

Women Of Northern, Western, And Central Africa: A Bibliography, 1976-1985

VISTAS

Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences

Volume 9

2015

Massive Open Online Courses and Perspectives from Learners In Developing Countries

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ABSTRACT

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are a recent, innovative addition to the online learning landscape that can provide learning opportunities to large numbers of people across the globe. Within a short time span, MOOCs have become a popular phenomenon with many viewing them as 'the solution' to the developing world's lack of access to education. However, there are many factors that can affect successful participation/learning in a MOOC, which can especially be challenging for learners from developing countries, who face greater difficulties of 'access' (physical as well as sufficient level of digital literacy), and have to negotiate learning in languages and cultural settings other than their own. This paper uses personas of four typical learners from developing countries and discusses what MOOCs would mean to them. Building upon the experiences of these learners, the discussion forms a holistic view of challenges faced by learners from developing countries in engaging with MOOCs and the opportunities/threats that MOOCs will bring, ranging from access issues to extending opportunities.

KEY WORDS

MOOCs, Developing countries, eLearning

1. INTRODUCTION

"A massive open online course (MOOC) is a potential by product of open teaching and learning" (Cormier & Siemens, 2010) that offers online learning opportunities to, potentially, the world. They are open for registration and no fees are charged for the basic offering. Many renowned universities are offering MOOCs; for example Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, Berkeley University of California, University of Edinburgh, University of London and many more. A recent report identified the value positions of institutions providing MOOCs as 'education access,

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