

OER Impact study

A JISC funded study on the use and reuse of OER

Who is using Open Educational Resources?

Posted on December 16, 2010 by @daveowhite

This post marks the official open-on-the-web style start to our JISC funded [OER Impact study](#). The key tasks of the study being:

- The investigation of patterns of behaviour around the use and reuse of OER.
- Examining the impact of these behaviours on teaching and learning strategies from institutional, tutor and student perspectives.

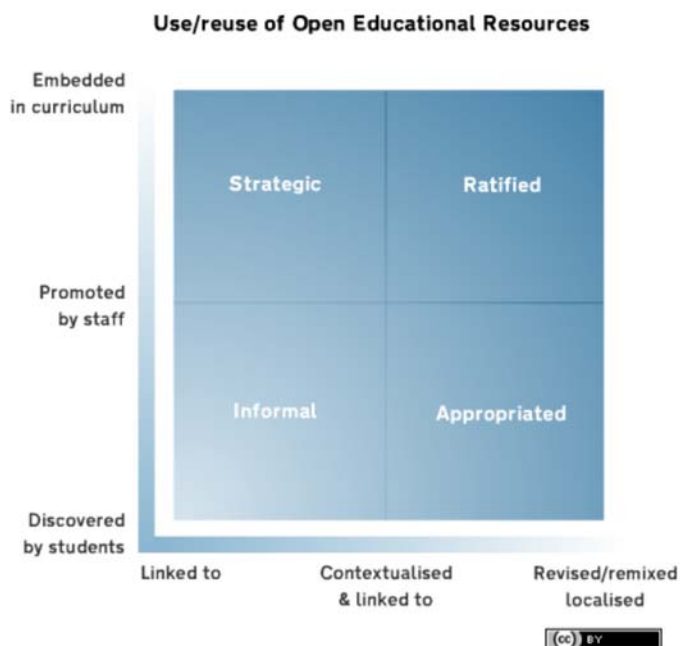
Our methodology is distinctly qualitative, focusing on the 'why' and much as the 'what'. Why you might be using OER rather than why they should exist.

As anyone who has cruised the blog posts around OER will know there is a never-ending debate about the value-cost ratio of openly licensing educational resources much of which hangs on an expectation of repurposing/remixing. Up to now there has been little research on the potential value of OER as distinct from stuff-on-the-web from the perspective of the users/re-users/remixers. We hope to somewhat redress that balance.

Most ['big OER'](#) activity to date has been driven by the production side of the produce/reuse coin. I recently heard of a university which was considering working with iTunesU in a potentially OER manner. Interestingly it was the marketing department who was pushing for this which is indicative of an understanding of one of the values of open resources/OER from an institutional perspective. I don't know if that marketing department has considered who might use/reuse the resources they hand to Apple?

In any event, stats out of our slice of iTunesU here at Oxford show that a lot of people are using OER. The majority of this use being informal (a term often incorrectly equated with 'casual') and individual. I suspect the videos which are CC licensed are used in much the same way as those that aren't. After all, one of the benefits of informal usage is that you don't have to be seen to be playing by the rules isn't it..? That aside there is a pleasant 'social-good' aspect here because beyond any formal curricular use of OER they benefit the-man-in-the-street in a manner that would be difficult to argue against.

In a [recent post](#) Amber Thomas made the point that OER is a "supply side term" which I tend to agree with. Given that the distinction between OER and stuff-on-the-web is technical (in legal terms) one of our primary concerns is to make sure that we capture narratives of use/reuse which are related to OER not simply to open-stuff-online. Having said this we don't want to devalue non-OER reuse or examples of the steady cultural shift towards an acceptance of 'openness' in the most general sense. To position our conversations with participants within a broad use/reuse territory we are proposing to use the following map.



As ever the semantics could be tweaked/argued over well into the night but I hope the map covers much of the use/reuse area that could be found in and around a Higher Ed institution. Suggestions for how the diagram could be improved are, of course, very welcome.

In conjunction with our research questions this approach should allow us to concentrate on OER value from a use/reuse perspective without discarding valuable examples of the informal use/reuse of OER or close-to-OER type resources.

Over the next six months our project will interview staff who use OER in their teaching practice and those who are interested in taking advantage of OER. In addition to this we will be interviewing students about what motivates them to use particular resources in their learning either as directed by the curriculum or discovered independently. If you have any good examples of OER use/reuse which has been embedded in course programmes/institutional strategies then please let us know.



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