



## The Use of MOOCs in African ODeL Institutions for Academics' Career Advancement: An Autoethnographic Reflection

### L'utilisation des MOOCs dans les institutions africaines d'ODeL pour l'avancement de carrière dans les universitaires: Une réflexion autoethnographique

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#### Abstract

*Integrating Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) into higher education has revolutionised access to knowledge and professional development opportunities worldwide. However, the recognition and impact of MOOCs on career advancement, particularly within African Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL) institutions, remain underexplored. This paper argues that MOOCs in African ODeL higher education institutions are not yet recognised as a viable means to support academics' career advancement. This paper delves into an autoethnographic study of two academics from different African countries – South Africa and Nigeria - examining their journeys and experiences with MOOCs and how these have influenced their professional development, academic appointments, and promotions. Through reflective journals, e-mails, and WhatsApp discussions, the study reveals a complex landscape where some higher education institutions still overlook MOOCs in their recruitment and promotion processes. Despite this, the participants' strong desire to enhance their knowledge and skills through MOOCs underscores the potential of these courses to contribute significantly to professional growth in academia.*

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**Keywords:** Autoethnography; career advancement; MOOCs; ODeL; professional development; recruitment and promotion

### Résumé

*L'intégration des cours en ligne ouverts et massifs (MOOCs) dans l'enseignement supérieur a révolutionné l'accès au savoir et aux opportunités de développement professionnel à l'échelle mondiale. Cependant, la reconnaissance et l'impact des MOOCs sur l'avancement de carrière, en particulier au sein des institutions africaines d'apprentissage ouvert et à distance (ODeL), restent peu explorés. Cet article soutient que les MOOCs dans les institutions africaines d'enseignement supérieur en ODeL ne sont pas encore reconnus comme un moyen viable pour soutenir l'avancement de carrière des universitaires. Cet article explore une étude autoethnographique de deux universitaires provenant de différents pays africains – l'Afrique du Sud et le Nigeria – en examinant leurs parcours et expériences avec les MOOCs et la manière dont ceux-ci ont influencé leur développement professionnel, leurs nominations académiques et leurs promotions. À travers des journaux réflexifs, des e-mails et des discussions sur WhatsApp, l'étude met en lumière un paysage complexe où certaines institutions d'enseignement supérieur continuent d'ignorer les MOOCs dans leurs processus de recrutement et de promotion. Malgré cela, le fort désir des participants d'améliorer leurs connaissances et compétences grâce aux MOOCs souligne le potentiel de ces cours à contribuer de manière significative à la croissance professionnelle dans le milieu académique.*

**Mots-clés:** Autoethnographie ; avancement de carrière ; MOOCs ; ODeL ; développement professionnel ; recrutement et promotion

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## **Introduction and background**

Through an autoethnographic study, this paper explores the adoption of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in African Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL) higher education institutions as a viable means to support lecturers' career advancement. The research underscores numerous benefits for various stakeholders in the education and training sector (OER Africa, 2020; Dodson et al., 2015; Radford et al., 2015; Bogdan et al., 2015) and highlights the increasing collaboration between universities and MOOC providers to offer professional development courses on a wide range of topics (Modise, 2022). MOOCs are, therefore, recognised as an innovative technology in higher education for professional development and lifelong learning (Bettioli et al., 2022).

However, studies indicate that the growth of MOOCs in Africa is relatively slow, with minimal cooperation, correlation, and connection among researchers in the region (Yunusa, Umar, and Bervell, 2021). This contributes to the scarcity of literature on MOOCs in African ODeL higher education institutions for lecturers' career progression. From an autoethnographic perspective, this paper explores the journeys of two lecturers from open and distance learning institutions in Africa - one from the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the other from the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). This study is significant, as it explores the recognition and integration of MOOCs in African ODeL higher education institutions to recruit and promote academics. Notably, NOUN and UNISA are leading contributors to MOOC research and production in Africa (Modise, 2022).

The study sought to answer the following research questions: 1) How are MOOCs utilised in African ODeL higher education institutions to support academics' career advancement? And 2) To what extent do the MOOC certificates contribute to academic career goals in African ODeL higher education institutions?

