

OER in TVET, an overview of the state of affairs and harnessing the potentialities of OER for TVET

Summary of findings and recommendations

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Introduction

Commissioned by UNESCO-UNEVOC, from June to August 2017 a study was undertaken to fill the gap both on mapping the landscape of the use of OER and open practices in the field of TVET, as well as on policy recommendations to support Member States' efforts in promoting and developing OER in TVET.

Data collection took place by means of a review of international literature, a survey and interviews with 10 experts in the field of TVET and/or OER. Analysis of the data has provided insights in several issues regarding the state of uptake of OER in TVET and on the basis thereof preliminary recommendations to improve the situation could be made.

Main findings of the study

The literature review has revealed that there are not many publications on OER in TVET. On this basis we may argue that OER in TVET is not an issue researched and discussed in international literature comparable to OER in Higher education or K-12. The review also showed that a large gap exists between the assertion that OER offer great potentialities for TVET, and activities to actually adopt OER in TVET. From the available literature, on a global scale there emerges a highly uneven pattern of projects and programs: in some countries OER's awareness must still arise, while other countries (e.g. United States) have formulated policies on OER in TVET. In most projects and programs identified, the main target group in activities to realize mainstreaming OER in TVET are teachers and trainers. When it comes to such programs, the Commonwealth of Learning is an important stakeholder in the field of OER in TVET.

From the survey and from interviews, it has come to the fore that in practice people appear to have a much broader view of "OER" than the internationally accepted definition. The interpretations of the term OER are manifold. These interpretations range from 'available on the Internet for free' to the rigorous definition common in the open community (digital learning materials with open, free access and published under an open license that permits adaptation and republishing). Overall, the study has found broad support for the statement that OER in TVET has great potentialities for the societal task of skilling people. The main motives to adopt OER in TVET and main opportunities for OER in TVET found are:

- Technical education is relatively more expensive than other sectors of education. OER are one option to extend more equal access to TVET. Especially videos are important means to realize this;
- OER increase efficiency, by sharing short courses among institutions;
- OER contribute to quality improvement when used by teachers: improvement of their own technical knowledge and provision of updated learning resources to learners;
- OER enable a more quickly response to market needs;
- OER contribute to inclusion and increasing equity;

- OER enable collaboration between teachers and labor market, teachers and learners and among teachers;
- OER enable cost savings for students

The main barriers that prevent mainstreaming OER in TVET are partly the same as those in other sectors: lack of vision and supporting policy (both national and institutional), lack of awareness of OER among teachers and policy makers and human factors (fear of sharing because of possible copyright infringement, unwillingness to share), high teaching load and an infrastructure with insufficient capacity.

But there are also specific characteristics of TVET that hinder publishing and using OER:

- Teachers and trainers in TVET mostly have no educational background;
- Repurposing of OER is important in TVET. Teachers and trainers in TVET often have insufficient (ICT-)skills to do this;
- Cultural and language issues hinder reuse across borders;
- For non-formal TVET, learners in TVET have insufficient skills to be able to self-learn using OER. A teacher/trainer is necessary to guide them along a learning path;
- In TVET skills development is important. Many available OER are about theory and not about practice and skills;
- TVET is a complex area, fragmented over formal and non-formal education, a lack of standards and low status in many countries. This makes overall policies and action plans difficult to accomplish.

Although there is wide recognition among policy makers of the potential and importance for TVET in general and the use of OER specifically, this is not matched by efforts to implement OER in TVET¹.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- Programs for creating awareness and capacity building should be more intensified and broadened. The last couple of years, especially COL has been active in this field with programs and activities. There is however a need for more of such activities and programs, by more actors;
- Adoption of OER calls for more than a series of one-off interventions, projects or funding. We recommend creation of education and training ecosystems of TVET and at national level enabling policies for adoption of OER in TVET;
- Programs to adopt OER should be put into a larger context of innovation and not as a sole activity. When thinking about policies or capacity building programs to mainstream OER in TVET, taking a broader view of OER may have advantages.

For UNESCO-UNEVOC we recommend:

- Continue current activities on creating awareness on policy level;

¹ At the recent 2nd OER World Congress in Ljubljana, similar conclusions about the uptake of OER were drawn, resulting in the Ljubljana OER Action Plan 2017. In this plan, governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to implement 42 recommendations to lower the barriers that currently exist in mainstreaming OER. This Action Plan is recommended in an accompanying Ministerial Statement by 20 Ministers, present at the congress.

- Collect good practices. Formulate guidelines on how to come to policy formulation, based on these good practices;
- Collect, develop and disseminate models and frameworks that governments and institutions can use, modify and apply to support in policy making;
- Provide support on systems for quality assurance of OER in TVET;
- Organize, start with or intensify cooperation and collaboration (e.g. via consortia) with important stakeholders in the field of OER in TVET such as the Commonwealth of Learning, International Labor Organization, the World Bank, and the Development Banks of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

More in general we recommend:

- To embed activities on adoption of OER in TVET in larger programs using ICT to innovate TVET;
- To create national and international repositories of training materials and case studies of good practices;
- To make use of national and international “OER-TVET champions”;
- To create an evidence base on (among others) cost effectiveness of adoption of open licensing arrangements and harvesting existing OER