

Sustainability strategies for open educational resources

Creating lasting value and cultivating adoption



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1 Introduction

It is becoming more and more common for teaching staff to create, share and reuse open educational resources, or 'OER'.¹ Often this begins with a project. That project, which may or may not draw its funding from external sources, creates an initial collection of OER is created while teaching staff and support staff gain experience working with OER. So, what can be done to make sure that the activities continue once the project ends? In other words, how can sustainable use of OER be embedded in the educational institute? This report calls the various activities and approaches **strategies for sustainability**, or simply **sustainability strategies**. In this context, sustainability refers to a situation where the results will retain lasting value even after the project ends. For example, sustainability strategies can help in maintaining the educational resources that are developed as part of the project.

In 2022, the Acceleration Plan's *On the road to digital educational resources and OER zone* mapped out what sustainability strategies are used in practice in the Netherlands. Strategies were collected by means of a survey of sixteen projects relating to OER in tertiary education in the Netherlands including vocational education (*mbo*), universities of applied science (*hbo*) and research universities (*wo*). The survey looked at what strategies were applied before, during and after the project that helped to make the project results more sustainable. Most of those projects were subsidised under the Dutch Open and Online Education Incentive Scheme (*Stimuleringsregeling Open en Online onderwijs*). This scheme was divided into two categories: OER and online education. The projects that were included in the survey all fell under the first category. The findings are summarised in the infographic [Sustainability strategies for OER](#) (Dutch).

This report describes what activities were undertaken before, during and after the various projects **to continue the projects after the funding under the Incentive Plan stopped**. Besides those activities, we also mapped out what, in retrospect, was needed to successfully implement the sustainability strategies before, during or after the project. This is useful information in connection with **new schemes that will be introduced** (including potentially under Npuls), and for **communities** that have started working with OER in the Netherlands.

The information presented in this report concerns the OER category under the Incentive Scheme. To organise the various sustainability strategies, we use the same framework as for the infographic mentioned above. That framework covers two dimensions:

1. **Time phase:** Before, during or after the project
2. **Aspect.** Broken down into separate layers:
 - **Organisational:** Strategy & Policy, Culture & Human Resource Development, Organisation, Technology & Infrastructure, Economic & Financial, Legal & Compliance and Primary Process (education)
 - **Thematic** elements of working with OER: Awareness of OER, How to search for OER, Substantive access to OER, Reusing OER, Creating OER or Sharing OER

¹ For the definition of this term, and the definitions of other key terms used in this report, see: <https://use.edusources.nl/introductie-digitale-open-leermaterialen/steps/begrippenlijst>

- **Actor:** Teaching staff, Support staff (both educational and informational), Management, Student, Community/Community of practice

The final product is a new summary of sustainability strategies as developed under the Acceleration Plan. That summary can be used as the basis for new projects, and offers educational institutes and communities of practice that contributed in earlier stages a way to share their results on a permanent basis, both in tertiary education the Netherlands and abroad.

This report describes, in sequence, the research method, the findings, an analysis of those findings and the conclusions and recommendations.

2 Research method

During the autumn of 2024, we conducted a series of interviews in Dutch with the project leaders of nine projects under the Dutch Open and Online Education Incentive Scheme (*Stimuleringsregeling Open en online onderwijs*). The interviews, which were semi-structured, focused on the following points:

Focus Point A: overview of strategies

For this focus point, we gathered the following information:

1. **Project goal.** The project's goal is assumed to affect the sustainability strategies and long-term success.
2. **Experience** with OER. The institute's level of experience is assumed to have a positive impact on the success of the sustainability strategies.
3. **Overview.** Bringing together the sustainability strategies according to the structure used for the infographic.
4. **Success.** Understanding the level of success that sustainability strategies achieve in the long term, i.e. whether those strategies lead to a collection of OER with lasting value.
5. **Foreseeability.** Understanding factors that have a negative or positive impact on sustainability plans.
6. **Support.** Understanding what support is needed. The responses to this item are relevant to SURF and Npuls.

