OER IN THE DUTCH EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

IMPRESSION OF A STUDY OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN DUTCH HIGHER EDUCATION (OCTOBER 2012)

All over the world, higher education institutions are increasingly offering open access to their educational resources and are investing heavily in Open Educational Resources (OER), i.e. learning materials that are freely available online for use or reuse. There has been an explosive rise in the use of platforms such as iTunes U and YouTube EDU for learning resources and Coursera for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Dutch higher education institutions are also moving forward with OER. They have, for example, published open courseware, and open web lectures and participation in iTunes U are gaining ground. The thinking regarding OER and their development is in transition, and many higher education institutions are currently developing a "vision" and specific policy regarding OER. That has been shown by a research report – OER Hollands Landschap / OER in the Dutch Educational Landscape – produced by the Dutch Open University on behalf of Wikiwijs and SURF. The report surveyed the current status of OER in the Dutch higher education sector. This article sets out the main results of the study and also looks towards the potential future: where are opportunities for OER in the Dutch educational landscape?

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OER in a national and international perspective

Higher education institutions all over the world are increasingly making their educational resources openly available and there has been an explosive increase in the use of platforms such as iTunes U, YouTube EDU, and Coursera for massive open online courses (MOOCs)[1]. This trend is part of a worldwide "Open Movement". Open Educational Resources (OER) – i.e. materials that are freely available online for use or reuse – belong to a digital "openness family", which also includes Open Source and Open Access.

The signing of the 2012 Paris OER Declaration[2] was a recent international milestone for the OER movement. The declaration is a plea for open education and calls on UNESCO member states to promote the use and reuse of Open Educational Resources, thus broadening access to education and improving the quality of educational resources. It is also a call for reinforcing the development of an OER strategy, encouraging research on OER, and increasing the use made of open licences for learning resources.

Governments are investing heavily in Open Educational Resources. Early in 2011, for example, President Obama announced that the United States government would be investing USD 2 billion in OER over a four-year period[3]. In the United Kingdom, the large-scale JISC/HEA OER programme[4] has been running since 2009, with a total budget of more than GDP 13 million. A "digital school" programme was recently launched in Poland; this involves the provision of EUR 13.8 million for developing OER[5]. In the Netherlands, the government is providing EUR 7.9 million for the Wikiwijs programme, which enables teachers – from primary to tertiary level – to share, find, use, and adapt OER. Dutch higher education institutions are also investing EUR 1.1 million in SURF's Open Educational Resources Programme; this aims to increase awareness of OER, boost the development and use/reuse of such resources, and promote the development of a vision and of policy.

Higher Education in the Netherlands

Higher education in the Netherlands[6] is known for its high quality and its international study environment. With more than 1500 international study programmes and courses, it has the largest offering of English-taught programmes in continental Europe. Dutch higher education has a binary system, which means that students can choose between two types of education: (1) research-oriented education, offered by research universities and (2) higher professional education, offered by universities of applied sciences. At a research university, students focus more on research-oriented work, which can be in either an academic or in a professional setting. At a university of applied sciences they can choose a professional programme in the applied arts and sciences, designed to prepare them for a specific career.

In 2002, the Netherlands introduced the Bachelor's-Master's degree structure. Both research universities and universities of applied sciences can award a Bachelor's or a Master's degree. After completion of a Master's programme, graduates can start a PhD degree programme (third cycle).

State of Openness @ Higher Education in the Netherlands

How does Dutch higher education stand when it comes to OER? To answer that question, a study – commissioned by Wikiwijs and SURF – was carried out in the second quarter of 2012 to investigate the current status of OER in the Dutch higher education sector and the aims for the future. The study was carried out by researchers at the Dutch Open University's Centre for Learning Sciences and Technologies (CELSTEC).

The aim of the study was to answer the following questions:
1. What Open Educational Resources are already available (or potentially available) in Dutch higher education?
2. To what extent do Dutch higher education institutions have a policy on the development, sharing and use/reuse of OER?

The second of these questions was subdivided into the topics of vision, policy, and implementation of policy. A "vision" for OER means an idea of the future, i.e. the aims that the institution has with OER (the "Why?"). Policy on OER means the activities intended to make that vision reality (the "How?"). Implementation of policy indicates how far the institution has progressed towards putting the vision and the specific activities into practice.

The results of the study offer a glimpse of the "state of the art", in other words an idea of the extent to which OER have been implemented in Dutch higher education, in both the quantitative and qualitative senses. This involves both policy initiatives regarding OER and surveying actual collections of OER (or potential OER).

Seven of the 14 research universities and 19 of the 38 universities of applied sciences filled in the questionnaire. The respondents were also interviewed by phone to collect additional information and phone interviews were held with the institutions that had not filled in the questionnaire.

