EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION IN E-LEARNING:
MOOCs and OER Movements in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

In late 2012, the New York Times called 2013 as the year of the MOOCs or Massive Open Online Courses. Over the past two years, MOOCs have been one of the trendiest approaches to teaching online. One of the attractions of a MOOC is the idea of sharing knowledge with a large world-wide audience free of charge in online environments. Another major potential game-changer is type of institutions offering courses, which include Stanford (Coursera/Udacity), MIT and Harvard University (EdX). In this connection, the MOOC phenomenon created a networked milieu designed within the context of e-learning that has not only been providing educational equality, but has also been meeting the demands of higher education in a wider scale. In this study, the authors’ aim is to reinterpret the overview on MOOCs as an educational innovation and discuss its dimensions within e-learning.

Keywords: MOOCs, mobile learning, pedagogy, e-learning, distance education

INTRODUCTION

What is a MOOC?
In its simplest form, A MOOC or Massively Open Online Course is a free online course available to anyone with an internet connection.
In August 2013, Oxford Dictionaries created an official definition of a MOOC to be “a course of study made available over the Internet without charge to a very large number of people.”

The term “Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)” was first used by Dave Cormier in 2008 to define "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge" course. (Yuan & Powell, 2013). The above mentioned course given by Siemens and Downes was preclusively opened for a group of 25 students on credit and required payment; however, after a while, the student number raised to 2,300 (Parry, 2010). Based upon the given numbers, it may be observed that MOOCs can be regarded as one of the trendiest approaches to teaching online and provides equal scopes for learners of higher education. In October 2013, Coursera, has drawn five million, and edX more than 1.3 million. And while the majority are still based in the U.S., their learners come from all over the globe: Among edX's students, 9% came from Africa and 12% from India. One of the attractions of a MOOC is the idea of sharing knowledge with a large worldwide audience free of charge through an internet connection. Another major potential game-changer is the type of institutions offering courses, which include Stanford University (Coursera/Udacity) and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University (EdX).

There are four major MOOCs currently. Coursera (www.coursera.org) established by two Stanford University professors, is currently the biggest MOOC platform providing 212 different courses in such areas as: economics and business, computer sciences, biology, social sciences, music and film, medicine, health, food and nutrition, physical and earth sciences. Coursera has a consortium of 33 of the most well-known and highly regarded universities in the world. Udacity (www.udacity.com) has a focus on computer science courses and provides a range of topics from beginner courses to intermediate and advanced courses. EdX (www.edx.org), owned by the prestigious academic institutions Harvard University and MIT, draws content from a selection of their highly regarded courses. Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) is a MOOC platform for young learners from kindergarten to Year 12 with courses centred on mathematics and science: biology, chemistry and physics. FutureLearn (www.futurelearn.com) is the newest significant player reflecting how MOOCs are constantly changing. FutureLearn comprises a consortium of 12 major UK universities including The Open University, which has considerable experience in distance and online education.

The well-respected New Media Consortium and Educause Horizon Report predicted MOOCs to be integrated into education for the year 2013, although their 2014 report does not mention MOOCs. This fact may indicate that MOOCs have already become a part of education and/or they are no longer ‘on the horizon’, and simply part of doing business. Historically, the adjectives “anytime, anywhere” have been attributed to the benefits of accessing the internet.

The MOOC phenomenon created a networked milieu designed within the context of distance e-learning and potential engagement. In this connection, MOOCs have not only been providing equality in educational opportunities, but may have also been meeting the demands of higher education in a wider scale.
There are some who believe that MOOCs could be the most effective tools to facilitate the outreach of higher education among the masses. Of course, there are others, who have issues with the MOOC movement, citing recent data of significant enrolment decline and many learners simply not engaging or finishing the courses. With this study, the authors’ aim is to reinterpret the overview on MOOCs and discuss the dimensions of this educational innovation of distance education.

There are several types of MOOCs, as they have quickly morphed into specific subsets, which address targeted needs of learners. Some of the sub-MOOCs include cMOOC, xMOOC, Hybrid MOOC, MobiMOOC, and EduMOOC. A cMOOC or ‘connectivist’ MOOC focuses on community, whereas an xMOOC’s focus on scalability and are more broadcast-focused and reliant upon certification and peer testing. A Hybrid MOOC takes advantage of the powerful outreach of a MOOC as well as the power of face-to-face instruction, combining the best aspects of each approach. Students watch lectures online at home, and then come to class to work on projects and interact with faculty. A MobiMOOC stands for Mobile MOOC and typically targets an audience who prefer to access the learning material using a mobile device.

