Dear readers,

As you may know, we conducted a survey with our e-newsletter subscribers in July. Thank you all for your feedback, it is important to us to make these monthly editions as useful and interesting as possible. We now have the results, and would like to share them with you. Your opinions are all valued and we will continue to make our effort to improve the e-Newsletter.

The theme of this month’s edition is MOOCs, or Massive Open Online Courses. With the technological advances today, increasing enrolment in higher education institutions and rapid privatization, the place for ICT is becoming more visible in everyday classrooms, and could be useful to our teachers and educators. With the continuing debates over access to, quality of and costs of education, the role of Open Distance Learning initiatives has taken on a more prominent role.

We will try and look at both sides of the discussion and opinions on MOOCs.

Reflecting on the feedback from our readers, each monthly edition will feature a “Sub-region Corner”, where we will present reviews of the ICT in Education status, issues and initiatives of a chosen sub-region, within and beyond the theme of the e-newsletter in that context.

Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions.

We hope that you enjoy reading our newsletter!

**Highlights:**

- **MOOCs and ODL in Higher Education in Asia-Pacific** (by UNESCO Bangkok, ICT in Education)
  
  An introduction to MOOCs and the stance of UNESCO Bangkok, providing some numbers, facts and thoughts on the topic.

A closer look at higher education in Asia and the Pacific reveals that more and more people are becoming aware of the importance of attending university and getting at least an undergraduate degree, which increases the chances of getting employed. The latest OECD indicators show that getting a tertiary education is economically rewarding, as its benefits outweigh the costs by leaps and bounds. As a result, the tertiary enrolment in Asia has been surging and has more than doubled since 2000 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). Recent phenomena in higher education also include the increasingly active role of private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as well as the increasing number of students studying outside their own countries, 53% of which come from Asia (OECD, 2014) and the primary motivation being the prospect of landing higher-paying jobs in their home countries or even overseas.
While Asia has acknowledged the importance of higher education through the abovementioned trends and has covered significant ground in education, there is much to be done in terms of the quality and equity in higher education. Asia has a 27.48% gross tertiary enrolment ratio that is still below the world average of 32.15% and lagging behind the rest of the world except for Africa (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). Research shows that a sample of developing countries in Asia have less earning power than its OECD counterparts (The World Bank, 2012), and that according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), the majority of tertiary enrollment comes from the high-income population and poorer families in several Asia-Pacific countries can hardly send their kids to college. OECD data also show that women are at a disadvantage even after attending university, having significantly less earning power than men.

It is in this educational backdrop of Asia and the Pacific that Open and Distance Learning (ODL) finds itself, where at least 70 open universities operate (Jung, 2007). ODL can extend the reach of HEIs to aspiring students and enables them to pursue a tertiary degree at any place and any time. ODL is increasingly becoming a legitimate and cost-effective tertiary education option for developing countries because of its capacity to take on a large numbers of students at a relatively lesser cost as opposed to the traditional universities (Hanover Research, 2011).

In recent years, ODL has seen significant improvement with the advent of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Courses are uploaded in Learning Management Systems that can be conveniently accessed through the Web. The past couple of years have also seen the surge in popularity of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); what used to be exclusive content from prestigious educational institutions, where only a select few can have access – has been opened for access to anyone who can go online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OER, ODL and MOOCs</th>
<th>OER</th>
<th>ODL</th>
<th>MOOCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Access</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Content</td>
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<td>Open and/or closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Free of charge</td>
<td>Standard university / HEI fees apply</td>
<td>free of charge for viewing of courses, certification issued for a fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Massive to unlimited</td>
</tr>
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<td>Personal Learning Environment (Learning Management System)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Manual (professor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
<td>Various (no quality assurance mechanism, curated by individuals / organizations)</td>
<td>University / HEI responsible for QA of content and platform</td>
<td>University / HEI responsible for QA of content; MOOCs provider responsible for QA of platform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The brick-and-mortar higher education institutions have been around for as long as we can remember. It has remained as the preferred model of higher education mainly because of its longevity rather than its effectiveness. The different elements that make up Massive and Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been around for several years, but because of significant advances in technology, it enabled a number of top-ranking universities in partnership with technology companies to capitalize on emerging model. A year ago, MOOCs have been touted as a disruptive innovation that will drastically change the education landscape, which got technology companies and top universities (MIT, Stanford, Harvard, The Open University) excited over its potential. