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## Hello China and MOOCs: Shaping a New Paradigm in Education

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**Abstract.** Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have undergone significant evolution over the years, transforming the education landscape and opening up new avenues for learning. One pioneering organisation that played a crucial role in this evolution was Hello China. Hello China introduced a ground-breaking approach to education, setting itself apart from traditional university teaching methods. This paper explores the evolution of MOOCs and examines how Hello China contributed to this process. Through its programmes - Hello English, tailor-made for Chinese youth and university graduates - the company aimed to enhance English language proficiency in China, thereby expanding access to business and employment opportunities. The innovative initiatives by Hello China and the Hello English project paved the way for the evolution of MOOCs. They showcased the potential of technology in education, demonstrating how mobile learning could enhance access to educational resources and bridge language barriers. Hello China's approach not only enabled learners to improve their English language skills but also connected them with employment opportunities, underscoring the practical applications of MOOCs. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, it is crucial to continue exploring innovative approaches and strategies to maximise the potential of MOOCs and provide accessible, high-quality education to learners worldwide. By implementing effective strategies encompassing clear learning objectives, engaging content, social learning opportunities, personalised support, flexible scheduling, and accessible platforms, we can enhance the appeal of MOOCs, empowering learners with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in the rapidly evolving educational landscape. Through an in-depth analysis of Hello China's impact and success in integrating mobile learning into MOOCs, this paper aims to provide valuable insights into the ongoing advancement of global online education.

**Keywords.** Education, Online learning, MOOC, Mobile education, Education technology

### **Introduction - Brief description**

Hello China was a company established in the United Kingdom in October 2000 to explore educational platforms in China. The company founded two programmes, both named Hello English, to help revolutionise China's national educational system. One of the programmes targeted the youth in China and the other was aimed at university graduates, with both programmes broadcasted weekly by the Chinese National Radio. The main purpose of the programmes was to improve the English language skills of people in China. After learning the language, they would be connected with businesses and employment opportunities.

The programme was supported by a website where supplementary educational materials and information were provided to enhance the participants' English levels. The programme proved to be a great success when it was launched with "4 million listeners per broadcast" (Holmes, James, 2016). Additionally, the programme aimed to reach the high number of mobile phone users in China and this was one of the first approaches to mobile learning as we know it today. The project was prosperous in integrating mobile learning ("m-learning or e-learning") alongside the radio programme that was on the air. As the first of its kind, this allowed the participants to practice the skills they heard on the radio and exercise their language skills by answering questions on their mobile phones (Holmes, James, 2016).

Thus, Hello China is a pioneer in mobile education and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which are generally adopted by universities. This report will study the success of the Hello China project comprehensively. Following an analysis of the success of the project, the report will try to provide answers to how MOOCs can advance and how participation in MOOCs can grow again.

Hello China was the first of its kind, as the organisation, alongside educational institutions, introduced the idea of mobile learning as a private organisation, unlike the conventional teaching system used by universities. When Hello China first applied its mobile phone short message service (SMS) M-Learning via the Hello English project in 2002, the Chinese government was also considering mobile delivery as an education technique. However, Hello China successfully introduced and implemented the learning system ahead of the Chinese government. Thus, the Hello English project was the introductory source of MOOCs in the education market in China.

In 2004, other educational technologies in China adapted m-learning into their teaching and learning systems. This idea was used as a concept to include online tools as a communicative instrument between the lecturer and student, which still allowed HelloChina to keep its unique delivery method. Although MOOCs have evolved over the years, Hello China was one of the pioneers in bringing about this change. The organisation's Hello English project was among the first wave of MOOCs that we are currently exposed to. Some examples of such present MOOC platforms include Udemy and Coursera. The evolution and adaptations highlight the success of MOOCs and it is important to be reminded of the learning system's beginnings with universities and Hello China's innovativeness, and there have been several academic papers about the success of MOOCs and how it changed over the years. Some of these papers will be explored in this chapter.

