



The 2018 OpenupEd Trend Report on MOOCs



Erasmus+

Editors

European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) | Darco Jansen; Lizzie Konings

Authors

European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), The Netherlands | Darco Jansen

Dublin City University (DCU), Ireland | Mark Brown

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain | Timothy Read; Elena Barcena; Beatriz Sedano

UniMOOC; Universidad de Alicante (UA), Spain | Adam Lapworth

Anadolu University (AU), Turkey | Cengiz Hakan Aydin

University of Wolverhampton (UoW), United Kingdom | John Traxler

University of Oviedo (UNIOVI), Spain | Aquilina Fueyo; Isabel Hevia; Sara Velasco

Linnaeus University (LNU), Sweden | Alastair Creelman

University of Birmingham (UBir), United Kingdom | Gabi Witthaus

FH JOANNEUM, Austria | Christian Friedl

Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI), Germany | Thomas Staubitz

Hellenic Open University (HOU), Greece | Christoforos V. Karachristos; Fotis Lazarinis; Elias C.

Stavropoulos; Vassilios S. Verykios

Published by: European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, The Netherlands



Correspondence

European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)

att George Ubachs, Managing Director

Parkweg 27, 6212 XN Maastricht, The Netherlands

Tel: +31 43 311 87 12 | E-mail: secretariat@eadtu.eu

www.eadtu.eu | www.openuped.eu

Suggested citation

Author(s) (2018) Title of paper. In D. Jansen; L. Konings (Eds.) The 2018 OpenupEd Trend Report on MOOCs. (pp. Pages). Maastricht, NL: EADTU. Retrieved from

<https://tinyurl.com/2018OpenupEdtrendreport>

License used

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> This license lets others distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon this work (even commercially) as long as credit is provided for the original creation. This is among the most accommodating of CC licenses offered, and recommended for maximum dissemination and use of licensed materials.



Disclaimer

This publication is partly funded by Erasmus+, KA3- Civil Society Cooperation, Education and Training. The European Commission supports for the production of this publication and does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Innovative impact

The article outlines five findings and seven key trends for (potential) corporate MOOCs based on a recent study and the evaluation of pilot runs of three corporate MOOCs in 2017 and 2018.

MOOCs and their digital successors could become a game-changer in business education and disrupt the way how companies grow talent and employees improve career pathways.

Introduction

MOOCs have started to be employed not just within higher education systems, but also within the corporate context. Examples are training of employees, human resource development, recruiting, marketing, and even brand awareness (Grossman, 2013; Iversity, 2015; Radford et.al., 2015; Renz, Schwerer, Meinel, 2016; Sreeleakha and Manikandan, 2015). In addition, MOOCs have the potential to support the development of labour market-relevant skills (CEDEFOP, 2014; Calonge and Shah, 2016; Patru and Balaji, 2016). As there was no further research conducted on the identification of main potentials and barriers of MOOCs in the business community at European level, a EU-funded research project (BizMOOC, see: <http://bizmooc.eu>) has been launched.

Perception, potentials and challenges

In the first phase of the project, 56 business representatives across eleven European countries were interviewed and 1.193 potential MOOC learners took part in a survey to analyse the perception, potential and challenges of MOOCs for European companies across 4 dimensions: (1) awareness and perception of MOOCs; (2) involvement in online and MOOC activities; (3) expectations, reasons, benefits and barriers to engaging with or creating MOOCs; and (4) opportunities and interest for collaboration with other institutions.

Five key findings

- **MOOCs are not mainstream in the corporate world.** The level of familiarity of EU companies with the MOOC concept is still rather low. While almost three quarters of the organisations interviewed were applying some sort of online professional development (especially in Western European countries), a low percentage of the interviewed organisations (less than 20%) have been involved in specific MOOC-related activity.
- **MOOCs are primarily recognised as Human Resource Development and training tool.** The main benefits of MOOCs are seen in relation to their application within HRD (including building a talent pipeline, on-boarding and recruitment) and as a customer training which is also in line with the literature reviewed. Marketing is seen as additional benefit, but only as a positive side-effect.
- **MOOCs work best as complementary education tool.** There was a higher potential seen in offering MOOCs to complement existing educational resources of the companies instead of replacing traditional approaches. This is also in line with a study conducted by McPherson & Bacow (2015).

