

## Cover Page

# **Title: The need for Open Educational Practices policies to transform Australian higher education**

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# **Title: The need for Open Educational Practices policies to transform Australian higher education**

## **Abstract:**

Open Educational Practices (OEP) have played an important role in assisting educational institutions and governments worldwide to meet their current and future educational targets in widening participation, lowering costs, improving the quality of learning and teaching and promoting social inclusion and participatory democracy. There have been some important OEP developments in Australia, but unfortunately the potential of OEP to meet some of the national educational targets has been fully realised and acknowledged yet, in ways that many countries around the world have. This paper will gather, discuss, and analyse some key national and international policies and documentation available as an attempt to provide a solid foundation for the case of an OEP national policy for Australia. Underpinned by translational research, this paper will then propose the creation of an OEP White Paper, in which ideas and strategies will be developed in consultation with key higher education stakeholders in Australia.

**Keywords:** OEP in Australia, OEP policies in Australia, open policies in Australia, policies for open practices in Australia, higher education policy

## Introduction

Open Educational Practices (OEP) have been playing an important role in assisting higher education sectors and governments worldwide to meet their current and future educational targets in widening participation, lowering costs, improving the quality of learning and teaching and promoting social inclusion and participatory democracy. However, OEP is a relatively new approach to learning and teaching and therefore many questions regarding how to adequately support OEP remain unanswered. In order to pilot and leverage OEP initiatives, many countries have attempted to trial, develop, and implement educational policies that incorporate and recognise OEP activities and programs.

Nationally, there have been important OEP developments in the Australian higher education sector. Following international momentum to 'open up' education via a number of global OEP initiatives, some Australian universities have engaged in institutional and collaborative projects; both internally and federally funded. In less than a decade, the scope of OEP in Australian higher education has expanded, influencing learning and teaching.

Likewise, state (schools, and professional and vocational training) and federal levels have begun to engage. The federal initiatives have mostly focused on encouraging government agencies to adopt open source software (OSS), to freely and openly licence publish government documents and reports, and open access to publically-funded research. The latter is supported by institutional repositories that store, and make available, research output and data, usually enable by Creative Commons licences. This responds to pressure from research funding bodies who increasingly stipulate open access in funding requirements (Picasso & Phelan, 2014).

Whilst these initiatives are equivalent to other global open access practices - notably those in the UK, the US, Canada and across the European Union - Australian federal attention has not yet focused on educational resources. Australia does not have a specific framework or regulation that supports the adoption of open educational resources and practices in higher education (Stagg & Bossu, 2016), unlike the more mature policies in the previously cited countries.

Despite this lack of national priority focus, a small number of OEP reports and research projects have been funded by the previous Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) to investigate and develop OEP across the sector. These reports have all strongly lobbied for OEP intervention, support, and policy development at national level.

However, despite federal funding, the Australian government has failed to commit to, or reflect, the recommendations in educational policy. This paper will gather, discuss, and analyse existing policies and documentation available nationally and internationally to provide a foundation for the development of Australian OEP national policy. We will use a White Paper wot frame the case to collaboratively develop strategies in consultation with key stakeholders across the sector. The White Paper will be underpinned by translational research, an established medical research methodology that bridges practice and policy. Translational research has been applied to education, as relevant educational research often takes a long period to operationalise (Mitchell, 2016). Before starting the related policy discussion, an overview of OEP is needed for better understanding of issues being explored in this paper.

