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Options Brief Pack – England

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0. Executive Summary

This report is **Deliverable 3.4UKE, Options Brief Pack – England**. It makes the following recommendations:

Higher Education

1. The UK government, working with the Devolved Administrations and key foundations, should set up a competitive innovation fund to develop one new undergraduate or Foundation degree programme each year with a focus on low-cost online education UK-wide around a core proposition of open content. The UK Open University should not be eligible to bid but should play a key role on the Steering Group for this fund, building on the knowledge it has gained from FutureLearn.
2. The funding councils and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), leveraging on the research done by the Flexible Learning research programme carried out by the Higher Education Academy, should encourage universities to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and specifically the ability to accredit knowledge and competences developed through online study and informal learning (including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs).
3. BIS and the Devolved Administrations should aim to build on the success of Open University Validation Services and the members of the Council of Validating Universities and consider the benefits of setting up an Open Accrator, initially focussing on qualifications in the ISCED 5B area as this is most correlated with high-level skills for business and industry. Particular attention should be given to students who have gained qualifications relevant to HE APL that are gained via “badges” from micro-providers of HE and approved providers from other domains (adult, informal HE/MOOCs, FE, commercial training, etc).
4. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), within the framework of ENQA, should: further develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition, by a series of workshops, consultations and studies building on its existing events and documents on this topic; work with Jisc to advance discussion on copyright; and in 2015 produce a position paper on the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition.

Colleges

1. Create an innovation fund for the development of online learning resources and assembling/creating pathways to credentials.
2. Foster work into standardised syllabi across England (and ideally the UK) for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for England-wide action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including relevant open repositories and (ideally jointly with publishers) open textbooks.
3. Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help teachers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support teacher / trainer / lecturer CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.
4. Develop incentive schemes for teachers and trainers engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.
5. Fund research into the verifiable benefits of OER, with greater efforts to integrate such analyses with its ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.

Schools

Our key recommendations are as follows:

#	Task to be done	Entities to do it
1.	Entities should promote to educational users (leaders, practitioners, students and guardians) the availability and accessibility of open resources created through EU cultural sector programmes and their domestic cultural sector programmes.	OER enthusiasts among teachers, teacher trainers and researchers
2.	Entities should seek to exploit the considerable investment in Repositories both nationally and at EU level.	School heads, teachers; publishers, social entrepreneurs (freemium models?)
3.	Entities should promote to schools (especially publicly-funded schools) the benefits of making resources available under an appropriate open license.	OER enthusiasts among teachers, teacher trainers and researchers
4.	Entities should ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.	School heads, local authorities and similar groupings
5.	Entities should ensure that any public outputs from their respective national research and teaching development programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license (in particular a Creative Commons open license).	Research councils, DfE, JISC, HEA, OFSTED, etc
6.	Entities must require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.	Actually a legal requirement!
7.	Entities should ensure that their Quality Assurance or materials approval processes permit that OER are allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists, subject to fulfilling relevant criteria.	OFSTED, local authorities
11.	Entities should continue their focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that they are able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER.	Government and local authorities should be doing this
13.	Entities should develop their understanding of how new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) impact on quality assurance and recognition.	OFSTED, OFQUAL, researchers
14.	Entities should fund research into the verifiable benefits and disadvantages of OER, with greater efforts to integrate such analyses with its ongoing research on online learning, and pedagogy.	researchers, Research Councils (ESRC)
17.	Entities should foster research into potentially sustainable business models for OER, integrating this with their ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.	researchers, Research Councils (ESRC), EU, examination boards

1. Introduction

1.1 The brief

This is Deliverable 4.3UKE, the England sub-deliverable of Deliverable 4.3 of Work Package 4 of POERUP. The overall Deliverable Title from the proposal is:

Options Brief Pack

and the sub-deliverable title is

Options Brief Pack – England

The Work Package title is:

The role of National and International Policies and strategy

The revised brief (taken from the Amendment, approved February 2014) for the Deliverable states:

Options briefs packs on proposed policies will be prepared in the relevant language for:

- *England, Wales and Scotland (Sero)*
- *Ireland (Sero)*
- *Netherlands (RdMC-OUNL)*
- *Poland (EDEN)*
- *France (Université de Lorraine) and*
- *Canada (Athabasca University).*

Each options brief pack will have a general introduction, a section for schools, a section for universities and a brief section on other sectors. However, the detailed structure will be consistent with the structure of relevant ministries in the country (for example in Scotland there is one ministry covering both colleges and universities). Furthermore, the language of each document will be consistent with the terms and concepts that the country's education policies are conceived within – noting that in some countries there is no specific mention – or only marginal mention – of ICT in the education policy.

This is the options brief pack for **England**. However, it also covers any residual UK-wide issues as they affect education in England and the other home nations of the UK.

There are separate policy briefs for the Devolved Administrations of Scotland and Wales.

The style of this Policy Brief

We have aimed to write these policy briefs so that they are relevant not only to the specific country being discussed but also helpful for those readers from other countries trying to learn lessons for their countries. Consequently we have given rather more background information on the target country than “locals” will need – we hope that they will forgive our apparent prolixity.

Another key issue is the use of *footnotes*. Policy briefs are not supposed to be scholarly outputs so it is not usual to use the standard research apparatus of Harvard referencing. Indeed, some experts take the view that even footnotes break up the narrative and logical flow to an unacceptable extent. However, in the area of OER and MOOCs much of the evidence is little known and much of what passes for “known” is contested or has evidential flaws. Consequently we have taken the view that

for POERUP policy briefs, in particular the ones written by the Sero team covering Britain and Ireland, we shall use footnotes, hopefully mostly in moderation.

The final point is *timeliness*. Many of the policy briefs could not be finalised until quite late in the project as there were slow-burn but vital developments under way in many of the countries. In some cases, such as Scotland, there were developments such as the Independence Referendum in September 2014 where we could not wait to hear the result; in others, such as Wales, the key developments occurred in good time (March 2014 being a key date for Wales). In England there were some relevant developments in spring and early summer 2014.

However, any document of this sort dates quite rapidly. This is an inevitable outcome of such projects. All we can say (and more is said in Deliverable 6.2 on Exploitation) that the Sero team who wrote this group of policy briefs remains in place and indeed are working on other OER-related study projects. Our wish would be that we could carry out, or at worst advise on, an update of these policy briefs every six months or so, if there is interest.

1.2 POERUP

The overall aim of POERUP is to carry out research to understand how governments can stimulate the uptake of OER *by policy means*, not excluding financial means but recognising that in the ongoing economic situation in Europe the scope for government financial support for such activities is much less than it was in the past, or is now in some non-EU countries such as US, Canada and Australia.

POERUP does not formulate policies based on informal discussions. POERUP wants the policies to be *evidence-based policies* – based on looking *beyond* one's own country, region or continent, and beyond the educational sector that a ministry typically looks after.

POERUP also aims to provide education authorities, the research community and OER initiative management with *trustworthy* and *balanced* research results, in which feedback from all stakeholder groups is incorporated and which used as standard literature. A specific objective is to help readers in charge of OER initiatives to foresee hidden traps and to find ways of incorporating successful features of other initiatives.

POERUP is about dispassionate analysis, not lobbying – it strives to take a balanced view within an overall positive orientation, in respect of OER specifically, and opening up education, more generally.

POERUP aims to provide policymakers and education authorities *above institutions*, but also OER management and practitioners *within institutions*, with insight into what has been done in this area, plus a categorization of the different initiatives (major and minor) and the diverse range of providers. The POERUP studies provide practical and concrete information in order to contribute towards a more informed approach in the future.

