Open Call for Position Papers on MOOCs

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have received considerable media coverage since the beginning of 2012. MOOCs started in Canada and the US, and their rise to prominence was to a large extent driven by service providers such as Udacity, Coursera and Edx. In 2013, MOOC activity began in earnest in Europe starting with the pan-European initiative OpenupEd and different (regional) MOOC platforms became available (e.g., FutureLearn, Iversity, FUN, UNEDcomas, Miríada X). In September 2013, the European Commission launched the initiative Opening Up Education to further enhance the uptake of Open Education in Europe. Recently a number of MOOC projects were funded by the European Commission.

However, EU MOOC activities are mainly concentrated in Western Europe, serve a limited number of language communities, and have been mainly driven by individual ambitious players from the HE sector. Although European higher education institutions are aware that MOOCs are an important global movement and an instrument for educational policy, many have been hesitant to adopt or engage with MOOCs. Pedagogical issues, strategic and cost questions are among the concerns that have prevented or delayed many European HEIs from entering into this movement, and the consequence is a hindrance to timely European development in this area.

To facilitate and strengthen pan-European action we are now calling upon experts and practitioners to come up with position papers on the opportunities and characteristics for European cooperation on MOOCs.

Submitters are free to choose any angle, subject, approach, but the position paper should address the key questions of how Europe could collaborate on MOOCs, including the role of Open Education. It is suggested that some of the following issues should be considered:

1. Institutional policies and strategies
   What are the opportunities for institutional cooperation on MOOCs in Europe? What could the European strategy for MOOCs be and how could institutions contribute?

2. Didactical and pedagogical approaches and models;
   Because of its massive audience the pedagogical model of a MOOC is such that the efforts of all (staff and technical) services do not increase significantly as the number of participants increases. This sets certain constrains to the learning design especially in a European context aiming at equity and diversity.

3. Shared services;
   The ongoing evolution of technology also introduces opportunities of opening up education by providing a range of online support services. With the introduction of MOOCs we see that some educational services are offered trans-institutional and even trans-national (i.e., outside HE institutions themselves). Possible central services may be related to registration and single login services, community and crowdsourcing facilities, cross-border / online exam possibilities, partner agreements on badge/credit transfer and/or networked curricula, IP and licensing support, LMS services, etc. What are the threats and opportunities for the development of such (open) education services in the European context?
4. Recognition options and quality assurance  
MOOCs offer a complete/full course experience including non-formal recognition options such as badges and/or a certificate of completion. Apart from these, free recognition options, some MOOCs already include an access route to formal accreditation, in ECTS, to be offered as a posterior additional paid service. However, does this unbundling of recognition options indeed contribute to the accessibility of the higher education system? What are the consequences for the quality system at both an institutional and national level?

5. Economic sustainability approaches and business models  
In the Open movement users get software, scientific output and educational resources for free and someone else needs to pay the costs. In general the costs change from the user to producer and subsidiser. As a consequence business models across the education ecosystem are changing. Is openness indeed an important driver in the European context with values like equity, quality and diversity? How does this relate to other drivers like massification, globalisation, economy of scale and variable cost minimisation?

6. Licensing and other legal aspects  
It is expected that open licensing enhances the circulation of knowledge and increases the pace of innovation. Open access in scientific output is just a start, open education is seen as the next essential step. Open educational resources (OER) are said to facilitate performance improvement on accessibility, quality and efficiency of the educational system. Is it therefore important that course material in MOOCs is OER? Is an open licensing policy for the software in the MOOCs platforms (open source) and for the data produced in MOOCs (open data) also important?

Submission  
We invite all interested experts and practitioners to submit their papers. These should make relevant contribution to the field and meet typical academic requirements.

Contributions should be in English, in the form of a written text (possibly including graphs, images, etc.) ranging from a minimum of 3000 to a maximum of 6000 words, including a summary of up to 250 words.

To participate, please send your position paper - including a summary - and your CV as e-mail attachment to darco.jansen@eadtu.eu or mieke.vanderleegte@eadtu.eu by 13 September 2014. Papers can be submitted either by individual authors or by teams. You are encouraged to submit your proposal earlier to support a speedy evaluation of the proposals.

Evaluation and selection  
The selection of the submissions will be carried out by a double peer-review system conducted by selected experts in the field. Evaluation will be based primarily on originality, significance and quality of the analyses, accuracy of the information and relevance of the conclusions.

The results of the selection process will be publicized by 4 October and authors will be informed accordingly.

1 The call is open to all with the exception of person directly involved in the partnership of the HOME project or acting as a reviewer. Next experts coming from institutions that are already partner in the HOME project are invited to submit a paper but are excluded from the compensation allowance regarding the MOOC conference.
Publication
All scientifically relevant papers received will be published on the [project website] where they can also be commented on and discussed. Next papers selected will be subject to publication in a special volume on the Status of the Art of MOOCs in Europe to be edited by the HOME partnership in 2015, with the support of the European Commission.

All selected papers will be published under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

Presentation at MOOC Conference
One author of each of the best 10-15 position papers will be invited as keynote speaker to present their work at a special international conference on MOOCs to be held in Porto, Portugal on 27 November 2014. All travel and accommodation expenses of the invited contributors will be covered by the HOME partnership according to standard European Commission rules. Experts coming from institutions that are already partners in the HOME project are excluded from this compensation allowance. Experts from outside the European Union are encouraged to submit their position papers. Their travel costs will need to be pre-approved by the EADTU.

Participation in expert networks of the HOME project
The HOME project will facilitate different expert networks for European cooperation on open education, in general, and MOOCs, in particular. Join us and become part of the debate! This is an excellent opportunity to be involved in a European expert network on MOOCs and Open Education that could have a direct impact on European Policies and help shape the European role in the global digital learning market. On the 28 November, the day after the conference, different expert groups will have their kick-off meeting. Authors of selected position papers will be invited to join a well.

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