



Utamaduni Bora: Author Interview

Transcript

00:00:01:10 - 00:00:08:60

Narrator: Utamaduni Bora: Author Interview. Introduction.

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Leticia: So, starting where I'm from. First, I'm an international student.

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Leticia: I came from Kenya and I joined the beginning of January 2024 in the Masters of Education program. It was a very good academic program for me to get into at first.

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Leticia: Because first of all, with Masters of Education, they really encourage a lot of research. Especially for regarding your interests and what changes you want to see regarding academics, regarding teaching, regarding learning.

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Leticia: So at first my interest was to focus on curriculum development. But because curriculum already by itself, it's very wide spread.

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Leticia: There's so many things you need to consider in terms of subjects, in terms of topics, in terms of what changes you need to see. And I was encouraged by my professors at that time when I was starting off to narrow it down to things that, where I can see there's a gap from my own community, in Kenya.

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Leticia: So I decided to narrow it down on Indigenous education because back in Kenya, Indigenous education is a relatively new subject to teach. Because Indigenous education before, it was just regarded as social studies or history, where you don't get to necessarily focus on your culture, where you come from.

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Leticia: And because it is a new subject that was introduced in Kenya a few years back in 2019, one of the main gaps was that there are not enough learning resources in what teachers can use to teach students. What kind of, just in terms of knowledge, what kind of curriculum, what kind of guide they can use to teach Indigenous education to students.

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Leticia: So that inspired me, and I decided to pursue on with that research through my academic field.

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Narrator: How did the idea for this Open Educational Resource come about?

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Leticia: So the open education resource that I created is called Utamaduni Bora. And with regards to open education by itself, I wasn't fully aware of it.

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Leticia: I just learned about it throughout the courses I took in Masters of Education. But I didn't delve in as much deeply.

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Leticia: So how I got to come across it, or create it, is through my professor. Her name is Dr. Alana Hoare.

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Leticia: And when I was completing my second semester, going to my third and fourth, usually you're given the option to choose between project, between thesis, or a capstone. So I decided to take the project because that is where I felt curriculum building is something that is more successful.

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Leticia: And I approached her, Dr. Alana, because she's very inspirational.

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Leticia: She guided me and networked me to the Open Press team. And that includes Jessica, Brian Lamb and Dani Collins, yeah.

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Leticia: So I got to know the three of them. And, especially with Dani, she was, she always loves to listen to people's ideas.

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Leticia: And because I didn't have an IT background, open education is to do with IT, it's to do with technology, it's to do with integrating education in the digital realm. And I didn't have a background in anything to do with digital or IT.

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Leticia: So in terms of, how to build a website was at first scary to me because I didn't have a background. But when I got to meet the Open Press team, especially Dani being the one who was guiding me, she was very kind in helping me, training me a bit, giving me some tips, recommending appropriate websites I can use.

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Leticia: Brian Lamb was actually the one who introduced me to WordPress by setting up a TRUBOX for me. And then, he introduced Dani to me, and then from there, Dani, Jessica, and the rest of the Open Press team helped me in knowing how to utilize WordPress, in terms of how to make it an open education resource for Utamaduni Bora.

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Narrator: How has working with the TRU Open Press supported or shaped this project?

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Leticia: It helped me know the importance of community building.

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Leticia: It helped me understand the meaning of networking and the meaning of putting in, all your passions, into something that is tangible. Because with regards to open education, it's something that is very, there's so many things, again, to consider.

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Leticia: So they helped me narrow things down. They helped me set clear goals.

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Leticia: They helped me in terms of knowing things that are presentable, because Utamaduni Bora, it is an open education resource for Indigenous education in the primary level. So they did help me to consider factors in terms of, like, what activities can be used, because with WordPress, there's the advantage of having H5P interactive activities.

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Leticia: So they did help me try to identify appropriate activities with regards to the age level. With regards to understanding, with regards to what are the limitations.

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Leticia: They helped me also in terms of licensing, understanding the meaning of having your work be properly protected under licensing, which was knowledge that I never had before, and I was very grateful to have a team to properly guide me. Not just to prepare the resource, but to help me understand how it can be protected, how it can be used effectively, how it can be, it can integrate other elements such as videos, and making it pretty to the eye, I would say. Making it aesthetic.

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Leticia: There's so many things to consider with open education, and I feel very fortunate, meeting the team who helped me, someone who doesn't have a strong IT background, have a soft landing and navigate it in a successful way whereby I can get enough training and confidence to utilize it and to create a resource, a learning resource out of it. Yeah.

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Narrator: What impact do you hope this OER will have on learners and educators?

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Leticia: My goal at the moment, because Utamaduni Bora is, at the moment focusing on my culture, to do with Kikuyu education.

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Leticia: And from my country in Kenya, we have 47 different tribes. And the Kikuyu culture, that is my culture, is just one of them.