## The role of educational policy

Australian higher education has traditionally viewed educational policy as intrinsically linked to social equity and inclusion. The most common lens for articulating these principles has been 'population

parity' (Naylor & James, 2015, p. 1); or the statistically proportional inclusion of under-represented socio-cultural, and socio-economic population groups. This has been mirrored in government-set targets (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008), and in university responses to policy (Universities Australia, 2016). This tone, set by the Labour Education Minister John Dawkins in *Higher Education: A Policy Statement* (1988) was underscored by his perception of the role of universities, namely;

[the university] is a primary source of the skills we need in our cultural, artistic, intellectual and industrial life. It acts to gather and preserve knowledge. It promotes greater understanding of culture, *often at odds with majority attitudes*, and in doing so, supports the development of a more just and tolerant society (Dawkins, 1988, p. 7, emphasis added)

However, contemporary educational policy is directly at odds with the humanist perception of the societal value of education. This value has shifted from social participation and that understanding of broader culture (*'often at odds with majority attitudes'*) and instead indexes outcomes against a neo-liberal economic rationalisation of a university education as narrowly aligned with job-readiness and future economic success. Given this perceptual shift, it can be reasonably argued that the 'value proposition' of open educational practice (OEP) in the current political climate needs to be examined critically by practitioners, especially if levers – in the form of national policy – are sought.

### **Public and private good: an ideological difference in policy**

The notion of the university as a 'public good' and enabler of a participatory democracy is reflected in early Australian educational policy. Dawkins' statement explicitly states that:

We want to be a society that understands its own political processes, enables all citizens to participate in those processes and does not accept without question decisions made on its behalf...We do not want a higher education system that fails to analyse and, where necessary, criticise the society in which it operates, *or one that chooses not to spread knowledge among those with fewer opportunities to increase their own understanding of events* (Dawkins, 1988, p. 7; emphasis added)

Higher education was perceived as a public good – the keystone to inclusive national agenda of societal participation. The implicit philosophy was that citizens had the right of access to education, with higher education providing a societal role that often transcended the prevailing norm. However, counter-productive government policy was instituted the same year with HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme). Students were now incumbent for university fees, and the new Scheme notionally made university more accessible by allowing students to defer their fees as a government loan that would be repaid once their future earnings reached a set threshold (income-contingent loans). This threshold has been varied over the last three decades, and the repayment of student loans has not been without criticism, both within Australia and in countries like the UK which also administer income-contingent loans (Findeisen & Sachs, 2016). By linking student loans to income, governments form explicit inter-relationships between education and tax regimes (Findeisen & Sachs, 2016). There have even been suggestions of emerging alternatives or amendments to income-contingent loans, such as normalising the national student debt by levying higher tax repayments for students in higher tax brackets - which would result in high-earners re-paying more than the base sum of the loan, whilst lower earners repay less than the total sum of their loan (Findeisen & Sachs, 2016), to systems that allow individual investors to pay for student loans and then enter into income-sharing arrangements post-graduation (Holliday & Gide, 2016).

The latter system not only notionally extends the commodification of education, but potentially does

the same for the individual student. In this model, students could be viewed as long-term investments, part of an investment portfolio which further positions tertiary education as a perceived individual good, rather than a public good. This perceptual shift will be explored later, but understanding the relationship between a national social inclusion agenda and educational policy is also required.

### Social Inclusion and educational policy

Since 1988, the approaches and metrics for attaining social inclusion have been under sustained criticism for both the classification proxies used to determine targets and eligibility, and the superficiality of reporting against targets. Classification of student equity groups is reliant on postcode of students' place of origin and further predicated on parental occupation (Universities Australia, 2008). These imprecise measures that fail to account for a multi-causal understanding of intentions to, and the experience of, study are the foundation for Australian social inclusion targets. Additionally, the results of high school education are used by all states as part of university admissions, although secondary school performance is not always an indicator of university success (Naylor & James, 2015). It is unsurprising then, that despite three decades of policy, widening access for students from remote and rural communities and low socio-economic backgrounds remains 'one of the persistent and seemingly intractable equity issues in Australia' (James, 2012, p. 85). Policy built on these measurements, and reliant on secondary school academic barriers is challenged to deliver meaningful outcomes. There is little evidence to suggest that under-represented groups have little aspiration to attend university – the main challenge facing these learners is access to education (Naylor & James, 2015).

