

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for Professional Teacher and Teacher Educator Development: A Case of TESSA MOOC in Kenya

Patricia W. Wambugu

Department of Curriculum, Instruction & Educational Management, Egerton University, Kenya

Copyright©2018 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Abstract This study intends to present a bespoke teacher professional development MOOC designed by Teacher Education for Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) team that allows MOOCs to become a viable means offering cost-effective, quality professional teacher development. TESSA is a network of teachers and teacher educators, working to improve classroom teaching in Africa. TESSA MOOC is an innovative approach to capacity building for teacher educators and teachers across Africa. The study presents outputs of an evaluation of TESSA MOOC course undertaken by Kenyan teachers and teacher educators. The experiences of the participants were that the TESSA MOOC was a new but interesting, appealing and flexible course. In addition, the participants were able to learn from one another and what they learnt may impact on their pedagogical skills. Key challenges identified include difficulties in downloading of materials due to lack of internet connectivity and use of ICT phobia for learning. MOOCs represent an untapped potential for teacher professional development that can be a cost and resource effective means to deliver quality education to teachers and teacher educators. Therefore, the teachers and teacher educators may need to exploit this learner based TESSA MOOC to build capacity for teaching.

Keywords TESSA MOOC, Professional Teacher Development, Teacher, Teacher Educator

1. Introduction

Teacher professional development is the process of constantly strengthening professional attainment, broadening academic knowledge, enhancing the professional skills, and improving teaching ability. The 21st century dynamics of the education systems emphasizes professional teacher quality due to the need on the

increased number of students with diversified needs and the changing teaching technology (Hennessy, Habler & Hofmann [1]; Ji, Cao, [2] This therefore demands that teachers and teacher educators need to continually grow in the profession. The effectiveness of teacher quality depends largely on the extent to which their knowledge and skills are upgraded regularly. One of the key elements of teacher quality is the provision of adequate opportunities for personal growth and professional development through regular training (Avalos, [3]; Junaid, & Maka, [4]. The traditional professional development courses where teachers go out of school to attend formal lectures, capacity building workshops and in-service courses are not addressing this need. This is due to the costs associated with professional teacher development, such as time, training and coaching, materials, equipment, and facilities, travel and university tuition and conference fees among others. There is need to have a more cost-effective way of training teachers and teacher educators for continued professional development.

MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) are freely available, short courses, delivered online, on a suitable platform. MOOCs are currently one of the latest educational revolutions a trending concept in education, which have proven a much-needed catalyst for the development of progressive programs that respond to the changing world. MOOCs therefore, represent an untapped potential for teacher professional development that may replace traditional educational courses Pope, [5], Suzannal & Myrick [6]. MOOCs have the potential to engage a large number of learners from different countries at any one time. They provide learners with the possibility to undertake activities drawing on a range of available resources and tools, while also offering participants opportunities for collaboration, and peer support. This study intends to present a bespoke teacher professional development MOOC designed by Teacher Education for Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) team that allows MOOCs to become a