

# Towards Teaching in Public

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# Towards Teaching in Public

## Reshaping the Modern University

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## Chapter 9

# Open Education: From the Freedom of Things to the Freedom of People

Joss Winn

### Introduction

Marx declared that ‘[t]he wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities,” its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity’ (Marx 1976: 125). This chapter offers a critical analysis of Open Education, a growing international movement of educators and educational institutions who, through the use of the internet, seek to provide universal access to knowledge. This analysis focuses particularly on Open Educational Resources (OER), the current, dominant form of Open Education, and attempts to understand the purpose and production of this public good within the immense accumulation of commodities that characterizes the creation of value – also termed wealth – in capitalist society.

It is acknowledged that Open Education is a potentially radical form of public education and, in spite of the differences in meaning of public and open (which are not the focus of this chapter), Open Education can be understood as a public good or, rather, a form of social wealth. Here, the use of the term social wealth draws from Marx and refers to an understanding of value that is intrinsically related to a historically specific mode of production, capitalism (Postone 1993, Wood 2002). Understood as a form of social wealth in capitalist society, Open Education can be subjected to a critique from the standpoint of critical political economy which recognizes that social wealth is a historically specific form of value, created through specific relations among people, to which Marx refers as ‘a refined and civilised method of exploitation’ (Marx 1976: 486). In this view, social wealth is derived from labour that is dominated by particular social structures. As Postone make clear,

Within the framework of Marx's analysis, the form of social domination that characterizes capitalism is not ultimately a function of private property, of the ownership by the capitalists of the surplus product and the means of production: rather, it is grounded in the value form of wealth itself, a form of social wealth that confronts living labor (the workers) as a structurally alien and dominant form of power. (Postone 1993: 30)

Taking this view of social wealth, being open or public does not offer an adequate way out of the capitalist form of social domination. We must examine aspects of Open Education as a public good in capitalist society from the perspective of a critique of value as the form of social wealth in capitalist society. The latter is derived from the domination of people by alien structures, which leads us to question the notion that what is public is necessarily good. The issue then becomes, can Open Education create a form of value that helps us overcome those alien structures? If not, can it point us towards an emancipatory social practice that does create a new form of social wealth? In order to answer this question, the first section of this chapter situates Open Education, not within a history of technology which is relatively straightforward, but within the history of neo-liberal education policy in the UK over the last 30 years. Open Educational Resources are then analysed using Marx's critique of value in order to understand better whether Open Education points towards a different form of social wealth.

## The Public are Our First Students

In 2007, the Open Society Institute and the Shuttleworth Foundation convened a meeting in Cape Town, where a number of leading Open Education proponents sought to find ways to 'deepen and accelerate their efforts through collaboration' (CTOED 2007). An outcome of this meeting was the Cape Town Open Education Declaration (CTOED), which described Open Education as an emerging movement that 'combines the established tradition of sharing good ideas with fellow educators and the collaborative, interactive culture of the Internet' (CTOED 2007). The Declaration begins

We are on the cusp of a global revolution in teaching and learning. Educators worldwide are developing a vast pool of educational resources on the Internet, open and free for all to use. These educators are creating a world where each and every person on earth can access and contribute



to the sum of all human knowledge. They are also planting the seeds of a new pedagogy where educators and learners create, shape and evolve knowledge together, deepening their skills and understanding as they go. (CTOED 2007)

It is understandable that the authors should begin their Declaration by celebrating what had so far been achieved. Indeed, over the last decade or so, proponents worldwide have attracted millions of pounds from philanthropic and state funding. Although still relatively few in number, individual educators and their institutions have created a discernible movement that has produced tens of thousands of educational materials, often entire courses, and made them available to anyone with access to the internet (Winn 2010). Today, there are international consortia, conferences, NGOs and an increasing number of government reports that promote the opening of education.

The Declaration is not a manifesto that defines the Open Education movement, but is an attempt by a small number of influential individuals to build the movement through a unifying vision, which anyone can sign up to; at the end of 2010, over 2,100 individuals and 220 organizations had done so. Significantly, the authors of the Declaration acknowledge that it is heavily focused on Open Educational Resources (OER), the aspect of Open Education that continues to receive the greatest amount of effort and funding.

