MOOCs: why are they important?

The TMT report 2014 predicts a “perfect storm” of conditions that could make (MOOCs) a major factor by 2020, representing over 10 percent of all courses taken in tertiary and enterprise continuing education. New technology, alternative modes of teaching and a need to continuously update quickly obsolete skills are driving the trend, suggesting MOOCs will grow enormously.1

MOOC Providers’ Distributions Showing Increasing Diversity 2013x14

How Global Are MOOCs? 2013 Data

Subject Distribution 2013

- Humanities: 20%
- Computer Sciences: 16%
- Business & Management: 15%
- Sciences: 11%
- Health & Medical: 11%
- Education & Teaching: 8.6%
- Maths & Statistics: 6.6%
- Social Sciences: 5.7%
- Engineering: 5.1%

Challenges - Accreditation / Certification
- Adaptive / Personalised Learning
- Modular Student Blending programmes
- Re-evaluating course statistics
- Learning about Scaling
- Improving educational outcomes
- Innovating pedagogy
- Understanding student motivations
- In Development
- MOOC.org - Partnership between Open EDX and Google to create a MOOC authorship platform
- Solarin - New MOOC platform & MOOC course provider from Orange Mobile Company

Institutional goals in MOOC initiatives

- Extending reach of & access for student recruitment
- Building & maintaining brand > visibility
- Promoting research impact
- Providing flexible learning opportunities
- Conducting research on teaching & learning
- Suplementing current face to face course studies
- Learning about scaling up

Re-evaluating course statistics

Coursera - ’drop-out and completion statistics have been incorrectly assessed in the past’2

By focusing instead on learner intentionality (as derived from entry surveys about completion) Coursera was able to show that there is a high level of completion among students that self-identified as intending to complete the course at the outset:

approximately 85% completion rates.

‘If you’re assessing the viability of MOOCs, this is the variable that matters: number of students still participating at the end, not what percentage of those who enrolled are participating at the end.’ Robert Wright, Princeton.

Hollands & Tirthali May 2014

Interviewees mentioned several ways in which MOOCs may lead, directly or indirectly, to improvement in educational outcomes:

- Motivating instructors to rethink pedagogy
- Course re-design
- “Chunking” lectures and interspersing questions
- Fine-tuning instructional materials
- Providing instant feedback
- Gamification and badging to increase motivation
- Outreach to participants to encourage persistence
- Adaptive learning/personalization/mastery-based learning
- Using MOOCs in FE to prepare students for college/university

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