



The 2019 OpenupEd trend report on MOOCs

Editors

European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) | George Ubachs; Lizzie Konings; Beau Nijsten

Authors

European Students' Union (ESU), Belgium | Gohar Hovhannisyanyan; Katrina Koppel
FH JOANNEUM, Austria | Christian Friedl
Hasso Plattner Institute Potsdam (HPI), Germany | Thomas Staubitz
Cracow University of Economics, Poland | Agnieszka Żur
Open University of the Netherlands (OUNL), the Netherlands | Christian M. Stracke
University of Oviedo (UNIOVI), Spain | Patricia Herrero de la Escosura; Ana I. González
Hellenic Open University (HOU), Greece | Christoforos D. Karachristos; Dimosthenis Karakatsoulis; Theofanis Orphanoudakis; Dimitris Sideris; Elias C. Stavropoulos
Oulu University of Applied Sciences (OAMK), Finland | Leena Paaso
Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), Finland | Teija Lehto
Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain | Timothy Read; Elena Barcena; Tiberio Feliz-Murias; David Recio-Moreno

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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

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**Christian Friedl, FH
JOANNEUM University of
Applied Sciences Graz
Agnieszka Żur, Cracow
University of Economics,
Thomas Staubitz, Hasso
Plattner Institute, Potsdam**

MOOCs for business use: Six hands-on recommendations

Innovative impact

In 2018, for the first time more than 100 million people learned with MOOCs (Class Central, 2018b) – and more than 50% used MOOCs to upgrade their labour-market relevant skills (Shah, 2018). However, the awareness level with MOOC as a high-quality easily accessible contemporary learning and training format for business is still low in Europe compared to the US.

Therefore, this article highlights six selected recommendations for opening up MOOCs to professional lifelong learners. The proposed PDP framework of MOOC design and implementation is based on an open educational resource called "MOOC BOOK" which was developed in the European research project BizMOOC.

Introduction

MOOCs have arrived to workplace training (e.g. Radford et al., 2015; Sreeleakha & Manikandan, 2015) and they are increasingly attracting interest of organizations and individuals that seek to develop labour-market relevant skills (Shah, 2018a). A growing number of both individuals and organizations make efforts to become recognized not only as MOOC learners, but also MOOC creators. However, the general awareness level with MOOCs as an effective and accessible contemporary training format is still low in Europe compared to the US (Driha, Friedl & Jansen, 2017).

Many authors agree that contemporary professional learning calls for a reconsideration of the form and design of learning environments, with a special focus on learning technologies and self-regulated learning (Egloffstein & Ifenthaler, 2017). MOOCs are considered a promising alternative in corporate learning, with a number of potential benefits, such as scalability, flexibility and adaptivity to specific company needs. Egloffstein and Ifenthaler (2017) point out that corporate MOOCs differ from the academic MOOCs: (1) They are mostly limited to employees, (2) they are open only within the organization, (3) they often may include face-to-face elements (e.g., discussions) if colleagues are co-located, and (4) they may include custom-built content if the topic requires it. Hence, MOOC creators around the world face an opportunity to tap into the growing demand of business-dedicated MOOCs.

This article is devoted to providing institutions and individual MOOC creators practical advice to design a (or transform an existing) MOOC so that it is attractive for the business community. The presented recommendations are a selection taken from the MOOC BOOK (www.mooc-book.eu), an open resource platform showcasing recommendations, good practice and up to date know-how in regard to MOOC design, promotion, implementation and delivery. The MOOC BOOK and its content was developed under the umbrella of the EU funded-project "BizMOOC – MOOCs for the world of business" (www.bizmooc.eu) by following a sequential mixed-methods approach consisting of 55 expert interviews, six surveys with +2,000 respondents in total, 14 focus groups and the implementation and evaluation of three MOOC Pilots. Thus, the objective of this hands-on article is to introduce future MOOC makers to different opportunities and approaches to upgrade their educational offer to business audiences and cater them with an action plan.

Best practices

Example of a business MOOC: <https://mooc.house/courses/bizmooc2018> (currently in self-paced mode, moderated re-run in November 2019)

CORSHIP – Corporate Edupreneurship: A new project developing a MicroCredential on Corporate Entrepreneurship which includes a business MOOC that builds on the MOOC BOOK: www.corship.eu

Open Textbook based on the MOOCBOOK: <https://moocbook.pressbooks.com>

Boot Camp for Future Business MOOC Makers: Workshop at the EMOOCs 2019 Conference in Naples on 20th of May 2019 https://mooc-book.eu/workshop_emoocs2019/

Selected Recommendations

The recommendations presented here are clustered along the so-called PDP (Promotion/Design/Participation) framework to cover the life-cycle of MOOC creation and implementation.