Open Educational Resources (OER) refers to the 'educational materials and resources offered freely and openly for anyone to use and under some licenses to re-mix, improve and redistribute' (Wikipedia contributors 2011). Typically, those resources include both learning resources and tools by which those resources are created, managed and disseminated. They are defined as open by the application of a permissive licence, such as those developed by Creative Commons (Creative Commons 2011). At the heart of the Declaration are three strategies aimed at increasing the reach and impact of OERs. Their implementation will require changes in the relationship between teachers and learners and in their practices; changes in the creation, use and distribution of educational resources and changes in policy to support the open, participatory culture of the Open Education movement.

The Declaration's emphasis on OER is not surprising. For a number of years, there have been efforts to create Re-usable Learning Objects (RLO), digital teaching and learning materials that are produced and shared through an adherence to formal technological standards so they can be disaggregated and reconstituted for re-use over time and by other educa-

tors (Freisen 2003). In contrast, OERs can be understood as less formally identified in terms of their composition and adherence to technological standards, yet more formally identified through the application of Creative Commons or other permissive licences; the latter act as methods of both protecting the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) of the creator (an individual or institution) and liberalizing the potential re-use of the materials.

One of the reasons why OERs remain the dominant mode of expression of Open Education is that the creation and licensed distribution of these teaching and learning materials has been very successful in attracting philanthropic and state funding over the last ten years. For example, in 2009, MIT received over \$1.8m for its OpenCourseWare project, which has systematically published OERs for over 2,000 of MIT's courses since 2001 (Wiley 2009). This high profile project has raised the profile of OERs and similar projects have followed elsewhere. In 2008, the UK Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) provided £4.7m of funding to the Joint Information and Systems Committee (JISC) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) to 'make a significant amount of existing learning resources freely available online, licensed in such a way to enable them to be used and re-purposed worldwide' (JISC 2009b). Similarly, £5m was provided in 2010 to 'build on and expand the work of the pilot phase around the release of OER material, and commence research and technical work examining the discovery and use of OER - specifically by academics' (JISC 2010).

It is important to remember that proponents of Open Education are advocating that all university courses should be made publicly available for re-use. In the author's experience, the process of designing, creating and publishing OERs for public re-use affects the way in which teachers conceptualize both their course and the public as students (Winn 2010). Hence, Open Education has the potential to reform not only the way that teachers teach and students learn, but also teachers' perception of the student and the role of universities as institutions where knowledge is somehow produced. Arguably, Open Education goes beyond Burawoy's assertion, which Neary and Morris highlight in Chapter 1 of this book, that 'students are our first public' (Burawoy 2004: 1608) and turns this idea on its head: for Open Education, the public are our first students.

The Open Education movement has not gone unnoticed by government. In the UK, the funding for the pilot phase of OER projects was first mentioned by the then Minister for Higher Education David Lammy, during a

speech (Lammy 2009) where he launched *The Edgeless University* (DEMOS 2009). This report argued for a 'rebirth' of universities, no longer as simply harbours of knowledge, but as users of online tools and open access as a means to survive in a changing environment. Thus, Open Education is advocated by the government both as a way to respond to changes that technology is imposing on institutions and as a way to further liberalize the higher education sector rationalized by the rhetoric of access, democratization and choice.

## Open Education within the Neo-Liberal Transformation of Higher Education

*The Edgeless University* report (DEMOS 2009) posited technology as both a problem and solution for universities. Advocates of Open Education saw this as an opportunity to further their vision of 'a world where each and every person on earth can access and contribute to the sum of all human knowledge' (CTOED 2007), yet this view neglects to situate the role of technology, and in particular, Open Education, within the history of educational reform in the UK over the last three decades. Since 1978, there have been successive policy changes within UK higher education, which can be identified as points along a trajectory of neo-liberal reform. Finlayson and Hayward (2010) have argued that between 1978 and 1997, Conservative government policy led to

- an expansion of the university system, leading to resource scarcity
- the deliberate imposition of complex conditions of resource competition between institutions
- the adoption by all but a small number of elite institutions of a corporate management structure appropriate to these conditions.

The advent of the Labour government in 1997 marked a shift from the years of Tory attrition to the promotion of the knowledge economy, within which universities were primarily conceived as engines for economic growth. That is, '[c]onservative policy was about reducing the economic input, while Labour sought to increase their economic output' (Finlayson and Hayward 2010: 2). Whereas the Conservative government had sought to impose corporate structures of management on universities as a matter of efficiency, the Labour government set them to work, fuelling the engine of

the knowledge economy with intellectual property produced by a massive programme of widening participation of human capital.