Most recently, AT&T and Udacity announced the “NanoDegree.” For $200 a month, it is intended to teach anyone with a mastery of high school math the kind of basic programming skills needed to qualify for an entry-level position as a data analyst or iOS applications designer. MOOCs are a recent development in Distance Education, which began to emerge in 2012.

A RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL DEMANDS

In his book called “The Idea of a University” written in 1852, John Henry Newman describes universities as the Centers that teach universal information.

Although a university mission is to benefit the wider world, this, for Newman, would be an idealistic approach and seemed not realistic and even impossible. While explaining that impossibility, Newman meant that “schools should cooperate across boundaries through interdisciplinary conversation” (Oakes, 2011).

In this connection, Newman’s ideal university can be effectuated via Internet in the future. Thus, not only the traditional and old-established institutions like Harvard and Cambridge, but well-known mega universities may respond the educational needs of different geographies with MOOCs in order to create a common intercultural sense of distance education as well.

The original aim and the allure of MOOCs seem to be an educational tool that provided free course materials to the widest range of students across the world.

Figure: 2, ‘the MOOCs and Open Education Timeline’ features the years between 2000 and 2013. As it can be inferred, MIT in the U.S.A has formed its OpenCourseWare in 2002. This was a new start that provided an acceleration to open and distance learning.
In 2006, Open University in the U.K reached its distance learners via OpenLearn. Following these remarkable beginnings, other open education platforms were developed. In this connection, many private institutions, taking part in higher education, have attempted to take an advantage of online learning (Yuan & Powell, 2013).

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![MOOCs and Open Education Timeline](Source: Yuan & Powell, 2013)

On the contrary to what is claimed by Yuan and Powell (2013), Wiley (2012) appraise MOOCs as a significant threat of future in education. As suggested by Wiley (2012), the idea that MOOCs are offered at no cost to the learner becomes more of an issue of being open. In this context, keeping quality and retaining copyright of the open sources will be the main problem to address for higher education institutions.

Another threat for institutions could be the dispute to set a price for taking a MOOC. As it is highlighted by Ruth (2012), an open source should be configured upon an intriguing technology. To the same writer, the best quality content could only be provided to massive groups of learners across the world via paid courses. These are the issues still in debate.

**MOOCs AS A PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION**

In addition to the apparent advantage of broader access to potentially high quality instruction and instructional material, some believe a MOOC can help revolutionize higher education pedagogy. Decades of research on pedagogy in higher education has demonstrated that much like K-12 teaching and learning, learners need engagement, motivation, application, and the ability to experience low risk failed events. It was thought that MOOCs could capitalize on these ubiquitous learning attributes by providing engaging material (simulations, videos, mobile apps, games, etc.); motivation (anytime, anywhere, perhaps addressing differential learning abilities); direct and timely application (topics, could address specific needs in the workplace and/or foundational material); and endless opportunities to repeat conceptual lessons and assessments until mastery is accomplished.
Many believed MOOCs could break the boundaries of traditional learning, thereby providing access to non-traditional learners, as well as those bound by financial constraints. Simultaneously, there were ideas on MOOCs helping to take what we know about pedagogy and accelerate some of the research and subsequent implementation of proven best practices, so badly needed in higher education. Examples of the possibilities that might be considered include preparing for “uninvented careers”, digital content creation clearinghouse, a maker economy, fabrication laboratory to create open educational resource electronic learning objects, big data learning analytics, adaptive technology for formative assessment, mobile learning, integrated wearable technology, such as the quantifiable self, and the internet of things (IoT).

Examples of learner centered active learning best practices that may be adapted for a MOOC include Picture Prompt, Total Physical Response, One Minute Papers, Muddiest Point, Drawing for Understanding, Concept Mapping, One Sentence Summary, Harvesting, Think-Pair-Share, Jigsaw, Classroom Assessment Quality Circles, Six Degrees of “RNA Transcription Errors”, Speed Sharing, Annotated Portfolios and Pictionary. These methods align well with the effective approaches of creativity development, metacognition, reflection, feedback and formative evaluation, spaced practice, and mastery learning.