A report produced in 2016 by Sung-Wan Kim from Korea Nazarene University noted that MOOCs passed the "inflated expectation stage of Gartner's hype cycle in 2012 and has gone 'through of disillusionment' stage" (What Brings about the Success of MOOCs in the Perspective of Education Service? 2022). The scholar recommends that MOOCs should be considered an education service-dominant logic and co-creation of value. This will be further explored in Chapter 2. Presently, it is important to credit the standpoint of Hello China where it was initially set to be used as a tool of rationality and usefulness. Further, Kim emphasises that the principles of education service science could be applied to learners using MOOCs to optimise their learning experience, which will then widely spread the use of MOOCs globally in underdeveloped countries as well.

The report also corresponds with a statement of Cathy Davidson, a professor at Duke University in the United States, where she notes that "MOOCs are going to save us" (Mangan, Katherine. 1 October 2012). Hello China launched an education tool and they exceeded

conventional methods in their implementation of the Hello English project. The success of the project was due to accessible and flexible vocational skills knowledge being provided to people via a private company without the complications of institutional bureaucracies.

In China, the Hello English project was not only aimed at educating students in higher-level institutions such as universities but also aimed at educating children. This was an innovative scheme to allow children to develop English language proficiency and equip them with the right language skill sets. Hello China, and the Hello English programme, was providing its m-learning services without access to the funding and sources that universities had. Additionally, the organisation was the first private body to introduce the model and attracted 4 million participants despite competition from the BBC and British Council. It was also the first of Vocational Open Online Courses (VOOCs) as the design of the programme links vocational skills and education. The programme was targeting a wide range of audiences, which was something that was not considered by academic institutions in the past.

Compared with the West where university degrees are more credible, in Asia, MOOCs hold the same weight. This means that the importance of this implementation through Hello China's Hello English project advanced the qualifications of the users whilst equipping them with the right skill sets. Hello China's M-Learning approach also allowed other learning providers such as the BBC to join the education market in the country and establish their mobile platform. These brought great improvements in the education sector within China and attracted many more investors, institutions and companies to follow the route set by Hello China (Holmes, James, 2016).

In light of the above, one can say that Hello China encouraged many changes and contributed to the transformation of the education system in China as well as becoming an example abroad. As a result, the idea of m-learning shifted from institutionalisation to privatisation, which is the widespread method we see today in MOOC provider platforms from edX to Udacity.

The following chapters will discuss MOOCs further and provide an in-depth perspective on the uniqueness of the courses and how they can become even more widespread than it is today.

## **What brings about the success of MOOCs from the standpoint of education?**

### **Overview of Chapter 2**

MOOCs have been popularised for their cost-effectiveness and flexibility in providing online education globally to many people. The MOOCs must be reflected as an educational tool emphasising rationality and usefulness. This chapter aims to provide a new perspective on educational services including MOOCs.

Firstly, MOOCs went through the "inflated expectation stage of Gartner's hype cycle" in 2012 and passed "through the disillusionment" stage (Stracke, Christian & Bozkurt, Aras, 2019) The cycle has proved that MOOCs are long-standing considering that although demand fluctuated, it remained high for MOOCs and with adjustment to the current developments, the education service can surpass traditional learning methods. For MOOCs to achieve their full potential, Sung-Wan Kim suggests that MOOCs be considered an education service. There were been dropout rates because of the structure of MOOCs compared to traditional education methods of teaching thus, the author suggests that after MOOCs are considered an educational tool, the dropout rates may also be eliminated as the educational service is unique.

The author proposes that with the focus on “education service” rather than the “limited definition of the term education, a learner’s experiences can be improved” via MOOCs as the system has a unique applicability to everyone (Jang. H. et al, 2018) An education service is described as the new way of describing education tools rather than limiting the description to the traditional ways of education. The educational tools are revolutionised by introducing technology in education to enhance the active participation and learners’ experiences in an identical manner to MOOCs which once again confirms the revolutionary nature of MOOCs and its increased need in today’s society more than ever.

The concept of education service is to ensure that learners receive the best of the innovative tool. The same goes for MOOCs, which were created for the best interests of the learners. The online education structure of MOOCs involves learning experiences while considering the “education service system”, which encompasses all forms of “learning environment, teaching and learning” and “services processes including input/participation experiences, process/learning skills, output/value knowledge” (Jang. H. et al, 2018). Overall, MOOCs incorporate all these aspects and create a learning platform that is absorbable by most learners.

