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Introducing Open Textbooks To Higher Education Teachers In Namibia: A Website To Raise Awareness Of Open Textbooks

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SAT: Introducing Open Textbooks To Higher Education Teachers In Namibia: A Website To Raise Awareness Of Open Textbooks (Brenda Kulobone)

Cloud created by:

Brenda Kulobone
9 January 2019

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Abstract

This project is about the introduction of open textbooks to higher education teachers in Namibia. It fits in the theme of openness because open textbooks are a part of the open source initiatives. Open textbooks are licensed to be freely used, adapted, and distributed (Open Textbook Library). They are not yet in use in Namibia; hence, this topic qualifies to be an innovation. Innovation, according to Skillicorn (2016), "is executing an idea which addresses a specific challenge and achieves value for both the company and customer".

There are various challenges observed to affect the process of developing instructional materials for distance education students studying at higher institutions of learning in Namibia. They are, among others, delays in the development of the study materials due to human resources, no use of interactive features designed to enhance learning in the 21st century, copyright permissions, and cost (McGill et al. 2013, in Santosh & Panda, 2016). A growing number of studies in the US, Canada and the UK show that open textbooks are the answer to all these challenges as they offer more flexibility in teaching delivery, up-to-date knowledge to support learning, and reduce the cost burden of buying textbooks (Rolfe & Pitt, 2018). Therefore, this project aims to sensitize higher education teachers on the benefits of using open textbooks.

The author will design a website that will contain information about open textbooks; what they are, their use, how they can be found and created, and share some resources of successful open textbook initiatives. In addition, the author will share an example of an open textbook, which contains similar content to some of the English courses that all higher institutions in Namibia offer. This example is intended for teachers to see and understand that, they can also adapt content relevant to their context from an existing textbook. While working on the site, the author will design a short survey to collect information on the knowledge and perceptions of teachers towards open textbooks and will use the feedback as a guide on what other details to include on the website. The website link will be shared with teachers and other stakeholders

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via WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter as well as through emails. For the conference presentation, the author will give a brief overview of the project and share the features of the website.

References

Santosh, S. & Panda, S. (2016). 'Use of Open Educational Resources in Distance Education – Opportunities and Challenges in Indian Scenario'. *Staff & Educational Development International, 20*(39). [Online] Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311771251_Use_of_Open_Educational_Resources_in_Dista _Opportunities_and_Challenges_in_Indian_Scenario (Retrieved 29 December 2018)

Rolfe, V. & Pitt, B. (2018). Open textbooks – an untapped opportunity for universities, colleges, and schools. *Insights*, *31* (30). [Online] Available at https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.427/ (Retrieved 25 January 2019)

Skillicorn, N. (2016) What is innovation? [Online]. Available at https://www.ideatovalue.com/inno/nickskillicorn/2016/03/innovation-15-experts-share-innovation-definition/ (Accessed 10 January 2019).

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Contribute

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Potenza Atiogbe
1:55pm 2 February 2019 Permalink

Dear Brenda

This sounds like a very interesting project, I had no idea open textbooks were not yet in use in Namibia. I like your poster it is extremely clear and succinct. I think Sway is such a fabulous tool.

My first questions are around engagement of teachers. From your abstract I was not clear

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whether the survey about open textbooks would be given to teachers before or after the website creation or both? I just wanted to understand whether the feedback from the teachers would inform the design of the website initially? Or their comments will inform future development?

My other questions are around what aspect of your project you will present will it be the website itself and the process involved in creating the content? Also which networks in particular informed the project development, the research data seems strong in this area but wonder what digital networks you have been tapping into? Fascinating project, all the best with your presentation preparation. I am looking forward to your presentation.

Best wishes
Potenza

[Samantha Bennett](#)
3:29pm 3 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Brenda

I'm facinated by your project. There are clearly benefits to using open textbooks in your situation. You mention that the existing open textbooks are available, but will need to be adapted to make them more relevant to the Namibian context. How much adaptation is likely to be needed? Will this be a barrier to their wider implementation?

What is the main focus of your project? Is it the website or is it the quiz/survey? Is the website the best way of achieving your aims i.e. information sharing and gaining feedback? How will you direct teachers to your website? Have you considered creating an online community of practice (maybe via a Facebook group) with other teachers who are interested in learning more about open textbooks so that you are not alone in your mission?

I don't expect you to answer all these questions. Just had them buzzing away in my head! Good luck with your presentation Brenda.

[Brenda Kulobone](#)
8:53pm 7 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Dear Potenza

Thank you very much for your feedback. You are right, Sway is such an amazing tool.

