NBA support strategy for the implementation of the UNESCO OER Recommendation by UNESCO West Africa

Introduction

The adoption by the UNESCO General Conference of the OER Recommendation (40 C/32) provides an unprecedented opportunity to mainstream OER practices into the policies and strategies of governments around the world and particularly in countries and region where OER adoption has been lagging behind. In fact, in many countries, OER use or production is still embryonic, if non-existent, and the knowledge of the OER Recommendation and its contents remains low amongst government officials, policy makers and practitioners. Likewise, capacities to harness OER practices effectively to improve both access to knowledge and learning outcomes is limited. In these countries, raising awareness on the importance and opportunities offered by OER is critical to the implementation of the OER Recommendation. In fact, there is a risk either that governments will not take steps to operationalize the OER Recommendation and/or that, when they do integrate it into their educational policy frameworks, they might do so in ways that have limited practical impact or inadvertently entrench and amplify poor pedagogical practices.

To avoid this risk, it is essential that primary and desktop research is undertaken to understand better what kinds of policies are most likely to lead to effective integration of the OER Recommendation into government policies in ways that will improve teaching and learning practices and lead to improved learning outcomes for students. It is then essential that lessons learned through such research become widely available and that key networks that engage at different levels with government and the educational systems are capacitated to leverage this knowledge to support more effective implementation of the OER Recommendation.

NBA will partner with UNESCO Dakar at the regional level and the UNESCO CI Sector at the inter-regional level, to support implementation of the UNESCO OER Recommendation at national government levels in the region and in coordination with other partners working in the region and inter-regionally. This support may include conducting research, engaging with government officials, and assisting UNESCO and its partners in the regional office to be able to support governments to implement the OER Recommendation. This work will engage governments in Anglophone and Francophone countries in West Africa.

First steps

Hold virtual conference with key government officials, policy makers, educational resources developers

Through the CI Sector and engaging other UNESCO partners where possible, UNESCO Dakar and NBA will host a virtual conference to sensitize key government officials in education, procurement, and other sectors on OER and the UNESCO OER Recommendation. Discussions will focus on receptivity and policy shifts by governments to take account of the educational possibilities created by open licensing.

While we understand that some governments are further ahead in this process than others, we envision that this online engagement will enable cooperation between NBA, UNESCO Dakar, UNESCO

partners in the region, and governments in research and policy development. We will use this opportunity to find government partners in the region that are already busy with, or interested in, operationalizing the OER Recommendation through policy and requiring technical support. Through technical support engagements, these partnerships will enable NBA and UNESCO's CI Section to carry out research to develop a series of practical 'measures'/criteria to assess the effectiveness of OER policies, considering issues such as implementation plans, monitoring plans, alignment to mainstream policies, funding, and human resource investment. These partnerships will be leveraged to conduct in-depth engagement with government.

Prepare two surveys to map the OER landscape

UNESCO Dakar and NBA will conduct two surveys – one aimed at governments and one at institutions – to research OER policy development and implementation in Africa. These surveys will include a desktop research component and engagement with key stakeholders including experts in the field and government officials through online surveys and follow-up interviews. These surveys will identify and differentiate standalone OER policies vs coordinated or 'integrated' OER policy strategies at national and institutional levels. The surveys will aim to understand implementation of these policies and strategies, and their relationship to key mainstream educational imperatives and broader government policy priorities.

Commence in-depth engagement with governments based on research conducted

Engagement with governments will depend on the outcomes of the above activities and will also be aligned with the work of UNESCO's Dynamic Coalition for the OER Recommendation. I might include:

- Holding structured engagements with key government stakeholders to explore strategies to implement recommended policy changes and refine recommendations for policy change;
- Providing technical support in the development of policy development to implement identified recommendations where feasible; and
- Supporting governments in developing of Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learnings (MERL) Plans to monitor effectiveness of policy changes.

Through partnerships with governments in the region, we aim to explore how the knowledge derived from the research and engagements with government and other stakeholders can be harnessed to create educational policy environments that support effective wide-spread implementation of the OER Recommendation.

Map out and support capacity-building needs of Sahel countries

While UNESCO Dakar and NBA carry out the work assisting governments with technical support to develop policy, NBA will define the skills necessary at country level to assist government officials develop policies and implement recommendations. UNESCO and NBA will use this opportunity to build a network of experts capable to work with governments to implement the OER Recommendation, thereby extending NBA's research work on the OER Recommendation into Francophone African governments in the region.