

Policy Recommendations

Enhancement of cultural & linguistic variety through OER

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Introduction

Lesser Used Languages (LUL) are the special focus of the LangOER project. In the context of LangOER, the definition of LUL encompasses endangered languages, regional and minority languages (approximately 10% of Europe's population) and small state languages. Open Educational Resources (OER) hold out the promise of supporting the teaching and learning of these languages in Europe and consequently inclusion and quality education for all. Next to that, OER can offer an important way forward in maintaining Europe's linguistic diversity. "Languages serve as a bridge to other people and open access to other countries and cultures, promoting mutual understanding. A successful multilingualism policy can strengthen the life chances of citizens".¹

Enabling LUL communities to actively take up OERs can generate also another number of welcome transformations that include "the change of mind set towards teaching and learning methodology; new channels to obtain education; and opportunities for knowledge sharing."²

OERs and Open Educational Practices (OEP) are relevant for all sectors and levels of education in LUL, and especially in the case of endangered languages and Regional and Minority Languages. For those languages, OER/OEP are particularly relevant simply because of these communities of speakers are relatively small in number, they typically lack financial resources, they often encounter a dearth of learning materials. OER can help to overcome the scarcity in educational resources in lesser used and minority languages and promote language equity and language diversity.

However, even as the number of policy proposals to support OER uptake have grown and the benefits are more widely recognized, thus far there have been only sporadic efforts to explicitly address the opportunities and challenges of OER policies aimed at European LUL communities.³

Against this background, the LangOER webinar participants will debate the three top level policy recommendations and on how different stakeholders could take concrete actions that enable LUL communities to actively develop, exchange and take up OERs and OEP.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/multilingualism/linguistic-diversity_en

² UNESCO, 2016, p. 228. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002443/244365e.pdf>

³ https://wiki.creativecommons.org/wiki/OER_Policy_Registry

Draft policy recommendations

The recommendations from the LangOER project are suggested on the basis of studies and observations of European countries over the last three years and the finding that licensed, quality OER and OEP are relatively poorly developed in LUL communities.

Following discussion of initial recommendations at the LangOER conference on the 26-27th September 2016, the project has revised these and now suggests the following top three level recommendations to be taken forward as part of a consultation process.

1. Develop a well-functioning OER lifecycle – “create -access-use-adapt”

Concrete actions which can potentially be taken are:

1. Develop and implement a strategy for OER, in particular addressing quality OER for grades, degrees and diplomas.
2. Include OER as an issue for existing quality assurance agencies and establish a dialogue with these agencies (e.g. ENQA) on their role and responsibility related to OER.
3. Consider establishing and funding an OER evaluation and adoption panel. (to include lead teachers, content experts and accessibility experts) that could undertake in-country cost-benefit analysis to assess the potential savings (or otherwise) which might be achieved through implementing an OER strategy, at EU member state level.
4. Make a commitment to and organize public procurement of OER.
5. Organise competitions for quality OER.
6. Organise calls for proposals with action lines addressing specific issues highlighted in the LangOER recommendations including research that provides evidence on OER impact and benefits.
7. Organisations involved in OER development in small languages should make use of European initiatives or (online) European Networks to reach larger audiences (e.g. EMMA, ECO).

2. Provide professional development and support for teachers

Concrete actions which can potentially be taken are:

1. Include training on the creation and use of learning resources (with a particular focus on OER) within initial teacher education and continuing professional development programs for teachers including via online platforms (MOOCs).
2. Establish guidance, tools and toolboxes for all relevant aspects of OER, in particular how OERs can support 21st century teaching and learning skills.
3. Provide support to teachers and school leaders via the creation of a network of OER Ambassadors.
4. Invite and train lesser used and regional minority language educators to share teacher and learning materials in a digital form with open licenses.
5. Put in place frameworks that ensure a holistic approach to formal, non-formal, informal and lifelong learning.

3. Community and network building for quality learning outcomes

Concrete actions which can potentially be taken are:

1. Support knowledge sharing events and peer exchange and capacity building networks at regional, country and pan-European level.
2. Ensure collaborative open learning within and among institutions for sharing quality learning materials, for example by using social media.
3. Provide incentives for collaboration, good practice and knowledge sharing.
4. Support collaboration with other nations or regions in establishing quality OER in LUL.
5. Organize further cooperation workshops between regional and minority stakeholders, educational stakeholders and majority language OER initiatives to bring more collaboration.
6. Collaborate with other institutions and stakeholders in stimulating community of practices for OER.

Other recommendation to consider

Review financial frameworks and policies and provide incentives for OER for all languages

1. Organize calls for proposals with action lines addressing specific issues highlighted in the recommendations including research that provides evidence on OER impact and benefits.
 2. Support R&D on translation from English and other world languages to LUL.
 3. Revitalize the commitment to OER that it expressed in Opening Up Education, with a particular focus on OER in LUL as a means of maintaining cultural and linguistic diversity.
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