## **The History and Nature of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)**

The history of MOOCs in formal education started about 150 years ago with the advent of distance education (Moe, 2015). The term 'MOOC' was coined by Dave Cormier in 2008 in reaction to an open online course titled *Connectivism and Connective Knowledge* (2004) designed by Stephen Downes and George Siemens. MOOC is the acronym for Massive Open Online Course, a way of teaching in the Internet age that allows learners to explore topics of interest without leaving their homes. The word 'massive' means that it caters to a large percentage of people; the word 'open' refers to accessibility to and by anyone free of charge; the word 'online' implies that delivery is through the Internet. In other words, virtual and not in person, and the word 'course' denotes that learners should be able to locate and explore new topics of interest (Moe, 2015).

The purpose of MOOCs is to interact with diverse participants through online tools to foster more productive learning environments. MOOCs do away with the boundaries of time and space to diffuse knowledge. Since their inception, MOOCs have exploded (Nyoni, 2013), and today, various learning institutions host their courses on these platforms. Nonetheless, MOOCs have experienced a decline in subscribers (Shah, 2021), but despite this, MOOCs have not outlived their relevance. However, they have not met the initial speculation that they would replace conventional learning and educational methods (digitaldefynd.com, 2024). The continuous relevance of MOOCs can be seen in their rebirth or rebranding as micro-credentials (Parsons et al., 2023). MOOCs are thus recognised as an innovative technology in higher education for professional development and lifelong learning (Bettiol et al., 2022). They also allow higher-education institutions to offer online certificates and degrees for professionals seeking a more affordable and flexible option to improve their professional skills and credentials (Tang & Xing, 2021).

Interest groups and stakeholders have different reasons for promoting MOOCs. The opening up of education must be seen alongside

powerful forces who view online learning as a means of increasing competition between institutions, introducing new business models with reduced public funding for universities, and creating a global higher-education digital marketplace (Schuwer et al., 2015).

MOOCs are a valuable tool for skills development in higher education. The literature alludes to the diverse applications of MOOCs to promote skill development, professional growth, and lifelong learning. For example, MOOCs facilitate the transfer of learnt skills to real-world settings, such as applying new programming skills in open-source software projects and developing new school initiatives upon completion of education leadership courses (Kizilcec et al., 2020). Furthermore, MOOCs improve professional knowledge and skills and promote positive attitudes and values, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education (Yildirim, 2022). In addition, MOOCs boost digital competence, occupational skills, and certification. Evidence suggests that they also assist unemployed participants in acquiring new skills and credentials (Castaño-Muñoz et al., 2017).

The literature also discusses the role of MOOCs in teacher development, providing authentic and relevant experiences for educators and fostering new skills in learning design and delivery (Salmon, Gregory, Lokuge Dona & Ross, 2015). Furthermore, behavioural change and improved professional behaviour have been attributed to MOOCs, which indicates their impact on skills development and practical application in professional settings (Launois, Maher, Certain, Ross & Penkunas, 2021). Giannatelli et al. (2023) provide pertinent data regarding the suitability of MOOCs to improve the clarity of information and, eventually, the malleability of European higher education. Gorbato et al. (2020) argue that technology-enabled learning tools such as MOOCs are instrumental in helping persons indicate their professional credentials to potential employers. Further, while investigating MOOCs' place in the job search process, using signalling theory, the study notes that self-promotion, the brand of the school, and the perceived relevance of MOOCs for employability are significant in influencing learners to

choose MOOCs, rather than learning goal orientation. Witthaus et al. (2016) presented a report of a year-long research into issues of assessments, credentialisation, and recognition of MOOCs, showing the ways European Higher Education Institutions (HEIS) recognise or ignore MOOCs and how certain employers acknowledge badges and MOOC certificates for lifelong professional development. The study produced a model to guide MOOC creators to position and shape their products; it further assists institutions and employers on which MOOCs to recognise. There is no doubt that MOOCs are generally recognised and actively promoted outside of Africa as a means of professional development, unlike the relative hesitation that pervades their recognition in Africa.