Reporting against inclusion targets is likewise a problematic space as the primary statistical data presented in policy documents such as *Keep It Clever* rely on absolute numbers as opposed to representational statistics. For example, 2014 data (Universities Australia, 2016, p. 18) reports a 60% increase in indigenous students (from 7038 in 2008 to 11,286 in 2014), claiming a direct positive correlation between the implementation of a demand-driven education system in 2008 and improved social equity. The *Higher Education and Research Facts and Figures* (Universities Australia, 2015) reports as a representational whole. Figure 1 shows the difference in reported data. Many of the equity groups experience small growth as a part of the overall population and – in some cases – a periodic decrease in participation.

Equity Group	Percentage of the total undergraduate population						
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Indigenous students	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6
Low SES students	16.8	16.9	17.0	17.0	17.7	17.8	18.2
Regional and remote students	20.7	20.7	20.6	20.4	21.0	20.6	20.4

**Figure 1:** Equity groups as a percentage of the total undergraduate population. From: Universities Australia (2015). *Higher Education and Research Facts and Figures*. Retrieved from: <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/ArticleDocuments/169/UA%20Higher%20Education%20and%20Research%20Facts%20and%20Figures%20November%202015.PDF.aspx>

## The 'value of education'

The language and value statement of universities has dramatically changed in the last thirty years. Universities Australia (2016) focuses on highlighting the contribution of the higher education sector to the national economy (p. 3), international competitiveness (p. 3), the need for government funding to 'position Australia cleverly for future prosperity' (p. 4), and increasing investment in industry-collaborative research partnerships to foster innovative and entrepreneurial graduates and researchers (p. 7). The statement ascribes dollar values to the 'stock of knowledge' (p. 8), describes future graduates as 'our future leaders, inventors, and wealth generators' (p. 12) and that they exit degrees 'career-ready [and] globally competitive' (p. 13). Almost absent in this document is the university's role in building a participatory democracy, and the three-decade-old statements about universities providing critical viewpoints have been replaced by a preference for increasing economic growth and the rationalisation of education as an export.

The substantive change in discourse is unsurprising when the perception of graduate outcomes is considered. An increasing commodification and massification of higher education are symptoms of the neo-liberalist interpretation of the university that is reflected in the language of *Keep It Clever*, and there is an element of 'moral panic' in the rhetoric surrounding Australia's 'decline' and 'loses' on a globalised landscape (Zajda, 2013, p. 234). Rather than design a higher education system based on 'social good', the Australian system has privileged organisational restructuring, positioning, and outcomes on corporatized models – and now uses this structure for reporting and accountability (Zajda, 2013). The resulting perception is of education as a tradable, exportable commodity – a product with a defined economic value, and one that represents a market-driven investment by the consumer (students). Education is unable to be commodified (Connell, 2013), but associated aspects of the experience can. The reintroduction of student fees supported by a student loans scheme (HECS), and the publishing of 'league tables' for university research outcomes, for example, reinforce a scarcity model. Student fees for education are paid by the individual, not the State, which reinforces that education is a 'private good' – that the outcomes based on individual investment, and that the benefits are likewise personal rather than for society. League tables present a hierarchy of institutions nationally, creating a false sense of 'quality' – or rather prestige for individual investment. Reputational capital through credentialing becomes a commodity as the individual trades on the reputation of their *alma mater* for advantage in the job market.

This change from a humanist ideology of higher education to one predicated by economic values and labour market readiness creates an environment that inherently challenges open educational practice at the level of national policy. Open education is often presented as 'social good' (Glennie, Harley, Butcher, & T, 2012, p. 7) – that can lead to either uncritical research or a lack of evaluative processes. This political and ideological shift may be responsible for the prevalence of research-focused open policy, and a lack of Australian educational resource policy (Stagg & Bossu, 2016). Open data has been positioned as an enabler for research collaboration, cross-disciplinary research, and reducing the cost of original research data collection – all outcomes consistent with economic rationalisation.