In their analysis, Finlayson and Hayward (2010) identified four rationales for such reforms of higher education: expansion, efficiency, economic accountability (value for money) and political accountability (democratization or widening participation). The values of expansion, efficiency and accountability were embedded in successive government-commissioned reports, which led to their practical realization and implementation through changes in legislation (for example, Jarratt's 1985 *Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities* and the *Education Reform Act* (DES 1988)). These values themselves must also be located within their historical context at the end of the 1970s, a period that witnessed the move from Keynesian welfarism to neo-liberal privatization, from Fordism to post-Fordism and a corresponding shift in the West away from manufacturing towards services and the knowledge economy. It is along this historical trajectory, when the heteronomy of neo-liberalism has become the new common-sense (Stevenson and Tooms 2010), that we should try to understand the development of Open Education, a term originally used in the 1960s and 1970s to refer to changes in classroom organization and pedagogy but now used largely to refer to a resource-centric mode of production and consumption of information.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to situate the Open Education movement of the last ten years within the historical context of educational reform. However, for it to succeed in its ambitions it is necessary for the proponents of Open Education to develop a greater sense of self-reflexivity, to ask how it is of its time and to recognize the structural constraints and imperatives within which they are working. For example, almost all of the funding that has been directed towards Open Education has been around the development of OERs, either from private philanthropic organizations in the US, such as the Mellon Foundation and Hewlett Foundation or, in the UK, government funding like that administered by HEFCE (Stacey 2010). Most recently, the US government announced a \$2bn funding programme over four years for OERs to develop and make innovative use of a variety of evidence-based learning materials, including cutting-edge shared courses and open educational resources. These resources would be available online for free, greatly expanding learning opportunities for students and workers. (United States Department of Labor 2011)

To what extent, we might ask, are these funders serving their own specific interests? Is Open Education being used as a method of compensating for a decline in the welfare state? Is government advocacy of OER a way of

tackling resource scarcity in an expanding system of higher education? To what extent is Open Education a critical response to neo-liberal reforms of education (Nelson and Watt 2004, DeAngelis and Harvie 2009) or, as Lammy (2009) makes clear, is it first and foremost meant to serve the knowledge economy and the increasing liberalization of higher education? If 'education is a political activity, framed within a political environment' (Stevenson and Tooms 2010: 6), how do we frame Open Education as a political activity within a political environment?

Similarly, to locate Open Education within a history of the use of technology in education might also tell us something about the overall trajectory within which Open Education exists. Throughout the history of capitalism, technology has served to 'improve' the efficiency of production and no less so than in the production of the knowledge economy (Noble 1998). As it will be argued below, Open Education in its dominant, institutional OER form can be understood as the application of technological innovation and efficiencies to create greater value out of academic labour an entirely capitalist, not a revolutionary endeavour.

## The Commodification of Open Education and the Role of Academic Labour

This section shows how Marx's critical social theory of capital based upon the categories of commodity, labour and value remains apposite for an analysis of Open Education today and in doing so, how our understanding of the public good is defined by the alien structures that create social wealth in capitalist society. According to Marx, capital is a historically specific form of social mediation through commodities whose source of value is human labour. The categories of commodity, labour and value are central to Marx's theory of capital as *the* hegemonic logic of modernity. Recent Marxist writers (Wood 2002, Clarke 1991a, Postone 1993) have shown the extent of capitalism's imperatives and constraints, and write about the history of capitalism as driven by an imperative or 'unfreedom', that is 'the unfolding of an immanent necessity' (Postone 2009: 32). As Neary elaborates in the final chapter of this book, the education system, like all other social institutions, should be understood as contained by and in many ways complicit in the persistence of this unfreedom. When its proponents refer to Open Education as a 'revolution in teaching and learning' (CTOED 2007), we should question whether Open Education is an emancipatory practice and ask how the imperatives and constraints of capitalism manifest themselves

within it. A preliminary attempt to answer these questions can be found in Marx's categories of the commodity, labour and value by revealing their form in the Open Education movement.

For Marx, the categories of labour and value have dual characteristics which are embodied in the commodity. In a capitalist society, the commodity mediates the way worker and employer, friends, family, teachers and students relate to one another. Every thing (commodity) has the dual characteristic of use-value and exchange-value. Its use value is not only the material, qualitative usefulness of the thing (such as an OER that can be used to teach or learn something), but also the bearer of its exchange value (its dynamic quantitative relation) (Marx 1976). All societies throughout history have understood the utility of things (use value) but it is unique to capitalist societies that the exchange value of a commodity becomes the reason why things are produced (Marx 1976). Exchange value is an abstraction, a form of equivalence and a defining characteristic of all commodities. According to this view, the value of an OER to the institution that releases it is not simply in its usefulness but in its relative equivalence to the exchange value of other commodities. It is this real, yet, abstract, constantly changing, value embedded in the potential for exchange that is common to all commodities.

