



WIKIAFRICA EDUCATION: CREATING A NEW AFRICAN NARRATIVE ON-LINE

by Craig Johnson, Bridge & Bobby Shabangu, Joburgpedia Project



The following resource is derived from a workshop by Craig Johnson presented to participants of the GTI Axis Summit 2019. Here, you will find a brief report on 'WIKIAFRICA EDUCATION: CREATING A NEW AFRICAN NARRATIVE ON-LINE ' and tools and tips for developing young people's critical thinking, collaboration, language and research skills, which helps learners become conscious citizens who can produce tangible change. This is vitally important in an education system that is embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution more and more.

Bridge has recently partnered with WikiAfrica to manage an initiative that seeks to empower South Africans to practice agency over their own narratives. Wikipedia is an online, user-based encyclopaedia, that now seeks to create a platform for African contributors to reclaim representations of our context. It was the idea of an initiative to self-write, thus re-constitute a healthier image of the African, and his/her experience, that first caught my attention when Craig Johnson of Bridge presented it to a mixed group of educators and student-teachers at this year's GTI Summit.

However, there are several implications that were not engaged in-depth, I suppose due to the fact that participants in this session had no prior knowledge of this initiative, or perhaps it was the 45-minute time constraint on the session. These implications will be discussed below as questions that were posed to Craig.

WikiAfrica - Bridge partnership

Bridge is an organisation working in the education sector and uses a Community of Practice (CoP) methodology to facilitate critical engagement on issues that affect teaching and learning. A fitting partnership considering the way in which Bridge seeks to explore how pedagogies and practices within the classroom can be interrogated and enhanced in order for the education system to produce better results.

Presentation

BRIDGE's Communication Manager Craig Johnson began the session by challenging participants with the question: **"do cell phones belong in the classroom?"** A number of attendees argued that cell phones are a distraction that draw learners away from effective learning. Others said that cell phones should be allowed in the classroom as it increases learners' engagement with the wider world and meets learners where they are. Some participants affirmed that educators need to allow learners to disagree with the content they are taught. Learners can show their class a Googled piece of information to prove why they disagree.

Young people are constantly bombarded with a flood of information online and elsewhere. As educationists, we want learners to develop critical thinking skills so they can determine whether this information is accurate and valid, and this is where WikiAfrica comes in.

Wikipedia is the 5th largest website in the world and there are 5.6 million pages on the site. Much of information found on the platform is biased towards English and knowledge that emerges from the Global North. To encourage the representation of knowledge from Africa, BRIDGE holds workshops on Monday's and Saturday's for 4 hours on how to use Wikipedia and upload African content onto the site.

Craig also placed emphasis on how co-constructing knowledge within a classroom context, will have a meaningful impact on the experience of the learners and teachers alike. Making the classroom into a space where the teacher does not have the authoritative pronouncement on the topic, but instead a space that holds multiple nodes of authority, and where the learners can challenge the teacher and make meaning together. This is a powerful pedagogical approach, and for Craig, Wikipedia can give children access to the information that can help make them active participants in their own learning.

Beyond using WikiAfrica for knowledge construction, Craig mentioned that because Wiki is an openly licenced online resource, registering an account gives one access to translation options. Getting children to translate already existing wiki entries into their mother tongue, can supplement their learning of the language, and can also be a good lesson on computer literacy and internet proficiency.

Two implications emerged from this presentation. The first is that, talking about internet-based platforms that are built for Africa, illuminates the very real inequality of access to internet connectivity and the devices that make this possible. So, when we say this is a platform built for Africans, are we talking about the well-off few, who have access to the internet and the world of Wikipedia? Secondly, South Africa, in particular, has a history that has left us with complex and engrained language attitudes, and a bias towards English, that continues to facilitate the death of African languages. What is the motivation for this shift towards writing in African languages?

Although Craig's answer to these questions was that WikiAfrica is aware of these concerns and is currently addressing them, they still linger in my memories of the summit, along with greater concern about the monitoring and evaluation difficulties of such a mammoth project. According to Craig, studies have shown that although many Wikipedia entries contain errors, Wikipedia has been found to be a relatively credible source (Chesney 2006; Francke & Sundin 2010).

On the next page is a comparison between the Constitution Hill English page, Afrikaans page and the isiZulu page. It is clear that the English page and even the Afrikaans page have far more content.

On October 5th – International Teachers Day – Nando’s Wikipedia, Moleskine and BRIDGE will be hosting an event at Constitution Hill to celebrate the work done in African content creation.

Here are 38 ways to use technology and content creation in the classroom to enhance learning, improve learning outcomes and encourage learners to take ownership of their own learning.

38 Ways Students Can Create Digital Content

Each idea can be integrated into a classroom lesson or used as a stand-alone project.

Inspire your learners to:

<p>Start or contribute to a blog. Contribute to a wiki. Record a podcast. Learn and write source code. Design an infographic. Create a Web site. Create a vlog (video blog). Design a digital poster. Create a Slideshare presentation. Create a PechaKucha presentation. Edit, enhance, and upload an image. Design an album or book cover. Record a newscast. Record a song. Create a music video. Design a brochure. Design a blueprint. Create a YouTube video. Plan a social-media campaign for a good cause.</p>	<p>Film a public-service announcement. Animate a story. Record a poetry reading. Create a GIF. Create a meme. Write a play or movie script. Build an interactive timeline. Host a classroom Webinar. Design a video game. Design a model for 3D printing. Write fan fiction. Review a book, a restaurant, a movie, or an album. Write and illustrate a comic strip. Create and administer a poll. Design a personal logo. Design a map. Develop an app. Create a time-lapse video. Design something using code.</p>
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Additional Resources

- To access a BRIDGE Open Education Resource on ‘Strategies to Help you Foster Metacognition in the Classroom’ click [here](#).
- To access a BRIDGE Open Education Resource on ‘Online Learning in the 21st Century’, click [here](#).

Bibliography:

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ABOUT GTI

The Global Teachers Institute (GTI) is a teacher development network of educators, schools and organisations committed to developing high quality teachers through school based initial teacher education programmes, international exchanges and collaborative platforms.

Our mission is to develop reflective, empathetic, socially responsible master teachers for high-need African schools through projects and interventions for replication and scale.

THANK YOU

With your contributions in the 2019 GTI Axis Summit, you've demonstrated your commitment to our work of teacher development. Your support has repeatedly played a key role in getting us a step closer to our vision of training quality teachers facilitating learning that creates a just, equitable and inclusive world.

PRESENTERS



Craig Johnson

Craig Johnson is the communications manager for BRIDGE, as well as being a registered Industrial Psychologist.

Craig focuses on monitoring and evaluating all aspects of BRIDGE, working with Project Managers & Knowledge Managers to implement effective systems for creating and implementing effective knowledge management.



Bobby Shabangu

Bobby Shabanga is the Wikipedian in Residence for the Joburgpedia project, responsible for digitising archived documents & pictures from the JHB Heritage Foundation.

Things that are close to his heart are history, visual arts, language, heritage, culture, music and politics. He sees a core part of his work as bridging the gap.

PRODUCER



Morongoa Masebe

'I studied Political Science, with a personal desire to answer nagging questions that I was increasingly having about the black experience in South Africa.

I never really got the answers I wanted, but along the way, I have learnt that perhaps the point has always been to open my eyes and keep them open. I am a scholar of utopian studies, race and representation, decolonisation and black radical thought. I am a human rights advocate in the making, who dabbles in womanism.'

www.globalteachers.org

