

OER Africa and Africa Nazarene University harnessing OER in support of expanded ODeL higher education provision in Kenya



AFRICA NAZARENE
UNIVERSITY

Institution & Institutional Context

OER Africa and Africa Nazarene University (ANU) have entered into an MoU to work together to utilise OER in support of expanded ODeL provision at ANU.

OER Africa (www.oerafrica.org) is an innovative initiative established by the South African Institute for Distance Education (www.Saide.org) to play a leading role in driving the development and use of Open Educational Resources (OER) across all education sectors on the African continent. Established in 1992, Saide's mission is to increase equitable and meaningful access to knowledge, skills and learning across the African continent, through the adoption of open learning principles and distance education strategies. Saide's OER Africa initiative brings together all of its OER-related activities under a common conceptual framework. Saide is – through its OER Africa initiative – providing a unique opportunity to deploy African expertise to harness the concept of OER to the benefit of education systems on the continent and around the world.

Africa Nazarene University (ANU) is a Private Christian University and an Institution of the Church of the Nazarene International. ANU was established as a Bible study college in 1994 and granted its University Charter in 2002. ANU's main campus is situated 24 km from Nairobi, in Ongata Rongai. It has satellite campuses also in Nairobi, Meru, Kisii, Machakos and Eldoret. ANU offers flexible modes of study including campus-based, school-based, evening programs and distance learning. In recent years, there has been increasing demand for non-campus-based higher education provision.

Keywords and OEP themes

Africa; OER; OER Africa; Africa Nazarene University; ODeL; curriculum design; course design; materials development; higher education.

What is the case Study about?

ANU and OER Africa have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that commits the two organisations to working together to support ongoing design, development, and implementation of ODeL programmes at ANU; integration as appropriate of OER into both ODeL and face-to-face programmes at ANU; showcasing of emerging best practices at ANU to be shared with the broader higher education community within and beyond Africa; lobbying the broader higher education community within and beyond Africa regarding the merits of collaboratively creating and sharing intellectual capital in higher education as a mechanism to improve quality and enhance long-term cost-effectiveness; mobilizing release of OER in areas of prioritized strategic importance for African (and global) higher education; where appropriate, jointly preparing new project and funding proposals.

Over the next three years, OER Africa will support a small selection of HEIs which are committed to transforming teaching and learning practices, in the context of the information society, through Action Research and Critical Practice, to build evidence that OER practices can both lead to and support transformation, and can be successfully mainstreamed and institutionalized.

Accordingly, OER Africa plans to work intensively with four African HEIs over the next 3 years, with one of these being ANU.

What is the issue or need you are addressing?

There is a need to grow participation in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, where participation rates hover around 5%. ANU has established and equipped an Institute for Open and Distance Learning to manage increasing demand for non-campus-based higher education provision at the university and openly shares its lessons of experience with other universities. It is believed that OER can support the process of improving quality and increasing flexibility of provision. Timeline: 2015 – 2017.

How was the initiative implemented?

OER Africa and ANU entered into an MoU in order to work together. OER Africa then supported ANU with a critical self-reflection on its current distance provision using criteria derived from the National Association for Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (www.nadeosa.org.za) and also ran a 2-day introductory workshop on OER. This was followed by a workshop on curriculum design and materials development integrating OER followed by online feedback on draft revised course outlines and course materials. This was followed by a more recent reflection workshop in which the lessons of experience to date were identified, the design of activity-based materials explored in more depth and an action plan developed for a more in-depth engagement on using a participatory action

research approach to mainstream the use of OER and Open Educational Practices at ANU. A case study based on the first year of engagement has been drafted and will likely be one of the first OER to be published through the MoU.

The initial first year engagement was part of an internal reflection and forward thinking series of focus group interviews conducted during the most recent workshop in September 2014. This has led to a draft action plan for the next three years. Part of the plan involved developing more systematic quality assurance procedures for course and materials development including soliciting student feedback and ensuring this feeds back into course and materials review.

Outcomes

ANU staff have begun to integrate OER and open software into their course materials, especially in teacher education. An institutional OER policy, case study and a revised module on Christian Ethics are expected soon to be published as the first OER from the collaboration. No new materials have yet been finalised for field-testing, revision and subsequent use by students. However, a key feature of the revised approach has been to integrate more learning activities and feedback into ANU materials and to expose students to a wider range of voices.

Issues & challenges

- Development of curricula and materials is more time-consuming when student engagement and resource-based learning approaches are pursued. For staff who also need to attend to the teaching of campus-based students, undertake research and participate in community engagement, specific allocation of time for appropriate curriculum and materials development and review can be challenging.
- For some staff, employed on the basis of qualifications and research outputs, there can be a quiet steep learning curve involved.
- It takes time to nurture a cadre of internal institutional champions and resource-persons to support such a process.

Addressing the issues

- Certificates of participation were provided for workshop participation.
- Staff who made significant efforts were recognised and congratulated publicly.
- The project is moving towards the publication of OER and the draft policy supports recognition of publication of peer-reviewed materials that incorporate OER and are published as OER for promotion purposes.

Looking to the future

- Staff need to recognise the growing demand for alternatives to campus-based provision. This then naturally opens the door to consideration of how to develop learning resources for students who will not be on campus most of the time if at all. This in turn creates interest in OER as a means of supporting resourcing sourcing, adaptation and creation.
- Then staff need a lot of examples and support for materials review and development. Few institutions offer or require an orientation to teaching in higher education so this needs to be built into the OER orientation, use and development process.

Recommendations

- Look at the literature on OER, OEP, ODeL, flipped classrooms, resource-based learning etc.
- Allow time for staff to engage with examples of practice relevant for their context
- Support and recognise those willing to engage

Insights & recommendations for institutional & national development

- Recognise learning experience development on par with research activity

Contact person and details

Tony Mays tonym@saide.org.za

Mary Ooko mooko@anu.ac.ke