

Out of Africa: A Journey Through the World of E-Learning

12. March 2014 by iversity (<https://iversity.org>)

by *Francisco Manuel da Costa* (<https://iversity.org/blog/da-costa-portuguese/>)

Out of Africa is not a romantic drama film, but a short story based loosely on my autobiographical experience in Africa's e-learning world. It's a long walk through the lands of Africa, where e-learning begins to bear fruits.



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The journey begins

My story begins in South Africa, and continues on northward through Angola, Kenya and finally Ethiopia. 18 years ago, I started to deeply research Africa Distance Education, especially the University of South Africa (UNISA), the largest distance learning university in Africa with more than 300,000 students, most of them from Africa. This institution started its work in distance learning in the middle of the last century. Presently, they offer many courses, from foundational degrees to Ph.Ds in many different subjects out of the humanities, social science management, law, etc.

Born in Johannesburg, the African Management Initiative (<http://www.africanmanagers.org>) is an ambitious pan-African MOOC project that offers free management education using MOOCs (<https://iversity.org/blog/francisco-shakespeare/>) logistics. Angola is the next stop. Over the past few years, I've been collaborating as a consultant with Angolalearning. This is one of the first African startups dedicated to e-learning and other ICTs in education. Education is growing tremendously in this country. Angola is a Lusophone country, a lovely and amazing country with fantastic people and where nature is majestic.

The African Virtual University

From southwest to northeast Kenya, my next stop is Nairobi. Last year, I was invited to work with the Lusophone program at the African Virtual University (AVU). The AVU is a pan-African and intergovernmental organization created by the African Union and has its headquarters in Nairobi. This distance learning university offers courses in its three official languages: English, French and Portuguese.

This project is part of the overall objective of the AVU Multinational Project II to strengthen the capacity of the AVU and a network of 27 institutions in order to deliver and manage quality ICT integrated education and training opportunities in 21 African countries. The project has the following activities: (1) establishment of new open distance and e-learning (ODEL) centers and/or upgrading of existing AVU learning centers as well as internet connectivity provisions at AVU partner institutions; (2) development and/or improvement, and delivery of ICT integrated programs: AVU capacity enhancement program (ACEP).



E-learning Africa Now in its ninth year and is organized this year in Kampala (Uganda). It is an opportunity to learn about the latest challenges and initiatives in education and training. forum is the largest meeting of e-learning and ICT supported education and training professionals in Africa, as education and training practitioners, experts, researchers, etc.

Our travel is close to a happy ending in Ethiopia. One Tablet per Child is a successful pilot project, supported by an Italian NGO which handed out 40 tablet computers in two remote Ethiopian villages to see if children can learn by themselves. They simply dropped off tablet computers with preloaded programs and to see what would happens: the children were : enthusiastic as they found the power button, a click that expanded their education with technology. I was so inspired by this story that I started working with a friend to reproduce thi: fantastic experience in a southwest Asian country.

Shaping the future along with it, e-learning arrived in Africa. So during this year, Africa's annual growth rate for self-paced e-Learning will be 15.4%, and their revenues are expected to reach \$512.8 million by the year 2016 (Ref (<http://elearningindustry.com/top-10-e-learning-statistics-for-2014-you-need-to-know>)). So for many years, I thought that selling e-learning cc in Africa was the same that selling land on the moon – luckily, I was proved to be wrong.

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To MOOC or Not To MOOC?

3. January 2014 by iversity (<https://iversity.org>)

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(https://iversity.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/09-Francisco-Manuel-da-Costa_large.png) by *Francisco Manuel da Costa* (<https://iversity.org/blog/francisco-bytenberg-period/>)

That's the question? If Shakespeare was alive, he would certainly ask: To MOOC or not to MOOC? And he would be available and motivated to take a MOOC (<https://iversity.org/blog/was-ist-ein-corporate-mooc/>). His mind and creativity would be excited to create new words in English, such as: MOOCee and MOOCer.

Francisco, To MOOC or not to MOOC - i...  



Video by *Francisco Manuel da Costa*

Redefining teaching and learning

But what does MOOCee and MOOCer mean? MOOCee is who is learning, and MOOCer is who is teaching. Maybe in the future, these concepts (learning and teaching) will no longer make sense, and will be updated to the new buzzwords MOOCing, MOOCer and MOOCee.

By the way, learning is what people do more and more in their lives, so micro-learning and personal learning environments will be used more and developed in the internet. Teachers online instructors are more like instructional designers and content curators, they have a lot of tools to create content, to communicate asynchronously or synchronously.