I uploaded the abstract before I started working on my website, I wasn't really clear on the direction to follow hence the confusion. However, I realised I had to engage with the teachers during the process of the website creation so that their feedback could guide me on the type of content to include. I have done that, I used Google forms to create my survey, I circulated the link and have been receiving feedback. I'm thinking of sharing some of that in my presentation. My presentation will focus on a brief overview of the project and share features of the website. I've used Emails, Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp as my digital networks.

Regards

Brenda Kulobone
9:18pm 7 February 2019 Permalink

Dear Samantha

Thank you very much for your input.

My project is about designing a website that will contain general information about open textbooks. I'm not sure of how much adaptations will be required but I'm certain for subjects like Maths, English Second Lang, Physics, Chemistry, etc most of the available content is related and relevant. To a certain extent, yes, the website is my best option, as I can load as much of the relevant content, links, videos, resources, etc. as I can, although i will need to work hard to let people know about it. So far I've shared the website link via Facebook, WhatsApp, emails and Twitter. Thank you for suggesting a Facebook Group account, it didn't cross my mind, I will create one.

Regards

Munir Moosa Sadruddin
9:06am 12 February 2019 Permalink

H Brenda

It was great to learn about your project during live discussion on student room. Hope my suggestions would have helped you!

Munir

Dr Simon Ball
4:13pm 18 February 2019 Permalink

Hi Brenda

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose - I suspect you may wish to deal with the first few in one response!

Best wishes

Simon

> That's a good level of awareness and use of open textbooks. Interesting that people have some awareness of open textbooks. I did my H818 project and

conference paper on open textbooks, but to be honest I hadn't heard fo them before the MAODE!

- ⟩ How is the 'How to search for open textbooks' section organised?
- ⟩ The website is clear and easy to navigate
- ⟩ Has the government of Namibia ever been proactive in pushing OER, e.g. money to set up resources which are OER?
- ⟩ Have you considered creating an online community of practice (e.g. a closed Facebook group) with teachers who are intersted in learning more about Open Textbooks - or even collaborating to create one themselves?
- ⟩ What is the most frequent request or 'problem' cited in your discussions on e.g. what'sapp?
- ⟩ What functionalites do you want to add to the website?
- ⟩ Given that there is a pretty good awareness of Open textbooks, what might be the scope for an 'advanced' website, or discussion group or webinar?
- ⟩ What practical advice would you give to staff wanting to author an open textbook
- ⟩ Thank you Brenda! Check out http://www.dot4d.uct.ac.za/about-32 if you would like to connect with an opentextbooks project at the University of Cape Town
- ⟩

[Brenda Kulobone](#)
9:53pm 22 February 2019 (*Edited 9:57pm 22 February 2019*) [Permalink](#)

Thanks, Simon and everyone for the comments and questions. Please see my answers below:

How is the, 'How to search for open textbooks' section organised?

I created a sub-page under the content page. On this sub-page, I shared a link (https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/subjects/education) that directs the viewer to the Open Textbook Library. Then, they can search the library or browse the subjects according to the field of studies.

Has the government of Namibia ever been proactive in pushing OER, e.g. money to set up resources which are OER?

Yes, the government established Trust called the Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet) to provide tangible support for ODL (Open Distance Learning) students through a network of affiliated resource centres and libraries. This Trust, together with the help of the Commonwealth of Learning, has developed a National OER Policy, which institutions are required to use as a guide to developing their own OER policies.

Have you considered creating an online community of practice (e.g. a closed Facebook group) with teachers who are interested in learning more about Open Textbooks - or even collaborating to create one themselves?

Yes, I did. I created a closed Facebook group where I added selected teachers but they haven't been so active. Some have liked the page only whereas others just say "it's a good initiative.

What is the most frequent request or 'problem' cited in your discussions on e.g.

WhatsApp?

The most cited concern is that of limited access to the Internet, as the Network coverage does not cover all parts of the country. Even so, not everyone can afford to buy Internet data or install WIFI modems, as well as buy gadgets such as smartphones, laptops and computers. In light of this, the use of open textbooks might be a challenge.

What functionalities do you want to add to the website?

I embedded a trial version of a Discussion Forum, which I wish could be there permanently because a forum board offers the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations.

Given that there is a pretty good awareness of Open textbooks, what might be the scope for an 'advanced' website, or discussion group or webinar?

I am really not sure about this, it will best to sell the idea to the management team so that they can instruct all faculties to take part in this initiative.

What practical advice would you give to staff wanting to author an open textbook?

I would refer them to read the BCcampus Open Education Self-Publishing Guide (https://bccampus.ca/2018/02/20/introducing-the-bccampus-open-education-self-publishing-guide/), which is a practical reference for writing and publishing an open textbook. This guide provides details on the preparation, planning, writing, and publishing of an open textbook as well as the importance of copy editing and proofreading. Copyright, open copyright licenses, and the differences between citation and attribution are discussed.

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