ARE MOOCs WORKING?

The answer to whether MOOCs are working depends on who you ask and specifically what is the question. If the question is have them become popular, are people paying attention and many people enrolling, then yes.

If the question is have MOOCs fundamentally modified higher education or our abilities to radically change how we teach in higher education, then the answer is no, or at least not yet.

In October 2013, the Wall Street Journal (2013) published an article on an ‘early report card for MOOCs”. The leading sentence indicated that at this point in history, they would evaluate MOOCs as “great potential, but still in need of remedial work.” Once again, they have found out, what we already know about effective learning persists, even online.

Attributes such as engagement, communication, interaction, and of course, caring, and enthusiastic instructors. A 2012-2013 study conducted by MIT and Harvard revealed an overwhelming 95 percent of students dropped out (BetaBoston, 2013).

The researchers believe the reasons for the high dropout rate is there are no live instructors; no straight-and-narrow path from beginning-to-end; the format do not encourage the exchange of different thoughts and ideas among learners.

A University of Pennsylvania study (Mindshift, 2014) showed their completion rate for its MOOCS was just 4%, although completion rates went up when the expectations for the class were lower. Also they found that 80% of MOOC users already have an advanced degree.
STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF MOOCs

Although MOOCs have recently become a topic of discussion in higher education, there are no shortages of scholars sharing their views on the relative strengths and limitations of MOOCs for teaching and learning. Some of the identified strengths of MOOCs throughout the research include their ability to provide potentially rich, mobile scalable content; a broader access (and potential open access educational material), significantly more arguments, and subsequent influence on moving the discussion of education as a human right forward; a healthy and potentially disruption of linear, low-level education; and an elevated potential for crowd sourced, democratized reform. As humans, it is a natural reaction to resist change and the academe is known for its cautious approach to any reform, which may lower the historic perceived quality. A parallel movement to MOOCs and one which could act as a catalyst to how well MOOCs are embraced is mobile learning. Recent, large-scale deployment of mobile devices for learning have initially shown positive results (Hargis & Cavanaugh, 2014; Hargis, Cavanaugh, Kamali, & Soto, 2013a; Hargis, Cavanaugh, Kamali, & Soto, 2013b). Of course, there are always two sides of the coin, and therefore MOOCs have their critiques. Some educators believe that the limitations of MOOCs might include a lack of perceived value; the chance of inconsistent quality; yet to be seen movement from traditional ineffective instruction to engaging, highly interactive learning; a business as usual philosophy (talking heads videos), which may only move the real issue around and not actually enhance higher education; uncertain, traditional leaders preventing forward movement; and a lack of rewards and recognition.

MOOCs AND OER MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

Today the trendiest education models on MOOCs and Open Educational Resources (OER) movements embrace global students to enhance distance education across the globe. In this regard, several endeavours have been made by the pioneer Europe-wide institutions that provide free access courses. As described in detail by Gaebel (2013), the European open universities were relatively silent about the developments, apart from the Open University UK with Futurelearn in 2012; however, in time more initiatives on MOOCs have taken place by now. In the report of EUA Gaebel (2013), 11 launch partners who participate in Coursera are displayed as France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and the UK, and outside the EU in Russia, Turkey and Israel. As indicated in the report, Koç University in İstanbul, Turkey is planning to offer courses on Coursera and currently it is providing language support to it. It is also assumed that Turkish Higher Education institutions have been gaining experience on MOOC platforms.

In Turkey, Open education Resources were introduced firstly by the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TUBA-http://www.tuba.gov.tr) in 2007. As indicated by Ozkul (2008), the Turkish OpenCourseWare (OCW) Consortium (UADMK) was assembled with the participation of representatives of 45 universities. In addition to this attempt, OCW Consortium was also formed with members from all Turkish academic institutions namely Higher Education Council (YOK) and Turkish Academic Network and Information Center (ULAKBIM) under the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) (Mutlu, Kayabaş and Kip-Kayabaş, 2012).
Likewise Koç University, Anadolu University (AU) in Turkey has contributed to OER pool by transforming its pre-published hardcopy textbooks into e-books format. To achieve this goal, a touchscreen technology aided content for 150 courses (half of which belong to fall term and the rest to spring term) has been used and developed (Yaşar, 2012).

