

Placing the spotlight on Open Educational Resources: Global phenomenon or cultural guise?

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The quest to enhance the quality of teaching in low-income countries has encouraged international aid agencies to look for alternative platforms to provide teacher education. Open Educational Resources have attracted the attention of the international community because of their ability to provide accessible and cost-effective teacher education programs across diverse cultural contexts. Yet, despite increasing support, little consideration has been given to whose knowledge, values, and cultural norms are legitimized within these open education platforms. This paper responds to such concerns by drawing on Bernstein's (2000) notion of regulative discourse to examine the Open Education Resources for English Language Teachers (ORELT) teacher education modules. Findings reveal that regulative discourse is strongly framed within these ORELT modules, which supports the socialization of teachers and their students into Western culture, values, and beliefs. This paper challenges the assumption that Open Educational Resources are a socially neutral pedagogical platform and raises questions about the educational and cultural implications for local contexts.

Keywords: Open Educational Resources; Bernstein; open education; educational development

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the quality of teaching in low-income countries has been a longstanding and complex challenge for the international development community. Pedagogy sits at the heart of this vexing global policy issue. There has been ongoing concern about the prevalence of teacher-centred practices in many low-income countries (UNESCO, 2005, 2014; World Bank, 2003). Despite persistent efforts to facilitate pedagogical change (UNESCO, 2005; World Bank, 2003), there has been little evidence of sustained, widespread success (UNESCO, 2014; Vavrus, Thomas, & Bartlett, 2011). Large class sizes, lack of resources, lack of time, assessment practices and language barriers, and even teachers themselves have been criticized for hindering pedagogic renewal (UNESCO, 2005, 2014; World Bank, 2003, 2018). The introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has placed increased focus on enhancing the quality of teaching through pedagogic change. SDG 4 aims to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (United Nations, 2017, n.p). For this reason, the international development community has begun to look for alternatives ways to facilitate pedagogical change.

Open Educational Resources (OERs) have provided one answer to this quality crisis. Butcher (2015) describes OERs as:

[A]ny educational resources (including curriculum maps, course material, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia applications, podcasts, and any other materials that have been designed for use in teaching and learning) that are openly available for use by educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or licence fees. (p. 5)

Put simply, OERs are learning resources designed for educators that can be accessed online for free. OERs include teaching resources as well as self-directed teacher training programs. The introduction of the SDGs has recast the focus on educational quality beyond basic education to include secondary and higher education (United Nations 2016; UNESCO, 2016). Advocates claim that OERs are well positioned to address this focus by extending their reach to teachers, tertiary students, secondary students, and more recently, even primary school students (Kanwar, 2015; UNESCO, 2016). For this reason, OER are presented as an answer to achieve SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2016).

There are a number of reasons why OERs are advocated as an effective solution to enhance the quality of teaching. Firstly, the widespread availability of mobile technologies make OERs a cost-effective alternative to face-to-face teacher education. Digital platforms limit reliance on physical and material infrastructure and this reduces the ongoing operational costs associated with face-to-face teacher training (OECD, 2007). Secondly, OERs can enhance access to education. As long as there is Internet access, OERs can provide teacher education programs for teachers in diverse geographic locations, including those in hard-to-reach and remote localities (UNESCO, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Thirdly, OERs can be repurposed and adapted by teachers and teacher educators to suit the cultural and contextual needs of their students (OECD, 2007; UNESCO, 2016). Finally, the emphasis on facilitating pedagogical change in many low-income countries make OERs an attractive tool to enhance teacher quality (Murphy & Wolfenden, 2013).

Learner-centred education affords learners active control over the “what” and “how” of their learning (Schweisfurth, 2013) and OERs are considered a learning platform that can facilitate this pedagogical change (Kanwar, Kodhandaraman, & Umar, 2010; Murphy & Wolfenden, 2013). Advocates argue that OERs promote a learner-centred experience by requiring teachers to self-direct and self-manage their engagement with online resources rather than experiencing a one-way teacher-centred pedagogic exchange (Kanwar et al., 2010; Murphy & Wolfenden, 2013). This pedagogical experience is said to foster self-determination and provide a learner-centred experience that teachers can implement in their own teaching practice (Kanwar et al., 2010). OER are, therefore, positioned as a tool to enhance the quality of teaching by accelerating the implementation of learner-centred education in low-income countries. The widespread support for advancing OERs as a tool to facilitate teacher education (Butcher, 2015; Murphy & Wolfenden, 2013; UNESCO, 2016) includes an assumption that OERs are a neutral pedagogical platform capable of enhancing both learning and teaching (see Cobb, 2018). However, it is not clear how local knowledge, wisdoms, and intellectual traditions are reflected in this global pedagogical platform. Importantly, whose values, beliefs, and cultural identities are legitimated and advanced in OERs? Until now, such critical analysis of pedagogy within the open education context has been largely overlooked. In this paper, I respond to these questions by using Bernstein’s notion of regulative discourse to analyse the social significance of pedagogy within a case study of an OER.

IDEOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF PEDAGOGY

To understand the social significance of pedagogy within OER firstly requires considering the social function of pedagogy. The idea that pedagogy fulfils a socializing function is well chronicled. For some time, academics have raised concern that pedagogy is a carrier of wider ideological agendas that serve the interests of dominant actors (Carter, 2010; Guthrie, 2011; Tabulawa, 2003, 2013). Bernstein (2000) exposed and challenged the value-neutral status of pedagogy and cautioned the need to pay particular attention to any changes in the pedagogical code to determine in whose interests these pedagogical changes serve. Because of this, academics have raised questions about the push from dominant global actors to accelerate the implementation of learner-centred pedagogy, particularly into low-income countries (Carter, 2010; Tabulawa, 2003, 2013). Learner-centred pedagogy has been marketed by international aid agencies as a panacea for education quality (Tabulawa, 2003), yet Tabulawa (2003, 2013) maintains that this focus has acted as a guise to hide the intent for learner-centred pedagogy to carry neo-colonial ideologies into low-income countries. This change in pedagogical code, he argues, has enabled Western values, beliefs, and knowledge to be transported into low-income countries through curricular and structural reforms.

Face-to-face pedagogical transmission is not the only way that ideological messages can be carried. Textbooks can transmit dominant ideological views and perspectives (Apple, 1993). Textbook authors can reproduce their own ideological perspectives by inadvertently writing their own ideological positioning into textbook content. For example, Woo and Simmons (2008, p. 294) concluded that their involvement as international textbook consultants in Afghanistan resulted in their own re-enactment of what they referred to as the “colonial unconscious”. They observed that their efforts to avoid a neo-colonial stance faltered as they “invariably became implicated through the discourse and practices of the project” (Woo & Simmons, 2008, p. 294). This demonstrates how Western values, beliefs, and knowledge systems can be “written into” textbook material, despite conscious decisions to resist such practice.

In many ways, OERs are like an online textbook. OERs do not provide two-way pedagogic interaction like other online platforms, such as Moodle. Rather, OERs enable educators to access and download resources, educational materials, and professional development courses, many of which can be read and engaged with much like a textbook. It would, therefore, seem that Apple’s (1993) concerns about the neutrality of textbooks could also apply to OERs. Indeed, Richter et al. (2013) raise concerns about curriculum content and teacher education material designed for a particular cultural, social, political, and historical context being transported into another through OERs. Given the current lack of quality control mechanisms in the field of OERs, Richter et al. (2013) argues that this has the potential to reproduce discriminatory ideologies.

Despite this argument, advocates maintain that one of the key features of OERs is that they can be repurposed by teachers to suit the needs of local contexts. However, there is growing evidence to suggest that repurposing OERs content is proving both challenging and problematic for teachers, particularly those in low-income countries. Kanwar et al. (2010) observe that adapting OERs has been significantly more challenging than originally anticipated. There have been pockets of success, such as the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) OER project (Murphy & Wolfenden, 2013); however, this project also proved to be a costly, challenging, and time-consuming process (Thakrar, Zinn, & Wolfenden, 2009). Some academics argue that teacher educators and teachers in

low-income countries may lack the technological skills and resources to repurpose resources (Bossu & Tynan, 2011; Richter & Ehlers, 2010) and some suggest that teachers' abilities to critique and adequately adapt resource content is also overestimated (Ritcher & McPherson, 2012). It is for this reason that Richter and McPherson (2012) challenge the flawed assumption that OERs can be adapted and modified by all users. So far, this literature review has demonstrated how the rapid rise of OERs has been justified to support pedagogical change and that there has been little consideration of the potential for pedagogy to become a carrier of ideology and bias within the open education context. Tyler (2001) suggests that there is an important need to critically analyse pedagogic transmission within digital spaces so that a deeper understanding of the production, reproduction, and transmission of bias can be gained. In order to do so, Tyler (2004) prompts us to examine the cultural and social centres of pedagogical reproduction within the digital environment. Bernstein's (2000) notion of regulative discourse provides a way to do this.

