

Agricultural Open Educational Resources on WikiEducator

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Abstract. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) conducted an international workshop for COL partners in sub-Saharan Africa on the design of agricultural open educational resources (AOER) for agricultural education and training. Most workshop participants were not used to the development of educational content in an open manner. We expect that AOER and Wiki-Educator will be taken up by national, African and international institutions.



Researchers learn from farmers' reality

AOER and WikiEducator. A challenge for agricultural education, research and development is the availability of technical and scientific information. Open Educational Resources (OER) - similar to Free/Libre Open-Source Software (FOSS/ FLOSS) - are becoming increasingly attractive and important as an alternative to textbooks and journals, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The OER practice is still in its infancy, and it is likely that many of the finer points are not yet fully understood.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) wishes to expand agricultural education for improved livelihoods in SSA. COL has good visibility in SSA, so far primarily on the schooling and higher education sector. More recently, COL's initiatives in agriculture look promising. Consequently COL is adapting OER to the field of agricultural education in the form of agricultural open educational resources (AOER) as a component of COL's initiative on technology-mediated open and distance education (Tech-MODE).

Recently, COL created the WikiEducator (www.wikieducator.org). Wiki-Educator is an evolving community intended for collaborative

- planning of education projects linked with the development of free content
- developing free content for e-learning
- building open educational resources

A "Wiki" is a website which anyone can use for publishing and editing online. COL's WikiEducator uses the same free software that is used for Wikipedia. One can edit and modify content on a Wiki from anywhere in the world. Therefore WikiEducator is an excellent tool for international collaboration on free content development, such as agricultural open educational resources.

AOER Workshop. In June 2007, in collaboration with and at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Nairobi, Kenya, and in association with the FLOSS4Edu initiative (www.wikieducator.org/floss4edu) COL conducted a workshop on AOER under the use of WikiEducator. The workshop was build around a toolkit (www.wikieducator.org/oer_workshop_toolkit) and included 23 collaborators from 10 countries, mainly from agricultural universities in Kenya and neighbouring countries. Workshop goals were to

- let participants have hands-on experience in using the WikiEducator and practice developing content
- try out an online version of the training toolkit for fine-tuning and pilot testing

Complementary subjects included e-learning, instructional design, learning objects, on-line learning resources, and copyright licensing options, specifically <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa>.

Lessons Learned. Most workshop participants were not used to the development of educational content in an open manner. Some common fears were related to

- loss of intellectual property rights
- security of published content and risk of vandalism
- lack of motivation and incentives for producing OER materials

Experiences with Wiki platforms show that these fears are not substantial.

This was the first COL-initiated pilot workshop with focus on agricultural education and WikiEducator in Africa. We expect that AOER and Wiki-Educator will be taken up by national, African (e.g. Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa - FARA) and international institutions (e.g. Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research - CGIAR).

Workshop participants design AOER materials