POERUP achieves this by:

- studying a range of countries in Europe and seen as relevant to Europe, in order to understand what OER activities and initiatives are under way, and why they are continuing (or stopping, or more starting) – and taking account of reports from other agencies and projects studying OER in other countries;
- researching case studies of the *end-user-producer communities* behind OER initiatives in order to refine and elaborate recommendations to formulate a set of action points that can be applied to ensuring the realisation of successful, lively and sustainable OER communities;
- developing informed ideas on policy formulation using evidence from POERUP and (the few) other policy-oriented studies, POERUP staff's own experience in related projects, and ongoing advice from other experts in the field.

Finally, these results are disseminated and are being maintained in a sustainable way. The project has a web site www.poerup.info and a wiki poerup.referata.com on which country reports and other outputs were developed and are being updated. This wiki is still active and is being sustained well after the formal end of the project, as OER, under a Creative Commons license (CC-BY-SA 4.0). In addition various OER Maps have been and are being developed – in particular www.poerup.org.uk – and will be maintained.

1.3 Sero and England

Sero Consulting Ltd

Sero is an education consultancy specializing in assisting institutions and government agencies with the exploitation of IT including learning resources (libraries) and e-learning. Formed in 2004, Sero has 20 staff and associates, with a specific business arm *SeroHE* focussing on Higher Education. Sero has many years' experience in working with non-profit organisations and foundations – including the European Commission (and its agencies and research labs), national, regional and local governments, JISC, and the UK Higher Education Academy.

Sero is the Project Manager for the EU project POERUP – Policies for OER Uptake – and was the Project Manager for the project VISCED – Virtual Schools and College Education – <http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info>. Both these projects developed large wiki databases of educational initiatives at the institutional and programme level. They also leveraged on the prior project Re.ViCa (2007-2009), in which Paul Bacsich played a key role, which created a large wiki of virtual campus initiatives – <http://www.virtualcampuses.eu>.

England

Sero has been active in policy and research terms in England since its founding in 2004. It carried out a long series of studies for Becta during the period 2006-10 including the multi-year project CAPITAL (Curriculum And Pedagogy In Technology Assisted Learning) in association with the University of Nottingham: this contained specific work items on international comparisons and ICT-induced organisational change. Sero has also worked extensively on JISC contracts and for the Higher Education Academy on benchmarking and an OER study (Learner Use of OER).

In addition, Paul Bacsich carried out many years of studies for the Higher Education Academy, beginning in 2005 with the Higher Education Academy/JISC Benchmarking of e-learning Exercise, continuing into Pathfinder¹ and culminating (in Wales) with the Gwella Programme – all focussing on benchmarking e-learning and managing the organisational change needed to foster e-learning. His latest study (2014) for the Higher Education Academy was to assist the development of policies to support flexible learning in UK higher education, including in England, but also the other home nations.

In 2012 he carried out months of market research for a US-EU-based venture fund looking into market possibilities for online learning in the UK HE and international markets. This involved reviewing every single major UK HE institution for the scale and scope of their online offerings.

¹ https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Bench_and_PathFinalReview20080926.pdf

2. Current state of open education in England

A note on England and the United Kingdom

The education systems of the four home nations of the United Kingdom are run by the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with the UK national government responsible also for England. However, copyright legislation and some aspects of industrial policy are controlled by the UK government. There are, therefore, no national OER policies for the UK as a whole. However, quite often initiatives funded for or targeted at England spill over, to a greater or lesser extent, to adjacent home nations – and the other home nations can buy into certain initiatives.

2.1 Open education initiatives in England

Before the 2010 change of political parties at the helm of the UK national government, the UK government allocated funding for a major OER programme (from 2009-2012), largely for higher education, and primarily for England, through the *JISC/HEA OER Programme*. This was run jointly by JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and HEA (the Higher Education Academy), in three phases:

1. UKOER1 was funded between April 2009 and April 2010, and supported pilot projects and activities around the open release of learning resources. A total number of 29 projects were funded through phase 1 programme in three strands: Institutional, Individual and Subject.
2. UKOER2 ran between August 2010 and August 2011. Phase 2 programme built on and expanded the work of the Phase 1, and commenced research and technical work examining the discovery and use of OER by academics. A total number of 36 projects were funded through phase 2 programme in three areas: the release, use, and discovery of OER.
3. UKOER3: Building on two previous phases, phase 3 programme operated between October 2011 and October 2012 to support the continued application of OER and related activity and processes across the HE and FE sector and related areas. A total number of 13 projects were funded through the phase 3 programme, investigating the use of OER approaches to work towards particular strategic, policy and societal goals.²

The JISC/HEA OER programme for higher education is completed; it has not fed into any visible policy at national level, but some of the formerly funded initiatives have continued to develop, even in the absence of policy and very little external funding.

In addition to the OER Programme, with an investment totalling about £5.4 million, JISC funded a Content Programme³ between 2011 and 2013. This programme builds on previous JISC Digitisation and Content Programmes⁴ which addressed issues related to the creation and delivery of digital content in parallel with the skills and strategies needed within institutions to support digitisation activity. The Content Programme has funded 9 projects focusing on the digitisation and open educational resources (OERs). These projects ran until July 2013, and digitised and openly released archival and special collections of primary sources, aiming to embed such resources within teaching and learning as a way of enhancing the student experience and fostering innovative pedagogies. A key output from the JISC/HEA OER and JISC Content Programmes was the creation and releasing of a

² See <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/oer.aspx>, <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/oer2.aspx> and <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/ukoer3.aspx>

³ http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation/content2011_2013.aspx

⁴ <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation.aspx>

substantial amount of OERs to support a particular subject. Funding supported projects to release resources by departments, faculties and schools within a variety of institutions, supported by Academy Subject Centres and Professional Bodies.

Following the change of UK government in 2010 (from Labour to a Conservative-led coalition), funding was withdrawn from national programmes for ICT support and development in schools and VET. In addition, the former national policy for ICT in education fell into abeyance (see next section).

The POERUP report on the United Kingdom contains a great deal of detail on the earlier OER initiatives and has a long section on Education in England.⁵

In 2013 and 2014 (at the time of writing) there have been no new national OER initiatives in England. However, in October 2013 the UK Open University announced the MOOC initiative FutureLearn. Technically this is a consortial initiative, not a national one, with funding from the Open University and co-funding from the other partners, but due to the leading position of the Open University (and its Vice-Chancellor Martin Bean) and the overt support (moral not financial) from the Minister of State for Universities and Science (David Willetts) it soon took on strong overtones of a national initiative – and has now spread to all home nations of the UK, and to several other countries.⁶

At the time of writing it is expected that there will soon be some new national initiatives in OER, but with much smaller funding than the earlier national HE OER programmes.

3. Open education policies and recommendations in England

3.1 Policies

In contrast to OER, policies and national strategies for e-learning have had a long history in England. Taking a window of just the last ten years (in UK terms the recovery period since the UK e-University collapsed) the year 2005 saw the development of the *Harnessing Technology* strategy for ICT in the schools and VET sector (further education) in England by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in an initiative intellectually led by Professor Diana Laurillard.⁷ About the same time the HEFCE strategy for e-learning for the Higher Education Sector was released.⁸ The *Harnessing Technology* strategy went through several minor iterations, the latest proposing revisions to ensure it lasted until 2014.⁹ However the change of government in 2010 sent this strategy into abeyance. The HEFCE e-learning strategy in 2005 was supposed to last 10 years but, in keeping with the climate of the time, it was revised in 2009 to give the universities far more leeway in its interpretation.¹⁰ This seemed fairly rapidly to fade into irrelevance as there was little money attached to it and the climate in England was moving rapidly towards a student fee-driven model of university financing.

