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## MOOCs and Beyond

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## Editorial

# MOOCs and Beyond

In August, 2012, four months after opening, Coursera—one of several Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) providers quickly gaining traction on the Internet—registered one million students, from nearly 200 countries. This is only one of the many staggering statistics that could be shared about the sudden popularity of MOOCs, the total of which speak to the worldwide interest in accessing university courses online.

The large number of people enrolling in MOOCs, coupled with university interest in expanding online content, has put this new model in the spotlight. The term MOOC dates from 2008, developed initially as a pedagogical experiment focused on creating a more connected and democratic learning environment. However, since 2011, universities have used the term to describe course offerings geared toward a worldwide student body. Today, “MOOC” describes a range of pedagogical models. George Siemens distinguishes between “cMOOCs” which follow the original “connectivist” model and the more institutionalised and tightly structured “xMOOCs”. Despite the differences, the emergence of MOOCs as a whole poses a set of challenges to the educational community. Many of us seem to believe that MOOCs are finally delivering some of the technology-enabled change in education that we have been waiting nearly two decades for.

This issue aims to shed light on the way MOOCs affect education institutions and learners. Which teaching and learning strategies can be used to improve the MOOC learning experience? How do MOOCs fit into today’s pedagogical landscape; and could they provide a viable model for developing countries?

We must also look closely at their potential impact on education structures. With the expansion of xMOOC platforms connected to different university networks—like Coursera, Udacity, edX, or the newly launched European Futurelearn—a central question is: what is their role in the education system and especially in higher education?

This special issue of *eLearning Papers* brings together in-depth research and examples from the field to generate debate within this emerging research area.

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## The Impact and Reach of MOOCs: A Developing Countries' Perspective

Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are a recent but hugely popular phenomenon in the online learning world. They are hailed by many as a solution for the developing world's lack of access to education because MOOCs can provide learning opportunities to a massive number of learners from anywhere in the world as long as they can access the course through Internet. However, a close consideration of learner's ability to make use of MOOCs in developing countries seems to contradict this rhetoric. This paper discusses features of MOOCs and looks at them from a developing countries' perspective to conclude that due to a complicated set of conditions ('access', language, computer literacy among others) prevailing in developing countries, MOOCs may not be a viable solution for education for a large proportion of people in these areas of the world.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/in-depth\\_33\\_1.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/in-depth_33_1.pdf)

## Tags

MOOCs, developing countries, connectivism, online learning

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## MOOCs and Disruptive Innovation: Implications for Higher Education

The opportunity that MOOCs offer for the massification of courses has generated significant interest from governments, institutions and commercial organisations, who have been increasingly involved in experimenting with MOOCs for the purpose of expanding access, marketing or developing new revenue streams. This paper will use disruptive innovation theory (Bower and Christensen, 1995) to examine MOOCs development and how their approach could be used to help institutions explore innovative approaches for teaching and learning and to gain competitive advantages in the education market. MOOCs provide institutions with a vehicle to think creatively and innovatively to explore new business models and flexible learning paths in higher education provision. However, there is a need to rethink current higher education structures and policies that obstruct innovation. This includes the existing funding structure and the ability to disaggregate teaching from assessment and accreditation for differential pricing and pursuit of marketing activities.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/in-depth\\_33\\_2.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/in-depth_33_2.pdf)

## Tags

MOOCs, disruptive innovation, sustainable innovation, business model

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## Tags

MOOCs, Bell-Lancaster, educational change, disruptive movement

## The Next Game Changer: The Historical Antecedents of the MOOC Movement in Education

Though the history of massive open online courses is very short, scholars can gain insights by looking at similar movements in the past. This paper examines several historical moments in education to develop an understanding of MOOCs and their future. Specifically, this paper explores two developments that resemble the discourse surrounding MOOCs—the emergence of studia particolare and generale in medieval Europe and the monitorial educational systems of the early nineteenth century. It also looks at several other educational innovations that have been seen as disruptive to the status quo of education. These include land-grant institutions in the United States in addition to the University Without Walls and open education movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These previous movements are very instructive as proponents of MOOC educational systems develop strategies for promoting MOOCs and giving them lasting resonance in the digital age.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset//In-depth\\_33\\_3.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset//In-depth_33_3.pdf)