### **Literature on MOOC Adoption in Africa**

In a systematic review of some 36 study reports on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in Africa, published between 2013 and 2021 (Maphosa and Maphosa, 2023), a number of reasons were identified for the slow positive response MOOCs receive. The reasons include Internet access and other educational equipment issues, the lack of necessary skills, educational obstacles, and the Global South's reluctance to recognise MOOCs (King, Pegrum & Forsey, 2018; Zhang, Bonk, Reeves & Reynolds, 2019). Yunusa, Umar, and Bervell (2021), in a review of 30 articles on MOOCs published between 2012 and 2021, discovered that the growth of MOOCs is relatively slow in Africa and that there is little to no cooperation, correlation, and connection between researchers in Africa.

In a systematic review of 15 purposively selected articles to determine how African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) perceive MOOCs and if they are willing to recognise them as a means to make quality higher education more accessible, Modise (2022) found that MOOCs are on the increase in African higher education. She reported that MOOCs are used for personal development and to augment degrees and traditional qualifications. OER Africa (2020) argues that enrolling in a MOOC is a way to familiarise oneself with recent developments in one's field. Studies show private organisations use

MOOCs for professional development and skills training (Dodson et al., 2015; Radford et al., 2015; Bogdan et al., 2015).

Although MOOCs' accreditation in higher education is a stumbling block to their adoption, research shows that at some universities in developing countries, they are recognised as credit for courses (Modise, 2022) and as prior learning (Rampelt & Suter, 2017; Oyo & Kalema, 2014). The literature also highlights the implications of MOOCs for higher education, professional development, and lifelong learning (Bettiol, Psereckis & MacIntyre, 2022). This research investigated whether MOOCs are recognised as a tool for professional development in African higher education institutions.

### **Methodology**

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that draws on the researcher's experiences to understand and interpret cultural encounters and explore the connections between individual experiences and larger social and cultural contexts (Ellis, 2011; Mokwena, 2023). In this method, the participant is "both the researcher and the researched" (Muncey, 2010:3). It requires researchers to reflect on their personal circumstances in order to understand cultural customs and beliefs (Oliveira, 2020). Autoethnography is a valuable tool for an in-depth understanding of personal experiences within social science fields (Jensen-Hart & Williams, 2010). According to Six (2020) and Oliveira (2020), autoethnography is a legitimate research method that provides authentic insights and contributes to trustworthiness and authenticity in research and practice. Producing autoethnographic work often includes self-reflective prewriting exercises and self-narrative writing exercises (Chang, 2016). Autoethnography also exploits memory and self-reporting resources (Coccaro, 2021).

### **Participants**

True to the nature of autoethnography, the authors of this paper are also the participants in this study (Muncey, 2010). We are two women from open African universities. The participant from Nigeria will be

referred to as Participant 1, and the participant from South Africa will be referred to as Participant 2. Both participants have doctoral degrees. One is an Acting Head of the Department at her institution, while the other is an Associate Professor. Both are academics in higher education. Although age is not a significant variable in selecting participants, it is interesting to note that at the time of writing this article, one participant was 47 and the other 38 years old. Our initial experience with MOOCs was for professional development at different points in our careers. Participant 1 discovered MOOCs in 2017 during her doctoral studies, while Participant 2 was introduced to them in 2013 through a formal South African-Maryland international capacity-building online programme. We both aimed to leverage MOOCs to bolster our transition into academia.

### **Data Collection**

We followed co-constructed and collaborative autoethnography (Grenier & Collins, 2016; James, 2017) to share our experiences of the MOOCs we completed and how they impacted our academic journeys. According to Mokwena (2023), data collection in autoethnographic studies involves reflective journals, e-mails, memos, and sketches. Narrative inquiry was appropriate to make sense of and draw meaning from our experiences, as it captured the personal and human dimensions of our experiences over time (Lumsden, 2018; Butina, 2015). The narrative inquiry also considers the relationship between individual experiences and cultural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), which was important in our study.

We analysed notes from our email exchanges, individual reflective journals, and chat messages from WhatsApp. Our first conversation regarding this research was during one of the Monthly Discourse webinars hosted by the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Dr Tony Mays, an education specialist at the Open Schooling Commonwealth of Learning (COL), presented a paper titled *Micro-Credentialing in*



*Open and Distance Learning*. We also included our notes from this chat.

