

How we helped teachers use the largest OER in the world--Wikipedia

In a year where more students and teachers are relying on the web to access information for their academic and personal lives, it's imperative to ensure that they are equipped with skills and strategies that will prevent them from falling victim to disinformation. The responsibility to develop these skills isn't confined to a single domain or academic subject, but it's rather a cross-curricular effort that impacts how students approach information to make decisions in their academic and personal lives. Taking this into account, the Wikimedia Foundation, the non-profit that operates Wikipedia and other free knowledge projects, launched a 9-week online program in three pilot countries that taught secondary school teachers how to use Wikipedia to develop media and information literacy skills among their students. At the Wikimedia Foundation, we work toward a world where everyone can freely share in the sum of all knowledge. We do this by supporting the global movement of more than 280,000 volunteers who collaboratively write, edit, and improve articles on Wikipedia and our other free knowledge projects based on principles of neutrality and reliable sourcing. As everything produced in the Wikimedia movement, the resources created for this program are now available for anyone interested to use, share and remix.

Wikipedia is one of the most visited websites worldwide. The information it contains frequently shows up in the first pages of any search engine and in the Google Knowledge Graph. While its nature as the encyclopedia that anyone can edit raises justified scepticism about its reliability, its demonization and exclusion from the classroom experience is a missed opportunity to engage students with a more critical approach to information. A critical engagement with Wikipedia in educational settings can change how students approach media and information, it can support the development of digital skills, and it can foster new ways of collaborating online. Moreover, educators around the world are already integrating Wikipedia into their pedagogical practice and there is a growing body of academic literature reflecting on the opportunities of these experiences.

In 2020, the Education team at the Wikimedia Foundation launched a pilot program in Bolivia, Morocco and the Philippines to help secondary school teachers take advantage of Wikipedia as a tool to foster media and information literacy skills. Our team worked collaboratively with local coordinators from Wikimedia affiliates in these three pilot countries to offer a high-quality and meaningful online professional development opportunity for the participants. The team created, contextualized, and translated open educational resources and led synchronous virtual training sessions for over 600 total participating teachers. The curriculum followed UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy framework and, as such, it was structured into three modules that touch upon the access, evaluation and creation of information through Wikipedia.

By the end of the program, 93% of surveyed teachers reported that they felt confident to integrate the new knowledge and skills they have gained about Wikipedia into their classroom practice. Additionally, teachers shared how identifying and reflecting on the content gaps about Bolivian history, culture and society in Wikipedia encouraged them to become editors themselves - an unexpected outcome of the program. Respondents of the post-program evaluation also highlighted how the program made them think differently about contributing to Wikipedia, searching for information online, and even how to better use technology and digital platforms in their teaching.

During this webinar, we will present our approach to building capacity around the use of OERs like Wikipedia, the results of the pilot, and how we're scaling this pilot to reach more teachers and students around the world. Participants will have a deeper understanding of how they can support teacher development to use OERs in virtual classrooms, and how they can bring this program to schools and teachers in their own communities.