The measure of this real abstraction (its value) is to be found not in the commodity's usefulness, but in the dual characteristics of labour: concrete labour (productive, purposeful human activity) and abstract labour (the objectified expenditure of labour measured against the total labour power of society). Marx describes abstract labour as the common 'congealed quantities of homogeneous human labour' (Marx 1976: 128), a commodity itself, whose value is measured by the socially necessary labour-time to produce any use value under the normal conditions of production and the average skill and intensity of labour prevalent in society (Marx 1976). In capitalism, social relations, mediated by the circulation of commodities, puts out of sight and out of mind the concrete labour expended to create the usefulness of the object so that we relate to one another through the exchange of things, whose source and substance of value is found in the social equivalence of abstract labour. Finally, Marx's theory of surplus value refers to the dynamic force of capitalism which is the imperative to accumulate value through exchange; that is, buying in order to sell. Technology, machines and commodities, can transfer their value but only labour-power provides the opportunity to create more value as its value must be less than that which it valorizes in the production process. The form in which surplus value is generally realized is profit in the form of money which is then circulated in exchange for more commodities and so on (Marx 1976).

## The Value of the OER Commodity

In the Marxist view, the Open Educational Resource is a commodity, a digital file, text book, pedagogical tool or series of lectures, which has both a use value and exchange value. The use value of an OER is in how we can teach with it and what we can learn from it. However, according to Marx, it is not enough for an object to simply have a use value in capitalist society, it must also have an exchange value, which is how the value of OERs can be expressed. The value of the OER commodity is defined by the ability to share (exchange) the resource for public re-use. Arguably, it is for this reason that sharing is so central to the self-identity of the Open Education movement. It is the process by which the movement's value becomes apparent and, potentially, by which institutions can accumulate surplus value.

Educational resources have always been created by teachers, but the imperative to share them is what defines Open Education. Technologies such as the internet and licences such as Creative Commons are employed to help realize and safe-guard the value of the educational resource and can be used both to liberate and protect the OER commodity. The internet provides a medium for exchange and the Creative Commons licence guarantees the attributed, unfettered exchange from producer to consumer, overcoming the bottleneck of one-to-one negotiation over the appropriate use of the resource. Through the use of Creative Commons licences as a legal standard for exchange, the circulation of the OER commodity on the internet can occur at great velocity (Winn 2011).

The concrete labour of the person who produces an OER is the mental and physical energy exerted in the process of designing, writing, building and publishing the resource itself. In capitalist society, employers are not primarily interested in employees as complex, social individuals, but in the contribution that their labour-power can make to the value of, in this case, the university. Employees are remunerated for the time spent expending their energy, receiving less than their overall value to the institution (Marx 1976). Employees are a source of value for the university in a number of ways, including providing quality assured teaching, attracting research income and enhancing the reputation of the institution. The creation of OERs therefore exists only within the capitalist value accumulation process.

In capitalist society, employers are compelled to ensure that employees are as productive as possible within the limits of time and space. The value of the OER, therefore, is that a single teaching resource is a depository of value for exchange outside of the traditional time and space of the physical classroom. The publishing of the OER on the internet initiates an act of



exchange which may realize surplus value for the institution in several ways; this is evident from the constantly recurring discussions about sustainability within the Open Education movement (McGill *et al.* 2008). How can OERs keep producing value over time? If OERs cannot create value over time or, in other words, if there is no sustainable business case for OERs, then can institutions continue to justify their production?