In the chat, one of us (Participant 2) commented that MOOCs should be used to recruit talent and reward performance through promotion and other incentives. Although the webinar topic was about micro-credentialing and using MOOCs for professional development and promotion, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) sparked interesting comments. The thought-provoking responses from others in the field to our comment on the webinar triggered this research. Webinar guests from various countries indicated that MOOCs are not considered in the promotion of educators or as an incentive at their institutions. Participant 1 also mentioned that over thirty MOOCs she had completed and earned certificates for were not recognised as prior learning, promotion tools, or incentives. We then exchanged contact details and decided to reflect on the use of MOOCs in our institutions and determine whether MOOCs are employed as tools for promotion or as an incentive.

Therefore, this paper reports on our experience-based testimonies (Mabuan, 2018) on whether African ODeL higher education institutions perceive MOOCs as tools for fostering professional development and whether they acknowledge MOOC completion for career advancement. We also sought to understand how MOOC certificates contributed to our appointments and/or promotions when applying for positions within our respective institutions.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is a rigorous and systematic process that reveals the richness and depth of qualitative data and offers valuable information about a studied phenomenon (Saldaña, 2021). It involves methodologically organising, categorising, and interpreting non-numerical data to uncover patterns, themes, and meanings. It is a crucial aspect of qualitative research that helps researchers derive insights from their data and transform raw data into meaningful findings and conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2017). The process often entails inductive and deductive coding to incorporate codes emerging

from the data. Codes were identified during the study (Saldaña, 2021), as shown in Table 1.

We have used thematic analysis to explain our lived experiences. According to Saldaña (2021), it is a flexible method that allows researchers to identify, analyse, and report patterns within data. We have collected notes from our e-mails, WhatsApp messages, and reflective journals. Because they were all in digital form, transcription was unnecessary. Seeing that the data was manageable, we decided to analyse it manually. We have read the data individually and have met to compare notes. After we had exchanged and discussed ideas, we coded the same data separately. We met again to share our codes and identify themes from the data (Table 1).

**Table 1. Codes and Categories**

<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>CODES</b>
Reasons for MOOC enrolment	Job switching Fear of unemployment Professional development Skill development Enjoyment Mandatory enrolment Personal choice
Motivation for MOOC completion	Incentives Value of MOOCs Personal enrichment Securing a job MOOC enjoyment Recruitment and promotion Career advancement
Value of MOOCs	Securing a job Recruitment and promotion Career advancement MOOCs improved my chances of an appointment Lifelong learning Continuous professional development MOOC enjoyment MOOCs boosted my confidence
Context	Academia

	Requirements for promotion in academia Job progression Academic research publications
Recognition of MOOCs for promotion	Requirements for promotion in academia Incentives
MOOCs organisations	EdX Coursera FutureLearn

## Findings

This section presents four themes from the two research questions and the data.

### Theme 1: Use of MOOCs for Academic Career Advancement by Academics in African ODeL HEIs

One of the strong codes and themes from the data was the reason and motivation for MOOC enrolment and completion. Research has meticulously reported on the motivation for enrolment in MOOCs. This study revealed that the motivation to enrol for another MOOC is closely tied to the successful completion of another MOOC. We enrolled on these MOOCs for professional development, to use them to strengthen our application for available positions in academia. As indicated in the following comments, we hope that our MOOC certificates will facilitate a career move into academia:

*I will have other certifications to present alongside my PhD to show my interest and boost my chances of securing a non-academic position. (Participant 1)*

*I have been working toward joining academics since 2013. After completing my MEd with distinction, I thought that would help secure a place in academia. The rejection I received when I applied for a lecturer position was a shocking surprise to me. (Participant 2)*

The study also revealed that although both participants have the highest qualifications, they still sought to enhance their knowledge and skills through MOOCs. However, fear of unemployment was

reported as one of the motivations for enrolling in MOOCs. One of the participants recorded in her reflective journal that *Planning was a mixture of being a lifelong learner and the fear of unemployment*. MOOCs have been dubbed tools for lifelong learning (Ossiannilsson, 2021). Enjoyment was a significant motivating factor in completing MOOCs, as Participant 2 indicated: *I enjoyed the content, the discussions, and the new way of learning*.

