

Four Years of Dutch Experience with MOOCs

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Case Study

Four Years of Dutch Experience with MOOCs



Heerlen (NL), November 2014 – Learner participation in Massive Open Online Courses is a subject of research in many universities worldwide. What type of motivation results in continued participation? What are the most popular learning activities and most important pedagogical elements? Wilfred Rubens works as a project leader and eLearning consultant at the Welten Institute of the Open University in the Netherlands.

He will present his MOOC case study at ONLINE EDUCA Berlin on 04 December 2014 in the session "MOOCs: The Ultimate Starter's Guide" from 14:30 to 16:00.

Since 2011, the Netherlands' Open University has been organizing free online masterclasses in the field of learning sciences and technology. These masterclasses have a turnaround time of a week. During this week, participants work on various learning activities like self-assessments, discussion assignments, and studying resources.

In addition, live sessions play an important role. One live session is an interview with an expert about the subject of the masterclass. During this interview, participants are able to ask questions in a chat. A second live session is a paper presentation about relevant research on the subject. About 200-500 participants have enrolled in these online masterclasses.

In 2013, the Open University offered a Dutch-language MOOC about eLearning with support of Kennisnet, a semi-governmental Dutch organization dedicated to ICT innovation for primary and secondary education and vocational training. This MOOC had a turnaround time of seventeen weeks; there were 890 enrollees.

Four online masterclasses that had already been planned formed the basis of this MOOC, which made the turnaround time very long. The subjects of the masterclasses were learning analytics, trends in eLearning, learning with multimedia, and Google Glass for learning. Moreover, several study tasks were developed (e.g. about learning theories and eLearning or about the impact of technology on learning) that consisted of study resources and discussions about assignments.

The evaluation of the MOOC was positive, with research showing that 24.5% of the respondents were (very) dissatisfied, whereas 44.5% were (very) satisfied.

We noticed that participants used this MOOC quite differently than those in other similar offerings. About seventeen percent participated in online interaction, with the most popular learning activities being attendance of live sessions and studying resources. However, a large group of participants also performed learning activities outside the MOOC (e.g. almost sixty percent discussed the content with others outside the platform).

I developed the MOOC with several colleagues who were involved in facilitating the online masterclasses (content, interviewers, chat moderators, and technical support). A calculation of the development and implementation time showed it took us 413 hours.

As mentioned, the most important pedagogical elements were live sessions, discussion assignments, self-assessments, and resources (articles, videos). Participants were stimulated to construct their own learning paths based on their own learning preferences and learning needs. Participants could receive a certificate if they subscribed for a "learning track", a new type of learning activity. The cost of this learning track was 249 euros; only three MOOC participants selected this option.

We feel it is not really meaningful to talk about drop-out and completion rates. Of the 890 enrollments, forty percent did not even begin the course. After three weeks, there were 320 participants, who gradually stopped participating. In an evaluation > 82% of 226 respondents reported that they did not study intensively (at all), 6% studied (very) intensively, and 23 participants logged in three weeks after closure.

In late 2014, we offered a MOOC about developing blended learning, also in Dutch. In the OEB session, differences in design and participation from previous MOOCs will be discussed.