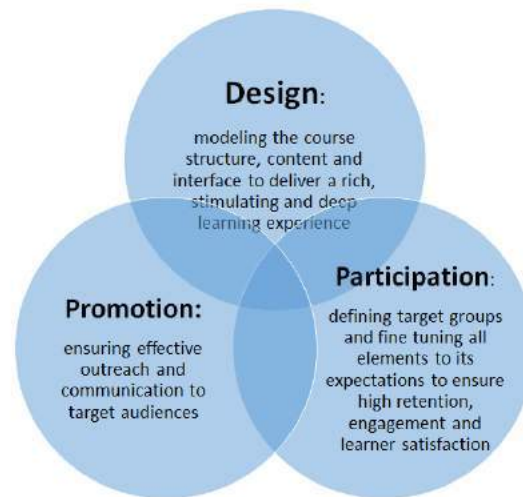


Fig. 1. PDP (Promotion/Design/Participation) Framework. Source: own work.

Based on the PDP framework, two selected recommendations per area are presented below. For further detail and explanations, we recommend the MOOC BOOK, featuring 25 recommendations, 50 lessons learned and 20 good practices complemented with templates and tools. The MOOC BOOK is published under an open license.

Promotion: ensuring effective outreach and communication to target audiences

- *Ensure that the promotion of the MOOC is targeting a defined audience:* Know the main characteristics and motivations of your (not too broad) target group(s) and identify the respective key selling points. Business learners or HR managers need different incentives than university students.
- *Design and apply a two-stage promotion campaign:* one for the institutions (way earlier) and one for the learners (start early, but not too early as you might end up with many no-shows)

Design: modelling the course structure, content and interface to deliver a rich, stimulating and deep learning experience

- *Carefully choose the platform:* an important criterion for choosing the platform is whether its functionality fits with your MOOC's design and with your target group's expectations and learning style. All functionalities should be evaluated, starting with a convenient sign-up procedure, and ending with available assessment modes and certification options.

- *Strike a good balance between different forms of activities and resources:* Business MOOC learners appreciate a mix of reading, watching diverse video materials, doing self-tests, quizzes, taking part in discussions etc. This diversification helps to cater different learning types/styles, it potentially introduces deeper learning processes and a self-reinforcing learning loop. Remember in this respect that multimedia is important, but only if the content is good and well presented. Animations are generally expensive to produce. If employed at all, their use should be restricted to few key areas.

Participation: defining target groups and fine tuning all elements to its expectations to ensure high retention, engagement and learner satisfaction. The best target group definition doesn't protect you from enrolments of non-target-group users. Don't worry if they don't like the course and drop out. That's fine.

- *Trigger the flexibility and convenience of your MOOC:* respect your target audience's schedule (business learners are busy) and offer flexibility to your learners with different course paths (e.g. define minimum participation requirements, mark "must-have" and "nice-to-have" content, showcase learning pathways). Providing a choice of content according to learner preferences can lead to motivational gains.
- *A well-planned communication policy is key to maintaining learner motivation:* Promote course enrolment, but do not forget to also promote course participation and completion. Stimulate your learners with easy and fun "ice-breaking" activities at the beginning. Be concise and easy-to-follow with instructions and encourage your learners to become co-creators of content throughout the course. Apply educational design tools and well-approved didactical approaches (e.g. Open University's Learning Design Principles, Gilly Salmon's e-Moderation approach or others)

The above PDP framework provides a pathway for corporate MOOC creation and the transformation of existing MOOC materials into a competitive corporate offer, which will meet the demands of digital workplace learning. Adaptive learning designs with flexible modes and access points, content referring to prior knowledge and participant professional experience as well as links to the participants' own professional contexts are important elements of all corporate MOOCs.

In order to optimize the effectiveness of the MOOC to a specific business audience, the adaptability of the MOOC needs to be checked. For example, by exploring whether the MOOC can be reworked to fit into a company learning program/catalogue. Next, can it potentially be adapted to a company competence framework to ensure sustainable uptake in training offers.

MOOCs will become an integral part of corporate learning and training only when the key decision-makers in companies become convinced that this format presents exceptional advantages. Preparing a strategy to introduce a MOOC to decision-makers entails aligning it to company strategy, corporate culture, current employee skills and to prior organizational knowledge. The MOOC key selling points are the concrete benefits for the company, which need to be delivered keeping in mind that the decision-makers might not be familiar with MOOCs and might lack some digital and language skills & terminology. Surely, some organizations will embrace MOOCs faster than others, but it is safe to say that most likely the full potential of MOOCs in the context of professional learning environments is yet to be discovered.

Conclusion

The focus of this paper was the growing demand for high quality business MOOCs to address the needs of digital self-regulated corporate learning. With the selected recommendations in three critical and interconnected areas, readers hopefully get a starting point how to adapt their own approaches and existing materials, such as an academic course, e-learning course or corporate training program, and transforming them into a business MOOC – fitted to the needs and expectations of contemporary professionals. With this short and hands-on article, we hope to have provided some useful hints how to open up an existing educational offer to new audiences.

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