Exploring the Business Case for Open Educational Resources

Abstract
The Open Educational Resource (OER) movement, which began at the turn of the millennium, was motivated by the ideal that knowledge is the common wealth of humankind and should be freely shared. Most institutions that decided to implement the ideal by creating OER relied on donor funding, notably from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which has demonstrated an admirable combination of consistency and flexibility in funding the OER movement around the world. As the OER movement took off, however, questions about its sustainability became increasingly pressing because it could not continue to rely indefinitely on donor funding. Institutions and governments began to review the economics of OER in order to determine whether there was a business case for investing in their production and use. It is against this background that I am delighted to welcome this preliminary version of an essay by Neil Butcher and Sarah Hoosen on The Business Case for Open Educational Resources. It was commissioned by the Commonwealth of Learning as an input to the World OER Congress organized by UNESCO in June 2012. This first version is a work in progress that will be refined and finalised in the light of experiences and results presented at the Congress. The authors do an excellent job of situating the contribution of OER in the wider context of the challenges facing education at all levels in an era of economic stringency. They relate OER to the realities of the teaching-learning process, arguing that greater reliance on resource-based learning, rather than large-group teaching, will be essential if wider access to education of quality is to be achieved. Creating high-quality learning resources ab initio is expensive, but Neil Butcher and Sarah Hoosen present compelling evidence that using OER can reduce this cost substantially. They also present some startling analyses of the economics of textbook production, which again show that systematic processes of investing in OER can create huge savings for governments and students. The commercial publishing industry can play a part in this process. The 2012 World OER Congress will greatly increase awareness of the potential of OER amongst governments and institutions. If this awareness is to lead to greater reliance on OER, then those who develop and use OER will need to be confident of the economic and business case for so doing. The authors have provided a solid basis for debating the business case in a variety of settings. I invite readers to take the debate forward and point the authors to any additional sources of data that might enrich the paper so that the post-Congress version of this report can reflect an even wider understanding of how to use OER to expand and improve education while cutting its cost. Sir John Daniel, Project Director, Fostering Governmental Support for OER Internationally

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Subject
16. Open Educational Resources (OER). 17. OER are teaching, learning, and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits their free use and re-purposing. 18. Search & Discovery. 19. Translations & Accessibility. 20. Customization & Affordability. 21. What is the Business / Policy Case for OER? 22. vs. Rivalrous vs. Non-Rivalrous Resources. 1. C-SAP OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES PROJECT E-learning Forum 8th July 2010 Darren Marsh and Anna Gruszczynska, C-SAP 2. The background HEFCE initiative, JISC / HEA key partners... Whilst exploring, with our academic project partners, the principles and issues around releasing educational material (institutional, contractual, administrative), we have also sought to develop some insights into the processes of sharing practice, and look forward to discussing the findings in this forum. In scope 3. Open educational content is teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an licence that permits their free use or re-purposing by others.