It is into this environment that open practice must demonstrate a clear value proposition. Open practitioners need to be mindful of the underpinning rationale shaping educational policy in Australia and how higher educational institutions have become complicit in recasting the value of education in society. It is therefore unsurprising that open educational practice is able to gain traction in Australia at the practitioner and institutional levels - as more bounded cultural values can be expressed at these levels with sufficient leverage - yet has failed to make any impact (or even reach a basic level of awareness) at the national level. The role of open policy advocates therefore becomes more complex - not just in lobbying for change, but in finding 'common ground' between differing ideologies.

## National Level OEP supporting documents

There have been attempts to provide evidence-based guidelines and recommendations at national level to influence Australian government OEP strategies and activities. Ironically, these guidelines and recommendations have been mostly developed through indirect government funded research projects and fellowships, such as the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT).

One example of these developments is the *Feasibility Protocol*, a set of guiding principles to assist OEP practitioners, senior executives and policy maker to make informed decisions regarding the adoption of OER at different levels; individual levels, including educators and learners, institutional levels and at the sector level (Bossu, Bull, & Brown, 2015). The feasibility was a key outcome of a two year project (2010 to 2012) funded by the OLT, which surveyed key stakeholders across the Australian higher education sector to uncover the state of play of OEP in Australia, including the use of OER, participants' awareness and willingness to engage with OEP (Bossu, Brown, & Bull, 2014). Most importantly, findings from this project provided in a set of principles to policy and decision makers at the sector level to consider. Some of them include:

- Provide government incentives and funding to promote research in OEP and encourage adoption across the higher education sector;
- Develop national level OEP dedicated policies to provide educational institutions and practitioners guidance on OEP engagement;
- Investigate the opportunities that OEP can bring to bridge the gap between formal and informal education;
- Consider OEP as a way to support the diverse student cohort across the higher education sector in Australia (eg. remote and rural students, adult and distance learners and national, international, refugee, imprisoned etc.); and
- Examine how OEP can play an important role in positioning the Australian higher education sector in the global stage (e.g. by adopting the 2012 Paris OER Declaration and other related declarations) (Bossu et al., 2014).

Amongst more recent funded projects is the *Students, Universities and Open Education (OpenEdOz)* project (<http://openedoz.org/>). The OpenEdOz was built on previous related projects, and aimed to bridge the OEP policy gap at national level (Wills, Alexander, & Sadler, 2016). One of its main deliverables was a Roadmap to a National OEP Strategy, which intended to assist the government to realise the potential of OEP for the Australian higher education sector and open up opportunities for further national policy development and support in which OEP can flourish. The policy roadmap was informed by the analysis of a range of national and international evidenced-based case studies related to OEP projects and initiatives gathered during the project (Bossu et al., 2016). The Roadmap is a detailed instrument, and shows the complexities of OEP adoption. It provides 25 Contributing Strategies divided by 10 Signposts, including Advocacy, Students, Teachers, Standards, Intellectual property, licensing and copyright, ICT infrastructure, research, and so forth. Also, the Roadmap suggests a number of relevant national organisations that would be appropriate and possibly "facilitators of action" to each of its strategies (Wills et al., 2016, p. 8)

Additionally, a study commissioned by the Higher Education Standards Panel and the OLT to report on the challenges, issues, opportunities and the effects that existing alternative models to deliver and recognise students' learning can pose to Australian universities, to the sector and to the Higher Education Standards Framework (Ewan, 2016). According to the author, "it offers a view of the landscape and highlights aspects of the topography that will likely influence higher education's journey into the future." (Ewan, 2016, p. 6). Relevant to this paper however, is the set of suggestions

made to higher education policy makers, which states that:

A coordinated approach will be necessary to ensure that Australia is not left behind in the wave of global attention to open education and the considerable implications it will have...Foremost among these is the need to agree on a national strategy to leverage contemporary IT for improving productivity of higher education through use of Open Educational Resources and the need for a national body to drive the strategy development (Ewan, 2016, p. 59).