Bernstein (2000) maintains that there are rules that are embedded within pedagogic discourse which regulate and legitimate certain skills and create further rules to regulate social order. Bernstein (2000) refers to one of these rule systems as regulative discourse, which establishes moral discourse to "create[s] order, relations and identity" (p. 32). Regulative discourse establishes criteria that govern conduct, character, manner, and behaviour. It is through these hidden rules of social order that discriminatory ideologies can be transmitted through pedagogic discourse. This has the potential to legitimate ideologies by socializing them as "thinkable" and "acceptable" beliefs, behaviours, and patterns of thought. Tyler (2001) observes that there is unrealized potential for recasting Bernstein's pedagogic theory beyond face-to-face interactions to examine pedagogy in digital spaces. In light of growing concerns about the rapid and widespread emphasis on pedagogical change, Bernstein's notion of regulative discourse raises important questions about the social significance of pedagogy within the open education context. This research seeks to respond to this gap in research by examining regulative discourse in the global OER platform, and considering the implications for local culture and educational contexts.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, I draw on Bernstein's (2000) notion of regulative discourse to analyse the social significance of pedagogy within one case of OER: the Open Educational Resources for English Language Teachers (ORELT) modules (Commonwealth of Learning, 2014b). I position this research within critical realist ontology. Critical realism enables the structuring conditions that govern the social significance of pedagogy within an OER environment to be identified, exposed, and examined alongside the potential for human agency to respond to these wider structuring conditions (Bhaskar, 1989; Lopez & Potter, 2001). In the context of this research, critical realism offers a way to examine the wider structuring conditions that govern the relay of pedagogy within the OER context and considers the potential for educators to respond by either reproducing, resisting, or transforming these structuring conditions.

Introducing the case: Open Educational Resources for English Language Teaching

This research uses an instrumental case study design to examine one case of OER: the ORELT modules (Commonwealth of Learning, 2012a, 2012b; 2012c; 2012d; 2012e). An instrumental case study encourages a rigorous and thorough analysis of a particular

phenomenon (e.g., regulative discourse) within a bounded case (e.g., the ORELТ modules). In this sense, the case plays a secondary role to the phenomenon of interest (Stake, 2005). The ORELТ modules are an example of an OER, which are designed to assist English teachers in low-income countries to implement learner-centred approaches within their own teaching practice (Commonwealth of Learning, 2014a, 2014b). Because of this, they have a dual pedagogic purpose as both a resource for in-service and pre-service teachers to enhance the quality of their teaching, and as a scheme of work for teaching English to junior secondary school students. Consequently, the beneficiaries of such modules are threefold: teacher educators, teachers, and junior secondary school students. Each of the six ORELТ modules consists of six units, with 36 units provided in total. These modules are freely available and accessible online and are intended to be adapted and modified by teachers (Commonwealth of Learning, 2014a).

Analysis

A two-stage approach to analysing the ORELТ modules was taken to allow emerging patterns and themes to be identified. The first move involved a form of content analysis to determine the number of instances that moral discourse was evident within the ORELТ modules. This enabled the intensity and frequency of moral discourse within the modules to be identified. Pre-determined categories based on Bernstein’s (2000) description of moral discourse were used to code and quantify the number of instances of moral discourse within the data (Kellehear, 1993). Table 1 provides a definition of these categories, which include “values” and “beliefs”, and also clearly defines what is included and excluded within each category (Mutch, 2013).

Table 1 Category Descriptors for ‘Moral Discourse’ within the ORELТ Modules

Category	Definition	Inclusions	Exclusions
Values	‘Values’ refer to the development of a sense of right or wrong. In other words, it is an internal compass that guides one’s actions or outcomes.	Activities that promote the identification of values. Activities that teach the enactment of pre-determined values.	Activities that promote the identification of thoughts and feelings.
Beliefs	A belief refers to the conviction that something is true; however, there is no verification that this conviction is truth or reality. In this context of this study, the teaching of beliefs refers to the teaching of a concept that is not verified as true.	Activities that teach students to believe that certain people or groups of people are superior to others (e.g., western culture, social class, gender, urban dwellers).	Activities that teach students about different countries or cultural groups.

