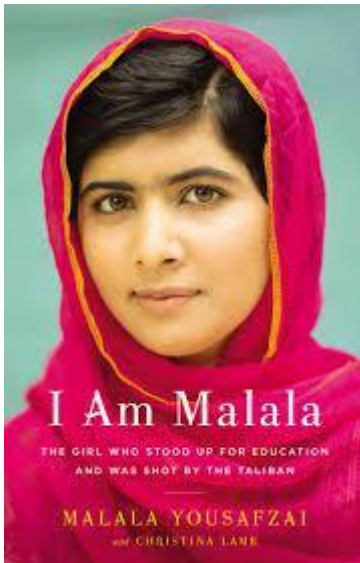


**Online Learning Insights**  
**A Place for Learning about Online Education**

**“I am Malala”:  
A REVIEW OF THE BOOK AND  
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

**Debbie MORRISON**



**I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban. Little, Brown and Company, 2013.**

**“I am Malala” is the true story of a fourteen-year old girl’s campaign for women’s right to education. In 2011 Malala was shot by the Taliban in a bus on her way home from school.**

**Two men boarded the school bus -“Who is Malala” they asked and fired gun shots; two lodged in Malala’s head. The series of events that followed, described in Malala’s voice, are remarkable- the politics, the media frenzy and her recovery. The shooting triggered a complex series of negotiations involving prominent political figures from Pakistan and England.**

**It’s a powerful book. Malala’s story is remarkable in light of women’s role in her culture and the groups fighting to oppress women-in this case the Taliban. It was the Taliban that claimed responsibility for shooting malala calling her crusade for education rights an “obscenity.” (Walsh, 2012).**

### **OVERVIEW**

**The first half of the book Malala describes Pakistan’s history including the history of her ancestors and the northern region of Pakistan, Swat where she lives. Malala also shares stories of her family, giving the reader a glimpse into the culture of Pakistan from a young woman’s perspective.**

**Many of the stories involve Malala’s father Ziauddin Yousafzai. She describes his involvement in local politics, in the community and his vocal support of education for boys *and* girls. There’s no doubt Malala’s passion and courage to stand-up for women’s rights stems from her father’s actions and character. Ziauddin Yousafzai defied Taliban orders by running a private school that encouraged girls to attend.**

**Malala describes the challenges and frustrations her father faced when starting the school. The motto over the school’s door read “*We are committed to build for your the call of the new era*”. Her father believed the school’s students could fight the enemy with pens, not swords.**

**Some reviewers claimed the book was poorly written, disjointed. It’s a valid point. The first half of the book does jump around, sometimes repeating facts. But I see this as a sign of authenticity; it’s written in a 14-year old’s voice, from her perspective. The first half of the book provides context for the second half. I could appreciate more about what happened to Malala after her shooting because of the background she included.**

## **EDUCATION'S VALUE**

In Western culture it's unthinkable that women be excluded from education. Malala and her story are symbolic of education freedom and the book delivers a message to the world. Education, considered a right for many is used as a mechanism for oppression in some countries.

Education is education. We should learn everything and then choose which path to follow." Education is neither Eastern nor Western, it is human. -*Malala Yousafzai*

Malala's story emphasizes education's value. Looking deeper it challenges readers to examine the role of education, its purpose and function within a society. Withholding education from certain groups within a society hinders progress, threatens peace and perpetuates poverty. These principles also apply to Western cultures where education is the starting point for eliminating poverty, reducing crime and violence in impoverished neighborhoods. There are parallels; it's thought-provoking.

MOOCs and Education for Women without Access Daphne Koller founder of Coursera when launching the MOOC platform often spoke about MOOCs as a vehicle to bring education to those without access and MOOCs "democratizing education". Though the chances that MOOCs will bring education to women in countries like Pakistan and empower them is questionable.

How can MOOCs democratize education if a country's government is unstable, when there is oppression of women and other groups? Or where there is no internet or access to computers or mobile devices? What about language barriers?

MOOCs do have potential to deliver education to those without access, yet there are significant barriers to overcome.

- ✓ How Jordan's Queen plans to 'democratize access' to education, VB News, Christina Farr
- ✓ Daphne Koller: "MOOCs can be a Significant Factor in Opening Doors to Opportunity", Edsurge, Daphne Koller

## **CURRICULUM FOR "I am Malala"**

George Washington University and the Global Women's Institute developed a university-level curriculum based upon "I am Malala" to work across various academic disciplines. The tools focus on themes such as how education empowers women, global feminism, political extremism and youth advocacy. One of the goals of the program is to encourage college students and eventually high school students to get involved, to facilitate dialogue among various groups, and to influence public opinion about access to education and women's rights.

- ✓ Global Women's Institute Launches 'I Am Malala' Resource Guide for Educators, GW Today, Lauren Ingeno
- ✓ I am Malala Resource Guide for Educators, Global Women's Institute, George Washington University

## **CLOSING**

"I am Malala" is a compelling read. Malala as an individual is a remarkable women who is a hero for women's right to a quality education. With her father, Malala created the Malala Fund that supports education for women including the Global Partnership for Education. The book is a good starting point for learning about the complexities of women's rights in some countries and education access. "I am Malala" delivers a message to each reader about the value of education. Education empowers.