The contents of all the learning materials are designed according to “self-study” format. Currently, latest educational technologies are utilized to empower and support students with new learning environments. In this regard, an open courseware initiative named “Yunusemre Newage Learning Portal” has been active to disseminate the contents of the distance courses since 2008. This e-learning platform has been delivering programs to one million three hundred thousand distance education students in many provinces in Turkey, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Western Europe and the Balkan region.

Even though, there have been several attempts of Anadolu University to widen open sources via online portals and the OER projects namely Second University (2004), e-Certificate Programs (2007), Yunus Emre Newage Learning Portal (2008), ANAPOD (2008), E-Learning Portal of Open Education Faculty (2013) within Anadolu University, OER movement is still in its infancy stage in Turkey where there is not enough formal education opportunities for all. (Aydın & Ulutak, 2010).

As explained by the same writers, there are serious barriers for widening the OER movement in Turkey. These are:

- lack of adequate copyright and intellectual property laws.
- shortage of incentives.
- the shortage of technical and instructional skills of the professors.

Based on the concerns discussed above, the OER Movement including MOOCs can be promoted if (Aydın & Ulutak, 2010):

- legal actions are taken into great consideration to protect the rights of copyright of the materials designed by academic staff of Anadolu University;
- the learning experiences become incentive for the academic and technical staff of Anadolu University; and
- diverse problems confronting OER are handled by experts and policy makers of higher education in Turkey.

ANADOLU UNIVERSITY MOOCs INITIATIVES

There have been several attempts and studies on MOOCs and Open Courseware conducted by Anadolu University lately. As indicated on the press release of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU, 2013) there are some other steps are taken by EADTU partner countries including France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, UK, Russia, Turkey and Israel (http://www.openuped.eu/partners/current-partners).
With the support of the European Commission, these partners have launched the first pan-European 'MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses-) initiative in which 40 courses, covering a wide variety of subjects, will be available free of charge and in 12 different languages in the closest future (www.OpenupEd.eu).

ANADOLU UNIVERSITY OPEN COURSEWARE INITIATIVES YUNUSEMRE LEARNING PORTAL

Yunus Emre Newage Learning Portal (http://yunusemre.anadolu.edu.tr) originally effectuated by Anadolu University in 2008. The portal is fed by open content developed by the academic staff of Anadolu University with no pre-requisition or an obligational charge. The system initially had 149 courses within 20 basic categories under the Creative Commons License designed upon self-paced online learning.

The portal, as an interactive milieu and a supportive source, allowed its users to reach 100 broadcast courses at different geographies with no given diploma or a certificate in return. By the end of 2008, Yunus Emre Learning Portal was visited about four million times and had 30,000 registered users (Mutlu, Kayabaş & Kip-Kayabaş, 2012) successfully. Yunus Emre Newage Learning Portal, as a lifelong learning initiative, was built upon the nuances of Lifelong Learning. In order to foster the online learning, the platform was enriched with effective tools such as eExercise, e-Course, e-Book, e-Television, e-Exam and e-AudioBook. The course content is regulated and internalized by the course instructors and made available to the public free of charge.

ANAPOD

ANAPOD (http://anapod.anadolu.edu.tr) started as a pilot project in 2008 to provide an online milieu designed with visual, written-audio information lectures. ANAPOD application was a new education model within University’s distance education process, which is highly applicable for many, disciplines (Cabuk, Senel, Polat, & Cabuk, 2009). As connoted by the same writers mentioned above, the portal was open to every user with basic computer knowledge. The simplicity of the system let instructors and learners to share and follow their course syllabus without any help of any operator or a system director.

By installing iTunes software, students could download courses on the web to their PCs, iPods or other mobile devices free of charge. Students could also juxtapose reviews on their campus courses.