Throughout the education experience via MOOCs, learners invest time and effort to perform high-quality learning tasks. This allows the learners to actively participate in the courses by benefiting from the advantages of technological resources and assistance. In addition, MOOCs and similar online education services allow immaterial principles that incorporate cognitive and reactive responses. Furthermore, MOOCs, similar to the concept of educational services, aim to apply technology to contribute to the progression of educational services. For instance, tailored education and technology are necessary for the advancement of society and MOOCs were unique to introduce innovative education to society's curriculum.

MOOCs and education services that are as innovative are considered to minimise limitations between teachers and learners, creating value through action and work. The novelty of MOOCs allows the reduction of traditional education mishaps where the focus on the supplier is shifted to the experience of the learner. Therefore, this new adaptation in education allowed learners to cultivate and flourish, unlike the conventional methods. With MOOCs, the unique way of learning has introduced more value into teaching methods and that is why the concept should be available for more geographical locations.

One should also consider the education system designs. The online systems are designed in ways to resolve problems that can occur at different levels including national, regional and international. This is why the applicability of MOOCs cannot be compared to the traditional ways of learning. Accordingly, learners and educational experiences are designed jointly for the utmost benefit. Online education is made up of many people, relationships, organisations and technology to create a network of value. It assists in presenting service design plans for each system level of learning environment service, teaching and learner experience. The learning environment service system in MOOCs can be classified into four types, depending on the degree of technological innovation and participation in use; “push-based, technology-affluent, human network-centred and pull-based” (Jang. H. et al, 2018). The four types are explained below:

1) **Push-based service system** has a Fordism approach for mass production following mass consumption.

2) In a **‘human-centred service system’**, the source of value creation focuses on human interaction, that is, the formation of a human network.

3) **‘Pull-based service system’** is centred on the co-creation of value and focuses on providing an environment that creates value in the use of educational services by users.

4) With the **Teaching-learning service system**, according to the degree of two-way communication orientation and programme structure, the teaching-learning service system can be divided into four types: programmed, video/audio conferencing, computer-assisted and adaptive.

Under the teaching-learning service system, there are various structures such as:

- The **programmed service system** focuses on supplier-oriented and content delivery-oriented programme operations. One-sided lectures using video content are typical. There is little interaction between instructor-learners and learners-learners, compared with other systems. In addition, it has a programme structure that makes it impossible for individual learners to select content, control learning speed, etc.

- The **video/audio-conferencing service system** has a structure that is difficult to tailor to the needs of individual learners and has the characteristic of providing an opportunity to interact between the instructor and the learner.

- The **computer-assisted service system** supports some degree of autonomy for learners to select learning content and adjust learning speed, but it is difficult to provide opportunities for interaction between instructor and learners. Depending on the learner's response, it moves to a different text (a linear programme) or a differently programmed text (a branched programme).

- An **adaptive service system** has a high level of interaction between instructors and learners and has the characteristics of providing educational services that meet the needs of individual learners. It is essential to support a system that provides the learning content that learners want immediately, and for this, the latest information and communication technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data must be utilised. For example, there may be an adaptive learning support programme using an artificial intelligence-based chatbot.

Learners' experience of service systems, on the other hand, can be classified into four types: passive, active, problem-solving and value discovering, according to the level of reality and autonomy of learning. These are defined as:

- **Passive active service system** focuses on the unilateral content delivery method of the instructor, the learner cannot actively participate in the teaching and learning process.

- **Active service system** has high-learning autonomy to participate in learning, so the learner actively participates in the learning process. But there is a limitation that learning is far from actual reality.

- In a **problem-solving service system**, the instructor presents real-life problems to the learner, and the learner focuses on solving only the presented problems.

- **Value discovery service system** focuses on learners finding practical problems and then trying to solve them. MOOC courses using creative problem-solving methodologies such as Design Thinking can be a representative example of value discovery. It is more important that learners create problems or activities proactively rather than pre-designed problems or activities.