The process of analysis involved examining each of the six ORELТ modules and each of the six units contained within each ORELТ module. In total, 36 units were analysed. The ORELТ modules were uploaded into the *NVivo* data analysis software program where nodes (Bryman, 2012) were created for each of the two moral discourse categories (values and beliefs). Once these nodes had been established, each of the modules was analysed and systematically coded using the category descriptors from Table 1. This provided a numerical summary of each node. The second move used thematic analysis to identify wider structural themes within the data. Thematic analysis was useful for building on the

earlier content analysis to organize these data in rich and descriptive detail and enable broader themes to be identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Wider structuring conditions, such as neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism, were identified and categorized as themes. Nodes were created in *Nvivo* for each of these emerging themes and data were systematically analysed and coded. While the content and thematic analysis provided two distinct sets of data, the data were complementary in the sense that the first move provided information about the frequency and type of moral discourse, which was used to identify wider structuring themes.

FINDINGS

The findings from the content analysis revealed that moral discourse was evident throughout each of the ORELТ modules. Table 2 demonstrates instances of moral discourse in the ORELТ modules.

Table 2 Quantity of ‘Moral Discourse’ in the ORELТ Modules

	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	Module 5	Module 6	Total
Total	15	8	5	6	18	18	70

What is interesting about these findings is that there are a number of teaching activities that explicitly promote the teaching of moral discourse. This suggests that criteria for social order are directly transmitted to students in low-income countries through the explicit and implicit teaching of values, beliefs, behaviour, conduct, and character. While it is not possible to provide examples of all these instances of moral discourse, I will refer to a small selection to illustrate how moral discourse is reinforced in the ORELТ modules.

Values

The explicit teaching of values is evident throughout the modules with one unit dedicated to teaching values through literature (*Using literature to develop sensitivity to life’s values*, Module 5, pp. 21–33). Throughout this unit, the teaching of values is clear, intentional, and explicit. In the introduction, the unit outlines the intent to use children’s literature to expose students to real-life values such as “honesty, fair-play, patriotism, love, and bravery” (Commonwealth of Learning, 2012c, p. 21). Teachers are instructed to engage their students in activities that identify positive and negative values from a pre-determined list (see Figure 1), however there are activities that encourage students to identify values in their own local context.

This is followed by an assessment activity that asks teachers to assess their students on the demonstration of these “positive life values” (ORELТ module 5, p. 26), shown in Figure 2. This assessment of values is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is one of few assessment activities in the 36 units. This suggests that assessing these values is deemed important. Secondly, evaluation provides a key to what counts as knowledge. These particular values, such as honesty, hard work, truthfulness, and purity, are, therefore, considered important knowledge to acquire. This raises questions about “why these values?” and “who decides that these values should be acquired across diverse cultural contexts?” These questions are central to this examination of values in the ORELТ modules and will be revisited later in this paper.

Resource 1b: List of values to match poster



Positive traits: *Honesty, loyalty, self-control, compassion, tolerance, firmness, respect, responsibility, bravery, kindness, sacrifice.*

Negative traits: *Treachery, cowardice, greed, lust, disobedience, pride, dishonesty, intolerance, cunning.*

Figure 1: Teaching values
(ORELT Module 5, unit 2, p. 27)

Assessment



- Which of the following positive life values were your students able to bring out as they worked through the activities in this unit? Mention the literary text, characters and events that brought out the following values:
 - Honesty
 - Hard work
 - Truthfulness
 - Purity

Figure 2: Assessment of values
(ORELT Module 5, unit 2, p. 26)

Beliefs

This analysis revealed a key underlying belief: that students should aspire towards Westernization. The findings show that Western norms are consistently yet subtly emphasized throughout the modules. This belief is not explicitly stated but is presented through demonstrated patterns of acceptable thought and behaviour. These beliefs are often embedded within accompanying multimedia video clips and are further reinforced through specific teaching activities. As Figure 3 shows, teaching activities draw on Western customs, traditions, and pastimes to reinforce acceptable ways of thinking, acting and behaving.

As this example demonstrates, students are asked how often they do the following activities; however, they are not given the option to indicate “never”. This activity may present significant challenges for students in low-income countries who may be unfamiliar with the cultural practices and norms that are referred to in this exercise. Furthermore, such an exercise also subtly reinforces appropriate cultural practices in the way that students are asked to choose from a limited selection of alternatives. These are two examples of many throughout the ORELT modules where Western values and ideals are presented as the established norm and the cultural benchmark. This signals a subtle yet persistent emphasis on the socialization of Western norms throughout the ORELT modules.