Focus Point B: information for answering the following questions:

1. Can any pronouncements be made about how a connection to pre-existing education relates to the success of the project's results (and their sustainability)? Particular examples might include the forms of education that can be classified as Open Educational Practices or Open Pedagogy.
2. Are the sustainability activities more successful if an active community (and/or community of practice) was involved during the project?

These questions are based on two assumptions that we defined, taking our inspiration from the studies by Versantvoort & Schuwer (2023); Tlili et al. (2020) and Downes (2007):

1. Once the OER are incorporated into education, they need to be kept up-to-date. This means that the sustainability of those educational resources becomes part of pre-existing activities for updating teaching materials.
2. Making a community of practice responsible for defining, designing and realising the OER during the project also creates a sense of ownership among that community. If that community can remain active after the project ends, its members can play an active part in the OER's sustainability.

We obtained the interviewees' permission to record the interviews and then transcribe them using the Amberscript tool. The transcripts were rendered anonymous and used to generate a

draft report using ChatGPT and NotebookLM. The draft report was checked alongside the transcript to verify that the generative language models had correctly abstracted the structure and details. It was then sent to the interviewees for feedback and approval. Where they had comments, those were incorporated into the final report in Dutch.

Appendix A contains a list of the interviewees. The interview protocol is included as Appendix B.

3 Findings (Focus Point A): Overview

This chapter describes the findings from the interviews, broken down by focus area.

3.1 Project goal and experience with OER

Seven of the projects were related to education at research universities (*wo*), and two were related to education at universities of applied science (*hbo*) in the Netherlands. Six of the projects included developing OER, in some cases to build on pre-existing OER collections. One project defined its goal as modifying pre-existing closed educational resources for open sharing. Two of the projects also had the goal of realising an active community of practice for the OER. Two of the projects involved developing an open environment for open Virtual Reality (VR) educational resources.

Within each project, one or more of the project partners had prior experience with OER.

3.2 Sustainability strategies

The table below shows the sustainability strategies that the project leaders mentioned during the interviews. Some of the strategies can be categorised under more than one topic; in those cases, they have been assigned to the category that is the best fit. For a reflection on this table, see the next chapter.

Aspect	Before project	During project	After project
Organisation			
Strategy & Policy		Involving policymakers and managers	
Culture & HR Development	Building on the culture of openness and sharing educational resources	Active exchanges of knowledge	Formalising ownership, either with individuals or with partnerships
	Experimenting with existing VR applications	Making arrangements about progress based on 2-year voluntary commitment	Professional associations can help to encourage sharing and updating the resources
		Improving the project's visibility	
		Developing manuals and documentation for knowledge transfer	
Organisation	Seeking out partnerships with stakeholders such as the library	Structurally involving users	Integrating sustainable development of OER as a library service

Aspect	Before project	During project	After project
	Setting up a broad steering or sounding-board group (including representatives of decision-makers)	Opening an experimentation lab for teaching staff and students	
	Bringing the library on as a partner in the project	Developing a workflow for sharing educational resources	
		Organising regular writing sessions	
		Involving a broader group of stakeholders	
		Working in small groups	
		Investing in expertise	
		Providing training in using VR technology	
		Organising regular face-to-face sessions with the project group and the sounding-board group	
Technology & Infrastructure	Choosing a platform with a view to sustainability (e.g. available for >5 years)	Choosing a platform (make or buy/use)	Using Github for automatic updates to OER, with a view to version management
	Researching what infrastructure is needed	Considering hardware and software management	Integrating with other systems
			Sharing on open-source platform (Wikiwijs/edusources)
			Making arrangements with ICT department about management and maintenance
Economic & Financial	Sharing costs in a consortium	Finding sufficient funding (from internal and/or external sources)	Formalising sustainable funding for five years
		Handling development in-house	Arranging funding for further development by professional association