Learning in unlimited time and space

A MOOC, for instance, will become part of our lives, and it will be available everywhere, all the time, anywhere and anytime. At the same time, it helps us to be everywhere, at any time. Internet is a space of economic, social, cultural, educational and ideological connections. It is a place of freedom, creation, imagination and memories.

Our memories and dreams are deposited in the internet and it becomes our Rigid Disk Drive. Part of us became more virtual, but in a certain way, more and more real. Internet is not just a toy but can be used as a tool. It is a place to share, to link. Internet is an expression of creativity, and creativity is a powerful way to make money, and money can stimulate creativity.

More than TO BE or not TO BE?, the main question is: to MOOC or not to MOOC?

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One thought on "To MOOC or Not To MOOC?"



Michel Boustani

8. January 2014 at 14:26

(<https://iversity.org/blog/francisco-shakespeare/#comment-8159>)

Interesting topic, as MOOCs whether we like them or not, are nowadays the buzz word among the education forums and networks.

I have attended so far to 12 MOOCs, enjoying some, bored at many, and questioning myself about the scope of MOOCs as they are today in 2014.

I consider myself having learned a lot from all these various MOOCs, as it was possible because I was intellectually and emotionally prepared during all these previous years of learning, inquiring, collecting knowledge, in other words being curious.

To my opinion, MOOCs will earn they real credentials if they favour MOOCee (Students and learners), to think, to ask, to interrogate, to be curious, to let their critical mindset freely express their thoughts, develop high level cognitive abilities (Such are the traits of experts)...

If MOOC designers, and pedagogical teams succeed to reaching such goals and results, then my guess MOOCs will be the Next Generation Real Learning tools.

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The State of Portuguese E-learning in the BRICS

27. January 2014 by iversity (<https://iversity.org>)



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Today we can surf around the world without a boat, but with a mouse. No more dressed as a sailor but in our living room with pajamas, and virtually with Google Translate, we can translate almost all languages and words and become polyglots. But, during the first period of globalization, the Portuguese language was the main vehicle of communication (<https://iversity.org/blog/francisco-bytenberg-period/>) for voyagers, discovers, traders and sailors in many parts of the world. For instance, the Portuguese were the first to translate Japanese to a western language. By the way, Portuguese had a great influence on the Japanese language.



First, there was the ocean space to trade and communicate, now there is the cyber-space. Today, Portuguese is the 5th most spoken language on the internet and the 3rd on Facebook and Twitter. It is the official language in two of the BRICS Countries: Brazil and China-Macao (<http://portal.gov.mo/>) (a former Portuguese territory until 1999).

In China, Portuguese is very trendy

Portuguese is a language da moda e do emprego na China. Within five years there will be over 5,000 college students learning Portuguese in China. Some Chinese universities have the second highest scores of entry in Portuguese studies. The University of Macao (<http://www.umac.mo/port/>), the City University of Macao, (both are offering e-learning courses in Portuguese) the Macao Polytechnic Institute and the Portuguese Institute of the Orient have worked together to promote Portuguese language in China.

Portuguese e-learning made by Russia

In Moscow, a successful startup e-learning provider that focuses on the BRICS markets, is teaching business courses (in e-learning) in Portuguese for a Brazilian audience. Under this Russian startup, tens of thousands of registered users were attracted to its courses and 80 percent of them were from Brazil and India.

The explosion of e-learning in Brazil

Brazil is living a terrific moment of explosion in Distance Education. According ABED, in 2011, about 3.5 million students enrolled in Distance Education courses in Brazil. This represents an increase of 58% from the previous year. More and more Brazilian universities are using e-learning technologies, more and more Brazilian students are doing Distance Education in their country and abroad, and taking MOOCs. An American consultant from a very well known e-learning platform says that, since 2011, his business has increased in Brazil 300%.

Portuguese heritage in India and South Africa

Part of India (Goa) was a Portuguese territory until 1961. In India, Portugal assists with the growing demand to learn Portuguese. At this level, Camões Institute in India plays a main role promoting e-learning courses. South Africa is a country with the largest and oldest Distance Learning University in Africa, UNISA (University of South Africa) located in Pretoria. Founded in 1873, it started to offer distance Education in 1946. This University has more than 300,000 students from around the world and stated to offer distance learning in many fields of study, from Bachelor degree, to Master's and PhD. This university offers Portuguese language and culture courses. Fernando Pessoa, one of the greatest poets in the Portuguese language lived for a long period in South Africa and he wrote: "MINHA PATRIA É MINHA LINGUA" ("My homeland is my language").