Resource 2: Working with everyday events



Worksheet

- a Look at these activities. Which of these do you do regularly?
- i swim
 - ii watch English movies
 - iii eat Chinese food
 - iv listen to music
 - v wake up at 6:00 a.m.
 - vi take a bath with warm water
 - vii wear Western outfits
 - viii go for a walk
- b Which of the above activities do you do?
- i every day
 - ii once a week
 - iii every evening
 - iv only at night
 - v sometimes
- c Activities that are repeated very often are called **regular activities**. Share one of your regular activities with a partner. For example:
I wear Western outfits once a week for my salsa class.

Figure 3: Teaching activities that promote Western ‘everyday events’
(ORELT Module 6, unit 1, p. 13)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section, I use Bernstein’s (2000) notion of regulative discourse to place the spotlight on the wider ideological themes that have emerged from this analysis. Firstly, the findings from this analysis reveal that Western beliefs and values are woven in throughout module content, which subtly normalizes and legitimizes Western cultural values and knowledge. This has significant implications for the construction of cultural identities, particularly at a time when there is a strong emphasis from within the global development community to promote an “appreciation of cultural diversity” (United Nations, 2017, n.p). While the scope of this research has not examined the process of module development, as Woo and Simmons (2008) acknowledge, it is possible for module authors to unintentionally write their own beliefs and values into module content. This demonstrates the ease with which OERs can inadvertently carry and transmit dominant beliefs and values, which may not reflect local cultural values, knowledges, aspirations, and identities.

The intent to accelerate OERs in low-income countries as a platform for educational delivery alerts us to the implications that this unregulated pedagogical space may present to local cultural practices (UNESCO, 2016). Zhang, Chang, and Teasdale (2018) remind us that almost every nation has a deep core of values about justice and civilized behaviour and that these values are transmitted through curriculum context and process. Yet, this study has provided an example of how this deep core of local values has the potential to be eroded through this globalized learning platform. Based on experiences from within the Oceania region, Zhang et al. (2018) argue that a “top-down” approach to educational initiatives in local contexts are unlikely to be successful. Rather, they assert that a bottom-up participatory approach is necessary to ensure that educational initiatives, such as enhancing the quality of teaching through pedagogical change, meet the needs, aspirations, and cultural wisdoms of local communities. Indeed, research points to the likelihood of educational success when curriculum content and pedagogical practices are

culturally located and are embedded within local knowledge and practice (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). Without doing so, OERs are at risk of becoming a standardized knowledge repository that fail to respond to the cultural, learning, and contextual needs of local education contexts.

At this point, it is worth remembering that one of the most salient features of OER is that they can be repurposed and contextualized. This striking feature of OER design has the potential to eliminate much cultural misalliance. However, despite this intent, the earlier review of literature addresses the significant challenges that teachers have in repurposing and contextualizing OER content (Kanwar et al., 2010; Richter et al., 2013; Ritcher & McPherson, 2012; Thakrar et al., 2009). Indeed, the ORELТ modules examined in this study highlight the difficulties in repurposing module content, particularly when teaching activities are aligned to online video clips and professionally designed worksheets which could make it difficult for many teachers, particularly those in low-income countries, to repurpose. In addition, these modules have been designed for teachers who have had limited, if any, teacher education and training. Therefore, their ability to critique, adapt and repurpose materials to suit the needs of their local context has, as the literature suggests, been overestimated (Richter et al., 2013; Richter & Ehlers, 2010). What is clear from the literature is that adapting OERs to suit the learning needs of students is neither an easy nor straightforward process for teachers (Ritcher & McPherson, 2012). This challenges the assumption that OER content can and will be adapted and repurposed by teachers and highlights how OERs could become a decontextualized learning platform.

