

Open Education Policy Working Papers #1 (April 2020)

The Open Education policy registry An open benchlearning tool

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Background

Open Education does not occur in a vacuum; ergo, policies aimed at fostering sustainable growth of Open Educational Practices (OEP) must acknowledge that such practices sit within a wider landscape of socioeconomic and educational ecosystems aiming to widespread efforts to democratise access to research and knowledge; however, the development of national and institutional-level OER & OEP policies appears to lag behind, therefore, the main objective of the OE policy registry is to become a hub for benchlearning, supporting institutions and communities of practice to develop OE policies that promote ethical developments of OE (Atenas et al, 2019).

Much discussion of the need for open education policy has occurred at the supranational level. International OE declarations (e.g. [Cape Town Declaration, 2007](#); [Paris Declaration, 2012](#); [UNESCO-Recommendation, 2019](#)) have called for an OE ethos to be embedded within wider education policy, as it is understood as a key spur to democratise access to quality education. Nowadays, a series of international initiatives are attempting to stimulate action on educational and scientific openness, including guidelines to foster sustainable policies. In some cases, nations and subnational governments have taken up the challenge of incorporating policy to enable open resources and practices into education policymaking agendas. What is less clear, and less straightforward to investigate, is the extent to which individual institutions are developing policies to support openness.

Our session at OER20¹, reported on the current state of OE policies internationally, based on the OE Policy Registry dataset. Through engagement with the data held in the Policy Registry it has been possible to collect and examine a wide range of policy documents and sketch some key features of the OE policy landscape. Further auditing of this dataset is needed, in order that the registry can be used effectively to support policy benchlearning by OE advocates, researchers and policymakers.

This session presented the initial findings of a research project conducted using this dataset, and additionally, inputs gained during a series of workshops designed to support OE policy co-creation. We presented key features of the OE Policy Registry to support

- 1) OE advocates seeking to support and enhance practice through policy
- 2) Policymakers at institutional and governmental levels
- 3) Researchers interested in OE policy

For these user groups, several different use-cases are addressed and presented:

- Policymakers can showcase and find good practice policy exemplars, which they can adapt and reuse within their context.
- OER advocates and advocacy networks can connect with each other, so that they can exchange experiences and cooperate in joint projects.
- Researchers can collect data on policy activities in different educational sectors and geographical areas, gaining a deeper understanding of the functioning of OE ecosystems and develop strategies for mainstreaming.

Introduction

The [OER World Map](#) is a platform that facilitates access to resources and knowledge to promote OEP, acting as a source of information for everyone interested in Open Education.

Its newest component is the [OE Policy Registry](#), which aims not just to record current policies but to become a knowledge hub to support the OE community in developing OE policies. The Registry is going to be [relaunched](#) soon!

¹ Leo Havemann, Jan Neumann, and Javiera Atenas. The OE policy registry – An open benchlearning tool. In: OER20: The care in openness, online, 1-2 April 2020. <https://oer20.oerconf.org/sessions/o-076/>

Open for benchlearning

Benchlearning can be understood as the process of mutual learning by comparing good practices and processes, in the case of policy, is a method for policymaking which is based in learning from national and international experience by comparing and analysing policies in order to gather good practices that can be used when planning and designing a policy.

The OE Policy Registry can support the community by providing a way to locate and 'benchlearn' from existing policies and the people and organisations which have developed them. The registry can enable sharing of policies or policy plans, locating and comparing with other documents, learning about the OE landscape and for those with existing policies, assist with improvement.

What do we mean by policy?

A policy can generally be thought of as a **statement of intent** ... that **describes a problem and broadly outlines how the problem will be addressed**. There is no single agreed definition ... For example, the term '**policy**' may refer to a **proposal, outcome, formal or informal decision, bundle of legislation, or positions implicitly taken**"².

"Open education policies are **formal regulations** regarding support, funding, adoption, and use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and/or Open Educational Practices (OEP). Such policies are **designed to support the creation, adoption, and sharing of OER and the design and integration of OEP** into programs of study."³

"OER policies are **laws, rules and courses of action** that facilitate the creation, use or improvement of openly licensed content."⁴

² Evans, M. C., & Cvitanovic, C. (2018). *An introduction to achieving policy impact for early career researchers*. Palgrave Communications, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0144-2>

³ Educause, "[7 Things You Should Know About... Open Education: Policy](#)"

⁴ Advancing OER Through Effective Policy Amanda Coolidge @acoolidge #OTsummit17 · May 24, 2017 Nicole Allen @txtbks <https://www.slideshare.net/txtbks/oer-policy-76319050>

Nature and level of policy

The **nature** of a policy can be understood as **carrot, stick or sermon** (Bemelmans-Vidéc, Rist, & Vedung, 1998).