These projects represent attempts to provide evidence-based recommendations and show legitimate concerns that the delay in adopting and lack of support for OEP initiatives could have serious consequences to higher education in Australia. Most importantly, findings from currently research shows that OEP has the potential to restore the essence of education, its value and purpose. OER, coupled with open practices can assist the Australia government to meet its educational targets to increase access to higher education to rural and remote students at a lower cost, therefore reducing student debt. By encouraging OEP at national level, the Australian government would still guarantee excellence and quality of education, as OEP can enable flexibility, innovative and affordability in learning and teaching. In fact, these are some of the elements underpinning the current paper titled *Driving Innovation, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education* (Australian Government, 2016). This paper discusses “potential reforms that support the Government’s vision of a stronger, more innovative and responsive system of higher education that preserves equity of access while meeting the financial sustainability savings” suggested in the current federal budget (Australian Government, 2016, p. 3). Unfortunately, it seems that the Australian educational system, in particularly higher education, is losing an opportunity by not adopting OEP as an approach to solve these challenges.

## **International OEP policies**

As discussed before, OEP in higher education has gained traction globally and as a consequence, the need to develop appropriate policies to establish guidelines and support development emerged. Other factors influencing the growing number of such policies are, for example, the increasing numbers of OER and OEP initiatives, the growing levels of awareness of OEP, the rise in funding opportunities by national, international and philanthropic organisations, and the support and recognition of OEP by international bodies such as UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) through documents and declarations.

The most recent document developed by an international body was the *Paris OER Declaration* (UNESCO, 2012). This declaration was created during the 2012 World Open Educational Resources (OER) Congress, hosted by UNESCO. It also acknowledges existing declarations and guidelines on Open Educational Resources such as the 2007 *Cape Town Open Education Declaration* (<http://www.capetowndeclaration.org/read-the-declaration>), the 2009 *Dakar Declaration on Open Educational Resources*, and the 2015 COL and UNESCO *Guidelines on Open Educational Resources in Higher Education* (Commonwealth of Learning, 2015). These are important international documents and strategies, providing the foundations for countries, nations and organisations to develop OEP capacity. In the proceeding section, we will explore some international i open policies that could inform Australian policy development.

### **Canada**

Canadian OEP is some of the most mature is the world. Perhaps one of Canada’s most popular initiatives was the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology’s Open Textbook Project. This state project, in partnership with BC Campus, committed to funding the



development of forty open tertiary textbooks; which has been increased recently to sixty titles (McGreal, Anderson, & Conrad, 2015). The Open Textbook Project also promoted harvesting existing open textbooks, encouraging academics to review and adapt these titles to reflect local contexts (BCCampus, 2014). However, McGreal and his colleagues believe that one of the most significant OEP developments in Canada currently has been the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Open Educational Resources signed in 2012 by the three western provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan). This MOU “includes cooperation among the provinces in sharing and developing OER; identifying, sharing and encouraging the use of OER; and by using technology, foster an understanding of OER issues” (McGreal et al., 2015).

## **The United States**

The US likewise recognised the potential impact of OEP, and is moving to a position of leading OEP policy developments and investments globally. In June 2015, a publication from the White House, Office of the Press Secretary, highlighted the *100 Examples of President Obama’s Leadership in Science, Technology, and Innovation*, and example 29 is focused on OER; “Invested in openly licensed education resources” (The White House, 2016). Since 2010, the Department of Labour invested more than \$2 billion to support community colleges, to develop OER. These grants increased awareness of OER and OEP not only amongst the grantees (Community Colleges), but also across the broader educational system in the US. The investments promoted the creation of resources available in a free and open online library called SkillsCommons (The White House, 2016). Also, “both the Departments of Education and Labor now require certain grant-funded materials to be openly licensed. Fourteen states and sixty school districts joined the Department of Education’s #GoOpen campaign, committing to transition to using OER in their schools” (The White House, 2016).