## **Conclusion**

To improve the service provided by MOOCs, it is important to consider the essential characteristics of those services (intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability) as previously mentioned. Corresponding to each service characteristic, I suggest four MOOC quality dimensions (value experience, mutual interaction experience, system approach and value co-creation) as mentioned below.

First, 'value experience' is required to provide tangible experience to learners. This dimension is composed of reality, reliability and value. The 'mutual interaction experience' dimension has two indicators (assurance and empathy) about users' point management or coping with service characteristic 'inseparability'. The 'system approach' dimension consists of three indicators (organisational environment, program and learner support), which are related to the service characteristic 'heterogeneity'. The 'value co-creation' dimension has two indicators (reactivity and collaborative co-agency). It is connected to the limitation of education service's perishability.

In conclusion, the innovativeness of MOOCs can be best utilised if considered as an educational service. Thus, Hello China's approach from the very beginning is distinct and innovative, ahead of its time corresponding to the suggestions made by Sung-Wan Kim.

## **Advanced tools to evaluate a large number of students in the open distance and e-learning MOOCs**

### Overview of Chapter 3

The nature of summative valuations can sometimes lead to inadequate study times and difficulty in assessing grades. This is also the case for e-Learning. Thus, at times, the participants learn just enough to pass or achieve good grades without much detailed understanding. Yet, MOOCs grant individuals the opportunity to pursue studies online with less associated costs in a time-efficient manner. To increase the credibility and applicability of MOOCs, the methods for assessment should also be considered. This chapter will analyse the modes of evaluation.

To begin with, one can start by considering Humanistic Learning Theory (HLT) (Gandhi, MH, Mukherji, P., 2022). The HLT mode of evaluation allows a smooth assessment of MOOCs. HLT introduces a modification towards deliberating students, their individualities and stimulus on learning. This method embraces particular human aptitudes including inventiveness, choice and personal development. Through the analysis of this method, we will be able to link HLT with MOOCs and then assess the enrolment of high numbers of students into the programme. Finally, we will be able to deduct digital tools that can be used in assessing large numbers.

The scale of online education is immense and enrolment numbers have been growing rapidly. According to Qayyum and Zawacki-Richter (2019), there were 23 million confirmed students enrolled in distance learning courses (Holmes, James, 2016). These courses are generally provided by institutions in 12 countries and the rise in numbers along with the sudden increase in courses show that there is a need for new methods of assessing and the HLT is one of doing this. HLT encompasses several areas of assessment from individualistic to educational degrees and is generally referred to as Humanism (Holmes, James, 2016). The term refers to a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasises the value and agency of human beings both individually and collectively. Also, this method allows assessing one's abilities emotionally, socially and creatively, as well as intellectually (Gould, J., & Roffey-Barentsen, J., 2018). Thus,

this method of assessment in MOOCs is one that can amplify the success of e-learning to another level.

This method, first developed by Maslow, Rogers and Bugental, was a response to conventional learning tools. In today's society, the availability of MOOCs and many more online courses has also led to adapting the HLT method in non-conventional learning ways. Yet, the following steps must be considered to ensure that evaluations can bring out the best of MOOCs and contribute to the success of the education revolution that Hello China initiated.

Firstly, given the nature of online learning, physical distance must be considered and online tutors must provide feedback that includes perception and motivation to guarantee continuity in these programmes. Secondly, the evaluations by tutors must conform to the courses' objectives at every stage and make sure that the goals are met. Thirdly, objectives that are set must be monitored to adhere to various institutions' levels and be in alignment with the appropriate goals. Lastly, these evaluations must consider the development of a positive attitude. Once all these elements are considered within the assessments, then the success of MOOCs is inevitable in the future as it was in 2002.

Assessment in the MOOCs context means incorporating humanistic strategies and interactive activities. Students can be assessed on time-on-task, student course component interaction and certification of specific skills alongside knowledge gained from a MOOC. For instance, Maslow suggests that students' own decision-making and choice make MOOCs central to the HLT approach. Given the nature of MOOCs, the courses encourage a student-centred and humanistic approach. The online tools make students make choices that vary from daily activities to future goals; the online nature of the courses and the way they have been designed support motivational and engaging learning.