Aspect	Before project	During project	After project
			Arranging internal project funding for further development
Legal & Compliance	Choosing a Creative Commons licence	Considering data management and privacy	
Primary Process (education)		Preparing a technical and didactic lesson plan	Integrating the OER into the curriculum, either as a unit or in modular form
		Embedding the OER into education at multiple academic universities	
Professionals involved			
Support	Making clear arrangements with support services	Offering support from ICT and the library	Making arrangements with ICT department about management and maintenance
		Considering hardware and software management	
Teaching staff	Establishing the apparent need for an up-to-date and accessible textbook	Regularly taking part in writing sessions	
		Bringing in teaching staff and other staff as developers	
		Reviewing resources (e.g. through a research group)	
Management		Involving management	
Students		Involving students in testing and reviewing the modules	
		Asking students for feedback on the user-friendliness and impact of the learning experience, e.g. the VR environment.	

Aspect	Before project	During project	After project
Community/community of practice	Setting up a partnership with multiple educational institutes	Giving presentations at annual conferences	Maintaining and/or expanding the community of practice (including across borders)
	Seeking to improve interactions with national partnership group	Creating a community, consortium and/or professional association, or seeking to join an existing one	Bringing in the community of practice as a partner for sharing educational resources (in the Netherlands and abroad)
Thematic aspects of OER			
Awareness		Improving awareness about OER and mutual cooperation between departments	Creating and/or scaling up awareness
Searching OER			Sharing a link to the website and Github on an open-source platform (Wikiwijs/edusources)
Substantive access to OER		Developing a taxonomy	
		Developing a knowledge graph	
Reusing OER	Starting from pre-existing resources		
Creating OER		Having internal and external reviewers monitor the quality of the subject matter	Giving the textbook a modular structure, divided into separate modules to make it more flexible and adaptable
		Emphasising the development of concrete educational resources	
		Developing a quality model	
		Developing innovative approaches to content production	

3.3 Long-term success of the sustainability strategies

How effective the sustainability strategies are for the project results can only be determined if some time has passed since the project ended. When we conducted the interviews, three of the projects satisfied that criterion. One of those projects concerned a grassroots development, i.e. an initiative from teaching staff, without instruction from above. Although that project did not consider sustainability as a topic, its results were included in a follow-up project in an indirect form of sustainability. The second project realised an assignment bank that is still used and that was recently updated to reflect new developments in the profession. The open textbook that was the product of the third project is still part of the curriculum and is updated by the relevant professional association. Remarkably, this project cannot draw on sustainable funding. With each of these three projects, the results actually became part of the curriculum, either during the project or after it ended.

Since the other six projects had only recently ended – or not yet ended at all – when we conducted the interviews, it is impossible to say anything about the long-term success of the sustainability strategies applied there.

3.4 Foreseeability of the sustainability strategies

In four of the projects, the professionals involved in the project made assumptions beforehand about the mutual cooperation between various stakeholders who they expected would be important for the sustainable maintenance of the results after the project ended. In one of the projects, changes in the team during the project were identified as an unforeseen event with a negative impact on the sustainability of the project results. Arrangements that were made during the project and that had a positive impact on the sustainability of the project results dealt with maintaining the software used and providing structural support for it. Those arrangements were put into effect after the project ended, by creating a separate budget and assigning maintenance of the OER to the library as a service. For most of the projects, the professionals involved also identified factors that affected how the project was carried out. However, they did not link this to the impact on sustainability, and so those findings are not considered here.

3.5 Support

The experiences of what support the projects were given vary considerably. Members of multiple projects mentioned the library as a partner that advised on the choice of best platform, helped to make the results findable and/or assisted with legal aspects. A professional association (for promotion and establishing contact with international experts), relevant study programmes and a research group each received one mention. Several of the projects also mentioned support from their research universities and universities of applied sciences, though that support was qualified as minor. The lack of support in obtaining funding for further sustainability was put forward as a particular shortcoming.

