

EDCI 339 Pod#2 Online Learning Topic Draft

Selected Topic: The Future of Learning Platforms: How can free educational content expand global access to learning?

▣ EDCI 339 Pod#2 Online Learning Topic Presentation

Each team will prepare one audio/video presentation, that may include multiple inquiry questions, and team members can certainly take different positions and tackle different aspects of the presentation. Your presentation should be captured as an **5-8 minute audio/video file** and uploaded and shared through a blog post. Please feel free to be creative with this project, and consider the use of screencasts, video presentations, podcasts, dramatization, simulation, animation, etc.

In addition to posting the project presentation online, your group will be expected to **report on your team progress in class**. Initially, each team will present a preliminary report through a **short (3-5 minute) presentation in class** about their area of inquiry. In this presentation you can present the topic, why it is of interest, and any initial findings or thoughts.

You will use the **same blog as for Assignment 1**. When complete, you can post your resource which can be copied/posted across all team member blogs. The category “**online learning inquiry**” on your blog will be used for this assignment.

Your project should be structured around the following prompts:

What is your distributed and open inquiry question?

The Future of Learning Platforms: How can free educational content expand global access to learning?

1. What is the relationship of your topic to teaching and learning?
(Nathan)
2. What are the pros, cons, and risks?
(Ella)
3. What are some of the strategies, best practices, and tips regarding your inquiry findings?
(Therese and Janit)

**Introduction and how can free educational content expand global access to learning?
(Nathan)**

Introduction and relevance of the topic

- Since the beginning of the year 2000, the **internet** has become much more **accessible** and **mainstream** for users around the world (Norman, 2025).
- Around the same time, many **social media** (e.g. YouTube, Twitter, Facebook) and **educational websites** (e.g. Wikipedia, Khan Academy, and MIT OpenCourseWare) were created for users around the world to learn and connect with each other.

- The internet provides a way to **lower the barrier of entry** to access adequate education and allows users to **create** and **share** knowledge almost instantly on the web.
- Fast forward to today, learners now have many choices of **free educational content** for their learning inquiries.

Importance in the context of global education

- **Educational websites** (e.g. Wikipedia) and **social media** platform (e.g. YouTube) provides a free and easily accessible method for learners to **quickly gain educational knowledge** (Wikipedia, 2025; YouTube, 2025).
- If they want to dive deeper, learners also have the ability to find many **scientific research articles** for free using **Google Scholar** (Google Scholar, 2025).
- Free educational content online has the opportunity to benefit both academic and self-directed learners with a **better** and more **enjoyable learning experience**. Since many free educational content platform designs are very mainstream and accessible to learners from around the world.
- Learners from around the world can access the free educational content from **anywhere** and learn the contents at their **own pace**.

How can free educational content expand global access to learning?

Pros, Cons, and Risks (Ella)

Pros

Free educational content being expanded globally for students would broaden participation in learning compared to traditional learning, as it allows students to learn at their own pace rather than facing constant barriers within traditional learning. The concept of the 5 R's of open education —Retain, Reuse, Revise, Remix, and Redistribute — provides students with a level of access and a way to share their learning with each other, giving them autonomy over their learning. Expanding free OERs globally will lower the cost of education for students worldwide, as lessons and textbooks are available for free.

Cons

There are drawbacks to the global expansion of free educational content. Lack of quality assurance is one of the primary issues since content is frequently created and shared by people with varying biases, leading to inconsistent and out-of-date information. Another issue that may occur is the digital divide among students due to online distractions, as well as some learners struggling to adapt to platforms and content, which creates inequalities in how information is understood. This links to another main

issue, which is technological barriers; students may not have access to specific technological factors that some parts of the world may not have, such as Wi-Fi, internet access, and laptops. Some barriers could limit the expansion of free educational content globally.

Risks

Student privacy is a big issue since online platforms gather information about students' work and personal data without their consent. Another risk is the language and cultural barriers associated with expanding globally; most free educational content is in English and reflects Western perspectives, which can be problematic for individuals who don't speak English and require information to be translated or who need to adapt to different values, perspectives, languages, and learning styles. Technology availability poses a serious issue as well, since students could not have fair access to it. There is an imbalance in equity since lower-income families frequently do not have the same access to technology as their wealthier counterparts.

Strategies and Best Practices (Therese)

Content Development

When making content, it can be helpful to cater to a diverse range of learners by creating different learning styles and in cultural contexts. For instance, incorporating local tourism objects, famous public figures, and others that encompasses local culture and promotes relatability and engagement with the readers (Arifani, 2016). This can promote a better understanding and help learners see the relevance of texts in their own lives and environment. By grounding content in familiar cultural references, educators can create a meaningful and impactful learning experience for learners that might resonate with them from diverse backgrounds.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Educators can design content that is more accessible to learners with disabilities that allows for more accessibility regardless of physical ability, location, and language, which ensures equitable learning opportunities. These tools include screen readers, subtitles, and color contrasts that can support a wider range of learners and improve overall usability (Mohan et al., 2023). Likewise, using clear and simple language that uses images and legible fonts creates a more inclusive environment where all students can learn and thrive with the content material. Additionally, the content material can remove barriers by having no paywalls or hidden costs for low-income users and they can actively participate in these conversations and opportunities (Stewart, 2016).

Usability and Design

With the future of learning platforms, it's important to ensure these platforms are user-friendly for people with different levels of digital literacy. When creating these platforms, it's important to understand the human experience with human-computer interaction (HCI), user-centered design (UCD), and knowing what the user expects and how the platform will respond when

given a prompt (Choi & Seo, 2024). Having clear navigation, intuitive layouts, and consistent designs that's similar to websites can allow for more efficient interactions with the user and reduce frustration by minimizing confusion and cognitive load. By prioritizing these design principles, learning platforms can be more accessible, intuitive, and empower any user regardless of digital literacy, background, and ability to support their learning experience.

Tips (Janit)

3 Practical Tips for Making Free Education Work for Everyone:

1. Use Open Licenses

Creators should publish their content with open licenses (like Creative Commons).

This allows others to legally share, translate, or adjust the content to fit their culture or language without asking permission every time (Wiley & Hilton, 2018).

Example: A science video made in Canada could be translated into Swahili and reused in Kenya—totally free and legal.

2. Make Content Available Offline

Many people don't have stable internet access. Learning materials should be downloadable or viewable without constant Wi-Fi.

Students in remote areas or places with slow internet can still study if content works offline—through apps, PDFs, or USB drives (Reddy, Jose, & Vaidehi, 2021).

Example: A student in a rural area can watch a video or read a guide on their phone even without data or Wi-Fi.

3. Help Learners Take Charge

Learners should be encouraged to set goals, track their own progress, and ask questions in online communities.

When students take control of how and when they learn, they stay more motivated and learn better (Blaschke, 2012).

Example: A learner might use a free Excel course, set a goal to finish it in two weeks, and join a discussion forum to ask questions along the way.

Conclusion (Janit)

Free educational content has the potential to make learning more accessible and affordable worldwide. It offers flexibility, reduces costs, and empowers learners but also presents challenges like uneven access, quality concerns, and cultural barriers. By focusing on inclusive design, accessibility, and practical solutions like open licensing and offline availability, we can strengthen the impact of these platforms. Our findings show that free content alone isn't enough; it must be thoughtfully created, equitably distributed, and learner-centered to truly expand global access to education.

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