## **Theme 2: Contribution of MOOC Certificates to Academic Career Goals in African ODeL HEIs**

This theme focused on the extent to which MOOC certificates help achieve career milestones and promotions. Participant 1 mentioned that her thirty-five MOOC certificates did not help her enter academia. She stated that after she had graduated in 2019 with a doctoral degree, she had to wait for more than *two agonising years before I could secure a place in academia*.

Our experiences with two African ODeL HEIs in Nigeria and South Africa show that not all ODeL HEIs recognise MOOCs when they recruit, employ, and promote educators. One of the participants commented that, irrespective of how many MOOCs she had completed, her academic institution did not recognise any of them.

*Upon graduation in 2019, was I right about my plans? No. I had to wait for more than two agonising years before I could secure a place in academia. Did my MOOC certificates count towards this? Not at all. (Participant 1)*

At the same time, Participant 2 mentioned that she believed her MOOC certificates gave her leverage for appointment as a lecturer at her institution. She strongly believed that her thirteen MOOC certificates helped her secure a position in academia, as seen in her comment below:

*Completing my MOOCs boosted my next application because I was shortlisted and interviewed for a lecturer position in 2017. Being shortlisted was an achievement for me, and I truly believed that my MOOCs improved my chances. I was*

*then officially appointed in June 2018 as a lecturer, and it was the most fantastic news ever. (Participant 2)*

Although Participant 1 had a doctoral degree, she reported that her MOOC certificates did not count in academia due to formal requirements for tenured positions. According to her, the reasons that her institution does not recognise MOOCs were based on the institution's recruitment and promotion assessments:

*Recruitment and promotion assessments are based on academic research publications and other requirements such as professional experience, university/community service/letter of commendation. (Participant 1)*

### **Theme 3: Challenges of MOOCs as Tools for Professional Development in African Higher-Education Institutions**

According to the literature, one of the significant challenges of MOOCs is non-completion (Nesterowicz et al., 2022; Zhang, Kim, Qi, & Zhao, 2022). Completion of MOOCs was also highlighted in this study as one of the challenges of using MOOCs for professional development. Jordan (2015) defines MOOC completion rates as the percentage of enrolled students who complete the course and receive the certificate. One of the participants observed that she had not completed all the MOOCs she enrolled for:

*So, part of the task was to complete a MOOC and write reflections on your learning journey. I had to choose any MOOC I wanted to complete. I chose a MOOC then and never finished it. (Participant 2)*

Participant 2 added that she did not complete some MOOCs because it was not mandatory to complete her first MOOC in the online programme for which she was enrolled. As for the capacity-building online certificate with a university in Maryland, she explained that candidates were required only to find a MOOC and reflect on their experience with it:

*It was in 2015 when I came across the MOOC offered by OECx and TESS-India through Edx entitled "Enhancing teacher education through OER" (TESS101x) in 2015. I completed this MOOC in January 2016. I enjoyed the content, the discussions, and the new way of learning. And so, I looked for other MOOCs related to teaching and learning, as I was working on switching from admin to academia. (Participant 2)*

Because she had to juggle the MOOC, the online certificate, and her day job, she decided not to complete the MOOC and instead focus on the online certificate. However, she explained that she later completed more than ten MOOCs and received certificates of completion for these MOOCs.

#### **Theme 4: The Value of MOOCs**

As reflected in the codes in Table 1, participants reported gains in personal and professional confidence and enrichment, lifelong learning, job security, continuous professional development, and career advancement from the MOOCs they enrolled in and completed.

Despite having different experiences in similar contexts (such as ODeL HEIs in Africa and a desire to join academia), both participants confirmed they had acquired valuable knowledge and skills from the MOOCs.

*I cannot, however, deny that the knowledge from these courses has enriched me and contributed to forming this budding but confident academic both in the classroom and in public engagement. (Participant 1)*

*[The MOOCs] really boosted my confidence and hope of finally being recognised for my skills and passion for teaching... I believe my MOOCs helped boost my application and prove that I was passionate about teaching and willing to learn and continue professionally developing myself within the field. (Participant 2)*

Our data analysis showed that MOOCs play a significant role in helping academics acquire new skills relevant to their field. This, in turn, can significantly impact the fulfillment of academic requirements and enhance qualifications for promotions.