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Leticia: So my inspiration, or my hope, is that I would like to network and broaden it more to not just focus on the Kikuyu culture, but to get people like educators, teachers that maybe have stories, or maybe have any academic criteria such as alphabets, anything at all that is regarding helping children see parts of education that represent their culture, that represents themselves. I would love to do more networking with other educators that come from different cultures, that we can collaborate and build upon this website to make it as wide as possible and accessible to not only people within the Kikuyu community, but more people within Kenya at large from the other 47 communities as well.

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Narrator: What challenges did you face during the development process, and how did you overcome them?

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Leticia: So the first challenge was definitely, of course, I had mentioned earlier I didn't have an IT background.

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Leticia: So the thought of developing a website, developing an open education resource was a bit scary to me and intimidating because I thought, where do I start? Where do I even begin?

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Leticia: I don't have enough knowledge. I don't have enough training.

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Leticia: And, but luckily, I was able to, again, I met a very amazing team that made me feel calm, made me feel safe, helped me, and then encouraged me to not make it look like it is something that is impossible to create. I was very fortunate to do it that way. Another challenge, I would say, is maybe the timeline,

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Leticia: because developing an open education resource is not easy. It requires a lot of time.

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Leticia: It requires a lot of effort. And because, within my program, I had about, I would say six months to be able to put in as much curriculum and pedagogies as possible within that time frame.

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Leticia: It was a challenge, but how I was able to go through it is, just talking about it, not only with the Open Press team when it comes to the technical parts of it, but also talking with my supervisors and other educators that had ideas to make the education resource more accessible. So I would say definitely time, and also the lack of knowledge was one of the main challenges that I experienced.

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Narrator: Was there a moment during this project that really stood out to you?

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Leticia: There are so many.

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Leticia: I guess one of the main things is getting insights, because this website, it's not a standalone project, it's not about me. I had a whole community of people that supported me.

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Leticia: What stood out for me is getting peoples' insights from the technical parts of, knowing how to utilize the WordPress as a website, and also knowing how to develop a curriculum and a framework behind it. So, you know, I had that team of two people.

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Leticia: One team is from the Masters of Education. That is my supervisors in terms of, learning objectives, in terms of learning activities.

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Leticia: So that was to do with education and curriculum by itself. And again, I had the Open Press team that helped me to think about if, let's say, children were to use Utamaduni Bora on their laptops, not just on their laptops, but on their tablets or on their phone.

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Leticia: How is it going to look like? Those are things I never considered, and getting insights and learning from people from both teams was very inspirational to me.

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Narrator: How do you see the role of open education evolving in the next few years?

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Leticia: I can't speak on behalf of everybody because I'm just going to talk about Indigenous education.

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Leticia: I would say Open Press, open education is evolving with regards to Indigenous education, because Indigenous education for some time back, not just from my country, but I'm sure for many global Indigenous educators, usually the term indigeneity, it's something that has nothing to do with, no one used to consider it as something that you can include in a digital platform. It was just something that would either be on pen and paper or something that would be practical, such as experiential learning.

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Leticia: So with regards to Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous education, I've seen it evolve for myself. I've seen it's something that is possible, and I see it as a challenge and an opportunity for many other teachers, collaborators, stakeholders that are interested in Indigenous education, that using a digital platform is a crucial, crucial area.

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Leticia: You know, especially with what happened to, with Covid, for example, many people were confined indoors, and it was a huge, I would say, an eye-opening experience for a lot of educators on the need to include Indigenous education within a digital atmosphere. Because if you are able, if we are going to experience a similar situation like that, we can see how open education serves as a huge, flexible outlet for people to use in education.

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Narrator: What advice would you give someone interested in making an OER?

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Leticia: My first advice is not to allow the term "open education", like, if it's to do with digital, to scare somebody.

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Leticia: With regards to if, let's say they have a limited background knowledge in IT or, you know, digital literacy, to not allow that to scare them. Another thing is knowing who are the right people to approach.

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Leticia: I was very fortunate to meet the Open Press team. That, I would say, it was a privilege. But, you know,

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Leticia: if I didn't meet Open Press, Utamaduni Bora wouldn't have been as successful as it is right now, because even though I've graduated and I'm done, I can still reach out to Dani, I can still reach out to Brian, I can still reach out to Jessica, and they will still give me consultation wholeheartedly. And I'm grateful for that.

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Leticia: So I would say, knowing who are the right people to approach in terms of open education, in terms of what resources to use online, and being as open minded as possible. You know, open education, it just, like.

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Leticia: The terms are so interesting. Being like, open education is really about open mindedness, making sure you're open to insights, open to knowing what works, open to challenges as well, and to not allow challenges to scare them, but rather to redirect them, I would say.

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Narrator: Conclusion.

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Leticia: If I'm going to conclude on anything, I would first of all like to thank you for having me for this interview, Divya.

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Leticia: And also, I would like to thank the Open Press team for being a cornerstone for the success of my project, Utamaduni Bora. I'm very fortunate and very grateful to have met that team, and I would highly recommend them to other people that are thinking about open education, not just within Indigenous, but also in other factors as well.

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Narrator: Thank you for the interview, Leticia.