Collections of Open Educational Resources: what does the Dutch OER landscape look like in 2012?

The study reveals which OER are already available (or potentially available) in Dutch higher education.

More than a quarter of respondents say that their institution has collections of OER. This mainly consists of lectures and presentations (71%), articles and books (57%), or complete open courses or open courseware (57%). The OER can be accessed via the institution's own website (86%), iTunes U (57%), or via YouTube, SlideShare or LOREnet (each 29%).

39% of the higher education institutions also indicate that there are collections of digital learning materials within the institution that can potentially be made openly available; 19% say that is not the case, and 42% do not know.

1 http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/briefingpapers/2012/oer.aspx accessed 8-10-2012

2 http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/English_Paris_OER_Declaration.pdf

3 http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/ETA20121885.htm#.UHL_0U1mL-5 accessed 8-10-2012

4 http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/oer.aspx accessed 8-10-2012

5 http://mac.gov.pl/dzialania/cyfrowa-szkola-i-nowe-umiejetnosci-program-pilotazowy-rzadu/ accessed 8-10-2012

6 http://www.studyinholland.nl/education-system#.UFDn7Y2Tu0w and http://www.youtube.com/studyinholland

More and more Dutch educational institutions are making their educational resources freely available online for use/reuse, with the pioneers being the Dutch Open University and Delft University of Technology. Medical education and "green education" are also very active in the field of OER. The Knowledge Bank for Universities of Applied Sciences provides access to student theses. The following initiatives have also commenced:
- Leiden University: development of OpenCourseWare for a number of Master's degree courses;
- Utrecht University: open web lectures, theses online, and 'Studium Generale' lectures;
- VU University Amsterdam: open web lectures and active participation in iTunes U.
- University of Amsterdam: open web lectures and proposed participation in iTunes U;
- Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences: start of development of open courseware for the programme in International Business and Management Studies.
- Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen: proposed participation in iTunes U.

Paul Rullmann, member of the Executive Board of Delft University of Technology: "Delft University of Technology has a clear vision for open courseware, and is pretty ambitious in that regard. We already offer about 80 open courses and we are very active on iTunes U. We even intend shortly providing a complete 'open' programme, an online programme with tests or practicals 'on site'. The open courses leading to certificates are derived from that system."

Vision for OER

The study also dealt with the question of whether Dutch higher education institutions have a broadly supported "vision" for OER. In other words, does the institution have a particular idea of the future as regards OER (the "Why?")? 65% of respondents say that their institution does not yet have a shared vision regarding OER; 23%, however, say that such a vision is starting to take shape. There is a noticeable difference between research universities and universities of applied sciences. Of the latter, 79% say that they do not have a shared vision; the corresponding percentage for the research universities is 29%.

The phone interviews show that Dutch higher education institutions have other educational priorities that prevent them paying attention to OER. All the institutions are currently engaged in concluding "performance agreements" with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Budgets are also under pressure due to the cuts in the education budget planned by the Dutch government. These developments mean that the focus is on such topics as improving the quality of teaching, academic performance, and professional training for instructors, without a link being made to OER. Respondents do expect, however, that they will in fact produce a vision regarding OER in the near future. One university of applied sciences notes that it is already working to create the conditions necessary for developing OER (courses, information about Creative Commons licences) in anticipation of the OER strategy.

Bert van der Zwaan, *rector magnificus* of Utrecht University: "Our Executive Board has a clear vision as regards open access and Open Educational Resources. We believe that publicly funded institutions should make their products publicly available so as to give knowledge back to society. That applies to scientific and scholarly articles and educational products. I believe that that vision enjoys broad support within the university, but the various different faculties, disciplines, or age groups have different views as regards the

Does your educational institution have an OER policy, comprising specific activities to achieve the institution's vision for OER?
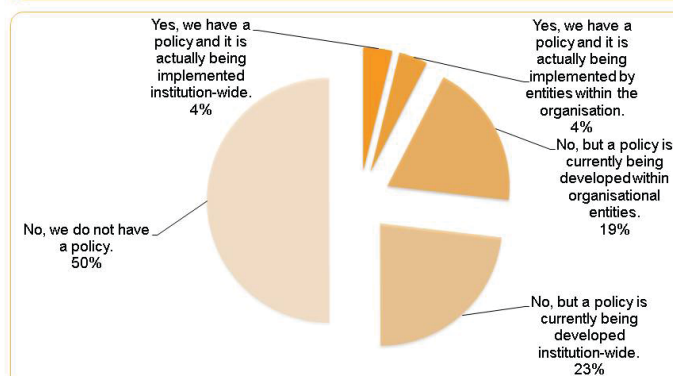
actual details. Our main task as the Executive Board is to be aware of 'shopfloor initiatives', cluster them, and on that basis develop a vision and practice with broad support. Utrecht University does not intend becoming a digital university. Our main approach will involve making educational resources available, for example web lectures, theses, and ultimately complete courses. Studium Generale – our programme for bringing science and scholarship to the general public – is in fact at the heart of Open Education."