*The next MOOC that caught my attention was the Foundations of Teaching for Learning offered by Commonwealth Education Trust through Coursera... I learned about teaching, teachers, learners, and teaching as a profession in these MOOCs. (Participant 2)*

## **Discussion**

MOOCs have been recognised as excellent tools for professional development and lifelong learning (Bettiol, Psereckis, & MacIntyre, 2022; Bettiol et al., 2022). They are renowned for their flexibility and capacity to provide opportunities for skill and knowledge enhancement. The findings in this study indicate that MOOC certificates make academics more competitive in the job market, supporting academic career goals in African ODeL HEIs.

The findings also highlighted the boost in confidence and self-efficacy from earning MOOC certificates. This often leads to a positive cycle, where completing one MOOC encourages further enrolment in additional courses.

MOOCs are also hailed as tools for massifying education (Oyo & Kalema, 2014; Modise, 2022). Nevertheless, research shows that funding remains one of the significant factors affecting access to education (Winthrop, 2022; IMF, 1985). This study also reported funding as a major stumbling block for MOOCs. Although they are often advertised as free, many offer free access to course materials such as video lectures, readings, and discussion forums. However, additional features usually come with a cost, such as receiving a certificate of completion or access to graded assignments (Shah, 2024; Hamilton & Swanston, 2024). One of the challenges reported in the findings was the issue of MOOC completion. It took self-motivation from both participants to complete their MOOCs and enrol

for others. When the reason for MOOC enrolment is personal and has promising future benefits, it seems MOOCs will be completed successfully.

The study indicates that MOOCs are now utilised for academic skill development in African ODeL HEIs and academic career advancement. How ODeL HEIs will respond to this emerging trend remains to be seen. We also argue that if students' MOOCs are regarded as credits at some universities in developing countries (Modise, 2022) and if they are taken as prior learning for access to higher education (Rampelt & Suter, 2017; Oyo & Kalema, 2014), should ODeL HEIs also not recognise and utilise MOOC certificates as tools for recruitment and promotion?

The credibility of MOOC certificates was not the reason behind the non-recognition in one institution; they were the formal requirements for an academic position that was needed there. However, as HEIs that produce MOOCs for their learners (Modise, 2022), it is clear from this experience that the value of MOOCs is not highly recognised for career advancement in the academic community.

The availability of MOOCs enhances several core values of ODeL, such as accessibility and inclusivity in education. MOOCs provide greater access to education for learners who might not have the opportunity to study in traditional settings due to financial, geographical, or other limitations (Modise, 2022), extending education's global reach. This accessibility is complemented by the scalability of MOOCs, allowing them to reach a vast number of learners. Like ODeL, MOOCs offer flexible learning options, enabling learners to study at their own pace and in their own space. While many MOOCs charge a fee for certificates, they are generally more cost-effective than conventional education, depending on the socio-economic context of the learner's country. The availability of MOOCs underscores the role of ODeL in democratising education.

However, the lack of MOOC adoption in some African countries for recruitment and promotion has several implications. Firstly, it reduces the motivation to enrol in MOOCs, which can limit the expansion of



knowledge and skills. Secondly, it means that academics may miss out on the benefits of MOOCs in ODeL, potentially contributing to a poorer perception of MOOCs. There is potential for ODeL HEIs in Africa to adopt MOOCs as part of their strategy for the recruitment and promotion of academics.

## **Conclusion**

This paper explores the perception of African HEIs regarding the value of MOOCs in academics' professional development and promotion. An autoethnographic approach was used to examine the journeys and experiences of two academics from two African ODeL HEIs. The findings revealed a mixed picture: while one African HEI recognised MOOC certificates in their appointment, the MOOC certificates did not enhance other applicants' chances of securing academic positions or count towards promotion assessments in another HEI. Because MOOCs significantly contribute to academics' professional development and lifelong learning, benefiting the educational system, African HEIs should reconsider their stance on MOOC certificates in appointments and promotions. MOOCs provide a valuable platform for acquiring new skills and knowledge, which can lead to significant personal and professional growth. They offer opportunities for personal enrichment, boosting confidence in one's job and fostering lifelong learning. This makes them a powerful tool for anyone looking to advance their career or expand their horizons.

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