In the schools and further education (VET) sector the bruises from the closure of Becta and the downsizing of associated FE agencies took some time to heal. Crudely, while there were many exciting-seeming developments (free schools etc), in ICT in education policy terms, nothing useful

⁵ http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/United_Kingdom and http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/United_Kingdom#Education_in_England – reports written mostly during October-November 2012

⁶ This is a specific case study for POERUP – see in particular <http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/Category:FutureLearn> and http://poerup.referata.com/w/images/OCWC2014-FutureLearn-Bacsich_final_online_PDF.pdf

⁷ <http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/508/>

⁸ http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_12/

⁹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101102103654/http://publications.becta.org.uk/download.cfm?resID=37348>

¹⁰ http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_12/09_12.pdf

was happening at a strategic level in terms of ICT in education in schools and FE. A useful snapshot of the situation two years ago is the report by Barry Phillips for VISCED in December 2012.¹¹ Ostensibly about policy recommendations to facilitate virtual schools in England, it is, we believe, a sound analysis (by an insider: he used to work for DfES) of the policy situation in England for ICT in schools at that time.

In 2013, the situation changed slightly, with the establishment of FELTAG¹² (Further Education Learning & Technology Action Group). FELTAG produced a report for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills¹³, to which the Department responded.¹⁴ This report will be discussed in the relevant section.

A new group ETAG was set up to carry forward the work of FELTAG in a more “official” way, but the timescales for this go beyond the writing slot for this report. The planning page for ETAG states:

ETAG will develop a range of actions designed to promote the effective use of education technology and remove existing barriers that prevent schools, universities and colleges from using technology to its full potential. These actions will be a mix of short-term and long-term for the Government, educational institutions, and the wider sector to take forward.

ETAG has a broad remit and issues have been organised into three main clusters, each containing a couple of workstreams, as well as a ‘wild card’ workstream. The workstreams have been framed around the group’s future vision of education technology (see the ETAG workstream pages for further information).

The group will gather suggestions and comments relating to each workstream between 23 April and 23 June 2014 before developing these ideas into a series of short-term and long-term actions over the summer. The group then plan to formally present its proposals to ministers for consideration in the autumn [of 2014] before fully implementing and embedding the proposals across Government, educational institutions, and the wider sector.

At the time of writing this report there are indications of some movement towards more positive ICT policy in schools and further education (VET), including mention of online learning, but no mention of OER and no clear indication that there are policies in the pipeline.

3.2 Influential reports (not yet policies)

Notwithstanding the policy vacuum, a number of potentially influential reports came out.

In fact the first of these came out in 2011, not long after the change of government. In summer 2009 HEFCE (under the former government) set up an *Online Learning Task Force* to “address how UK higher education might maintain and extend its position as a world leader in online learning”. The report *Collaborate to compete: Seizing the opportunity of online learning for UK higher education* came out in January 2011.¹⁵ It made significant mention of open educational resources, yet it became clear quite soon even to outsiders that the new government was not going to fund any of the recommendations (not that surprising in the financial climate of the time – in fact the former

¹¹

http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info/sites/default/files/Deliverable_VISCED_D3.9A_Policy_Recommendations_England.pdf

¹² <http://feltag.org.uk/>

¹³ <http://feltag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/.../FELTAG-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/.../bis-14-841-government-response-to-recommenda...> [fix]

¹⁵ http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce1/pubs/hefce/2011/1101/11_01.pdf

government had not been very supportive) and there were indications that many of the points had not been subject to much research.¹⁶ Despite the apparent demise of the report, it seems to have had a long-term impact and one can see some of the approach working out in the way more and more UK universities are developing MOOC and online MSc programmes.

In September 2013 the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) released *The Maturity of the MOOC*, subtitled “A Literature Review of Massive Open Online Courses and other forms of Online Distance Learning”.¹⁷ It contained a set of useful interviews and a modest set of references but also much comment on a wide range of popular reports. It was not the purpose of the report to produce recommendations but at the time the report got wide publicity and served to legitimate the MOOC idea. It is likely to have had a considerable effect on universities considering FutureLearn.

Just as this document was closing, the Department for Education (DfE, formerly DfES) in June 2014 released *MOOCs: Opportunities for their use in compulsory-age education*.¹⁸

4. POERUP recommendations for England

A note on politics

Under the current constitutional rules, the next general election in the UK will be on 7 May 2015.¹⁹ Since the UK government also currently controls the England administration in terms of educational policies, this means that from the time of writing there is just over 10 months until the general election. This gives very little time for any recommendations for England made here to become government policy, let alone be implemented.²⁰

(In contrast, in the two of the three Devolved Administrations, Wales and Scotland, the subject of separate policy documents, the next national elections are not until May 2016; leaving much more time for policy to be developed.)

It is also a matter of some debate among experts as to what is the degree of policy continuity in education in the UK in recent years. There are numerous scholarly papers on the subject but from our practical standpoint in Sero of having done educational policy work covering the current and previous UK government, we would say that there has been substantial policy continuity in reality at a general level, as opposed to the rhetoric and the detail. In Higher Education, fees were introduced by the previous government; as were Academies in the schools sector. Under the Coalition administration, numbers of Academies have increased dramatically as a direct result of government policy and Free Schools were also introduced by them, together with University Technical Colleges – another non-standard type of school directly funded by central government. Fees for higher

¹⁶ With a few notable exceptions such as the highly useful report from TALL (March 2010) on Study of UK Online Learning – <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/projects/UKOnlineLearningStudy-FinalReport-Mar10-FINAL-FORPUB.pdf>

¹⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240193/13-1173-maturing-of-the-mooc.pdf

¹⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315591/DfE_RR355_-_Opportunities_for_MOOCs_in_schools_FINAL.pdf

¹⁹ This is because of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011 – for more information see <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/elections-and-voting/general/general-election-timetable-2015/>

²⁰ The timescale is even tighter, due to the informal six-week “purdah” rules that apply in the UK – see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purdah_\(pre-election_period\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purdah_(pre-election_period))

education have been substantially increased. Policy continuity in education is much less than in the Devolved Administrations or in some other (not all) EU member states, such as Finland.²¹

At this time of writing, little can be said about the educational direction of any future government, be it single-party or (quite likely) a Coalition of two (or even) three parties.²² The Labour opposition, currently less right wing than the former Labour government, has indicated for some time that fees will stay, but may be reduced;²³ and that new types of schools will be more closely regulated at the local level and that the creation rate of these might well slow.²⁴ All parties are saying that technical education (VET) needs to be reformed, but it remains to be seen what this is likely to mean in reality.

On the economic situation, while the UK economy is at last growing quite strongly by EU standards, by around 3% and likely to continue at this sort of rate,²⁵ the pressure on national budgets will still be intense, whatever party/parties are in power and whatever the precise balance between tax rises and budget cuts.²⁶

Our conclusion from this is that our recommendations must be few in number and thus targeted to the most serious challenges, must be realistic, and must not cost “above the line” more than a small amount of money.²⁷

As said several times before, POERUP is a study project not a lobby group for OER; and Sero is a consultancy company with a track record of providing realistic advice to governments, agencies and educational institutions over many years.

4.1 Higher education

Background

The higher education sector in England is one of substantial complexity but still largely dominated by large public non-profit institutions called “universities” who are in receipt of substantial funding from the government, via HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council), even though they also now receive substantial fee income from students, many of those with fees provided via the government-backed Student Loans Company.²⁸

In numerical terms, HEFCE announced recently that it “will allocate £3.88 billion to 130 universities and higher education colleges and 212 further education colleges for the academic year 2014-15”.²⁹

²¹ Regarding Finland, a recent UK report noted that “There is also great emphasis placed on continuity of education policy: the direction of travel has remained similar for fifty years.” (House of Commons Education Committee: The role and performance of Ofsted: Second Report of Session 2010–11, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeduc/570/570i.pdf>)

²² The voting shares in the EU elections made a lot of commentators think – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/vote2014/eu-uk-results>

²³ “Tuition fees: Labour pledges maximum cap of £6,000”, 25 September 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15050334>

²⁴ For one example of many, note “Labour says it will keep Gove school reforms”, 2 March 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26405714>

²⁵ *HM Treasury: Forecasts for the UK economy: a comparison of independent forecasts*, no. 326, June 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321052/201406forecomp.pdf

²⁶ “Ed Balls: Labour will run a budget surplus”, 24 January 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/24/ed-balls-labour-will-run-budget-surplus>

²⁷ As a suggestion, our “quantum of action” would around €1 million. Thus in our view large content development programmes along the lines of Wikiwijs or JISC/HEA OER Programme are not now realistic (in UK or most other EU member states).