The experiences with the support offered by SURF were varied. On the positive side, SURF facilitated spaces and offered access to valuable networks and knowledge sources. The members involved in one of the projects felt that they did not receive enough thematic help from SURF in identifying sustainable strategies: they wanted a platform that matched their needs, rather than adapting their resources to suit edusources. Another project recommended that SURF should expand its services with application management support for successful projects, for example by facilitating hosting or advising on possibilities for funding.

3.6 Lessons learned and recommendations from project leaders

The interviewees were asked to reflect on their project and highlight issues and lessons that could potentially be relevant for future projects that deal with OER in tertiary education in the Netherlands and abroad. Those lessons learned and issues include not only sustainability, but also the project approach and what support is needed. The following issues were mentioned:

1. Being able to draw on structural support during and after the project is vital for its sustainability.
2. A broad group of stakeholders (teaching staff, policymakers, support staff, decision-makers) should be involved, and if possible, given active roles on the project. Students should also be considered for this.
3. While the project is still underway, start looking for possible sources of funding for when it ends. This includes national and international grants and subsidies, professional associations and institute budgets.
4. Join a community/community of practice, or else create a new one. Consider whether professional associations can add value here.
5. Make an effort to create awareness of OER in general, and the cultural shift that it requires.
6. Wherever possible, make use of the existing technological infrastructure.
7. Make allowance for the time and funding needed to scale up after developing the first version of the OER.
8. While the project is still underway, start making arrangements in as much concrete detail as possible about cultivating adoption of the results.
9. Create a 'coalition of the willing', preferably while the project is still underway, and leverage it to generate more and more support.

4 Findings (Focus Point B): reviewing the assumptions

During the preparatory phase of this study, we defined two assumptions about the features of projects and what factors contribute to successful sustainability:

1. Sustainability efforts have more success if the OER have a close relationship with education and the vision on education.
2. Sustainability efforts have more success if an active community (particularly a community of practice) was involved during the project.

This chapter reviews these assumptions.

As noted above, with only three of the nine projects covered here had any significant time passed since they ended. For those projects, the current status of their project results is taken as the basis for this chapter. For the six other projects, the point of departure is based on the expectations expressed by the interviewees about long-term availability.

Relationship between success and education/vision of education

According to the first assumption, *integration into education increases the likelihood of continuity and adaptation*. In other words, if OER are in fact used in education, this is more likely to result in a lasting need to share, adapt and expand the resources, which makes them more sustainable. The interviews reflect the premises underlying this assumption. For example, one interviewee noted that “if you make sure that they are embedded in education, and at multiple organisations, this will prolong the need to share them every so often, or to adapt modules or possibly expand the resources”.

The interviewees mentioned the following factors as improving the likelihood that the educational resources will be incorporated into education:

- **If they fulfil a concrete need**
Projects that address a concrete issue in education and offer a visible improvement are more likely to achieve successful implementation and sustainability. Focusing on existing problems and needs in education, and the role that OER can play in addressing them, makes the OER more relevant and more usable. For example, one project to improve skills began by identifying problem areas in work placement education.
- **Quality**
Working together with others makes it easier to mutually agree on arrangements about what good quality means in educational resources. This makes it more likely that the resources will be incorporated into education on a sustainable basis. In one project, a sounding-board group was brought together of profession-specific teaching staff from various universities and other relevant institutions to establish the content and preferred quality standard of the OER. Broad support encourages acceptance and use of the resources. How important this is was highlighted by one interviewee who mentioned that confidence in the quality of the project results was based on them “being checked by fifteen colleagues from different universities and by people working in the field”.

- **Relevance and flexibility**
Developing OER in modules facilitates flexible use in multiple different educational contexts. To quote one interviewee, “The book is already used in plenty of places, and colleagues use the modules in their education. (...) It becomes very easy to say: I’ll use this set of modules for education, and use them for work placements too, for example.”