### Conjuring Value Out of MIT's OpenCourseWare

MIT's OpenCourseWare (OCW) initiative is the single largest institutional provision of OERs to date, offering teaching and learning materials for over 2,000 of its courses. This initiative provides a good example of how Open Education, currently dominated by the OER commodity form, is contributing to the predictable course of the capitalist expansion of value. Through the use of technology, MIT has expanded its presence in the educational market by attracting private philanthropic funds to create a competitive advantage, which has yet to be surpassed by any other single institution. In this case, technology has been used to improve the labour of MIT academics as a source of value, who produce lecture notes and recordings of lectures which are then published on MIT's website. In this process, value has been created by MIT through the novel application of science and technology, which did not exist prior to the inception of OCW in 2001. Over ten years, 78 per cent of the OCW initiative has been paid for by external, mostly philanthropic, income (d'Oliveira and Lerman 2009). In 2009, this valorization process attracted \$1,836,000 of private philanthropic funding, donations and commercial referrals, contributing 51 per cent of the annual operating costs of the OCW initiative, the other 49 per cent being contributed by MIT (d'Oliveira and Lerman 2009). Through the production of OERs on such a massive scale, MIT has released into circulation a significant amount of capital which enhances the value of its brand as educator and innovator. Through the OCW initiative, additional value has been created by MIT's staff, who remain the source and substance of the value-creating process. Even though the OERs are non-commercially licensed and require attribution in order to re-use them, the production of this value-creating property can be understood within the 'perpetual labour process that we know better as communication' (Söderberg 2007: 72). Understood in this way, the commodification of MIT's courses occurs long before the application of a novel licence and distribution via the internet. OCW is simply 'a stage in the metamorphosis of the labour process' (Söderberg 2007: 71).



Following this initial expansion of the value of OCW and MIT's leadership position in Open Education, and with the private philanthropic funding that has supported it due to run out, new streams of funding based on donations and technical innovation are being considered to enhance the value of the materials provided (d'Oliveira and Lerman 2009). Innovation in this area of education has made the market for OER competitive and for MIT to retain its major share of web traffic, it needs to refresh its offering on a regular basis and seek to expand its footprint in the educational market. Proposed methods of achieving this are, naturally, technological: the use of social media, mobile platforms and a 'click to enroll' system of distance learning (Wiley 2009). More recently, reflecting on the tenth anniversary of OCW, one of the founders of the initiative underlined their objective for the next ten years.

Our ambition is to increase the impact of OCW by an order of magnitude,' says Professor Dick Yue, who chaired the committee that proposed OCW and also advises the program. 'If we've reached 100 million people in our first ten years, we want to reach a billion in the next ten. If a million educators used our content in their classrooms so far, we hope to help 10 million use the content in our next decade.' (MIT 2011a)

The plan to expand the OCW initiative ten-fold to reach a billion people in the next ten years has four strands, each based around the objective of a quantitative expansion of MIT's capital in the global OER commodity circuit: placing OCW everywhere; reaching key audiences; creating communities of open learning and empowering educators worldwide (MIT 2011b). In this respect, technology, such as the internet, has had both an intensive and extensive effect. It allowed MIT to intensify the productivity of its academics through the duplication of digital resources and to extend the reach and value of the MIT brand through the distribution of OCW. The economic imperative to expand can be understood as a compulsion enforced by an increasingly competitive market for OER (Wood 2002).

MIT's statement concerning the need to find new ways to create value out of their OCW initiative is a good example of how value is temporally determined and quickly diminishes as the production of OERs becomes generalized through the efforts of other universities. Seen as part of MIT's entire portfolio, the contribution of OCW follows a well-defined path of capitalist expansion, value creation and destruction and highlights the need for constant innovation in a competitive environment. It also points to the potential crisis of OER as an institutional commodity form, through

the diminution of academic labour, which is capitalism's primary source of value, and the declining value of the generalized OER commodity form, which can only be counteracted through constant technological innovation (Wendling 2009).

The analysis of MIT is not intended to imply criticism of the OCW team at MIT, who are, no doubt, working on the understanding that the initiative is a public good. In terms of creating socially useful wealth, it is indeed a public good. The suggestion here is to show how seemingly good and public initiatives such as OCW are subject to the structural discipline of capitalism and compound its social relations through the exploitation of labour and the valorization of the commodity form. The sustainability of such initiatives remains primarily dependent not on any measure of their contribution to the public good, but rather on their ability to attract the commodity of money by enhancing the reputation of the institution, recruiting staff and students, demonstrating efficiencies, furthering innovation, improving the student experience and supporting other institutional activities such as staff development and the quality assurance process (McGill *et al.* 2008). In the light of these institutional benefits, it is worth considering the Open Education movement's failure to provide an adequate critique of the institution as a form of company and regulator of wage-work, while it celebrates the expanding circulation of a form of institutional value.