²⁸ See <http://www.slc.co.uk>

²⁹ “HEFCE allocates £3.88 billion to universities and colleges in England for 2014-15”, 26 March 2014, <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2014/news86801.html>

To clarify, higher education colleges are institutions which are small and specialised providers of higher education. Areas of specialisation are usually one or more of music, dance, drama, art, teacher training, theology, agriculture or nautical studies. Many of them do not offer their own degrees – the qualifications are validated often by a nearby university. Further education colleges, often called “colleges”, are providers of vocational education and training (VET, ISCED level 4), but an increasing number (now 212) also offer HE qualifications (again, usually validated by a nearby university). Only 41 of these, in the Mixed Economy Group, are truly dual-mode HE-FE providers on a substantial scale.³⁰

The total number of HE enrolments at England higher education institutions was 1,944,995 in 2012/13.³¹

In addition to those directly publicly-funded institutions, there are the *alternative providers* (both public and private) – a few quite large and well-known like Regents University and BPP – and others, like the Open College of the Arts, known for being innovative in delivery – but the vast majority are small and unknown.

A government study in 2013 identified 674 privately funded HE providers operating in the UK with 160,000 HE learners studying with them in 2011/12.³² The vast majority of these providers are based in England, with a substantial number in London. Exactly 217 of the 674 providers had fewer than 100 students: indeed, only 35 providers had over 1000 students and only 5 providers had over 5000 students. Many of the students are part-time and many of these studying by distance learning.

Key Policy Recommendations from POERUP

Deliverable 4.2U produced in September 2013 a comprehensive set of recommendations to foster OER in higher education across the EU. These recommendations have been presented at many conferences and discussed in many meetings, including meetings of the POERUP International Advisory Committee. There have been very few comments suggesting anything more than minor revisions to these. Hence we shall take these as the source of our draft recommendations. In the interests of conciseness in the main report, these are in Annex 1.

1. The UK government, working with the Devolved Administrations and key foundations, should set up a competitive innovation fund to develop one new undergraduate or Foundation degree programme each year with a focus on low-cost online education UK-wide around a core proposition of open content. The UK Open University should not be eligible to bid but should play a key role on the Steering Group for this fund, building on the knowledge it has gained from FutureLearn.
2. The funding councils and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), leveraging on the research done by the Flexible Learning research programme carried out by the Higher Education Academy, should encourage universities to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and specifically the ability to accredit knowledge and competences developed through online study and informal learning (including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs).
3. BIS and the Devolved Administrations should aim to build on the success of Open University Validation Services and the members of the Council of Validating Universities and consider the benefits of setting up an Open Accrator, initially focussing on qualifications in the

³⁰ <http://www.mixedeconomygroup.co.uk>

³¹ For this and similar statistics see <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/sfr197>

³² *Privately funded providers of higher education in the UK*, BIS Research Papers no. 111, Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/privately-funded-providers-of-higher-education-in-the-uk>

ISCED 5B area as this is most correlated with high-level skills for business and industry. Particular attention should be given to students who have gained qualifications relevant to HE APL that are gained via “badges” from micro-providers of HE and approved providers from other domains (adult, informal HE/MOOCs, FE, commercial training, etc).

4. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), within the framework of ENQA, should: further develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition, by a series of workshops, consultations and studies building on its existing events and documents on this topic; work with Jisc to advance discussion on copyright; and in 2015 produce a position paper on the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition.

Discussion

1. Innovation

The UK government, working with the Devolved Administrations and key foundations, should set up a competitive innovation fund to develop one new undergraduate or Foundation degree programme each year with a focus on low-cost online education UK-wide around a core proposition of open content. The UK Open University should not be eligible to bid but should play a key role on the Steering Group for this fund, building on the knowledge it has gained from FutureLearn.

This recommendation might be thought to be unrealistic in an era not only of limited collaboration between UK home nations in IT and education (with the notable exception currently of Jisc³³) but also of limited funding available for such activities. However three points should be made:

- The success of FutureLearn,³⁴ with several Scottish university partners, and also one partner from each of Wales, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic – shows that on-the-ground collaboration can go on despite higher level lack of collaboration.
- The FutureLearn development owes a lot to the support of BIS, the UK Department of Business, Innovation & Skills; even though BIS no longer has any UK-wide remit in education, it still has a UK-wide remit in business, competition and technology development.³⁵
- More in that vein, technology funding (as done elsewhere, e.g. in the past in Canada³⁶) can be used. The recent competition *Learning technologies – design for impact* from the UK Technology Strategy Board (soon to become Innovate UK) is designed to support “exploratory studies into the design of technology-based products and services that will improve learning outcomes”.³⁷ It notes that proposals must demonstrate “how the technology could lead to better learner outcomes and also offer a sustainable, commercial business model”. Moreover, projects “can be specific to any curricular subject or group of students, including childhood and adult learning, private learning, work-based learning and continuous professional development”.³⁸

³³ See <http://www.jisc.ac.uk> – and note the funding sources described at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/about/corporate/how-we-are-funded>

³⁴ <https://www.futurelearn.com>

³⁵ Similar non-education federal powers have been deployed in Canada in the past to engender multi-province collaboration in e-learning since the days of Telelearning NCE in the late 1990s-
http://auspace.athabasca.ca/bitstream/2149/722/1/telelearning_research_and.pdf

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ <https://www.innovateuk.org/-/learning-technologies-design-for-impact>

³⁸ Focussing on training and professional development are other standard finesses to circumvent devolved education powers.

Thus we still stand by this recommendation. For a consortium of universities considering such a course, a quantum of £250,000 (typical of a JISC/HEA OER Phase 1 project) would be very much welcome, especially if the consortium envisaged a route to market via postgraduate fee-paying courses.

2. Accreditation of Prior Learning

The funding councils and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), leveraging on the research done by the Flexible Learning research programme carried out by the Higher Education Academy, should encourage universities to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and specifically the ability to accredit knowledge and competences developed through online study and informal learning (including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs).

To clarify, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is the UK-wide quality agency for Higher Education,³⁹ and is a full member of ENQA, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.⁴⁰ QAA is UK-wide but works rather differently in the Devolved Administrations from the way that it works in England, with some say rather more focus in Scotland and Wales on quality enhancement.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), also called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – and in US and Canada Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), or Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) – describes a process used by universities, colleges, etc to assess the skills and knowledge acquired outside the formal education process for the purpose of recognizing competence against a given set of competencies (or standards or learning outcomes). Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) focuses on assessment of previous formal education qualifications and is really a part of Credit Transfer and Accumulation; in contrast, Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) focuses on assessment of previous experience, including informal education outcomes from OER and MOOCs.

One recent study, in fact a companion study to the HEA Flexible Learning research described below, noted that “more than 90% of HEIs in the UK both recognise and award credits, yet there has been significant variation in the ways that such schemes are applied”. The author further describes the situation:⁴¹

However, information and guidance, the first step towards an effective credit accumulation and transfer system, requires improvement. Information is often presented in a technical non user-friendly way, not sufficiently informative and/or difficult to find. In addition, little evidence was found of active marketing of APEL by the institutions.

