

OE Global 2021

Interactive activity addressing UNESCO OER Recommendation

Action Area (v) Promoting and reinforcing international cooperation

Open Textbooks in Africa: Perspectives

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Overview

Open textbooks are an important phenomenon in the global higher education landscape with compelling affordances around cost savings and content development approaches that address localisation and decolonisation of the curriculum.

Located in the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the Digital Open Textbooks for Development (DOT4D) project investigates the current ecosystem of open textbook publishing and provides implementation support in open textbook publishing activity at UCT. The project has a social justice agenda, in that it interrogates economic maldistribution, cultural misrecognition and political misrepresentation in the context of open textbook provision using critical theorist Nancy Fraser's (2005) social justice framework.

Vision

- To build on the research by the DOT4D project (2018-2021) at UCT explaining the role of open textbooks as mechanism for addressing social (in)justice in the classroom, with a focus on African higher education / "promoting and stimulating cross-border collaboration and alliances on OER projects and programmes"
- To extend our experience and knowledge to other institutions in Africa
- To test and further develop models of open textbook development

- To find funding for this project / “establishing regional and international funding mechanisms for promoting and strengthening OER”

Are you interested in open textbooks in Africa? Share your views...

- > Are you ready for open textbooks and is your institution ready?
- > What kind of help do you need?
- > What kind of help can you provide?
- > What steps can be taken for sustainability and funding?

Open textbooks at the University of Cape Town

> Are you ready?

A recent open textbook landscape survey revealed that there were (at least) 39 open textbooks published by UCT authors in the period 2010–2021,¹ but that there was uneven distribution of open textbook output across different faculties.

> What kind of help do you need?

1. Better reward / acknowledgement for open textbook production.
2. Publishing infrastructure to facilitate dynamic, openly licensed content delivery.

> What kind of help can you provide?

1. Practical implementation support in content creation, resource design and publishing.
2. Insight into sustainable models of content creation and publishing.
3. IP and copyright expertise.

> What steps can be taken for sustainability and funding?

1. UCT has an annual Open Textbook Award, but more support and resourcing is required to support content creation and resource production.
2. Academics require relief from other academic duties to undertake this work.
3. Reward systems need to evolve in order to consider the innovation and transformation work facilitated by these processes.
4. Small grant initiatives have been shown to be highly effective. More support of this kind is necessary.

1

<http://www.dot4d.uct.ac.za/news/open-textbook-landscape-survey-report-what%E2%80%99s-happening-uct>