Throughout the evaluation of MOOCs using the HLT method, course curators rely on fostering engagement and inspiring students to be passionate about self-learning through online methods. The courses are easily accessible via mobile technology and are more engaging regardless of the location. MOOCs in alignment with the HLT also allow self-evaluation in a meaningful way. Routine testing encourages memorisation and increases excitement to learn a new skill. With the HLT technique in MOOCs, the humanistic approach of the courses focuses on the entire student experience and meets the needs of many students. This adaptive method in online learning and evaluation assists in addressing different difficulty levels. Thus, linking HLT with MOOCs forms of assessment allows larger numbers of students to be assessed objectively and innovatively in accordance with the ground-breaking ways of MOOCs.

In MOOCs, self-assessment, peer assessment and summative assessment must all be included in the assessment process to be able to implement the HLT at its best. According to scholars such methods that are implemented in MOOCs develop judgment and expert-like evaluation capabilities which then help foster the inevitable growth of MOOCs.

Within MOOCs, summative assessments can employ either one or multiple assessment types. Combining multiple assessment types can help reduce the time and cost of marking per student and provide more chances for students to obtain helpful and meaningful feedback. Also, in MOOCs, summative assessment is viewed as cost-effective because it reduces the cost of marking per student and offers opportunities for instant feedback depending on the tasks. Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) tests allow automatic evaluation of group and individual performance. The online media and interactive tools enable a humanistic approach in the assessment activities. In addition, some Learning Management Systems (LMS) used to host



MOOCs offer various assessment tools that enable the integration of teaching, learning and assessments. The assessment tools are discussed in the following section.

Blogs and discussion forums are not yet used as summative assessments because summative assessments are almost always formally graded and often heavily weighted. The innovative assessment tools discussed below can be used either for formative or summative assessments. With formative assessments, teachers can assign the students either self or peer assessment, particularly for many students. For example, quizzes in Moodle (a free online LMS) are used to evaluate student understanding of the material. Chauhan and Goel (Quiz in MOOC: An Overview, 2017) regard quizzes as some of the primary elements of MOOCs that enhance the ways of learning and advance new educational methods.

Chauhan and Goel established that quizzes are used for two reasons; the first is for evaluating students' performance and the second is for practice purposes to provide instant feedback to the students for self-evaluation, without worrying about the effect of their score on the final score outcome. Gamage, Ayres, Behrend and Smith (Optimising Moodle quizzes for online assessments, 2019) agree that quizzes can be used to improve student engagement. Gamage et al. demonstrate that quizzes can be used to assess students' competencies during the various stages of a study period through automated marking and easily extractable statistics as well as improve student engagement. With a large MOOC class, the teacher can set up a computer-graded quiz with feedback for each question or only correct and incorrect question feedback. The students will receive feedback either immediately after each question or after submitting the answer for grading. That will depend on the teacher's settings. The same quiz can be used as a self-assessment activity where the students can use the feedback provided to perform personal, unguided reflections on performance to generate an individually derived summary of one's level of knowledge, skill and understanding in a particular area. MOOCs have focused on social interactions between students due to the physical distance and large enrolments and, most importantly, improving learning outcomes.

In MOOCs, where students are located across the globe, teachers should create peer-graded discussion forums to empower the students to test out new concepts, galvanise ideas and reinforce new thinking (Sharif, A., & Magrill, B., 2015). Much literature has been published about blogs, considering them as communication and learning tools in MOOCs. Mak, Williams and Mackness (Blogs and forums as communication and learning tools in a MOOC, 2010) reflect on several definitions of a blog from various sources and maintain that blogs are associated with creating personal space for personal learning, quiet reflection and developing personal relationships with bloggers and others. Depending on the LMS used for the MOOC, blogging for assessment can be effective.

Some of the LMSs that host MOOCs incorporated a peer review system in their learning platform that guides students using grading rubrics to evaluate and provide feedback for each other's work. The teacher can set up a blog activity and ask each student to grade at least three other students or more blog posts. In this activity, students can be allowed to evaluate their blog posts and allocate self-grading scores.