Supranational, national, and institutional **level** policies are attempting different kinds of interventions.

Perhaps useful to think about policy as a continuous **process** rather than something that can be frozen or captured into a 'product' like a written policy document?

In this case what to do with such '**policy traces**' as we can find in the registry?

Institutions and policies

OE advocates have highlighted present and future benefits, leading to prominent **supranational policy interventions** (particularly from UNESCO).

These tend to call for increased engagement with OE by states, which should stimulate action at the levels of institutions, systems and individual educators (see [Fostering Openness in Education: Considerations for Sustainable Policymaking](#)).

There are some **national** level initiatives.

Within **institutions**, some staff engage in forms of OEP, and some institutions have adopted policies around OE.

Consequences for the Registry

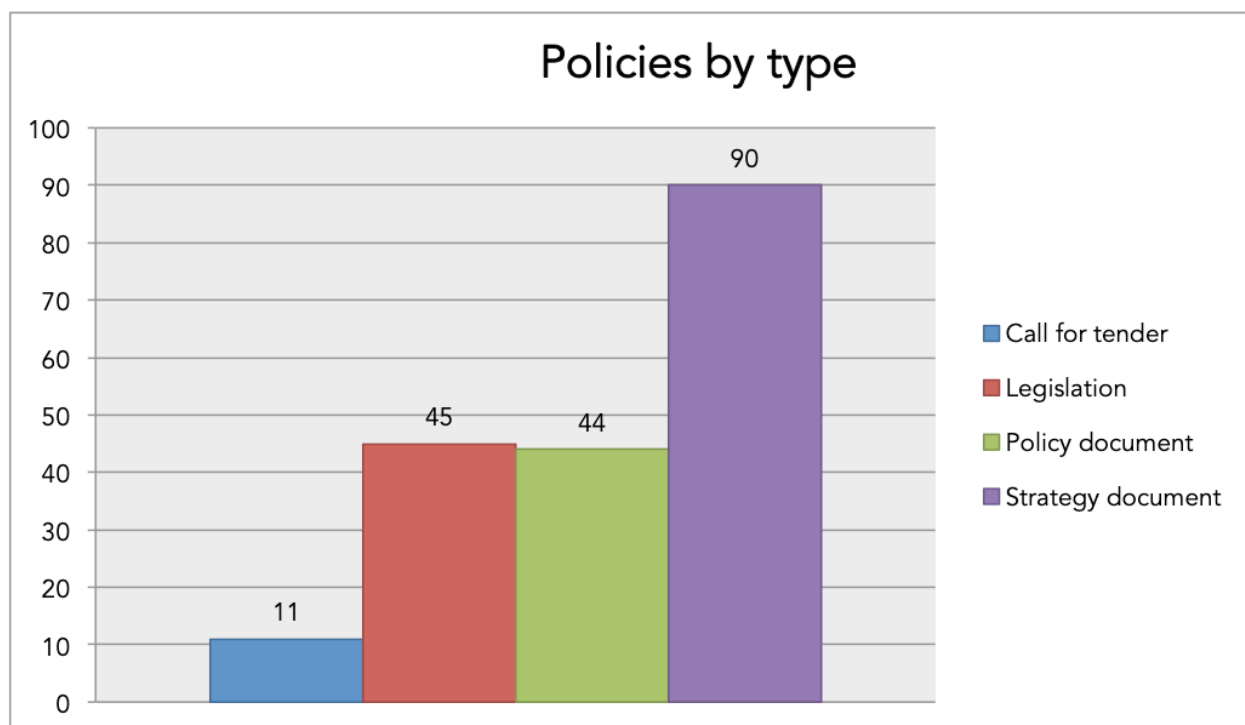
What should be collected is not completely clear. Currently the registry focusses on policy documents. It might be necessary to focus more on the related activities (projects, services) in the future. The OER World Map provides an ideal environment for this.

The OE policy registry landscape

To understand the current panorama of OE policies, the OER policy registry, from the OER world map has been analysed. A total of 190 policies have been retrieved until January 2020 and these have been reviewed and analysed following the criteria presented in the JRC OE reports JRC Opening up Education: A Support Framework for Higher Education Institutions (2016) Policy Approaches to Open Education - Case Studies from 28 EU Member States (OpenEdu Policies) (2017).