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## Tags

MOOCs, learning design, educational models, online learning, learner empowerment

## MOOC Design Principles. A Pedagogical Approach from the Learner's Perspective

The debate around Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is much more focused on the social, institutional, technological and economical aspects than on the need for development of new pedagogical approaches that provide consistent guidance on how to design for this emergent educational scenario. A new understanding of knowledge production and learning challenges the core of learning design, demanding innovative and appropriate approaches to teaching and learning. We present a set of learning design principles drawn from the learner's perspective. They focus on empowering learners in networked environments for fostering critical thinking and collaboration, developing competence based outcomes, encouraging peer assistance and assessment through social appraisal, providing strategies and tools for self-regulation, and finally using a variety of media and ICTs to create and publish learning resources and outputs.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset//In-depth\\_33\\_4.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset//In-depth_33_4.pdf)

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## MOOCs are More Social than You Believe

We report about two ongoing studies, which challenge the individualistic model of MOOC based learning. MOOC usage is embedded in the context of collocated study groups. The ability to pause a lecture and discuss its contents with peers creates learning opportunities. Learning by explaining has been proved effective through many empirical studies. We investigate the best way to configure these study groups with different tools.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field\\_33\\_1.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field_33_1.pdf)

### Tags

Collaborative MOOCs,  
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collaborative learning,  
technology enhanced  
learning

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## Realising the Potential of Peer-to-Peer Learning: Taming a MOOC with Social Media

We report on peer-to-peer learning online, describing the role of cooperative, student managed groupings in successful learn-by-MOOC experiences. We found that to expand learners' potential in digital culture, it helps to by-pass traditional notions and tools of online learning support, and embrace networked social media.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field\\_33\\_2.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field_33_2.pdf)

### Tags

academic literacy,  
connectivism, digital  
culture, open education,  
peeragogy

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### Tags

Open Educational Resources, Learning Design, MOOC, Open University

## Learning from Open Design: Running a Learning Design MOOC

The OLDS-MOOC (<http://olds.ac.uk>) for learning design developed a project-based structure with alternative paths through the material. Running the course in the open led to fresh collaboration, demonstration of tools in action and interaction with enthusiastic learners. There were also strains in operating and lessons to be learnt.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field\\_33\\_3.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field_33_3.pdf)

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## Quad-blogging: promoting Peer-to-Peer Learning in a MOOC

We present the concept of quad-blogging, and its potential for facilitating and enhancing peer-to-peer learning in higher education, specifically in a massive open online course (MOOC) by increasing peer engagement, promoting the practice of blogging and fostering the formation of professional learning networks through social media.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field\\_33\\_4.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field_33_4.pdf)

### Tags

quad-blogging, peer-to-peer learning, MOOC, connectivism, peeragogy

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### Tags

serious games, game based learning, MOOCs, entrepreneurship, lifelong learning.

## Game Based Learning MOOC. Promoting Entrepreneurship Education

Promoting entrepreneurship could help society overcome the crisis. At the same time, MOOCs could allow a large number of participants to enrol in entrepreneurship education. This case study introduces the Introduction to Entrepreneurship MOOC, which takes advantage of Game Based Learning for developing entrepreneurship through an active based methodology in a MOOC open to anyone, anywhere.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field\\_33\\_5.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field_33_5.pdf)

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### Tags

aMOOC, graduate students, community, interdisciplinary course development, online learning

## The AlphaMOOC: Building a Massive Open Online Course One Graduate Student at a Time

Traditionally, developing courses in higher education involves a single individual working to build materials that will be implemented by that individual. More rarely, groups work together to build course. Interdisciplinary collaboration by teams of developers is often seen during online course creation, where teams generally consist of content experts, technologists, and instructional designers, and each takes on and persists in a single role. We propose a different model for team development of online MOOCs, one in which team members take on diverse roles. This approach was implemented in development of a Foundations of Science course, with 28 core team members, consisting of staff and graduate students. The engagement of experts in areas outside their immediate area of expertise allowed developers to take on the role of the novice, ensuring a MOOC that was approachable to learners of diverse abilities.

**Full text:** [http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field\\_33\\_6.pdf](http://elearningeuropa.info/sites/default/files/asset/From-field_33_6.pdf)