Type of session

Panel (60 minutes) - Evidence Track

Title of session

Conceptual issues in mapping OER

Names, titles and institutions

Paul Bacsich, Sero, UK (convenor)

Felix Ostrowski, hbz / graphthinking GmbH, Germany

Rob Farrow, Open University, UK

Tel Amiel, University of Campinas, Brazil

Dan Wilton, Athabasca University, Canada

Goals or intended outcomes

To ensure that those engaged in mapping projects for OER, including those intending to participate in the activities around the upcoming Hewlett-funded OER World Map Phase II initiative led by HBZ, have a better understanding of the key issues and decisions in mapping OER.

Short description (140 characters)

A panel of experts in mapping OER will summarise their experiences and collectively discuss questions and issues raised by the audience

Clear description of what will be covered (1000-2000 words)

While there are a number of different approaches to mapping OER in terms of databases used, mapping schemes and fields to be collected, there are a number of common issues that always crop up. Most do not have a clear-cut answer and each project has to come to a view on how to resolve the issues. Many of these were first prefigured in the report for UNESCO by Susan d'Antoni (2012) for UNESCO.

Each of the panellists (at most six on the panel) will make a short position statement (5 minutes maximum) and then in the remaining half of the session the panel will discuss questions and issues raised by the audience. It is not expected that most questions will have an agreed answer - what is more important is to get a range of perspectives on the issues.

Issues that are likely to come up (based on our experience so far) include, but are not restricted to:

1. It is common practice to represent each OER initiative by a "pin" located at its exact geographic position. But what is the exact position? Can a consortium have a precise position? Does it have several positions? Do we have to consider which department runs the initiative and where it is located on the campus? (If there is a campus.)

2. What do we do if an institution (as is increasingly common) runs two or more initiatives - how do we resolve the "initiatives on the head of a pin" dilemma? (There is a similar situation at larger scale when there are many initiatives in one small country, such as New Zealand.)

3. Pins can be of many shapes and colours. What are the issues involved in deciding on shape and colour?

4. While there is a generally accepted list of countries of the world (with some standard debates as to the status of some territories), the grouping of countries into "georegions" is less agreed. What is the panel's experience of using such groupings and what are the issues?

5. The political structure within a country in many federal countries (like US, Canada and Germany) is very fixed; but in many countries it is more fluid - as example currently in France. How much detail of regional and sub-regional entities should our maps include and what should we do about updates?

6. Some commentators feel that for certain kinds of mapping, pins should be replaced by coloured areas (countries, regions, counties etc). When have the panel found such representations to be useful?

7. How should we represent the languages used in a specific corpus of OER? How granular should our classification of languages be? The OER needs of users who speak less-used languages are politically important in many jurisdictions including Canada and the EU. How should these languages be represented?

8. The ISCED classification (even in its 2011 iteration) is a rather crude instrument, with insufficient discrimination in the K-12 arena and no ability to represent lifelong learning and CPD. How can this scheme be extended or replaced to be more relevant to OER?

9. Similarly the ISCED-F subject classification is overly simple. How should it be modified or extended, especially as one moves from databases of OER repositories to databases of OER content items?

10. Wikipedia makes a valiant and surprisingly comprehensive attempt to provide standard names for universities and many other educational institutions, in its English version, and somewhat less comprehensive attempts in other-language versions. How should one approach the problem of naming institutions in a range of languages, especially if one disagrees with the Wikipedia names?

11. More generally, an OER map is likely to make use of a lot of open data, either dynamically linked or copied across. In the view of the panellists, what are the main types of linked open data that are useful?

12. Is it sensible to expand the term "map" beyond the idea of a purely geographical representation of the data? (Some projects like Worldmapper feel that maps need to get away from standard geographic representations and use representations where territories are resized according to the size of specific quantities such as population, GNI per capita, etc.)

13. Where are the conceptual boundaries of the OER World Map in terms of initiatives with limited focus on teaching? In other words, should Open Access projects or Open Content services in general be included and mapped? (OpenDOAR already has been mapping many Open Access initiatives.)

14. How should one handle developments such as MOOCs which may have a core of OER but be closed-access or with a "freemium" business model?

In the situation that there are too many questions for the panel to consider, priority will be given to non-technical questions such as the ones above.

References

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Bacsich, P. (2014). *Transversal and categorised inventory of OER Programmes and Initiatives - on maps*. POERUP Deliverable 2.1 Edition 2, June 2014. Available at http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/File:POERUP_D2.1_edition_2.pdf

D'Antoni, S. (2012). *A world map of Open Educational Resources initiatives: Can the global OER community design and build it together? Summary report of an international conversation: 12–30 November 2012*. Available at https://oerknowledgecloud.org/?q=content/world-map-open-educational-resources-initiatives-can-global-oer-community-design-and-build-i

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Neumann, J. (2014). *Project Conclusion Report - Launching the Development of an OER World Map: Phase I*. hbz, 2014. Available at https://wiki1.hbz-nrw.de/download/attachments/11502005/hbz-oer-map-projectcompletionreport_V2.pdf

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Intended audience

Those currently engaged in mapping OER initiatives.

Those collecting and curating OER initiatives who would like to learn more about how to map them, the issues that come up and the decisions involved.