

CURATING OER FOR YOUTH LIVELIHOOD AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

A brief concept note

Introduction

This document provides a brief concept note on how to curate skills development course materials and curriculum content targeted at African youth, that is licensed as Open Education Resources (OER).

Working Definitions

The following working definitions are provided, that help with understanding the OER curation process

OER: In November 2019, governments across the world adopted the UNESCO Recommendation Open Education Resources (OER)¹.

“ *Open Educational Resources (OER) are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others.* ”

The UNESCO Recommendation also defines open license as a license that respects the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provides permissions granting the public the rights to access, re-use, re-purpose, adapt and redistribute educational materials. OER include the following that to support access to knowledge and the quest for building equitable and inclusive knowledge societies

- full courses;
- course materials;
- modules;
- learning objects;
- open textbooks;
- openly licensed (often streamed) videos;
- podcasts;
- tests;
- lesson plans;
- software;
- tools;
- mobile apps;
- materials; and
- techniques.

Curating OER involves searching and sorting the vast amount open content on the Internet and finding, organizing, annotating, presenting and sharing them in ways that are meaningful, valuable and relevant to the target audience of the organisations or groups (Commonwealth of Learning, 2020).

Open License: Open license refers to a license that respects the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provides permissions granting the public the rights to access, re-use, re-purpose, adapt and redistribute educational materials (UNESCO, 2019).

ICT: Refer to information and communication technologies which, under appropriate conditions, can enable improved

¹UNESCO. (2019) Recommendation on Open Education Resources. UNESCO General Conference, 40th Session. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370936>



access, quality and equity in learning, teaching and skills development. ICT can open possibilities for OER to be accessible anytime and anywhere for everyone, including individuals with disabilities and individuals coming from marginalized or disadvantaged groups. They can help meet the needs of individual learners and effectively promote gender equality and incentivize innovative pedagogical, didactical and methodological approaches (UNESCO, 2019).

Employability Skills refer to portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual's capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work, to progress within the enterprise and between jobs, and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions (ILO, 2004). Individuals are most employable when they have broad-based education and training, basic and portable high-level skills, including teamwork, problem-solving, digital, entrepreneurship and communication and language skills which enable them to adapt to a changing world of work (ILO 2005).

Sustainable Livelihoods: A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining natural resource bases (FAO, 2018).

MOOCs: MOOCs stand for massive open online courses. They are courses that offer flexible and open forms of self-directed online learning. Most MOOCs are courses that are free, and available on the Internet (hence, online). They are considered to be massive because offer a scalable model of online learning through the participation of large numbers of participants who can enrol in a MOOC. They are open because any individual can enrol for the course (provided they have access to a connected digital device and Internet connectivity), irrespective of education level or qualification. MOOCs offer a wide range of courses in many different subjects for individuals to be able to evolve their knowledge and education in an affordable and accessible manner (Czerniewicz et al, 2015; COL, 2020).

The Rationale for Adopting OER Policy and Practice

When education materials are openly licensed as OER, they open up the following opportunities

- More cost-effective creation of education materials and courseware
- Greater access to materials and courseware
- Prospects for to re-use, re-purpose, adaptation, redistribution, curation, and quality assurance of those

materials and courseware

- Enable the translation and adaptation of existing OER to suit local learning and cultural contexts
- Enable the development of and access to gender-responsive materials
- Enable the creation of alternative and accessible formats of materials for learners with special educational needs, and learners who are situated in vulnerable marginalised and excluded contexts.
- Provides a building block for the adoption of appropriate innovative pedagogies that can support lecturers, trainers and facilitators to improve their teaching practice
- Providing a building block for African youth to become active, engaged students who can also create and produce relevant content in support of skills development.

Curating OER

The value of curating OER lies in

- Searching for and sourcing relevant content and courses that are already available for use and re-use by teachers, lecturers and students;
- Making the sourced content available and accessible to youth living and working in diverse environments;
- Adapting existing OER to local conditions and contexts;
- Preserving instructional time;
- Promoting equity and access among disadvantaged and under-served youth;
- Ensuring and controlling the quality of content available to your target audience; and
- Building communities of practice.

OER curation strategies

In many cases finding the learning resources is the natural part. The challenge lies in selecting the best ones and compiling and organizing them in ways that make them accessible, useful, and meaningful for the target audience. The following strategies are recommended for AUDA-NEPAD ASPYEE Portal and their partnership with CAPA.

1. Know and engage the target audience

The target audience would be a diverse range of African youth in secondary schools, working in the formal and informal economy, unemployed youth and youth registered in TVET colleges. They would include

- Youth who participate in non-formal training programmes delivered by NGOs and CBOs
- Youth who are registered for formal vocational training programmes at TVET Colleges
- Youth who are employed in the informal economy and who

are participating in apprenticeship programmes as workers in informal enterprises

- Youth who may be interested in starting their own businesses
- Teachers and lecturers of vocational skills development programmes; youth entrepreneurship programmes
- Content providers, content creators, curriculum specialists are also another set of stakeholders who are likely to use and create the OER that are curated.