US support and investments in OEP have continued strongly. In January 2017, the U.S. State Department released the *Federal Open Licensing Playbook*, consisting of guidelines, cases studies, and recommendations for US federal agencies and practitioners involved in the development of openly license materials and educational resources (including publically funded resources). The Playbook has been “designed to assist federal efforts to maximize the impact of grant funds, and create opportunities for innovation and collaborative practices using federally-funded resources” (Green, 2017).

## **United Kingdom**

In the UK, the potential for OER and OEP as a significant tool for higher education institutions has been recognised for some time. Between 2009 and 2012, JISC in partnership with the UK Higher Education Academy managed a three phase program (UKOER), aimed to encourage “the free sharing and re-use of high-quality learning resources in the UK and worldwide as part of a wider ‘open’ philosophy” (JISC, 2013, para 4). The UKOER program funded 65 projects and 15 “rapid innovation short technical projects” and together they “prompted a UK-wide rethink of the way in which learning and teaching materials are created, shared, distributed and used” (JISC, 2013, para 3). This program has been terminate since, however, the legacy, community engagement, the knowledge created and disseminate, and the impact on learning and teaching innovation in the UK and globally during the time of the program continues.

More recent developments in the UK have been the Opening Educational Practices in Scotland project (<https://oepscotland.org/>), funded by the Scottish Funding Council and led by the Open University in Scotland (OEPS, 2016). The project involves higher education institutions across the sector and “aims to enhance the capacity and reputation of the Scottish tertiary education sector in developing publicly available online materials supported by high quality pedagogy and learning technology (OEPS, 2016). Other OEP related development in Scotland are the Open Scotland

(<http://openscot.net/about-2/>) and the Scottish Open Education Declaration (<http://declaration.openscot.net/>). These initiatives combined have the potential to position Scotland in a very unique position globally, as these are cross sector initiatives, aiming at “raise awareness of open education, encourage the sharing of open educational resources, and explore the potential of open policy and practice to benefit all sectors of Scottish education” (Open Scotland, 2016, para 2).

## **Africa**

OEP has strong possibilities to influence ‘the imbalance which exists in the quality of education between developed and developing countries’ (Percy & van Belle, 2012, p. 113), with Muganda, Samzughi, and Mallinson (2016) asserting that ‘being part of the OER movement is not optional but a necessity for the African academic community’ (p. 38). The goal of OER Africa, one of the largest African OEP organisations, is to support the development of Africa’s ‘capacity, and join emerging global OER networks as active participants who showcase Africa’s intellection property, rather than passive consumers of knowledge produced elsewhere’ (OER Africa, 2016a). Policy development is one part of the overall participatory action research framework that guides OER Africa projects, aligning with this goal. Africa has experienced rapid increases in student applications, with many students unplaced in tertiary education due to the volume of the demand (Ohioze, Odishika, Adedeji, Olusanya & Adesina-Ulthman 2013). OER Africa has assisted educational institutions in meeting this demand. Also, there have been some OEP developments at school and tertiary levels across the continent, but unfortunately, national level policy development is mostly absent from discussion, including in documents produced by OER Africa. Despite this many African universities have developed local policy – in collaboration with OER Africa – to support, promote, and reward engagement with OEP as aligned with national educational goals (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2009, Africa Nazarene University, 2015). All of these points are salient to discussions on Australian institutional and national policy, and practitioners advocating for such policy would do well to examine African policy initiatives.

## **China**

Closer to Australia, The Ministry of Education for the Free People’s Republic of China actively supports OEP through funded projects, such as the Quality Courses Resource Centre (creating and sharing 20,076 courses), the Video Open Course project (producing and disseminating 603 courses in 12 disciplines), and the Resource Sharing Course project (producing 120 full courses), as well as 13 MOOCs offered via an open source platform (xuetang online) based on OpenEdX (Guo, Zhang, & Bonk, 2015). Despite these projects, recent research has shown that awareness of OEP and open licencing still remains low in Chinese higher education (Guo, Zhang, Bonk, 2015).