The ANAPOD was the first and the only project in Turkey that aimed to store approximately ten thousand hours of audio, video and Powerpoint content in 2008. Blogs were also used to store the lessons in a chronological order and wiki’s to visualize the instructors’ notes and comments on the courses (Cabuk, Senel, Polat, & Cabuk, 2009).
OPEN EDUCATION FACULTY E-LEARNING PORTAL

After the launch of Yunusemre and Anapod portals, Anadolu University took another big step towards e-learning and reformed Open Education eLearning Portal in 2013. After one year, approximately 777 course content produced by 1,400 academic staff has been presented to online learners. (http://eogrenme.anadolu.edu.tr/Sayfalar/default.aspx) Furthermore, e-seminars including 7,500 lecturing videos were embedded on the virtual platform

The most updated technologies have been used to effectuate a learning management system which is based on modular and personalized learning approaches. The portal is designed upon different programs in which separated web sites include information on guidelines and introductory information of the program, an informative academic calendar and recent announcements and updates.

In this way, the e-learning services have become one click away with a very simple log in process that required only a user name and a password of the online learner.

CONCLUSION

Anadolu University uses the updated educational technologies designed within unique lifelong learning programs, mainly based on e-Learning. In this regard, many essential steps are taken to undertake the best quality education initiatives over the last decade.

Beside the above mentioned efforts, Anadolu University takes “e-learning portal(s)” as a priority in order to meet the educational requirements of distance education students within the country and beyond borders. The university aims to follow the latest technological and instructional trends and developments and exploring the frontiers of research in distance education with its self-regulating and dynamic experts, academicians and practitioners who are determined to focus on lifelong learning that is widened new paths in distance education. Currently, the university has laid the foundation to start crowd-sourcing approach towards MOOCs.

In general, educational reforms have been moving two steps forward, three steps backward for many decades. The idea of a MOOC is definitely not the magic bullet to resolve all educational concerns, however, perhaps it could provide sufficient disruption to encourage a broad range of educational stakeholders to initiate and sustain conversations, which may take us on a different path. Although MOOCs are not the panacea, they do provide many aspects for further exploration. Further work could include aligning learning theories and what we currently know on how we learn and process information to large online environments. Although we have been teaching online for several decades, we have still not been able to create high quality, consistent and engaging learning environments, especially those, which would be available to large numbers of learners in the form of OER. Ideally, we would synthesize effective learning environments into our quickly changing digital abilities. As a global society, many of us are actively using technology, the internet, social media, smart phones, and much more.
However, integrating these tools into learning, in the form of electronic learning objects (eLOs), which use foundational learning theories and instructional design (backward design and/or design thinking) has not been mass produced, openly shared and made accessible.

We have seen the lightning speed of technological discovery in recent years, and it may be only now in our history that we are able to combine many of these technologies into useful, highly scalable and of extreme quality eLOs, which could be accessible to everyone.

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- **Learning and the Massive Open Online Course: A Report on the ELI Focus Session**, ELI White Paper, May 2013. This report is a synthesis of the key ideas, themes, and concepts that emerged. This report also includes links to supporting focus session materials, recordings, and resources. It represents a harvesting of the key elements that we, as a teaching and learning community, need to keep in mind as we explore this new model of learning.

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- **The Pedagogy of MOOCs**, May 11, 2013. This Paul Stacy blog posting provides a brief history of MOOCs, the early success in Canada and the author's own pedagogical recommendations for MOOCs.

- **What Campus Leaders Need to Know About MOOCs**, EDUCAUSE, December 2012. This brief discusses how MOOCs work, their value proposition, issues to consider, and who the key players are in this arena.


- **The MOOC Model: Challenging Traditional Education**, *EDUCAUSE Review Online* (January/February 2013), A turning point will occur in the higher education model when a MOOC-based program of study leads to a degree from an accredited institution — a trend that has already begun to develop.

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Challenge and Change," *EDUCAUSE Review* (September/October 2012). Author George Mehaffy discusses various aspects of innovative disruption facing higher education including MOOCs.

A True History of the MOOC," September 26, 2012. In this webinar panel presentation delivered to Future of Education through Blackboard Collaborate, host Steve Hargadon discusses the "true history" of the MOOC. It's also available in mp3.

The MOOC Guide. This resource offers an online history of the development of the MOOC as well as a description of its major elements.

MOOC.CA. This MOOC-centric newsletter, authored by Stephen Downes and George Siemens, offers news and information on MOOC providers.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) Constituent Group. This EDUCAUSE constituent group takes a broad look at MOOCs as a paradigm of learning communities and open education.

Reviews for Open Online Courses is a Yelp like review system from CourseTalk for students to share their experiences with MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).