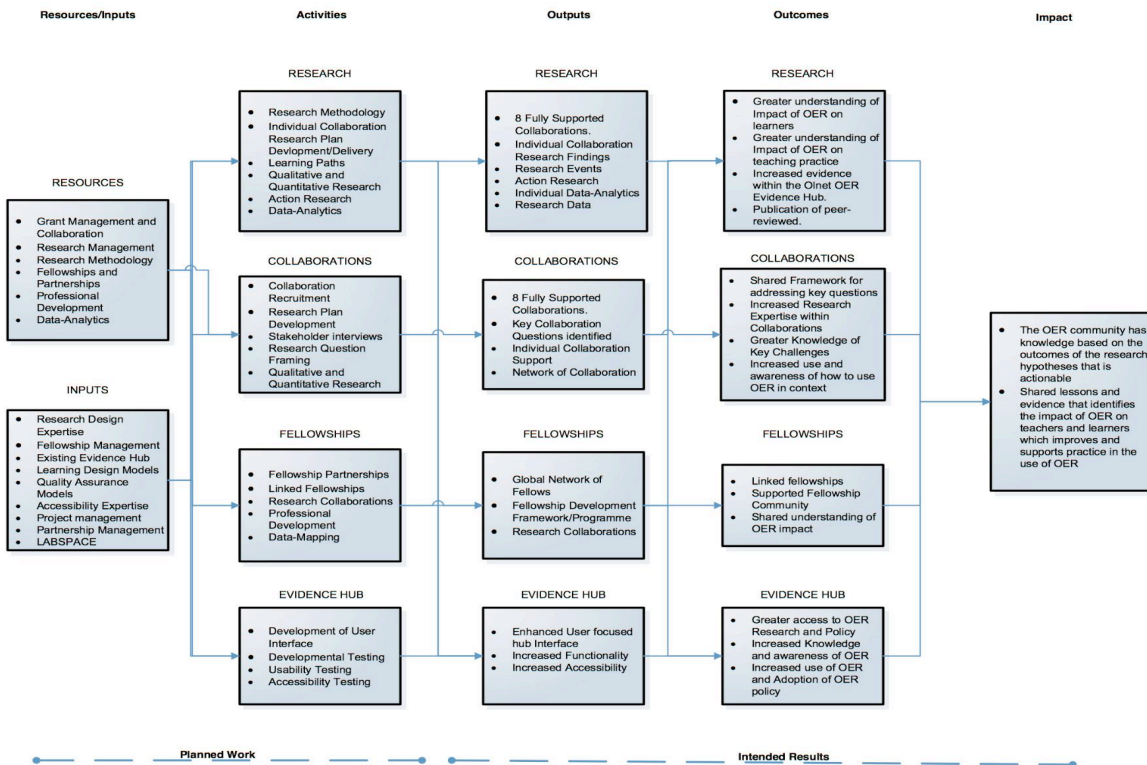
The project logic model is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The OERRH logic model