OER policy

Half the respondents say that their institution does not yet have an OER policy comprising specific activities to achieve the institution's vision for OER (the "How?"). On the other hand, no fewer than 42% say that an OER policy is currently being developed within organisational entities (19%) or institution-wide (23%). The other institutions already have a policy that is being implemented institution-wide (4%) or within faculties, domains, or schools (4%).

Once again, there is a noticeable difference between research universities and universities of applied sciences. 30% of the universities say that they have a policy that is actually being implemented, while 70% say that a policy is currently being developed. At universities of applied sciences, the reverse is the case; 30% are currently developing a policy but 70% neither have a policy for OER nor is one being developed.

The existing policy focuses primarily on increasing awareness of OER within the institution (86%), on sharing OER within the institution (71%), on providing technical support for the

development of OER (57%), and on providing content-related/ didactic support for developing OER (42%).

When the institutions were asked for their reasons for developing an OER policy, the three most frequent answers were:
1. to raise the institution's profile (internationally) (86%);
2. to attract the right students and help them choose the right programme (57%);
3. to reach new target groups (57%).

> Ineke van Oldeniel, member of the Executive Board of Saxion University of Applied Sciences: "Saxion does not yet have any formal shared policy on OER, and the Executive Board does not intend imposing one from the top down. After all, this goes to the heart of the professionalism of the instructor. It is the instructor who will need to do it, and the instructor already has a lot on his or her plate. We are currently in a period of awareness, and we are using the technique of enticement, with innovation projects in which instructors try out new approaches and show their colleagues what they have come up with. That helps, and things are getting going. That's important, because OER can make education better, more interactive, and more attractive. OER also provide an excellent opportunity for raising our profile as an educational institution. That is definitely a route that we intend taking. OER are an incentive to doing things differently in education. You can use OER, enrich them, and give them back. And what is perhaps more important, you get more co-creation."

When the institutions were asked why they were not developing an OER policy, the top three answers were:
1. Our institution does not have expertise in the area of OER (21%);
2. Don't know (21%);
3. The administrators at our institution do not see any added value in OER (16%).

16% of the institutions also said that their administrators did not see any added value in OER. As already noted, the phone interviews show that the institutions currently have other educational priorities.

Implementation, use, and reuse of Open Educational Resources

Six out of 10 respondents said that OER were used within their institution, either by individual members of staff (46%) or by faculties, domains, or schools (15%). Furthermore, 23% said that no OER were used or reused by instructors within their institution, while 15% did not know whether they were used. It should be noted that it was only universities of applied sciences that said that OER were not used/reused. During the phone interviews, some respondents added that there was explicit interest among instructors for using OER in their teaching, as part of their search for the best and most effective materials.

The study shows that at more than half of the institutions (54%), no support is provided for the development of OER. The institutions that do provide support do so in the form of content-related/pedagogical support (50%), technical support for the production of OER (50%), legal support as regards copyright matters (33%), financial support (26%), and profes-

sional development activities for instructors (26%). It is clear that support is provided primarily by the research universities and that support at universities of applied sciences is often limited to matters of content and pedagogy.

57% of respondents say that no quality requirements are imposed for OER and that they are not included in the internal quality assurance system. A quarter say that quality requirements are imposed but that the way OER are included in the internal quality assurance system differs from one organisational entity to another. Not a single one of the institutions in the response group has OER quality requirements for the whole institution; nor has a single one made OER a standard part of the quality assurance system for the whole institution.

> Frans van Kalmthout, vice-chair of the Executive Board at Avans University of Applied Sciences: "If you love your subject as professionals do, you must want to share things. OER provide a large number of opportunities for improving the quality of education. I consider it extremely important for instructors to reuse materials produced by other instructors. But that always involves semi-finished products. Education is not a kind of tea that you brew somewhere and pour out in various different places. The professionalism of the instructor is the main thing. Instructors need to be encouraged to take good materials further that have been produced by someone else, and in that way develop themselves professionally and also their subject. Then one and one can make three."

Conclusions and prospects for the future

The study shows that the development of OER in Dutch higher education is still in the start-up phase. Dutch higher education institutions are taking cautious steps as regards OER. A number of universities, for example, have published open courses, and open web lectures and participation in iTunes U are gaining ground. The thinking regarding OER and their development is in transition. Although only a few institutions already have a vision and specific policy regarding OER, many say that they are in fact working on these.