While national guidance on the recognition of prior learning exists in the UK on the ground, the application of APL varies and it can be said there is little practice on which to base generalised patterns of activity in the UK. Variation refers to aspects such as the volume of credit that can be claimed on admission to a programme, time limitations for credit claiming, methods of assessment and costs.

The Higher Education Academy has over the last two years carried out an extensive programme of research into flexible learning (including part-time and distance learning).⁴² As this report was closing, it released a long-awaited synthesis report and recommendations *Conditions of flexibility*:

³⁹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

⁴⁰ <http://www.enqa.eu>

⁴¹ *Review of credit accumulation and transfer policy and practice in UK higher education*, Manuel Souto-Otero, for the Higher Education Academy, 2013, https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Review_of_Transfer_of_Credit_Report.pdf

⁴² <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/flexible-learning>

*securing a more responsive higher education system.*⁴³ The report contained an extensive set of recommendations (pp. 69-71) which on the whole could be seen as rather unthreatening, yet if implemented seriously some could engender systematic change. For example, apropos of our Recommendation 1 it suggested:

Funding Councils might consider, as a lever in promoting more experimentation in the system, adopting an initiative – with a limited but dedicated tranche of monies deliberately aimed at sponsoring initiatives from institutions with a view to increasing flexibility

More pertinently to this recommendation, although there was little direct discussion of APL, it recommended that the Higher Education Academy might:

work alongside other sector bodies and relevant credit networks to encourage and help embed a UK-wide credit framework and a more even take-up of credit accumulation and transfer

If taken seriously by all institutions, this could be transformative.

3. The Open Accreditor

This recommendation follows on from the previous.

BIS and the Devolved Administrations should aim to build on the success of Open University Validation Services and the members of the Council of Validating Universities and consider the benefits of setting up an Open Accreditor, initially focussing on qualifications in the ISCED 5B area as this is most correlated with high-level skills for business and industry. Particular attention should be given to students who have gained qualifications relevant to HE APL that are gained via “badges” from micro-providers of HE and approved providers from other domains (adult, informal HE/MOOCs, FE, commercial training, etc).

To clarify, Open University Validation Services (OUVS) “validates awards which have parity of esteem with awards offered throughout UK higher education”.⁴⁴ OUVS currently validates almost 300 programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, often from higher education colleges and overseas institutions. OUVS is the successor to the former Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) which used to oversee all awards from the polytechnics (who later became the post-92 universities).⁴⁵ The Council of Validating Universities describes itself as “the only body in the UK specialising exclusively in good practice and standards for that aspect of higher education which concerns the validation of programmes of study by universities and colleges (‘awarding institutions’) for delivery by other colleges or organisations (‘partner institutions’)”.⁴⁶ There are a number of credit transfer consortia operating within England and some beyond; in particular the Northern Universities Consortium (NUCCAT) works across northern and central England and Northern Ireland.⁴⁷

Our own research on this topic suggests that many validation experts and many institutions both small and large would welcome such an approach, especially those with a focus on online provision. The institutions most in touch with this area make detailed critiques of the sort reported in the paper by Souto-Otero for HEA. Online providers were particularly positive. One noted that “there is the lack of a common scalable approach to analysis and recognition of the range of input qualifications that our students come in with”. Another noted that “multiple entry points and exit

⁴³ https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/FP_conditions_of_flexibility.pdf

⁴⁴ <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/validate/>

⁴⁵ <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/validate/cnaa-aftercare-service>

⁴⁶ <http://www.cvu.ac.uk>

⁴⁷ <http://www.nuc.ac.uk>

points and coherent recognition of APL may address the take up of opportunities and retention issues". One of the current credit transfer consortia was positive. The Open University stressed its own abilities in this area and the economies coming from scale and proceduralisation.

4. Quality Assurance for online and open learning

This is a good example of a recommendation where England, and the UK more generally, has in reality rather little to do.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), within the framework of ENQA, should: further develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition, by a series of workshops, consultations and studies building on its existing events and documents on this topic; work with Jisc to advance discussion on copyright; and in 2015 produce a position paper on the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition.

The reference to 2015 can be construed as "before the general election".

As many UK experts know, the QAA has been active for several years in ensuring that online learning is given parity of esteem with classroom learning, within a general rubric of ensuring that all non-classroom forms of learning are adequately regulated. It was as long ago as 1999 when QAA first published its Guidelines on the quality assurance of distance learning.⁴⁸ Since then there have been several iterations although some in EU circles find it surprising that the current QAA guidelines now do not have an annex on e-learning (or open learning) when several other ENQA members have considered this or are considering this.⁴⁹ However, in practice QAA assessors are well-versed in such matters and routinely consider e-learning aspects when reviewing organisations.⁵⁰ There is also a robust dialogue between QAA and UK quality in e-learning experts, which other countries might usefully copy.⁵¹

QAA has in fact now moved on to wider considerations of open learning. Indeed, QAA made a very useful Statement on Massive Open Online Courses in March 2014: among other points it observed that "We want to help prospective students make informed decisions about the quality of MOOCs, while respecting the open and innovative nature of this provision. In this way, we seek to recognise rather than constrain the potential of MOOCs." Furthermore:

We are committed to working with those who currently offer MOOCs and those who may do so in the future, to identify and share sound practice in quality assurance and enhancement.

*Aside from formal mechanisms, we also recognise that the experience of the community of learners and providers will offer a strong indication of the true value of MOOCs, revealed in the reflections of participants through, for example, online forums and social media. QAA is developing resources to facilitate the gathering and dissemination of good practice, in order to support providers as MOOCs continue to evolve. **We will also explore ways in which we***

⁴⁸ These are widely referred to in the literature (e.g. see http://cde.athabascau.ca/online_book/ch16.html) but surprisingly no longer on the QAA web site.

⁴⁹ See for example the ENQA-led SEQUENT project – <http://www.sequent-network.eu>

⁵⁰ For two very different examples of QAA good practice of auditing e-learning see the reviews of IDI (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/The%20Interactive%20Design%20Institute%20Ltd/The-Interactive-Design-Institute-Ltd-RSCD-13.pdf>) and of the University of Derby (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/University%20of%20Derby/University-of-Derby-IA-annex-09.pdf>).

⁵¹ QAA Code of Practice Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning): A Commentary & Critique, QAQE in e-Learning Special Interest Group, June 2010, http://qaqe-sig.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/QAQE_Report_final1.pdf

can assist with future arrangements including the development of assessment techniques and the award of credit. *[our boldface]*

Thus we hope it is clear that with this recommendation we are pushing at an open door.

Other policy recommendations

See Annex 1 for the full set of England HE recommendations proposed by POERUP. See also Deliverable 4.2U for the EU-level wording of all 18 HE recommendations.

4.2 Further education

Background⁵²

There were 351 Colleges in the England further education sector in April 2011. Colleges in the English further education sector are grouped in five categories: General Further Education Colleges (GFE), Sixth Form Colleges (SFC), land-based Colleges (AHC), art, design and performing arts Colleges (ADPAC), special designated Colleges (SD). Many of these colleges also provide work-based vocational training programmes.

For the purposes of this section we ignore Sixth Form Colleges as they do not offer ISCED 4 level.

General Further Education Colleges (GFE) largely provide vocational education and training for the 16+ age group and training for businesses. (Most also provide some general education courses at GCSE and A/AS Level – ISCED 3. Many provide limited vocational training for 14-16 year olds by arrangement with local secondary schools.) The majority provide some higher education courses (ISCED 5 – see section 4.1) in partnership with universities. Annual enrolments are mostly in the range of 10,000-20,000 learners. Some rural colleges are considerably smaller and the largest few have up to 50,000 enrolments per annum. The majority of learners are aged 16-24.