Relationship between success and community/community of practice

The second assumption in this exploration was phrased as follows: *sustainability efforts have more success if an active community (particularly a community of practice) was involved during the project.*

The following experiences with a community of practice add to the premises underlying this assumption:

- **Support and adoption**
An active community creates broader support for the resources that are developed, which means a greater likelihood of adoption and sustainability. This is illustrated by a pronouncement by one of the interviewees: “If you get just five or six educational institutes on board, you have laid a foundation, and you can create support. By asking people to help to write or review a document, you create awareness and broader support for the book, which encourages people to use it in their own settings.”
- **Cultivating quality and relevance**
As described above, the OER’s quality and relevance are key factors for sustainability. A community/community of practice that is given a role in cultivating the relevance and quality will help with the sustainability. The interviewees explained how that role was given shape in their projects. One of the interviewees mentioned how important for sustainability it was to have a focus board group of professional teaching staff at various academic universities and other relevant institutions, so that everyone acknowledges the quality and relevance of the OER’s content.
- **Sharing expertise and experiences**
A community/community of practice provides a platform for sharing experiences and expertise, for instance at conferences and in presentations. This potentially leads to more engagement with the development of the resources and cultivating their adoption. One of the interviewees mentioned the example of a writing process where the community provided valuable feedback on the resources and methods that were developed. Another interviewee described how exchanging resources and thinking about them also resulted in exchanges about blended didactics. After the project, the partnership of educators continued with the development and adopted the educational resources into their collections.

One of the interviewees acknowledged the added value of a community of practice for sustainability, while also noting that the factor of **time constraints** sometimes has a negative impact on members of the community (mostly teaching staff and researchers) in terms of their active participation and as such on the sustainability of project results. Another interviewee indicated that time constraints are “an important reason why further additions to the textbook have yet to be fully realised.”

5 Discussion

This chapter reflects on the findings described in the previous chapter.

5.1 Reflection on sustainability strategies

A comparison of the strategies gathered in this study with the strategies in the existing infographic ('first series of projects') reveals several findings:

Early focus on sustainability

In this study, far more projects besides those of the first series developed activities before their start to promote sustainability after the project. This mostly involved bringing in the best stakeholders, not only to make the project a success but also for the period after its completion. Exchanging knowledge and encouraging each other create engagement among the project team, which has a positive impact on the sense of ownership of the results.

Reliance on key team members

The study seems to indicate that lasting availability of key team members for the project is a very important factor in terms of planning the sustainability activities. With four of the projects, one or two individuals proved to be vital for sustainability after the project. When key individuals of some of these projects became unavailable, this had a negative impact on the sustainability. As such, it appears to be important in such cases to diminish the reliance on those individuals, and to do this sufficiently far in advance and preferably while the project is still underway. One way to achieve this is to regularly switch roles during and after the project (e.g. regularly rotating the project leadership).

The role of communities/communities of practice

Several projects started a community/community of practice while they were underway, or else involved an existing community. One of the assumptions is that, after the project ends, the members of such a community of practice will feel ownership of the educational resources that have been developed and will take on an active role in their sustainability. This is discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

Two of the interviewees noted that working together to develop OER can add to the sense of community, which leads to greater motivation to contribute to the resources and actually use them. One example was organising writing sessions. Another interviewee mentioned, "At the most basic level, it's not about sharing content, but rather about speaking a common language, about sharing awareness and having a common goal or purpose. To my mind, the sense of community should be leading. The technical possibilities to share content are of secondary importance by a margin."

Continuity of the project organisation

When the projects ended, several of them were unable to continue the organisation that was set up while they were underway. This appears to have a negative impact on the sustainability of the project results. This means that it is advisable to focus – while the project is still underway – on embedding that organisation in the educational institute. The [Roadmap policy OER, step 5. Organisation](#) (use.edusources.nl) can be used to draw inspiration from. One important parameter for embedding the project results in the institute is establishing who is responsible for what.

Lack of engagement among decision-makers

One remarkable finding was that management (the decision-makers) are rarely involved before or during the project, despite the importance of their role after the project in realising the financial and organisational parameters for the sustainability of the project results. Many decision-makers are members of a steering group or sounding-board group. Such groups should be given the most active role possible to optimise their engagement (Versantvoort & Schuwer, 2023).