It can be seen by the examples above, that key global developed, and developing, economies are investing and strongly supporting OEP through policy, funds, declarations and research. This is largely due to the recognition of the role of OEP in meeting educational and social inclusion targets and policies, as the demand for access to education increases and the capacity of educational institutional to deliver education remains stagnated. However, the examples provided are far from comprehensive, as successful OEP programs are present on almost all continents

## **Crafting an Australian OEP White Paper**

While globally OEP policy and activities are maturing rapidly, Australian developments remain unsupported and isolated. Many educational institutions and their leaders are aware of OEP but the lack of national support and a commodified educational system, leave educational leaders with no options but meet government targets to receive their share of federal funds. Australian OEP

researchers and advocates believe that more purposeful activity is required for Australia to achieve comparable results in OEP. One way to assist the Australia government to fully realise the potential of OEP for Australian education is the development of a White Paper.

A White Paper would raise awareness and understanding at national and sector levels, inform government agencies of current global developments in OEP, and provide an action plan and strategies for the development of national level OEP policies and initiatives.

Designing a White Paper for OEP in Australian Higher Education will be situated in translational research. Originally applied to public health research and policy, translational research aims to bridge the gap between policy makers and practitioners (Wethington & Dunifor, 2012). It encourages a more holistic understanding of phenomena, by considering data, contextual influences and factors, and the nature of the broader environment in which the phenomenon sits (Evans, 2012). Translational research has been viewed as an appropriate lens for educational research, especially as it intersects with public policy and seeks collaborative representation from a wider range of stakeholders (<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/05/21/38brabeck.h27.html>). Translational research can draw upon diverse data sources to support specific foci and outcomes.

The development of the White Paper will be done in consultation with key higher education stakeholders, including policy makers, senior executives and practitioners. The researchers involved in the development of the White Paper will also attempt to develop a national community of practice in OEP, and members of this group will also be invited to contribute to the paper. The researchers also plan to schedule face-to-face or online consultations and delivery of workshops to discuss and gather stakeholders' feedback on the White Paper.

Other activities that will be conducted as part of the development of the White Paper are: to further review existing national and international OEP policies; to review existing research; to disseminate the findings and make them accessible to the sector; to develop and compile resources for government, institutions and practitioners and to mechanisms to evaluate impact. These are also elements that underpin translational research (Mitchell, 2016).

### **Final Considerations**

University-level adoption of OEP is not completely contingent on national policy, but whole-of-sector traction is reliant on national-level awareness from policy makers. It is the realisation that the current rhetoric positions education as a 'private good' and one that can be commercialised and 'exported' that drives a deeper understanding of how to construct a value proposition for OEP in the policy space. This realisation can be argued as a causal link between the misalignment of the goals of OEP lobbyists and government policy-makers. If OEP is positioned as 'disruptive' or 'in conflict' with current educational practices, gaining traction becomes even more problematic.

As a response to the possible conflicts in ideologies, a middle ground can be established by identifying opportunities to explicitly link open practices to current policies. This positions OEP as a supporting approach (and not the only approach) to achieving articulated outcomes for Australian Higher Education. By adopting an approach founded in translational research it is possible to engage in a more inclusive and open discussion with stakeholders and to collaboratively seek the alignment and value of OEP in a national agenda. This paper has outlined not only the ideological differences, but also shown evidence from global government bodies that Australian higher education is ill-developed in open practice, despite sharing concerns for equity of access, scalability, capacity-building, and collaboration. It is necessary therefore to show that openness is not a direct competitor with traditional education systems, but an approach that can enhance, and provide

innovative and substantively new opportunities for learning and teaching Australia, benefiting not only learners and educators from all walks of life, but also institutions and governments nationally and internationally.

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