Best practice

Corporate MOOC on Intrapreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a buzzword of the new century, but not everyone is a born entrepreneur. Yet innovation and entrepreneurship also take place within companies ("Intrapreneurship") with the engagement and dedication of open-minded entrepreneurial employees.

To unleash this potential among employees on a larger global scale, four partners from university and industry teamed up to offer the first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Intrapreneurship.

The content of the course covered a clarification of the intrapreneurship concept, outlined its opportunities for companies and employees, and introduced an intrapreneurship toolbox. Almost 3,000 business learners from 98 different countries and cultures enrolled so far, to discuss the potential and applicability within their environment, and jointly worked on own intrapreneurial ideas throughout the course.

The MOOC offered flexible learning pathways and certification options to meet the diverse target group needs such as a fast track for people with limit time or a full track including an interactive pitch development team exercise.

The whole course was designed and moderated applying an adapted version of the *Learning Design* concept by the Open University UK and *e-moderation and e-tivity concepts* by Gilly Salmon. The learners of the course, external experts and other MOOC developers provided

- **MOOCs face (too) high expectations.** Managers and employees expect from MOOCs to provide better networking opportunities, save costs, modernize education, provide up-to-date and high quality knowledge, develop new competencies, improve employee retention rates, increase flexibility etc. Some interviewees stated that e-Learning was already sold too many times before as new epiphany to companies and employees, but could not meet the expectations. So we should be very realistic and careful what to promise with MOOCs.
- **MOOCs face administrative and inexperience barriers.** There have been many unsolved questions documented with regards to legal limitations, confidentiality issues (e.g. do companies monitor their employee's learning results, how are company-secrets treated etc.) and technical issues (starting with a simple company firewall). Next, unawareness and lack of experience hinder companies from entering the MOOC market. This potentially opens the door for collaboration with MOOC-experienced institutions which is already happening (examples are openSAP & openWHO, Udacity & Google or Deutsche Telekom & Cadena).

Corporate MOOC Trends

Based on the findings of the study, three MOOCs were designed, implemented and evaluated in the timeframe of October 2017 to May 2018. The courses tackled business-related topics around three European LLL key competences (Learning to learn with MOOCs, Idea creation, and Intrapreneurship). All three were offered on different European platforms (OpenLearn, UniMOOC and mooc.house), and applied different designs and didactical approaches (self-paced or scheduled start and end, from non- to fully-moderated). Feedback was gathered by 55 business and university experts and over 1.000 learners in pre- and post-course surveys in the courses. In addition, the MOOC production teams applied a peer evaluation scheme and two external evaluators reviewed the course design. The evaluation approach was monitored by an external quality assurance board consisting of seven MOOC experts.

At the time of writing this article, the three MOOCs have been completed, but the meta evaluation is not fully completed. However, the following key trends can already be derived when contrasting the study findings with the preliminary evaluation.

Seven key trends for corporate MOOCs

1. **Employees prefer to learn private.** At least 15 companies recommended the MOOCs to their employees, but we had very few enrolments done with an official company email address – still, approximately 2/3 of the learners were employees according to our course surveys. This indicates that companies are slowly opening up to MOOCs, but their employees tend to learn private and self-determined. This might change, if companies offer more incentives to their employees to take a MOOC (e.g. as part of their working time), which was not the

extended feedback before and after the course. The preliminary evaluation is highly positive, 93% of learners would recommend the course to others and the completion rate passed the 20% mark which is above MOOC average completion rates.

The moderated version of the courses has started on the 26th of February 2018 and lasted – depending on the chosen course option – between 4 and 7 weeks. The course stays available for participation as self-paced version. Participation and all types of credentials are free of charge.

Course Link:

<https://mooc.house/bizmooc2018>

case in the pilot runs.