Limited strategies for sustainable funding

Few strategies were put forward to obtain sustainable funding. Part of the reason is that the OER developed in five of the nine projects covered by this study were given a place in the curriculum to cultivate their maintenance. Three of those projects ended quite far in the past. This is discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

According to the experiences of a few of the interviewees, the terms of the open licences meant that openly sharing educational resources hindered partnerships with commercial organisations. For one project, however, it was precisely such a partnership that appears to have secured future sustainability, with the commercial organisation including the use of OER in its business model.

One project pointed towards the professional association as one source of funding for follow-up work, possibly but not necessarily on a structural basis. This seems likely to be a viable solution, particularly if the professional association can use the OER for activities relating to continuing professional development.

The study found that little thought was given to alternative funding models (Downes, 2007; Tlili et al., 2020). Only the models of fundraising (from internal or other sources) and setting up and drawing on a community of practice during the project were mentioned by a few of the projects. For the latter option, Büchel & Raub (2002) indicate that it is vital to convince the decision-makers of the project's value, its results and the role of the community in providing sufficient facilitation in time and resources to keep the community alive and active after the project ends. This underlines the need to actively involve management in the project at an early stage. However, it is not always clear what role the community plays after the surveyed projects, in terms of sustainability of the project results. One of the interviewees suggested that the educational institutes involved in the community of practice should share the costs.

Two of the interviewees posited a follow-up to the incentive scheme in order for projects to take another step forward towards sustainability. Such a scheme could be considered as part of the Npuls programme.

Student involvement

Several of the projects involved students. Their input ranged from helping to develop the results to offering feedback on the draft versions. None of the first series of projects involved students while the project was underway. However, nothing was said about how involving students affected sustainability. Presumably, student involvement leads to results that are geared more closely towards the students (the target audience of the educational resources that are developed), making it more likely that they will be adopted into the curriculum on a permanent basis. That permanent adoption will then automatically create the necessity to maintain the

resources. Ross et al. (2018) describe the impact on sustainability by using students as ambassadors for OER at their institute.

Distinction between project activities and sustainability activities

Most of the strategies intended for thematic aspects of OER during the project were concerned with better access to the content of the OER using a taxonomy or knowledge graph² (three projects) and making quality explicit and embedding it using a quality model or reviews (three projects).

For several of the projects, the professionals involved announced that various activities, particularly those aimed at making the project successful, were also thought to contribute to the project's sustainability. It is safe to assume that a project that is conducted carefully, and with carefully produced results, is a necessary parameter for sustainability. However, since the study focused only on activities aimed at sustainability, those activities are omitted from the findings. One exception to this principle is where projects decided to put together a team beforehand with representatives from all the various disciplines. A few of the projects indicated that, if the team (or at least part of the team) remain together after the project, this has a positive impact on sustainability.

Less emphasis on awareness

Compared with the first series, few of the projects mentioned activities to create awareness about OER. The probable explanation is that the educational institutes conducting those projects already had prior experience with OER.

5.2 Reflection on the assumptions

The assumption that *integration into education increases the likelihood of continuity and adaptation* seems to be supported by various of the factors put forward, provided that the cost is proportionate to the use. Remarkably, none of the interviewees mentioned anything about a 'vision of education'; instead, they referred mostly to the practical aspects: integrating the OER into the curriculum.

The project results offer a sustainable solution if the educational resources that have been developed align with concrete needs (urgent or otherwise) of the educational field.

Being able to rely on the quality of those resources is a vital factor for integration into education. This can be achieved, for example, through co-creation with multiple colleagues in the same profession whose expertise has been established among the users. Lastly, educational resources in modular form will make them more flexible to use, which in turn will make their integration into education more likely.

Several of the interviewees mentioned building broader support, cultivating the quality of the resources and sharing expertise as factors underpinning the assumption that an *active community has a positive influence on the sustainability of the project results*.

