

Chapter 7

Adoption of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) for Librarians' Professional Development in Africa

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ABSTRACT

Librarian development is the process of constantly strengthening professional attainment, broadening academic knowledge, and enhancing skills. This chapter explores how Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), can be used as continuing professional development of a librarian. This chapter narrates how MOOCs may offer a librarian an opportunity to upgrade their skills or further their education. It explains the benefits and challenges of the adoption of MOOCs for continuing professional development in developing countries and how this can be applied in developing economies. The major benefits of MOOCs to librarians are to help in professional and personal learning, but most librarians who wish to experience progressive career-development are yet to ascertain this fact. The chapter concludes that librarians have the opportunity to leverage this technology to improve their relevant professional skills in the 21st century. It is also established that the adoption and use of MOOCs among professional librarians in Africa is low as in advanced countries.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a paradigm shift in the dynamic of teaching and learning, lifelong learning is not left out of this speedy shift. The modes of developing capacity among professionals in the 21st Century are no longer limited to attending conferences, workshops, and in-service training or learning. The computer-mediated means began with the emergence of Web technology which has birthed diverse methods of self-paced learning for career advancements such as the use of the wiki, blog site, and website also known as virtual learning, e-learning has transformed to Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). MOOCs are becoming a major part of the professional development tool in some advanced countries; it is important that librarians and professional bodies in Africa help build appropriate capacity of their employees and members.

BACKGROUND

Libraries are considered as an environment for learning and development of their clientele, and unfortunately, the development of librarians tend to be sidelined (Farkas, 2016). The acquisition of degrees, requisite skills and knowledge empowers librarian to be of great assistance to library patrons in their research endeavors, thus, the need for librarians to constantly seek self and professional development for advancement in research, skills for efficient and effective service delivery and better employment opportunities. Professional development helps to sharpen the skills of academic librarians for acquisition of knowledge and proficiencies that have not been met by either formal education or on-the-job-training (Pan & Hovde, 2010). Professional development is considered as the various educational opportunities available to librarians and other professionals in relation to their jobs. Librarians partake in professional development to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that will improve their performance on the job. Farkas (2016) opined that any library manager that desires to experience unfathomable commitment and dedication from library staff members should find means to support their professional development. As this sharpens skills, brings about vast and meaningful ideas into the library, and makes all librarians feel more attached to the work.

Professional development began formally in 1960 when the need to train school staff in the United States for professional development arose, though the construct was coined as far back as 1857 (Murphy-Latta, 2008). Ever since professional development surfaced as a means to sharpening the skill of school staff in the United States in 1960, diverse individuals from different fields of human endeavor have been taking advantage of this to boost their career progression, keep enhancing professional capabilities, keeping abreast of latest practices and technological trend, as well as to conform with professional guidelines and obligations. Traditionally, professional development varies from a semester extensive program to a workshop, and or diverse services rendered by professional development broker. Approach to professional development could be certification, case study method, technical assistance, consultation, coaching, community practice, lesson study, reflective supervision and mentoring. Technological innovations have brought in remarkable changes in the approach in which professional development programs are delivered today. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) continue to exert its telling impact on virtually every profession. The adoption of ICTs in professional development began with the training of teachers about five decades ago, which took place in the 1970s and 1980s, Cox and Preston 1999 cited in Fagbohun & Adetimirin, 2016), Over the years, diverse technologies have emerged to improve continuous learning processes such as the computer and related technologies, the internet,

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