The most commonly used game-based assessment tool in MOOCs is Kahoot. It is a game-based approach to learning and assessment. Students can even create their own "kahoots" to share with classmates, creating an interactive experience. In addition, the game-based assessments can be integrated with the quizzes. The methods of assessing a high number of students in MOOCs presented in this chapter are not new to the general teaching and learning environment. However, in this chapter, self, peer and summative assessments were linked with

HLT principles and how they can be used in MOOCs. Lastly, the chapter suggested innovative tools to assess a large number of students in MOOCs. Since humanistic teachers are passionate about helping students meet as many of their needs as possible, using the innovative tools mentioned in this chapter may assist students to adapt to learning and measure their performance.

### **Pandemic and e-learning - a new era?**

#### **Overview of Chapter 4**

The outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019 pushed MOOC development to the forefront. With the emergence of the new norm in the global education landscape, MOOCs carry a fundamental role in sustaining and promoting online learning worldwide. In times of crises, continuity of learning and the sustainability of teaching are of paramount importance to all stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, students and government officials, among others, to consider cautiously and carefully. A crisis event can lead to urgent issues with a high-level impact on school settings. The use of education technology and online learning provides a workable solution to respond to crises and restore education. Recently, China and other parts of the world have experienced an unexpected epidemic that has perturbed and challenged the functioning of educational institutions in such conditions.

Nearly a decade later, “MOOCs have reached 220 million learners, excluding China. In 2021, providers launched over 3,100 courses and 500 micro-credentials” (Shah, Dhawal, 2020). These mass online courses were created without a business model. Yet, within a decade, MOOCs went from no revenue to bringing in well over half a billion dollars annually (Shah, Dhawal, 2020).

Providers are also changing schedules so that courses are available throughout the year rather than having intermittent start dates, so learners can start on demand. Scaling MOOCs required removing professors from the active role of running their courses. With time, MOOCs other parts of the world have experienced an unexpected epidemic that has perturbed and have found their audience (at least from a monetisation perspective). One such audience is professional learners - that is, learners who are taking courses for potential career benefits. In terms of growth, it allowed the learners to fast forward in time, gaining in months what would have taken them a couple of years at their previous growth rate in the absence of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about significant changes in the way we live, work and learn. One of the most significant changes has been the shift towards online learning, with many educational institutions turning to MOOCs to provide high-quality education to learners around the world. The pandemic has led to a surge in demand for MOOCs. With traditional classroom-based learning disrupted, learners have turned to MOOCs as a way to continue their education remotely. According to data from Class Central, MOOC enrolments increased by 38% in 2020, with over 170 million people taking at least one MOOC (Shah, Dhawal., Pickard, Laurie., & Ma, Rui., 2023).

This increase in demand has led to a rapid expansion of MOOC offerings, with universities and educational institutions around the world developing new courses to meet the needs of learners. MOOCs have also been used as a way to provide free or low-cost education to those who have been financially impacted by the pandemic.

### **The rise of MOOCs during the pandemic**

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, educational institutions were forced to close their doors and move their classes online. This created a significant demand for online learning platforms, including MOOCs. MOOCs were able to provide high-quality education to learners around the world, regardless of their location or educational background. The pandemic also accelerated Coursera's (a US-based MOOC provider) plans to go public. Another major MOOC provider, edX, feeling they couldn't compete with Coursera without additional resources, decided to get acquired.

The pandemic also highlighted the benefits of MOOCs, such as the flexibility for students to learn at their own pace and the ability to access high-quality learning materials from anywhere in the world. As a result, many learners and educational institutions turned to MOOCs as a solution for online learning during the pandemic.