² A knowledge graph is a knowledge base that uses a graph-structured data model or topology to represent and operate on data. Knowledge graphs are often used to store interlinked descriptions of entities – objects, events, situations or abstract concepts – while also encoding the free-form semantics or relationships underlying these entities. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_graph)

Where a community of practice constitutes a possible sustainability strategy, Baas (2023) highlights the importance of brokers for cultivating continuity, including after the project ends. Recognising OER *champions*, and earmarking resources for them, can have a positive impact on the success of the sustainability strategies (Ross et al., 2018). This is a role that could be taken on by library staff (Kimball et al., 2022).

As noted above, there is a real risk of cultivating a community of practice which hinges on a small number of key individuals within that community. Without them – or if their priorities change – the community’s continuity could be jeopardised, and with it the sustainability of the project results.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

Focus on sustainability in each of the projects

The study shows that each of the projects included a focus on making the project results sustainable. For three of the nine surveyed projects, a significant amount of time had passed since they ended, and the educational resources developed in each of those projects are still being used in education. This creates the necessity to make sure that the results in fact remain relevant, and so leads to ongoing sustainability efforts. Actively involving, while the project is still underway, stakeholders who are important for the sustainability also seems to have a positive impact on sustainability. However, it is necessary to focus on cultivating the organisation that has been set up in order to ensure that it remains functional in the long term. The challenge that was most frequently identified was the funding that this requires, which may be drawn from either internal or external sources (e.g. from a professional association).

Building on policies and organisation

The study also produces a number of recommendations. Many of the factors that are related to sustainability concern the policies and organisation of working with OER. Defining a vision, a policy and the implementation provide a basis for the results' sustainability, for example cultivating support or funding.

Active role for students

Another recommendation is to give students an active role to play during or after the project. This might include using them as ambassadors for OER or asking them to help with the development. If the students are enrolled at a teacher training course, this works in two directions: besides contributing to the project, they can also help create more awareness and understanding of working with OER. With that in mind, this should become part of their curriculum.

Continuing to monitor sustainability activities

The study also shows that numerous diverse activities can be used to create sustainability. Given that the findings are based on nine projects, of which six ended shortly before the study was conducted or were even still underway, it is advisable to continue to monitor the results of those projects for a better understanding of how effective the sustainability strategies are in the long term. To this list of projects can be added the projects from previous rounds of the Open and Online Education Incentive Scheme that ended further in the past.

Inspiration and aids from Wikiwijs

The activities for working on sustainability before, during and after a project are available in Wikiwijs: [Sustainability strategies for open educational resources](#). This includes the aggregated findings from both the study that was conducted during the Acceleration Plan (2022) and the present study. Anyone involved, including project leaders and policy advisers, can visit this portal for inspiration on deciding what activities to use for the sustainability of their OER project.

7 Limitations on the scope of this study

The findings from this study, in particular from questions about what values the interviewees perceived, are based on the interviewees' personal opinions. Although the line of questioning persisted in an effort to establish a factual basis, this was not always possible to give. Wherever possible, the descriptions of the findings seek to provide substantiation by identifying underlying facts from other sources. Where this was impossible, the outcomes state whether the pronouncements were perceived by one project or multiple projects.

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Appendix A: List of interviewees

Interviewees	Educational institute
Linde Voorend & Hedwig van Rossum	VU Amsterdam
Marijke Hendrix	Zuyd University of Applied Sciences
Gert-Jan Verheij	University of Groningen
Rolf Hut	Delft University of Technology
Harrie Passier & Ruurd Kuiper	Open Universiteit & Eindhoven University of Technology
Theo van den Bogaart	HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht
Kirsten Namesnik-Sylvester	Utrecht University
Michiel de Jong-Steenbrink	For Delft University of Technology
Kees van Gestel	VU Amsterdam

Appendix B: Interview protocol

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) should not be omitted.