Open Education can be found as standalone policies or within the corpus of other policies, as sometimes Open Education happens in wider and different contexts, for example, OE policies have been identified in/as Call for tender; Legislation; Strategy document or just as Policy document.

Out of the OE policies retrieved from the OER policy registry, it can be seen that most of the policies can be found in Strategy documents (90), followed by Policy documents (44), Legislation (45) and finally in Call for tender (11).

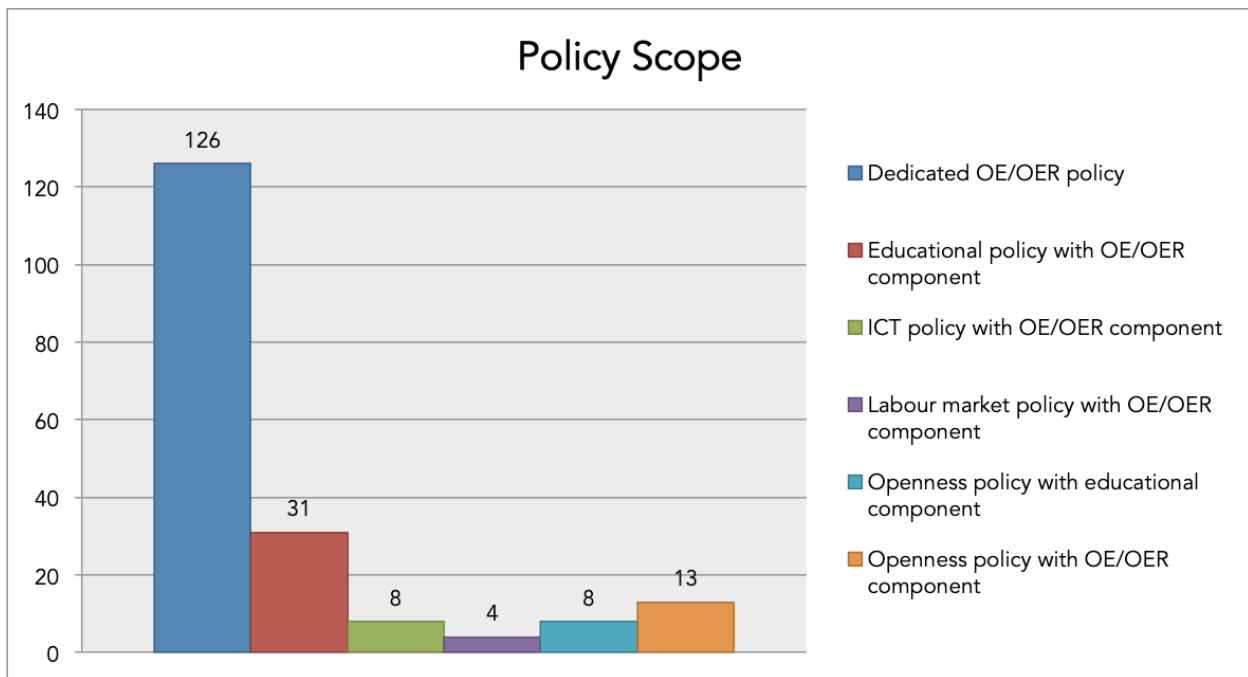


The JRC report (2017)⁵ identifies four typologies of policies: a) policies focusing specifically on opening up education through the promotion of OER and OEP; b) policies relating to general ICT for learning with some open education component; c) comprehensive strategic educational policies with some open education component; and d) policies built up as National Open Government Plans with some open education component. However, the OER policy registry, have included other categories to this list to make it more specific:

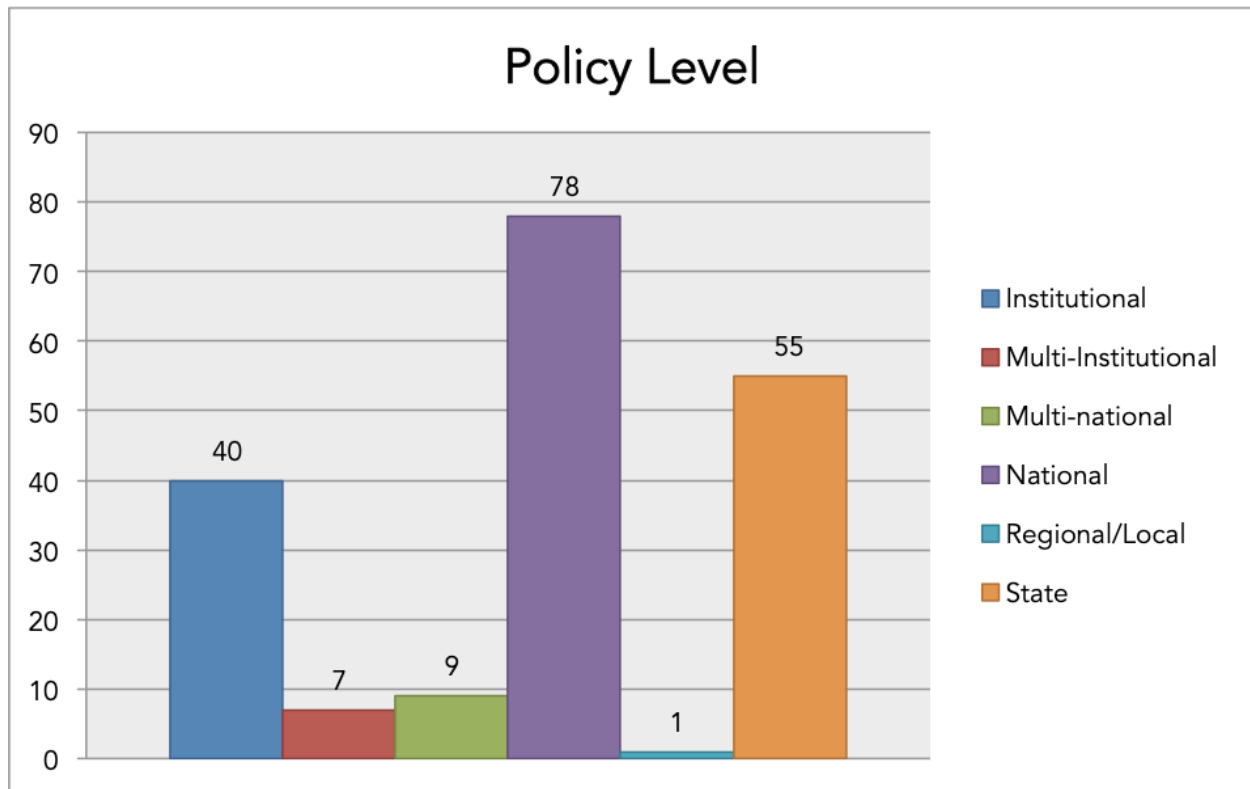
- Dedicated OE/OER policy, which means that is a policy that has been developed to promote, support and foster the production, use and adoption of OE - OER at national, regional, state or institutional level
- Educational policy with OE/OER component: Are educational policies at national, regional, state or institutional level that include elements to promote, support and foster the production, use and adoption of OE - OER
- ICT policy with OE/OER component: Are technology oriented policies at national, regional, state or institutional level that include elements to promote, support and foster the production, use and adoption of OE - OER
- Labour market policy with OE/OER component: Are policies within programmes to support the unemployed find work that include elements to promote, support and foster the production, use and adoption of OE - OER
- Openness policy with educational component: Are policies in other fields of openness such as Open Government which promotes open access to knowledge that have an educational component, therefore, indirectly or implicitly promote, support and foster the production, use and adoption of OE - OER
- Openness policy with OE/OER component: Are policies in other fields of openness such as Open Government, Open Access and Open Data that include elements to promote, support and foster the production, use and adoption of OE - OER

⁵ Policy Approaches to Open Education - Case Studies from 28 EU Member States (OpenEdu Policies)
<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/policy-approaches-open-education-case-studies-28-eu-member-states-openedu-policies>

Out of the 190 policies retrieved from the OER policy registry, 126 are Dedicated OE/OER policies, 31 are Educational policies with OE/OER component, 13 are Openness policy with OE/OER component, 8 are ICT policy with OE/OER component, 8 are Openness policies with educational component and 4 are Labour market policies with OE/OER component.