Land-based Colleges (AHC) focus on vocational training for land-based industries and recreational management, largely, but not exclusively, in the sectors of agriculture, horticulture, equine studies and land and recreation management (e.g. farm management, forestry and golf courses). Most of them include some higher education courses in their portfolio and undertake some distance learning, often with international students. They range in size from around 500 to 3,000 annual enrolments, with the largest contingent in the age range 16-24.

There are four Art, design and performing arts Colleges (ADPAC): specialist colleges, focusing on vocational training in art, design and performing arts. They are small in size and the majority of their students are in the 16-24 year old age range.

Special designated Colleges (SD): The 10 SD colleges are largely colleges of adult education, however, they do contain a small number of students under 21 years old.

In addition to the 351 colleges described above, there are some 70 independent colleges which provide learning and vocational training to people with physical and learning disabilities. The colleges are members of NATSPEC – National Association of Specialist Independent Colleges. The majority of their students are aged 16-24.

There is no statutory curriculum for English colleges in the further education sector. The majority of learners study part-time with most undertaking vocational and work-related training. Vocational training programmes run at all levels. In addition to vocational training, many FE learners study:

- Basic skills

⁵² Taken largely from the POERUP country page http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/UK#Further_Education_in_England

- ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), though this number is reducing due to cuts in government funding
- Higher education courses: Over half the GFE colleges provide HE courses, with both foundation and full degrees

Further education colleges are independent autonomous corporations which administer their own affairs but are subject to inspection from Ofsted and audit from the Skills Funding Agency, providing funds for the 19+ age group (and GFE colleges overall).⁵³

To improve quality and efficiency in FE and skills training, the Skills Funding Agency are:⁵⁴

- reforming the funding and content of 16 to 19 provision through the introduction of study programmes
- making sure that students who haven't achieved at least a C in maths and English GCSEs continue studying qualifications in these subjects, as set out in the conditions of post 16 funding
- introducing a new funding system based on student loans: it's for people aged 24+, studying at levels 3 and 4, or for advanced and higher apprenticeships
- freeing colleges from central government control
- improving apprenticeships
- making FE teacher training more professional
- providing better careers advice
- introducing a new traineeships programme to support young people to develop skills for employment, including apprenticeships
- introducing the Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc) – a new measure that will allow young people aspiring to a vocational career a high-quality alternative to the A level route
- reforming 16 to 19 vocational qualifications, expanding the provision of work experience and allowing colleges to enrol 14 to 16 year-olds
- identifying the best vocational qualifications as either 'tech level' or 'applied general' qualifications and ask employers and universities to endorse them, so young people know which courses have the best job prospects

Notice that online learning and open learning are not mentioned.

FELTAG

There have, however, been moves towards potential actions in these areas. The *Further Education Learning Technology Action Group* (FELTAG) was set up in January 2013 by Matthew Hancock, Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise in BIS, as a sector group to make practical recommendations aimed at ensuring the effective use of digital technology in learning, teaching and assessment in Further Education and Skills.

At the outset, FELTAG agreed that:

- digital technology was not the end goal in itself
- Government cannot, and should not, provide all the answers
- ownership by the FE sector of outcomes is key

FELTAG's members identified and developed six workstreams to gather evidence and ideas and to develop their recommendations,⁵⁵ which are summarized below:

⁵³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency>

⁵⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-quality-of-further-education-and-skills-training>

⁵⁵ <http://feltag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/FELTAG-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>

1. Horizon-scanning: the sector has to keep abreast of change.

It is obvious that the pace of technological change is accelerating and the impact of digital technology will continue to have a profound effect on the economic and social well-being of England, including the FE and Skills sector.

It is critical that our policy-makers, teachers, governors, and managers fully understand these technological developments and their implications for teaching, learning and assessment in vocational and adult education.

2. Investment and Capital Infrastructure: procurement must be appropriate and agile.

Investment in technological infrastructure is critical to ensure that the FE and Skills sector is capable of responding to the rapid changes in digital technology. It is vital that procurement of infrastructure is agile and capable of responding to fast-changing technologies and pedagogies. Providers will need to consider the need for any capital proposals, and whether learning can be achieved more effectively online, or virtually, or in partnership with commercial providers. If new buildings are needed, do they have industrial strength digital infrastructure capable of supporting learning anytime, anywhere?

3. Regulation and Funding: regulation and funding must not inhibit innovation and its effectiveness in improving learners' outcomes.

Regulatory and funding models have a significant impact on a providers' ability to innovate using learning technology.

If FE institutional cultures are to change, the regulatory and funding regimes must, at the very least, cease to inhibit innovation and ideally facilitate learning technology's optimal use to improve learner outcomes.

4. Workforce capacity: the entire workforce has to be brought up to speed to fully understand the potential of learning technology.

One of the strongest themes that emerged from FELTAG's commissioned research, its online conversation and its surveys with teachers and managers was the need for significant investment in the knowledge, skills and understanding of the learning technology's potential among policy-makers, governors, principals, senior and middle management, teachers and support staff.

Benchmarks should be established for initial teacher education/training and teachers' continuing professional development so that their ability to understand and optimise the use of learning technology can be enhanced and refreshed regularly. This should include the use of assistive technology. Additionally, continuous professional development for teachers needs to be considered when purchasing any capital expenditure for learning technology.

5. Employers: relationships between the FE community and employers should become closer and richer, and enhanced by learning technology inside and outside the workplace.

A closer relationship should be established between employers and FE and Skills providers so that learning technology in and outside work are more effectively exploited.

6. Learners: learners must be empowered to fully exploit their own understanding of, and familiarity with digital technology for their own learning.

FELTAG's research and conversations consistently referred to the under-exploitation of learners' skills, devices and technical knowledge when it came to the use of

learning technology. The greatest resource available to FE and Skills providers in this domain is their learners. More effort needs to be made to engage and empower learners' use of digital technology – and the use of their own devices – in the learning process.

Note that the report does not make any reference to OER or open education, although some of the recommendations are relevant to these.

POERUP policy recommendations for FE

Deliverable 4.2C produced in September 2013 a comprehensive set of recommendations to foster OER in further education (VET) across the EU. These recommendations have been presented at many conferences and discussed in many meetings, including meetings of the POERUP International Advisory Committee. There have been very few comments suggesting anything more than minor revisions to these. Hence we shall take these as the source of our draft recommendations.

A version of these for Member States is in Annex 2. All of these POERUP recommendations are in line with the FELTAG report and the Government response.

Five of these POERUP recommendations call for Government investment:

1. Create an innovation fund for the development of online learning resources and assembling/creating pathways to credentials.
2. Foster work into standardised syllabi across England (and ideally the UK) for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for England-wide action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including relevant open repositories and (ideally jointly with publishers) open textbooks.
3. Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help teachers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support teacher / trainer / lecturer CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.
4. Develop incentive schemes for teachers and trainers engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.
5. Fund research into the verifiable benefits of OER, with greater efforts to integrate such analyses with its ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.

None of these need involve substantial sums of money. The MoLeNet initiative⁵⁶ which ran from 2007 to 2010 funded and supported 104 projects involving approximately 40,000 learners and over 7,000 staff, with limited resources and provided a model for seed-corn funding leading to sustainability and this model could be effectively used with all five of these recommendations.

There is growing (if sometimes contested) evidence that open education and the availability of OER can produce significant cost savings and economic benefits.

The remaining recommendations largely involve focusing sector bodies and providers on some of the key issues linked with the development of OER. This need not imply additional resourcing, rather redirection of effort. We believe also that future OER research should explicitly embrace Repositories, Federations, Portals and Tools and should consider work-based learning, both self-directed and trainer-led.

