MOOCs and Corporate Social Responsibility – An Opportunity for Inclusion or Simply Window Dressing in the Marketplace?

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The aim of the paper is to...

• Explore the value of MOOCs by examining what they are, what they are not, and their ultimate aim.
• Examine what value MOOCs serve to participants and organisations.
• Debate whether MOOCs achieve their own aim(s) by examining the evidence supporting their continued use in education.
• Explore possible ways uptake/access to MOOCs can be enhanced as part of higher education’s commitment to promote social inclusion.
MOOCs: what they are and what they are not

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are:

• A relatively new phenomenon in education with their footprint taking hold from 2008 onwards.

• Different from online courses by focusing on the context rather than content of learning, facilitating completely open access, free to the end user (Chattopadhyay 2014).

• Aimed at massive rather than limited participation and are ‘signed up to’ on a voluntary basis so learners form a community of learning rather than being part of a defined cohort, or an independent learner.

• Focused on the learning process rather than being driven by evaluation and accreditation and are built on the principles of ‘just in time learning’ (Chattopadhyay 2014).
What do MOOCs offer an organisation?

An opportunity to:

• Gather market intelligence on where their potential customers may come from.
• Advance their globalisation agenda (Salmi 2009).
• Contribute to the social responsibility agenda and enhance the social inclusion endeavours (Rhoads et al 2014).
What do MOOCs offer participants?

The opportunity to:

• Form a community of learning by “meeting” likeminded learners from across the globe.

• Engage in connectivism via open access and large scale sign up to “classes” (Yuan, Powell & CETIS 2013).

• Meet their CPD needs (Liyanagunawardena & Williams 2014).

• Gain some form of career benefit – promotion.

• Seek out a new job or career opportunity or set up a new business (Zhenghao et al 2015).
MOOCs enable learners to:

- Achieve an academic credential at reduced cost.
- Learn as part of a group from their “home” base rather than having to travel to a formal learning base.

However, some argue the purpose MOOCs serve is still not fully understood (Gasevic et al 2014).
What message do MOOCs send out about an organisation?

They send messages about:

• What an organisation is able to offer its conventional students.

• How an organisation engages with its students.
## Are MOOCs organisational window dressing, or its shop window?

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<tr>
<th>Shop Window</th>
<th>Window Dressing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short courses to allow the person to have a taster learning opportunity to hook them in.</td>
<td>Attract those that may never have been able to “go” to that institution under normal circumstances (Dacey 2104).</td>
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<td>Good practices showcased to the external world via the MOOC are perceived to mirror those that are experienced by internal student body (Conole 2014).</td>
<td>Materials need to be in a format that non-English speakers can digest and manage otherwise downloading videos and materials to facilitate understanding may be expensive in host country.</td>
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<td>Act as a marketing tool to demonstrate what an organisation offers. (By keeping the window open passers-by are able to go back when the material it offers provides them with the means to fulfil an unmet need) (Chadaj <em>et al.</em> 2014; White, Leon Urrutia &amp; White 2015).</td>
<td>Contribute to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Liyanagunawardena, <em>et al.</em>, 2014) and inclusivity agenda (Lin 2010) – for this to truly occur potential students need access to stable electricity and broadband sources (Bhandari 2014). Likewise the materials need to also be inclusive in their format and presentation otherwise they have limited scope. (Navarrete &amp; Lujan-Mora 2017).</td>
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Where is the evidence to support the continued use of MOOCs in education?

MOOC are starting to be:

• Conceptualised as the 21st Century’s version of a textbook (Fischer 2016).
• Counted as partial credit towards a degree qualification (University of Tasmania Bachelor of Dementia Care).

And offer the opportunity to:

• Attract a massive audience despite seemingly low completion rates (Kizilcec et al 2013; Marcus 2013).
• Introduce gamification strategies into learning to enhance user involvement and achieve greater participation as education is perceived more like a leisure activity (Sachdeva et al 2015).
How can we increase MOOC uptake and completion rates (1)?

Tips to increasing MOOC completion rates:

• Build opportunities for student engagement facilitating the development of a community of learning.
• Design ways of encouraging student engagement in early sessions or before people ‘sign up’.
• Outline how to use the MOOC so learning opportunities are enhanced.
• Understand students’ motivation to be involved in the MOOC.
How can we increase MOOC uptake and completion rates (2)?

Tips to increasing MOOC completion rates:

• Target motivational enhancement strategies at the outset by giving positive reinforcement for task completion.

• Consider ways of adding value and rewarding MOOC participation.

• Build in good educational practice making content reflective and creative.

• Avoid bandwidth intensive materials. (Holland & Tirthali 2014).
How can we increase MOOC uptake and completion rates (3)?

• Consider ways to widen participation by dividing learning into small, easy to understand chunks so that they are accessible by those whose first language is not English.

• Include a glossary of terms in supporting materials (Hew 2016, Marrone et al 2013).

• Know the cultural context of participants where possible and provide transcripts to support participant’s understanding (Liyanagunawardena et al 2014).
Are MOOCs of benefit to society?

- Offer education to the masses free at the point of delivery (Rhoads et al 2014, Yuan et al 2013).
- Provide those in resource limited locations with the opportunity to experience education in a global institution without undue expense.
- Provide a platform for true transnational education.
- Generate communities of learning.
- Generate opportunities for just in time learning (Chattopadhyay 2014).
- Have the capacity to generate a global resource and the largest free international library.
Concluding comments

• For some institutions MOOCs provide a platform for addressing the CSR agenda. However, the extent to which this can be fulfilled depends on the manner in which the MOOC is constructed in the first place.

• If institutions are to become truly philanthropic by offering open access education to disadvantaged groups: most if not all have a long way to go before they reach those that need education the most.
Thank you for listening.....
Any questions???
References


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