With this in mind, this analysis has also alerted us to the potential for pedagogy to fulfil a socializing function within the open education context. This highlights a second key finding from this study: that OERs are not a neutral pedagogical platform. As previously discussed, there has been growing awareness that pedagogy can fulfil an ideological function (Bernstein, 2000; Carter, 2010; Tabulawa, 2003, 2013b). By putting Bernstein's (2000) notion of regulative discourse "to work" (Robertson & Sorensen, 2017, p. 3), this study has revealed that the ORELТ modules have the potential to add to the growing toolkit of educational platforms that inadvertently regulate, legitimate, normalize, and socialize Western ways of being, behaving, and becoming (Cobb & Couch, 2018). These findings challenge the assumption that pedagogy within the open education context is immune from reproducing discriminatory ideologies (Richter et al., 2013). Nguyen, Elliott, Ferlouw, and Pilot (2009, p. 109) refer to this as "educational neo-colonialism", where the dominance of Western paradigms shape and influence educational thinking in non-Western countries by rescripting the "mental universe of the colonised" (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 16). Concern has previously been raised about neo-colonial practices being embedded within textbooks (Woo & Simmons, 2008); however, this research has identified the potential for open education to also carry neo-colonial ideologies. Taking this into account, what, then, does this mean for local forms of education and how might local teachers and educators best respond?

In order to respond to these questions, I return to critical realist ontology. Critical realism reminds us of the power of human agency to reproduce, resist, or transform structuring conditions that seek to limit, obfuscate, or remove choice from actors (Bhaskar, 1998; Lopez & Potter, 2001). Within current pedagogical debates, Tabulawa (2003) raised concerns about learner-centred pedagogy being a carrier for neo-colonial ideologies. However, his concerns rest on the belief that learner-centred pedagogy has been disguised as a form of Westernisation and imposed upon low-income countries through the guise of Western aid. However, in this paper, I argue that neo-colonial ideologies have not

“acted upon” the open education context through an exogenous process. Rather, I make the case that global actors, including teachers in local contexts, have the opportunity to respond strategically to the structuring conditions, such as neo-colonialism, that influence the open education context. This creates space for strategic action to either resist or transform the reproduction of neo-colonial ideologies (Jessop, 2005). For example, Western authors currently dominate the development and production of OERs, with English language being the most common medium of instruction (Richter et al., 2013); there is an opportunity for local educators to create and produce OERs that are based on local knowledges, languages, and cultural values, thereby transforming the structuring conditions that regulate Western dominance in this OERs space. In addition, teachers can respond strategically by resisting the implementation of non-contextualized OER material into their own teaching practice. In these ways, local educators can be agents of change by resisting and transforming the reproduction of neo-colonial ideologies. To this end, I bring an alternative perspective to Tabulawa’s (2003) account of pedagogical neo-colonialism by acknowledging that human agency has the potential to disrupt the “top-down” imposition of neo-colonial socialization.

Bernstein’s notion of regulative discourse has been invaluable for placing the spotlight on hidden moral discourse within the ORELТ modules; however, one of the criticisms of applying Bernstein’s pedagogic theories to analyse educational research is that it can reduce Bernstein’s work to a prescriptive analytic frame that is removed from its’ theoretical substance (Sriprakash, 2011). What is more, such analysis can present an overly structuralist account that fails to acknowledge the potential for human agency to transform, rather than reproduce discriminatory ideologies (Rochex, 2011; Sriprakash, 2011). In this paper, I have provided an example of how Bernstein’s pedagogic theories can be used in a “non-deterministic” and “non-sociologistic” way (Rochex, 2011, p. 77) by positioning the analysis within the critical realist ontology. In this sense, I have demonstrated how human agency has the potential to respond to the neo-colonial influences within the OER context. Despite the unique ways in which Bernstein’s pedagogic theories have been considered in this study, there are limitations. For example, this research has only investigated one case of OER. While the ORELТ modules have provided a rich case to examine regulative discourse, it has limited the ability to generalize findings. For this reason, it is recommended that future research employs a multiple case study design (Stake, 2006) to provide a robust understanding of the social significance of pedagogy within multiple cases of OERs. A further limitation is that this study did not examine the implementation of OERs within classroom contexts. It is, therefore, recommended that future research examine teachers’ experiences of repurposing and implementing OER.

To conclude, OER have been advocated as an answer to achieve an “inclusive and quality education for all” (United Nations, 2017, n.p) at all levels of education. In this paper, I sought to recast Bernstein’s (2000) notion of regulative discourse to examine the social significance of pedagogy within the open education context. In doing so, I have demonstrated how Bernstein’s pedagogic theory can place the spotlight on regulative discourse within OER, uncovering their hidden socializing function. This has raised important questions about the implications for local educational and cultural contexts and has raised awareness about the need to respond to this rapid acceleration of OER by ensuring that local knowledge, wisdom, and culture are represented in this digital space. It is through such processes that local educators can resist and transform the dominance of these Western-centric worldviews, such as those seen in the ORELТ modules.

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