⁵⁶ <http://www.molenet.org.uk>

Other policy recommendations

See Deliverable 4.2C for the EU-level wording of all the VET and FE recommendations.

4.3 Schools

POERUP policy recommendations for schools

POERUP Deliverable 4.2S produced in June 2014 (after eight months of piloting and refinement) a comprehensive multi-level set of recommendations to foster OER in schools across the EU. Additional work adapted these to a set of 18 recommendations at Member State level. These are in Annex 3.

Out of these we could select several that could be regarded as either easy to do or natural priorities for England. However, there are more fundamental problems – with implementation.

- A. With less than a year to go until the General Election and with many pressing financial problems to overcome, it is not likely that the Department for Education will want to undertake any new initiatives, especially if additional funding is required or additional political problems are likely to be generated.
- B. The innovations taken forward by the Secretary of State for Education – Academies, Free Schools, more commercial involvement in school education, etc – are generating increasing controversy with teachers' unions and the first problems with the minimalist regulatory regime for Academies and Free Schools are becoming evident.
- C. Moreover, the plethora of different types of school and the decline in the power of the local education authorities mean that top-down projects are increasingly difficult to bring about and increasingly likely to under-achieve.
- D. The lack of scale of many local education authorities (over 150 in England), their sheer number and their increasingly tight budgets means that they also are not a natural mid-level structure to deliver change.
- E. Unlike most other countries, England has no effective devolved regional structure of administration – the nine English regions⁵⁷ favoured by the last government have become little more than statistical reporting tools for the EU and OECD,⁵⁸ even if a few have genuine historical and cultural validity.⁵⁹ The counties are largely historical artefacts, with only faint signs of rebirth. While there are increasing signs of merger between local authorities, increasing joint working between cities, city regions, and even talk of northern powerhouses,⁶⁰ the shape of the future England regional administration is not yet clear and will need at least one more election to bring in an effective model for a modern democracy.
- F. It does not help change management methods focussed on statist solutions that “The independent sector educates around 6.5% of the total number of school children in the UK (and over 7% of the total number of school children in England) with the figure rising to more than 18% of pupils over the age of 16.” These pupils predominantly from the government, business and academic elite families and dominate entry to elite universities.

These are all good reasons to reject top-down solutions for fostering OER in England's schools, but we contend that they are not good reasons for doing nothing.

⁵⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_England

⁵⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NUTS_1_statistical_regions_of_England

⁵⁹ Yorkshire is usually mentioned here, by those who live in it.

⁶⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-we-need-a-northern-powerhouse>

Thus for England we propose a *mid-level strategy*, based on schools, groups of schools (be they Academy chains, local education authorities, church denominations, private sector, etc), linked to bottom-up strategy from teacher OER enthusiasts and academic researchers.

The recommendations in bold are our key recommendations (overleaf).

#	Task	Entities (actors)
1.	Entities should promote to educational users (leaders, practitioners, students and guardians) the availability and accessibility of open resources created through EU cultural sector programmes and their domestic cultural sector programmes.	OER enthusiasts among teachers, teacher trainers and researchers
2.	Entities should seek to exploit the considerable investment in Repositories both nationally and at EU level.	School heads, teachers; publishers, social entrepreneurs (freemium models?)
3.	Entities should promote to schools (especially publicly-funded schools) the benefits of making resources available under an appropriate open license.	OER enthusiasts among teachers, teacher trainers and researchers
4.	Entities should ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.	School heads, local authorities and similar groupings
5.	Entities should ensure that any public outputs from their respective national research and teaching development programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license (in particular a Creative Commons open license).	Research councils, DfE, JISC, HEA, OFSTED, etc
6.	Entities must require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.	Actually a legal requirement!
7.	Entities should ensure that their Quality Assurance or materials approval processes permit that OER are allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists, subject to fulfilling relevant criteria.	OFSTED, local authorities
8.	Entities should consider establishing and funding an OER evaluation and adoption panel. This panel should include lead teachers, content experts and accessibility experts.	(too hard)
9.	Entities should consider establishing a specialist OER function/post to undertake an in-country cost-benefit analysis to assess the potential savings (or otherwise) which might be achieved through implementing an OER strategy.	(too hard)

#	Task	Entities (actors)
10.	Entities should establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help teachers and administrators understand the uses and benefits of OER and open licensing.	Not easy with the current model of teacher training. However, academics in Departments of Education can do their best.
11.	Entities should continue their focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that they are able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER.	Government and local authorities should be doing this
12.	Where institutions are providing digital devices to learners they should ensure that all considerations have been taken to maximise the effectiveness (economically and pedagogically) of devices, support and strategy with regards to OER.	school heads, groups of schools, research leaders doing funded trials
13.	Entities should develop their understanding of how new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) impact on quality assurance and recognition.	OFSTED, OFQUAL, researchers
14.	Entities should fund research into the verifiable benefits and disadvantages of OER, with greater efforts to integrate such analyses with its ongoing research on online learning, and pedagogy.	researchers, Research Councils (ESRC)
15.	Entities should support research covering Repositories, Federations, Portals and Tools and within that context should consider off-campus learning (both institutional – virtual schools – and self-directed or home-tutor led) as well as on-campus.	researchers, Research Councils (ESRC), EU
16.	Entities should support research which seeks to inform greater understanding of the success/fail factors behind OER Repositories – particularly the influence of the various approaches to quality assurance.	researchers, Research Councils (ESRC), EU
17.	Entities should foster research into potentially sustainable business models for OER, integrating this with their ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.	researchers, Research Councils (ESRC), EU, examination boards
18.	Entities should explore the means by which closer, enduring collaboration can be fostered between Higher Education researchers and the schools sector with the objective of increasing the research evidence-base concerning OER in schools and developing a culture of two-way discourse and sharing between the schools and HE sectors.	researchers, teacher trainers and schools in collaboration – and look out for foundation, commercial and EU funding

Envoi

The recent publication of the DfE report *MOOCs: Opportunities for their use in compulsory-age education*⁶¹ reminds us that business model drivers should be feasible in the K-12 sector also:

Many kinds of schools in England wish to attract more pupils:

- independent schools⁶²
- academies⁶³
- free schools⁶⁴
- University Technical Colleges⁶⁵
- English-curriculum international schools (in and beyond the UK)⁶⁶
- International Baccalaureate schools (144 at last count)⁶⁷
- American schools⁶⁸
- virtual schools⁶⁹ and a wide range of existing online GCSE and A level providers⁷⁰
- and of course many schools in the local authority state system also.

All schools want to control their teaching costs and yet provide a good education to an increasingly diverse intake.

Suitably harnessed these are strong drivers.

It may be a year or two before we see the “Eton MOOC” – and it has been disappointing how slow much of the independent sector was to take up ICT (though things are changing fast) – but in the absence of government push there is plenty of scope for mid-level actors to take a much greater role – as is routine in the university sector.