### The University as a Personified Subject

As Neocleous (2003) has shown, in modern capitalism, the worker is objectified, as the commodity of labour serves to transform the company into a personified subject, with greater rights and fewer responsibilities under the law than people themselves. As the neo-liberal university increasingly adopts corporate forms, objectives and practices, so the role of research and teaching is to improve the persona of the university. Like many other US universities, MIT awards tenure to a tiny handful of elite academics in their field (Lin 2010) thus rewarding, but also retaining through the incentive of tenure, staff who bring international prestige to MIT. The employment of prestigious researchers diverts effort and attention from individuals' achievements and reputations and focuses on the achievements of the institution. This is measured by its overall reputation, which is rewarded by increased government funding, commercial partnerships and philanthropic donations. This, in turn, attracts a greater number of better staff and

students, who join the university in order to enjoy the benefits of this reward. Yet, once absorbed into the labour process, these individuals serve the social character of the institution, which is constantly being monitored and evaluated through a system of league tables in which

the process of personification of capital ... is the flip side of a process in which human persons come to be treated as commodities – the worker, as human subject, sells labour as an object. As relations of production are reified so things are personified – human subjects become objects and objects become subjects – an irrational, ‘bewitched, distorted and upside-down world’ in which ‘Monsieur le Capital’ takes the form of a social character – a *dramatis personae* on the economic stage, no less. (Neocleous 2003: 159)

To what extent the Open Education movement can counteract this personification of educational institutions and the subtle objectification of their staff and students is still open to question. The overwhelming trend so far, however, is for OER to be seen as sustainable only to the extent that it can attract private and state funding which serves the reputational character of the respective universities. Yet, as Marx and more recently Postone (1993) have argued, the creation of this temporally determined form of value is achieved through the domination of people by time, structuring our lives and mediating our social relations. The increased use of technology is, and always has been, capitalism’s principal technique of improving the input ratio of labour-power, measured by time, to the output of value, which is in itself temporal and therefore in constant need of expansion. And so the imperative of conjuring value out of labour continues upon its treadmill.

## The Freedom of People, Not Things

Clarke maintains that

[t]he working class is not simply the object of domination of the ‘instrumental rationality’ of capitalism. However alienated may be the forms of social labour under capitalism, the fact nevertheless remains that the creative powers of co-operative labour remain the only source of social wealth, and of the surplus value appropriated by the capitalist class. (Clarke 1991a: 327)

Education is at the heart of the contradiction of capitalist domination in that the working class, through its creative labour, is the sole source of wealth; capitalism must at the same time develop this creativity through education and restrain it through the discipline of wage labour. This contradiction is no less apparent in the Open Educational Resources movement as institutions and educators seek to demonstrate and sustain the value of their resources, and therefore the value of themselves. Furthermore, the state has assumed its role of promoting Open Education as a source of social wealth and institutional value. This has the additional effect of increasing the marketization of higher education by liberalizing the productive output of teaching staff and shaping the overall movement of Open Education into one that is tied to private and state funding and on-going institutional valorization processes. Through the useful sharing of knowledge, OER has the potential to be a source of social power, but remains constrained by the dominant structures of social wealth and complicit in the valorization process of teaching and learning.

This critical analysis presents the circulation of Open Educational Resources as a misguided concern for the freedom of things over the freedom of people, a concern that is based on a liberal view of economics, where value is attached to things rather than labour being understood as the actual source of value. Marx understood this important distinction and criticized 'the modern bagmen of free trade' (Marx 1976, 153) who see the exchange relation as the source of value, rather than the social relation of private property and wage labour (Marx 1976, Rubin 1979). Marx acknowledges the dual characteristics of the commodity being fundamentally an expression of the dual characteristics of labour and, in so doing, provides an emancipatory social theory that could lead to a really emancipatory social practice of Open Education (Clarke 1991a). If the emphasis of the Open Education movement can be moved away from the institutional processes of OER production and exchange towards a critique of research, teaching and learning as capitalist forms of labour, it might be possible to assert the movement as a critical form of social power rather than wealth.

Political action, including education, must therefore recognize that the potential to bring about such a change lies not in the freedom of things, but in the freedom of people from labour, capital's sole source of value and hence its contradiction. In this view, Open Education's revolutionary potential is in its as yet under-acknowledged re-conceptualization of what it means to work as a researcher, teacher and student. In this view, the project for Open Education is not the liberation of resources but the liberation of teachers from the work of teaching and the liberation of students from the

work of learning. Elsewhere, this has been more fully elaborated as a ‘pedagogy of excess’ (Neary and Hagyard 2010), where teachers and students develop an understanding of the present as history and so become more than their prescribed roles through a radical, self-reflexive, intellectual and practical process, which interrupts the logic of capitalism (Neary 2010, Neary and Hagyard 2010). As a social movement, the Open Education movement’s contribution could be to re-conceive education not merely in yet another commodified form but in the production of knowledge at the level of society through the abolition of teaching and learning as commodified forms of labour that mediate social relations and dominate our lives.

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