The increased use of MOOCs during the pandemic has also helped to increase the reputation of MOOCs as a platform for online learning. Here are some of the ways in which the pandemic has benefited the reputation of MOOCs:

- **Accessibility:** MOOCs have been able to provide education to learners who may not have had access to traditional educational institutions. This has helped to increase the accessibility of education and has shown that MOOCs can be an effective solution for providing education to learners around the world.
- **Flexibility:** The pandemic has highlighted the need for flexibility in education, and MOOCs have been able to provide this flexibility. Learners can participate in MOOCs at their own pace and on their own schedule, which has helped to increase the appeal of MOOCs as a platform for online learning.
- **Quality of education:** MOOCs have been able to provide high-quality education to learners during the pandemic. This has helped to increase the reputation of MOOCs as a platform for online learning, as learners have been able to experience the benefits of high-quality education from anywhere in the world.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** MOOCs are often more cost-effective than traditional educational institutions, which has made them an attractive option for learners and educational institutions during the pandemic. This has helped to increase the appeal of MOOCs as a platform for online learning.
- **Personalised support:** MOOCs often provide personalised support, such as one-on-one feedback or coaching. This has been particularly beneficial during the pandemic, as learners may have struggled with the isolation and lack of support that can come with online learning.

In 2023, MOOC providers are looking beyond universities to create courses. The pandemic also increased the adoption of online courses by corporations and governments around the world; this is where they are (and will be) looking for growth over the next few years.

Thus, the pandemic can be an opportunity to reclaim the status of MOOCs as educational systems have been widely affected throughout the globe. MOOCs have created a new era where traditional teaching techniques have become outdated. Therefore, this now represents a chance for MOOCs to reinvest themselves even stronger than ever.

## **MOOCS – Long-term learning method/sustainability**

### **Overview of Chapter 5**

The United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2030 Agenda's Sustainability Goal 4 aims to safeguard the educational rights of all by ensuring everyone has equal access to education. In a way, MOOCs created this opportunity and allowed access to many students around the globe. Hence, the question is 'Can MOOCs be sustained in the long run after improved modes and post-COVID-19?'

One must begin by explaining the importance of education and its constitutional importance across the globe. Education is both a human right and a force for sustainable development. The main example of this is evident in every goal of UNESCO's 2020 Agenda. At its core, the goals are constructed around educating people and granting them skills. COVID-19 was the most significant health emergency around the globe in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and educational institutions and practices have been profoundly disrupted by the closure of physical campuses. However, this led higher education institutions and teaching practices alongside policymakers to adapt their policy models accordingly. The result is an increased interest in online education. Consequently, the largest MOOC providers have experienced dramatic growth since the onset of the pandemic.

Although 2012 was named the year of MOOC, 2020 marked another milestone for MOOCs because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Millions of people around the world are now using MOOCs to learn for a variety of reasons, such as professional development, career transition, college preparation, supplemental learning, lifelong learning and corporate e-learning and training.

UNESCO considers open education and the open movement, such as Open Educational Resources (OER), MOOCs, Open Science, and Open Access, to be the most efficient ways to achieve the organisation's Sustainability Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG4 on education, as well as to promote resilience and sustainability in quality education for all, equity, lifelong learning, and well-being. The use of the term "global commons" underscores the universality of education and the collective global responsibility for education. Education, particularly open education, is a global common goal in achieving equity, social justice and human rights. Another initiative of UNESCO, which goes beyond the SDGs and aims at empowering individuals to achieve their personal goals, is the global initiative Futures of Education: Learning to Become. This initiative serves as a catalyst for reimagining how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet. The most coherent means of giving shape to this vision of regenerative education is through the principle of education as a global common, which was initially outlined in the 2015 UNESCO report Rethinking Education. In this context, education, knowledge and their importance for a prosperous future are among the most important global commons, which include water, the atmosphere and biodiversity.

In light of the above, the focus on global initiatives in education is a global common and MOOCs are highlighted in relation to the goal of achieving human rights, lifelong learning, social justice, liberation and equality. The emergence of MOOCs has disrupted traditional education systems, providing learners with access to knowledge and expertise from all around the world. It is evident that MOOCs have enabled learners to connect with one another and collaborate in ways that were previously impossible, and this has given rise to a new theory of learning called connectivism.

Connectivism is a learning theory that emphasizes the role of networks and connections in learning. It suggests that knowledge is distributed across networks of people and resources and that learning is the process of making connections and building understanding through these networks. Connectivism recognizes the importance of technology and the internet in facilitating learning, and it encourages learners to engage with digital technologies to expand their knowledge networks. The topic of connectivism needs to be explored together with sustainability. As mentioned earlier, the advent of the internet and digital technologies has fundamentally changed the way we learn and access information.