⁶¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/moocs-opportunities-for-their-use-in-compulsory-age-education>

⁶² <http://www.isc.co.uk>

⁶³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development>

⁶⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-schools-open-schools-and-successful-applications>

⁶⁵ <http://www.utcolleges.org>

⁶⁶ <http://www.cobis.org.uk>

⁶⁷ <http://www.ibo.org/country/GB/>

⁶⁸ http://london.usembassy.gov/american_schools_uk.html

⁶⁹ There are at least 20 in the UK – http://www.virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Category:Virtual_schools_in_UK

⁷⁰ This issue was discussed in the VISCED project. See in particular http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info/sites/default/files/Deliverable_VISCED_D2.5_Final_List_of_Exemplars/index.pdf

Annex 1: POERUP HE recommendations for England

1. The UK government should set up an innovation fund to support one new online initiative each year within an overall commitment to opening up education
2. QAA should, with reference to the England context with the UK: Continue to develop its understanding of new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) and how they impact quality assurance and recognition; Engage in debates on copyright within the Wales legal context; Consider the effects of these new modes on quality assurance and recognition as they impact on England HEIs and the specific delivery regime in England (including many small and/or private providers); Ensure that there continues to be no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting new providers and inspecting institutions/programmes.
3. HEFCE and QAA should contribute to the debate about a more flexible approach to measuring credit ratings of modules, less based on study times, drawing on the Welsh experience with credit transfer, WBL, flexible learning and APL (both APCL and APEL): leading to the development of a Bologna-bis framework based primarily on competences gained not duration of study.
4. HEFCE and HEA should recommend to universities that they should work to improve and proceduralise their activity on APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, in its various sub modes) and in particular to accredit knowledge and competences developed through all kinds of online study, informal and work-based learning, including but not restricted to OER and MOOCs, within agreed limits.
5. HEFCE and other interested parties should consider whether the specific Welsh context needs an Open Accrutor to assist small and specialist institutions to handle APL for students entering these institutions and seeking to accredit prior study.
6. HEFCE and other interested parties should **continue to consider** whether there are programmes or specific teaching situations (e.g. first year studies, pre-university studies) where a common approach to provision makes sense, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support such provision.
7. HEFCE, the Research Councils, Foundations and other England funding bodies should ensure that any public outputs from their funded programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license.
8. HEFCE should fund research into the cost basis for university teaching in both traditional and non-traditional modes and consider the implications of the results on its approach to funding.
9. England HEIs should adopt a standard license for all openly available educational material.
10. HEFCE with Jisc should mount an initiative to upgrade the level of knowledge of university staff on IPR issues, perhaps as part of some wider initiative e.g. on MOOCs so as to give context and applicability for the knowledge.
11. HEFCE with HEA should encourage England institutions to keep their continuous professional development programmes up to date in terms of newer modes of teaching and learning, including not only campus-based online learning but distance learning, OER, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and to move such programmes online and increasingly open and collaborative between institutions.
12. HEFCE should encourage institutions to consider the use of incentive schemes (and reconsider the issue of non-incentives) for academics engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.
13. HEFCE and related bodies should fund research into the benefits of OER in the England HE context, with greater efforts to integrate this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy, and with wider research on OER in and beyond England.

(Note that in some versions of these country recommendations, 4 and 5 are combined.)

Annex 2: POERUP college recommendations for Member States

1. *Communications and awareness raising*

- Mount a campaign to educate lecturers, teachers and trainers on IPR issues.
- Promote to educational users (leaders, practitioners, students and guardians) the availability and accessibility of open resources created through the European Commission's cultural sector programmes and national cultural sector programmes, to make these available across the country.

2. *Funding and resources*

- Ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.
- Increase scrutiny of the cost basis for further education delivery and consider the benefits of output-based funding for qualifications.
- Fund research into standardised syllabi country-wide for technical and vocational training where this is appropriate for national action, and in the light of a successful outcome to such initiatives, foster the developments of common bases of OER material to support these standards, including relevant open repositories and (ideally jointly with publishers) open textbooks.

3. *Reducing regulatory barriers*

- Reduce any regulatory barriers against new non-study-time-based modes of provision in further education.

4. *Quality issues*

- Establish a national quality assurance standard for OER content produced in the country.
- Ensure that OER is allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists.
- Require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.
- Consider establishing and funding an OER evaluation and adoption panel. (This panel should include lead teachers, content experts and accessibility experts.)
- Consider establishing a specialist OER function to undertake a cost-benefit analysis to assess the potential savings (or otherwise) which might be achieved through implementing an OER strategy.
- Consider in the relevant quality agency the effects of OER and other new modes on quality assurance and recognition and ensure that there is no implicit non-evidence-based bias against these new modes when accrediting institutions both public and private including for-profit (if relevant), accrediting programmes (if relevant) and assessing/inspecting institutions/programmes.

5. *Teacher training and continuous professional development*

- Establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help lecturers, teachers and administrators understand the benefits and uses of OER and open licensing. This would support teacher / trainer / lecturer CPD on the creation, use and re-use of OER, with coverage of distance learning, MOOCs and other forms of open educational practice, and also IPR issues.
- Develop incentive schemes for lecturers, teachers and trainers engaged in online professional development of their pedagogic skills including online learning.

6. *Certification and accreditation*

- (for larger Member States) Set up an Open Accreditor to accredit a range of studies which could articulate into a route to an undergraduate degree. In the first instance the Accreditor should focus on qualifications in the ISCED 5B area as this is most correlated with high-level skills for business and industry.

7. *Infrastructure issues*

- Continue a focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that learners are able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER in their further education activities.
- Where institutions are providing digital devices, ensure that all considerations have been taken to maximise the effectiveness (economically and pedagogically) of devices, support and strategy with regards to OER.

8. *Further research*

- Foster research into the benefits of OER and sustainable business models, integrating this with ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.
- Support educational institutions in developing new business/educational models and launch research and policy experimentations to test innovative pedagogical approaches, curriculum development and skills assessment.

Annex 3: POERUP schools recommendations for Member States

1. Member States should promote to educational users (leaders, practitioners, students and guardians) the availability and accessibility of open resources created through EU cultural sector programmes and their domestic cultural sector programmes.
2. Member States should seek to exploit the considerable investment in Repositories both nationally and at EU level.
3. Member States should promote to schools (especially publicly-funded schools) the benefits of making resources available under an appropriate open license.
4. Member States should ensure that budgets for digital educational resources are flexible enough to support the development (and maintenance) of openly licensed materials.
5. Member States should ensure that any public outputs from their respective national research and teaching development programmes are made available as open resources under an appropriate license (in particular a Creative Commons open license).
6. Member States must require (within reasonable expectation) OER to meet (disability) accessibility standards and ensure that accessibility is a central tenet of all OER programmes and initiatives.
7. Member States should ensure that their Quality Assurance or materials approval processes permit that OER are allowed to be included on approved instructional materials lists, subject to fulfilling relevant criteria.
8. Member States should consider establishing and funding an OER evaluation and adoption panel. This panel should include lead teachers, content experts and accessibility experts.
9. Member States should consider establishing a specialist OER function/post to undertake an in-country cost-benefit analysis to assess the potential savings (or otherwise) which might be achieved through implementing an OER strategy.
10. Member States should establish (and adequately fund) a professional development programme to help teachers and administrators understand the uses and benefits of OER and open licensing.
11. Member States should continue their focus on improving the ICT in education infrastructure (and levelling out disparities of access) so that they are able to exploit potential pedagogical and financial advantages of OER.
12. Where Member States (or institutions) are providing digital devices to learners they should ensure that all considerations have been taken to maximise the effectiveness (economically and pedagogically) of devices, support and strategy with regards to OER.
13. Member States should develop their understanding of how new modes of learning (including online, distance, OER and MOOCs) impact on quality assurance and recognition.
14. Member States should fund research into the verifiable benefits and disadvantages of OER, with greater efforts to integrate such analyses with its ongoing research on online learning, and pedagogy.
15. Member States should support research covering Repositories, Federations, Portals and Tools and within that context should consider off-campus learning (both institutional – virtual schools – and self-directed or home-tutor led) as well as on-campus.
16. Member States should support research which seeks to inform greater understanding of the success/fail factors behind OER Repositories – particularly the influence of the various approaches to quality assurance.
17. Member States should foster research into potentially sustainable business models for OER, integrating this with their ongoing research on distance learning, on-campus online learning, and pedagogy.
18. Member States should explore the means by which closer, enduring collaboration can be fostered between Higher Education researchers and the schools sector with the objective of increasing the research evidence-base concerning OER in schools and developing a culture of two-way discourse and sharing between the schools and HE sectors.