2. Clarify the purpose of the OER to be curated

What would the OER be used for? This concept brief recommends that the AUDA-NEPAD and its partner would need specific kinds of OER such as

- Training materials such as vocational training course materials;
- Open courses focused specifically on employability skills development for youth;
- Course components that relate to the development of employability skills;
- Manuals and how-to toolkits in support of developing employability skills;
- Career guidance materials;
- Podcasts in local languages related to employability skills;
- Mobile apps that can support youth with employability skills development, job searches, job retention, setting up and managing businesses; and
- Courses and course components that specifically relate to the development of practical vocational skills.

3. Ensure that the OER are relevant to the target audience

The OERs that will be curated should also be relevant to a diverse range of youth and their respective realities and skills development interests and contexts. Relevance is determined by a shared understanding of existing conditions under which the target audience live, learn and work, how these conditions are likely to change over time and the extent to which youth skills development strategies and outcomes are aligned with the anticipated changes.

To determine relevance for African youth will, therefore, require active engagement and participation of youth themselves, in the process of selection, use and evaluation of the respective OER. For this reason, it is recommended that any given content curation system adopted by the AUDA-NEPAD and its partners, will need to establish mechanisms for active youth participation and engagement.

Similarly, educators, facilitators, trainers are key stakeholders,

users and creators of OER as well. These too will need to be consulted regularly to ascertain whether the OER that have been curated, are relevant and useful for these stakeholders.

4. Ensure that the OER are accessible to the target audience

Linked to the idea of the relevance of the OER that will be curated, is the idea of accessibility. Most OER access is dependent upon consistent, affordable access to quality Internet connectivity. When youth do not have access to Internet connectivity, it means that the OER curation process will have to consider creating offline access to the resources. This means that there should be multiple entry and access points to the OER, across platforms for offline and online youth communities.

5. Make sure that OER are housed and stored in ways that are known and accessible

Raising awareness of the existence of curated OER is another significant activity that drives the use of the OER by the target audience. The portal where the OER is housed and curated also needs to be searchable, accessible, easily navigable for the target audience and where possible, be available in languages spoken by the target audience.

Further sub-criteria for consideration on sourcing, organizing and storing OER include

- Annotating and tagging content in ways that are meaningful and relevant to the target audience;
- Organizing content to facilitate searching and productivity
- Storing content to ensure safe, reliable, and equitable access
- Archiving content that may no longer be relevant or deleting content that are no longer relevant.

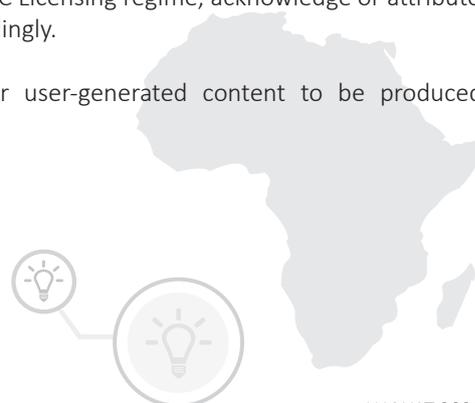
Also, there are two ways in which OER can be curated. They include

1. Curating links to third party OER: In other words, one can cut and paste links on your portal to the sites from which they were sourced; or
2. Licensing curated OER to host on the AUDA-NEPAD ASPYEE portal or CAPA portal.

This will involve:

- Determining whether and which Creative Commons licence the particular OER is licensed under.
- Based on the CC Licensing regime, acknowledge or attribute the OER accordingly.

Also allowing for user-generated content to be produced



as OER and be made available and accessible would be an essential consideration. How user-generated content can be quality assured and made accessible becomes part of the curation strategies as well.

6. Develop clear quality assurance criteria for the selection of appropriate OER

The following criteria have proven to be useful for assuring the quality of an OER.

- Is the content in the video or podcast or application accurate?
- Are the right concepts covered?
- Is the presentation clear and understandable?
- Is the presenter audible and does the presenter speak clearly and with an understandable accent? Does the presenter establish a rapport with the audience?
- Is the content presented at a pace that is appropriate for the target learners?
- Is the language accessible to the target audience?
- Are graphics and visual support appropriately and clearly applied?
- Is the technical quality accessible such as the visual sound quality acceptable for the medium that it is presented on, such as video or audio?

7. How exactly will curating be done?

There are a few steps that the Expert Group can agree to take towards curating relevant OER. Some of these steps include

1. Ensuring that all Experts have a shared understanding of OER and Creative Commons Licensing

2. Agreeing on the purpose and objectives of the kind of OER that will need to be sourced
3. Agreeing on search terms and possible repositories to search
4. Agreeing on the best ways to evaluate the content based on agreed criteria
5. Agreeing on which resources can simply be adopted and which need to be adapted or remixed
6. Agreeing on how to make the OER accessible to the target audience and involving some of them in this process.
7. Agreeing on where and how they will be stored and made accessible and how they will be searchable.

8. Which regional elements could be included?

To determine local and regional relevance, the Expert Group will have to agree on the selection criteria. Some of these can include

- Locally-produced content that can be sourced using local search words
- Sourcing content in local languages
- Sourcing content that involves or includes local artists, local influencers
- Sourcing user-generated content that have been produced by local institutions