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We Live in the Bytenberg Period

26. December 2013 by iversity (<https://iversity.org>)

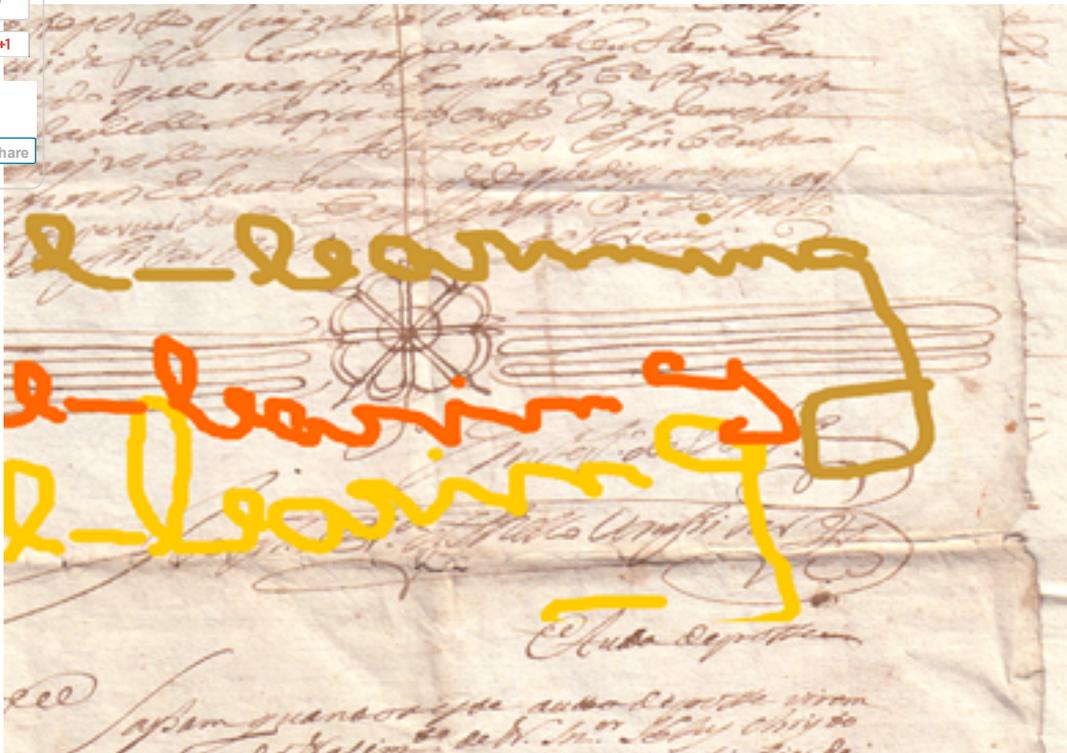
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by Francisco Manuel da Costa, Portugal

We are living in a period with a terrific change. A period that I termed the Postgutenberg, Cybergutenberg – or better said Bytenberg. The history of the logistics for knowledge dissemination has 3 important moments, which I identified as: the Penenberg (Pregutenberg's Period), the Printenberg (Gutenberg Period) and Bytenberg (Postgutenberg's Period).

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The Penenberg Period

Before the invention of the Gutenberg's characters, books as a verbal written material communication logistics were imprisoned in the monasteries. They were static, immobile, unique and elitist objects.

The Printenberg Period

The puzzle of characters invented by Gutenberg became the magic formula for dissemination of verbal communication written by the world. The combination of typographic character shaped spreader and grammar had a multiplier effect on access to knowledge and this disruptive formula created new perspectives in education.

The Printberg Period lasted several centuries, but less time as compared with the previous period. The alphabet brought by bytes freed knowledge of books logistics. We have the privilege of being contemporaries of this period of succession and transition to Postgutenberg's Period.

The Bytenberg Period

Postgutenberg's Period started with the recent flow of bytes. The internet has freed the education that was stuck in the halls of schools and universities, bringing it to the street and making it flexible in all places and at all times, accelerating the speed of your dissemination.

We are almost all immigrants and few are natives of this historic hazard. Most teachers are immigrants and are struggling with communication clashes with the natives (students). After we should view this as a learning process. In conclusion: the Gutenberg's Period freed knowledge of chained books of monasteries; the Bytenberg's Period freed knowledge of the classroom walls.

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