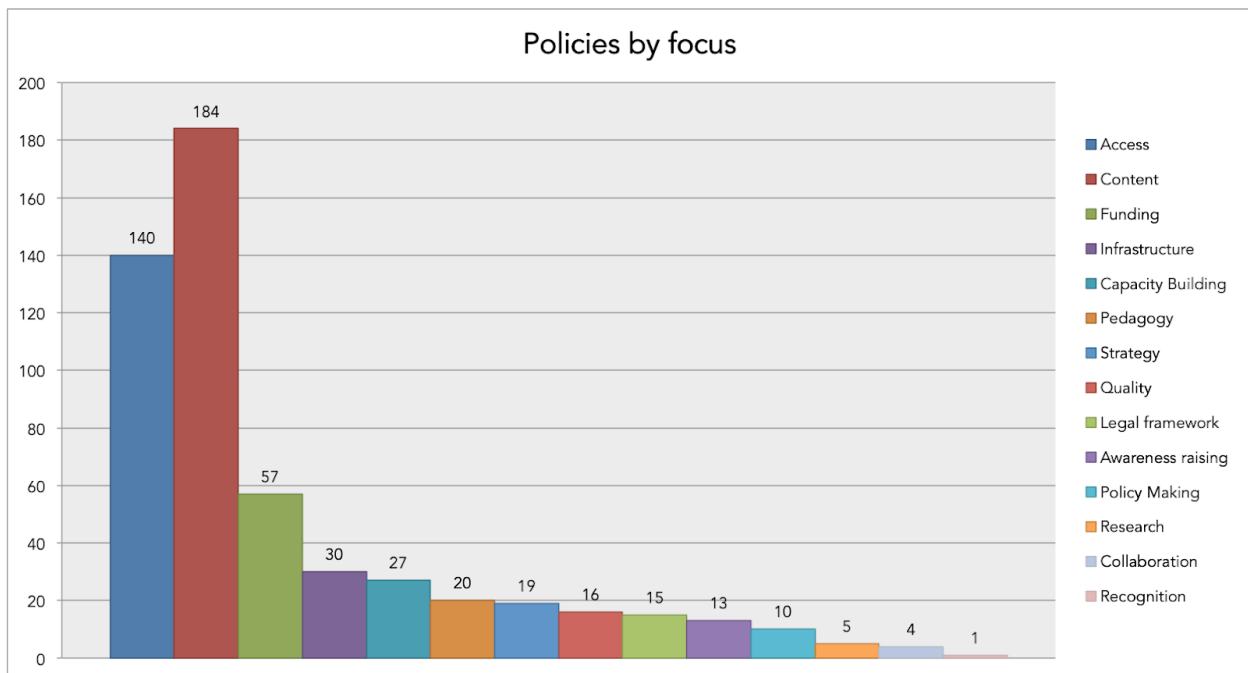


When looking at the policies from a level perspective, out of the 190 policies reviewed, 78 are national policies, 55 are state policies (mostly US and Brazil), 40 are institutional, 9 are multinational, 7 are Multi-Institutional and only one is Regional/Local



Also, the JRC Opening up Education: A Support Framework for Higher Education Institutions (2016)⁶ has defined 6 core elements of the policies access, content, pedagogy, recognition, collaboration and research, and the OE policy registry has included these among other elements are core descriptors of the policies, which out of the 190 policies reviewed can be seen as Content (184); Access (140); Funding (57); Infrastructure (30); Capacity Building (27); Pedagogy (20); Strategy (19); Quality (16); Legal framework (15); Awareness raising (13); Policy Making (10); Research (5); Collaboration (4); Recognition (1)

⁶ Inamorato dos Santos, A., Punie, Y., & Castaño Muñoz, J. (2016). *Opening up Education: A Support Framework for Higher Education Institutions*. JRC - EUR - Scientific and Technical Research Reports. <http://doi.org/10.2791/293408>



Our activities for Open Education Week

- Open Education Week:
<https://altc.alt.ac.uk/oesig/2020/02/22/open-education-week-2020/>
- Thread: <https://twitter.com/leohavemann/status/1235153017982406656>
- Blogposts:
<http://femedtech.net/published/putting-practices-in-the-oe-spotlight/>
- Video provocations:
<https://flipgrid.com/f61bc14c>

Next steps - relaunch

- Engage with anyone interested in learning more about OE policy making and provide them with the support they need
- Build a larger dataset of policies for people to explore and research using the registry
- Promote a benchlearning approach to foster the development and update of OE policies
- Conduct research to produce guidelines and good practices in OE policy

- making
- oerworldmap.wordpress.com/2020/02/19/relaunching-the-open-education-policy-registry/

Contribute and participate!

If you know of an open education or related *policy, strategy, or similar*, please fill in this form so we can include it in the Policy Registry.

So if your country, region, state, or institution has one, [put it on the map](#), simply [add it here](#) (or send us an email or tweet).

Questions, comments, policies, suggestions, counter-arguments, sympathies gratefully received...

Tweets - especially to flag a policy - to: [@oerworldmap](#)

Mails to flag policies to: info@oerworldmap.org

If interested in knowing more or participating in research contact:
leo.havemann@open.ac.uk / [@leohavemann](#)

With thanks to all our OER World Map/Policy Registry & OE Policy Lab co-conspirators.

References

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<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/opening-education-support-framework-higher-education-institutions>

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