2. **Solving the unsolved.** This “bottom-up participation” solves barriers. By moving the ownership and responsibility for the MOOC away from the company, many administrative key barriers identified in the initial study – such as technical issues or legal constraints – become obsolete. The same is true for wrong expectations, as the MOOC is not an official company HR offer and the employees have the freedom to take a MOOC or not. Of course, all these issues stay unsolved if companies produce and offer their own MOOCs instead of using external ones.
3. **Unawareness stays, but perception becomes higher.** The huge potential to use MOOCs as complementing offer was not fully confirmed by the pilot runs. The approached companies showed large interest, but many of the HR managers preferred to collect their own experience first, before fully “trusting MOOCs” and eventually recommend MOOCs as official company offers.
4. **Observe your pro-active employees.** This leads to the next finding. Experts mentioned that companies which are outsourcing training offers are asking for complete packages including a competence matrix. They simply do not take the time and responsibility to search for freely available MOOCs, evaluate them etc. In addition, experts indicated that in many cases, decision-makers in established companies are not digital natives themselves and that it needs the right strategy to convince them.
5. **Go with established channels.** The previous finding addressed external MOOCs. Even less companies and HR managers dare to create an own MOOC. If considering this, we collected the experience that it is much easier to design the course, provide the quality requested (professionalism a must – business learners are even more critical than students) and reach a critical mass of learners when going with an established platform and collaborate with a professional partner. This does not necessarily need to be one of the major global platforms as our pilot runs showed.
6. **Flexibility is key, moderation can help.** We experimented with flexible pathways to cater the diverse needs of business learners, especially their time constraints. E.g. for those with limited capacities, a fast-track and separate course certificate was offered. This was highly appreciated and motivated learners to go for the full track. But learner engagement can sometimes also be improved with simple changes. E.g., carefully consider when to publish new content respecting working times, holidays and corporate schedules. In addition, we ran experiments with unmoderated and moderated team assignments. The moderation encouraged the discussions of (already active) learners, but did not necessarily turn un-active learners into active ones.

7. **Corporate UnMOOCification.** In line with overall developments in the educational landscape, many MOOCs are not MOOCs per definition any more. We see company-closed MOOCs, MOOC offered with freemium business models, and a strong shift towards shorter, modular versions (Micro, Nano). Some experts mentioned that completely “for free” could even become mixed up with “worthless/low quality”. This is complemented with a growing scepticism towards “allegedly free” online offers.

Conclusion

Some findings of our initial study have been confirmed by our field experiments, although the initial research phase had a stronger focus on the company-perspective than the pilot runs. MOOCs are still not broadly perceived in the corporate world, unawareness is still a considerable factor and administrative challenges stay, but only when speaking about a “top-down self-production” approach. There lies huge potential in the interface between external MOOCs and company HR programmes, if the design of such offers cater a corporate audience (flexible, modular and adaptable to company training offers including a competence matrix). Corporate MOOC learning is also identified as key trend by a recent Class Central study (Shah, 2018). The potential of MOOC as complementing corporate training offer has not been fully realized yet, but this also opens up interesting fields of collaboration between the educational and business sector.

The key trends derived will be further investigated, analysed and specified. There needs to be more differentiation between target groups, external and self-produced MOOCs and additional validation. Further findings and results will follow throughout 2018 and will be published on the project’s platform: <http://mooc-book.eu> and relevant conferences.

References

Grossman, R. (2013). Are Massive Online Courses in Your Future? Organizational and Employee Development Special Report, SHRM.

Iversity (2015). KPMG und iversity: Online-Kurs zur Zukunft der digitalen Weiterbildung.

McPherson, M. & Bacow, L. (2015). Online Higher Education: Beyond the Hype Cycle. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 29(4), 135-154.

Patru, M., Balaji, V. (2016). Making Sense of MOOCs. A guide for Policy-Makers. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France.

Radford, A.W., Coningham, B., Horn, L. (2015). MOOCs: Not just for college students-How organizations can use MOOCs for Professional Development. Employment Relations Today, 41(4): 1-15.

Renz, J., Schwerer, F., Meinel, C. (2016). openSAP: Evaluating xMOOC Usage and Challenges for Scalable and Open Enterprise Education, ICELW 2016 Proceedings.

Shah, D. (2018). MOOC Trends in 2017: Online degrees and corporate learning”, Class Central, derived from <https://www.class-central.com/report/mooc-trends-online-degrees-corporate-learning/>

Sreeleakha P., and Manikandan, N. (2015). The Way Forward with MOOCs – Professional Development Perspectives. American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, 15-514: 29-32.