

Overview of Impact of Research on Policy, Practitioners & Services around Open Learning Practices

Caledonian Academy research into practices around learning resources has had an impact on the direction and decisions of funding bodies, on learner support in other institutions in the UK and internationally, has been embedded in environmental design, and contributed to public policy on transparent government.

Our emphasis on socio-cultural factors has changed culture, leading to richer policy, by moving debate on from technology and a view of resources as objects, to practices. Through shaping the UK Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and Higher Education Academy (HEA) programmes in Open Educational Resources (UKOER) and Digital Literacies, our research has had impact on practitioners and professional services around open learning practices in over 90 UK higher education institutions, and direct impact on digital literacy support in at least six.

Our findings have informed a report to the Cabinet Office on 'Transparent Government'. Internationally, major repositories of resources in the USA, Estonia and the Netherlands have been prompted by our work to take a user-centred social focus in repository design.

Underpinning research

Our research is distinctive for its socio-cultural, user-focused approach to learning with open educational resources (OER). In a field often dominated by technical and organisational considerations, we emphasise a broader understanding of "open learning practices" that encompasses all activities that open up access to education in a context where freely available online content and services are becoming the norm.

A key issue in developing sustainable approaches to learning practice was to identify characteristics of resources that have proved effective in changing learning and teaching. Falconer and Littlejohn's research on Effective Learning Resources achieved this, relating the characteristics to existing frameworks for understanding resources. Their work highlighted the significance of the relationship between a resource and the user, and informed design of a major programme of work funded by the UK Government (JISC/HEA UKOER, £15m).

Learning resources are typically collected into repositories for ease of management and to promote discovery and use. Previous work on repository development frequently focused on the technical requirements of repository managers. In our *Community Dimensions of Learning Object Repositories* project (CD-LOR, JISC, £250K, 2005-7) Margaryan, Littlejohn and Milligan demonstrated the significance of cultural practices in repository use. They proposed a new framework for repository development that addressed key socio-cultural issues, that has influenced repositories internationally.

Since 2001 promotion of OER in many nations' programmes and policies has highlighted the need to understand the socio-cultural factors surrounding OER use. In our *Learning from Digital Natives* project (LDN, Higher Education Academy, £25k, 2007-08) Littlejohn and Margaryan, studied user adoption of technologies for accessing resources. Littlejohn, Beetham and McGill investigated the digital literacies required for effective resource use, and the ways in which universities support learners to acquire them, in our *Learning Literacies in a Digital Age* (LLiDA, JISC, 2008-09, £60k) project. Their findings are embedded in support for digital literacy at universities across the UK. Learning resources are increasingly released under open licence as OER. The open licence has profound implications for the ways in which these resources are used. Littlejohn, Falconer, McGill and Beetham [5,6] explored these implications in the practices of adult

learners and educators within and outside formal education, drawing on the rich data they gathered during our *UKOER Evaluation and Synthesis* (JISC UKOER 1, 2 & 3, £200k, 2009-12) and *OER4Adults* (European Commission Joint Research Centre, £50k, 2012-13) projects. Findings have guided development of the UKOER funding programme and are being embedded into a European Commission Roadmap for Open Education for Lifelong Learning in 2030.

Impact

Our insistence on socio-cultural issues surrounding OER practice has impacted on the culture of funding bodies nationally and internationally, on the practice and provision of professional services in open learning practices nationally and internationally, and on public policy on transparent government in the UK and beyond.

Selected evidence of impact

The Community Dimensions of Learning Objects Repositories (CD_LOR) research provided some of the seminal research from the UK on the use and design of learning object repositories. When the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ascilite) was contracted by the government funded Carrick Institute (later Australian Learning and Teaching Council) to develop design principles for an online repository we drew on the well-developed outcomes of CDLOR to focus on the development of an engaged community of learners rather than a repository alone. The researchers in the CDLOR team were invited and valued members of the reference group and provided a well-received keynote at the annual conference as part of this process, as well as key information sessions for the Directors of the Carrick Institute (ALTC). The research outcomes from CD-LOR greatly influenced the design based research process throughout the project and its influence is highlighted in the related papers.

Associate Professor Geraldine Lefoe, Head, Academic development Unit, University of Wollongong, Australia; Co-leader, Carrick

Exchange-ALTC Exchange Project, Former Vice-president (ascilite)

The synthesis and evaluation of the c£15m UKOER programme was used iteratively to improve the programme as it ran, and stands in its own right as the world-leading resource concerning the implementation of open practices in institutions. The work of the research team is consistently referred to internationally. As a new and fast moving field, OER literature is generally "grey", and citations by leading organisations (eg the Open CourseWare Consortium) and at leading conferences (eg the Open Education Conference) is an excellent measure of the impact of the evaluation. The work is also incorporated in a practitioner-focused resource, the OER infokit. The UKOER programme was not developed in isolation and drew on [related research] including LLIDA and CDLOR.

David Kernohan, JISC Programme Manager

The team at the Caledonian Academy, expertly led by Prof. Allison Littlejohn, has made significant contributions to our understanding of professional learning, particularly in organisational settings. They are also well-known for their work on Open Educational Resources, for which they have received wide recognition from their academic peers and national and international funders.

Professor Peter Sloep, Professor of Technology Enhanced Learning, CELSTEC, Open Universiteit Nederland

Work and thinking around Learning from Incidents has changed at Shell Scotford site as a result of participating in LFI Engage. There has been an immediate impact with regards to initial learning's drawn from the survey and our engagements that have showed us areas where we may improve. Long term Shell are currently considering implementing LFI Engage fully and influencing change broadly. The outcomes will impact on practice longterm through enhanced learning from incidents and modification of current work practices.

Steve Mousseau, Incident Investigator, Shell (Scotford, Alberta) Canada