Question #	Question	Note
A0: General information		
A0.1*	What is your name?	
A0.2*	What educational institute is your current place of work?	
A0.3*	What was your role on the project?	
A0.4*	When did the project start and end?	
A0.5	Was this project your institute's first experience with OER?	If the institute had prior experience: ask about the details of that experience (e.g. other projects, other separate activities at the institute).
A0.6*	What sector or sectors were involved in the project?	Senior secondary vocational education (MBO), higher professional education (HBO) and/or academic university (WO).
A0.7*	What professional areas did the project concern?	E.g. mathematics, STEM, pedagogy, etc.
A0.8*	What was the scope of the project?	International, national, regional, limited to the institute itself.
A0.9	What prior understanding of and experience with OER did you have when you started the project? If you were missing any knowledge or skills, what did you do to remedy that?	
A1: Project goal		
A1.1*	What did you hope to achieve with the project?	E.g. to improve education.
A1.2*	Did you achieve all the project's goals? What factors determined whether you did or did not achieve them?	Try to find out the details of what worked and what did not.

Question #	Question	Note
A1.3	Looking back, what this project a good idea? Why, or why not?	
A2: Information about sustainability strategies		
A2.1*	What measures did you take before the project began to cultivate adoption of the results after its completion?	E.g. activities relating to organisation (such as policies, HR, education), people to involve (teaching staff, support staff, library) and OER-specific activities (such as encouraging reuse and improving knowledge and awareness among stakeholders).
A2.2*	What measures did you take while the project was underway to cultivate adoption of the results after its completion?	
A2.3*	What measures did you take after the project was completed to cultivate adoption of the results?	
A2.4*	Why was sustainability not a factor that you considered?	Only ask this if no relevant activities were undertaken.
A2.5	Were you able to draw lessons about sustainability strategies from your institute's prior experiences with projects involving OER? Did this involve mutual cooperation?	Only ask this if it was not the first project involving OER (A0.5).
A2.6	Were any other projects at your institute involving OER able to draw lessons from your experiences with sustainability strategies? Did this involve mutual cooperation?	Only ask this if this was the first project involving OER, or if this project coincided with other projects (A0.5).
A3: Success of the sustainability strategies		
A3.1*	Are the project's results still usable? How is this evidenced?	E.g. if teaching materials are still being used and adapted.
A3.2*	What sustainability strategies do you think made this happen, and why?	Only ask this if the results are still usable (A3.1).
A3.3	Knowing what you know now, what would you do to achieve sustainability?	

Question #	Question	Note
A3.4*	What was the project's impact on your institute? How is this evidenced?	E.g. a greater awareness of OER, influence on education.
A3.5*	Who is responsible for maintaining the OER?	Only ask this if any OER were in fact developed.
A3.6	Were the sustainability strategies influenced by the financial investment? If so, in what way?	
A3.7	As a result of this project, have you also adopted didactic methods in education that would be very difficult to realise, or even impossible, without OER?	E.g. more activating forms of education that place greater agency with the students, including allowing them to choose their own educational resources.
A4: Plannability of the sustainability strategies		
A4.1	What assumptions did you have about sustainability when the project first started?	
A4.2	Did you encounter any unforeseen events before, during or after the project that affected the sustainability strategies? How did you handle them?	
A4.3*	What arrangements did you agree on about sustainability while the project was underway? How did those arrangements work out in practice after it ended?	See also A2.2.
A5: Support		
A5.1*	What support did your institute provide while you were considering and implementing sustainability strategies? Are you happy with the support you received? Why, or why not?	

Question #	Question	Note
A5.2	What support did SURF provide while you were considering and implementing sustainability strategies? Are you happy with the support you received? Why, or why not?	Try to structure this according to the infographic.
A5.3	Did you receive support from anywhere else while you were considering and implementing sustainability strategies? If so, where did that support come from? Are you happy with their support? Why, or why not?	E.g. colleagues, literature, commercial operators.
A6: Other		
A6.1*	If someone decided to undertake a similar project, what advice would you give them?	
A6.2	Can you think of anything that has not been asked or discussed here but that you think is worth sharing?	

Credits

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