MOOCs are a prime example of how connectivism can be applied to education. MOOCs provide learners with access to an unprecedented amount of knowledge and expertise from around the world. Learners can connect with instructors and other learners from all over the world, collaborate on projects and discussions and build networks of like-minded individuals who share their interests and goals. MOOCs also offer learners the opportunity to take control of their own learning, as they can choose the topics and courses that interest them, and they can learn at their own pace. This autonomy is particularly important in connectivism, as it allows learners to build their own networks of knowledge and expertise, and to take ownership of their learning process.

However, MOOCs are not without their challenges. The sheer amount of information and resources available can be overwhelming, and learners may struggle to find the resources that are most relevant to their learning goals. Additionally, MOOCs can be isolating for some learners, particularly those who prefer in-person interaction and collaboration.

To overcome these challenges, MOOCs need to be designed with connectivism in mind. MOOCs should encourage learners to connect with one another, both online and offline, and to collaborate on projects and discussions. MOOCs should also provide learners with tools and resources to help them navigate the wealth of information available and to find the resources that are most relevant to their learning goals.

In summary, connectivism and MOOCs represent a new paradigm in education, one that emphasises the importance of networks and connections in learning. MOOCs offer learners an unprecedented amount of knowledge and expertise and provide learners with the tools and autonomy to take control of their own learning process. However, MOOCs also present challenges, such as the overwhelming amount of information available and the potential for isolation. To overcome these challenges, MOOCs need to be designed with connectivism in mind, with an emphasis on collaboration, networking, and the provision of relevant resources and tools.

### **Final overview and suggestions to increase participation in MOOCs**

MOOCs have gained popularity as a platform for delivering online education to a high number of learners across the world. While MOOCs have been successful in increasing access to education, participation rates have been a concern. This final chapter will provide an overview of MOOCs and strategies to improve participation.

It is important to emphasise the importance of MOOCs and provide an overview. MOOCs are online courses that are designed to be open to anyone with an internet connection, regardless of their location or educational background. These courses are typically offered by universities or other educational institutions and provide access to high-quality learning materials, including videos, quizzes and interactive assignments.

MOOCs are often structured around a series of modules or topics, with learners progressing through the course at their own pace. MOOCs may also provide opportunities for learners to interact with instructors and other learners through discussion forums or live webinars. Despite the potential benefits of MOOCs, participation rates have been a concern. Many learners enrol in MOOCs but fail to complete the course, with “completion rates often lower than 10%” (P. Rieber, Lloyd, 2016).

There are several reasons why learners may struggle to participate in MOOCs. Some learners may find the format of MOOCs to be too impersonal or overwhelming, while others may struggle with the self-directed nature of online learning. In addition, learners may face technical difficulties or lack the time and motivation to complete the course.

There are several strategies that can be used to improve participation in MOOCs. These strategies may include:

- **Clear learning objectives:** Providing clear learning objectives can help learners understand what they will gain from participating in the course. By setting clear goals, learners may be more motivated to complete the course.
- **Engaging content:** MOOCs should be designed with engaging and interactive content, such as videos, quizzes and interactive assignments. This can help learners stay engaged and motivated throughout the course.
- **Social learning opportunities:** MOOCs should provide opportunities for social learning, such as discussion forums or live webinars. This can help learners feel connected to the course and to other learners and may increase motivation and engagement.
- **Personalised support:** Providing personalised support, such as one-on-one feedback or coaching, can help learners overcome challenges and stay motivated throughout the course.
- **Flexible scheduling:** MOOCs should be designed to be flexible, allowing learners to participate at their own pace and on their own schedule. This can help learners balance their educational goals with other commitments, such as work or family.
- **Accessible platform:** MOOCs should be designed with accessibility in mind, ensuring that learners with disabilities or other accessibility needs can fully participate in the course.

In conclusion, MOOCs have the potential to provide access to high-quality education to learners around the world. However, improving participation rates is crucial to realizing this potential. By implementing strategies such as clear learning objectives, engaging content, social learning opportunities, personalised support, flexible scheduling, and accessible platforms, we can improve participation rates in MOOCs and provide learners with the education they need to succeed.

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