Using the “open umbrella” to build capacity among stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER

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Goal
To increase educational technology capacity of lecturers within the post-schooling education and training system (PSET) with open education resources

Background
The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa are implementing a five-year programme that was conceptualised within the framework of the South Africa – European Union Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP). The objective is to “assist the Government in transforming the education, training and innovation system so that it contribute to improved economic performance of the country”. One of the Department's undertakings is to commit towards lecturers professional development and address barriers to skills and knowledge development learning experienced by lecturers.

Project Description
A proposed initiative in MIP is the adoption and customization of the “Open Umbrella” (https://weblearning.co.za/umbrella/) a self-evaluation tool & field-guide, intended for digital or hybrid educational settings. The open umbrella is licensed under Creative Commons and the tools and resources are available as Open Educational Resources (OER) and this will be posted on the DHET portal.

Alignment with UNESCO recommendations
The umbrella offers lecturers a systematic and continuous capacity building resources on how to create, access, make available, re-use, adapt, and redistribute OER that correspond directly to their digital courses. Educational practitioners, who have previously used digital modalities, will use the open umbrella to self-evaluate their current provision against baselines within these practice areas. The resources available allow them to re-consider the current approach to digital education, participate in demand led professional development and make benchmarks against which they can measure improvements to their courses. Those who use the self-evaluation tool and companion resources to work through the eight practice areas and identify the particulars associated with their implementation of technology in their course, will derive value from the combination of ed tech expertise and online pedagogy.

Intended Outcomes
The open umbrella offers manageable steps to course improvement by using open education resources. It is focused on eight practice areas (assessment, teaching and learning strategies, learning activities, communication, administration, design and student support) that relate to course design and delivery. This project has been designed to support the implementation and improvement of digital teaching and learning within these practice areas with open education resources.

OE Global Contribution
In a proposed interactive activity, participants will be
1. Invited to review their current online courses using the current baselines within the open umbrella.
2. Visit the accompanying field guide to set benchmarks for their future courses
3. Annotate the whole resource using hypother.is.

Details

Digital expertise need to be combined with education capabilities if University, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Community Education and Training (CET) college managers and lecturers are to make informed decisions about optimal use of hybrid or blended teaching and learning. To support lecturers professional development in flexible blended teaching and learning across South Africa, the “open umbrella”, an open education resources (OER) project that was developed in response to feesmustfall, has been adopted by DHET. The umbrella app and blended learning field guide (commonly known as the open umbrella) is a Creative Commons licensed set of tools and resources and will be made available as Open Educational Resources (OER) on the NOLS.

By deploying a self-evaluation tool and companion resources, eight self-study modules and a schedule of workshops and webinars, this project will offer informed and evidence based guidance to lecturers and academics managers so that they can further improve the educational use of digital modalities for course delivery.

This project is built on the policy directives of the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2014) which argues for a PSET system based on open learning principles and the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into teaching and learning.

The project has been designed to support the implementation and improvement of blended learning over eight practice areas. The tools and resources within the umbrella allow educational practitioners who have previously used digital modalities the opportunity to self-evaluate their current provision, re-consider the current approach to online teaching, and make improvements to their courses without increasing cost.

Those who use the open umbrella (self-evaluation tool and companion resources) to work through the eight practice areas and identify the particulars associated with their implementation of technology in their course, will appreciate the degree of ed tech expertise and online pedagogy.

It is anticipated that combination of self study learning materials and workshops will enable self-directed educators to demonstrate their learned skills and competencies to their peers and deploy improved practices within their courses. The above activities will be supported by a cohort of enablers and champions who will play an advisory, advocacy and support role, intended to embed and encourage the growth of a community of open practitioners who can contribute towards institutional capacity.

The following goals of A National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers are supported:

- Enable continuous professional development (CPD) for further and higher education teachers
- Advance further and higher education teaching through leadership development