One striking point is the clear difference between research universities and "universities of applied sciences". Research universities are significantly more active where OER are concerned than universities of applied sciences, and more appreciative of the value of these resources. The great majority of OER initiatives are to be found at the research universities. A small, active group of universities of applied sciences can be distinguished that are interested in OER, that are developing initiatives, and that have plans for taking matters further, but most of the respondents at these institutions say that in the present period of budget cuts and discussions of quality they do not have the scope for developing a vision or policy regarding OER.

It is here that we believe opportunities lie, namely by making explicit how OER can be valuable when tackling strategic educational issues. Institutions could utilise OER to help students choose the right programme, for example, or to improve academic performance[7]. Web lectures are a familiar example

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7 Forward, M.L., 2012,OpenCourseWare. In: Game changers: Education and Information Technologies (EDUCAUSE, 2012), pages 81-89.

of this. OER are also increasingly used so that students can refresh their knowledge and fill in gaps, thus improving their academic performance. The availability of a wide range of OER ensures that students can utilise those materials that fit in best with their own "learning style". Practical experience shows that making educational resources openly available often improves their quality because it initiates a process among instructors, students, and other producers to be extra-critical regarding the content and presentation of those resources[8]. The materials are also viewed by what is potentially a large group of users who can provide the author with feedback for improvements.

> Paul Rullmann, a member of the Executive Board of Delft University of Technology: "As instructors become more expert at producing open courseware, you see them preparing normal lectures with the idea at the back of their mind that their teaching will 'go round the world'. They are therefore becoming more aware of the content, structure, and length of their lectures. I think that's excellent, if those two processes – lectures for your own students and for the rest of the world – are combined."

OER can also be used for "knowledge valorisation", i.e. making knowledge of practical value to society. Scientific/scholarly knowledge packaged as OER can in this way be shared with a worldwide target group made up of instructors, students, and self-learners. Finally, making their educational materials freely available allows institutions to raise their profile strongly. OER enable them to show the rest of the world what they have to offer as regards education and research, and thus to attract talented students and researchers.

> Frans van Kalmthout, vice-chairman of the Executive Board at Avans University of Applied Sciences: "I think it's very important for the government to develop a vision for OER and to support the OER Declaration. It's also important with a view to raising the profile of Dutch higher education, which is not just of high quality – as the international rankings show – but also uses English as the language of instruction for a lot of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes. That provides an excellent opportunity for using OER to show what you have to offer. You can show, for example, that after the US and the UK, the Netherlands – with the Scandinavian countries – has a really exceptional position in the global education sector."

The Netherlands will find itself dealing with an increasing number of developments regarding OER, making it relevant for institutions to take up a position on OER and to adopt a vision. June 2012, for example, saw the adoption of UNESCO's Paris OER Declaration. This was drawn up by OER experts from all over the world and calls on UNESCO member states to encou-

rage the use/reuse of OER. The declaration is expected to be ratified by the member states in 2013, thus reinforcing the call for government and education institutions to develop an OER strategy.

Another important development is the rapid rise of the phenomenon of massive open online courses (MOOCs). These very popular courses – often given by top professors at Ivy League universities in the United States – can be expected to increase awareness of the existence of OER and to call on individual institutions to adopt a position regarding this development.

For Wikiwijs and SURF's OER innovation programme, the results of this study provide leads for undertaking various activities in 2013. Wikiwijs will, for example, contact the institutions that have indicated that they have OER (or potential OER) and will assist them in making these materials accessible via the Wikiwijs portal. SURF and Wikiwijs will also assist institutions in developing a vision and policy for OER, including by organising strategy workshops for administrators, educational managers, and policy specialists. SURF and Wikiwijs will also jointly develop a model describing various scenarios and business cases for OER and will help institutions in answering the questions "Do we want to work with OER? Can OER contribute to successfully tackling strategic issues facing our institution? What can we actually do?" It is also important in this phase to continue to share knowledge and experience – including between sectors – and thus increase awareness of OER. The same applies to sharing and further exploring potential business models.

> Bert van der Zwaan, *rector magnificus* of Utrecht University: "It's now the government's move as regards making funds available and initiating things. The government could above all play a role as regards the 'How?' but not the 'What?'. SURF can make an important contribution through coordination and knowledge sharing, and by producing a valuable, high-quality series of OER."

> This article, the whole study report, and the interviews are available at http://www.surf.nl/en/actueel/Pages/DutchhighereducationmovingforwardwithOpenEducationalResources.aspx

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8 EDUCAUSE, 2012, Seven things you should know about OER. Available on http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7061.pdf. Accessed 8-10-2012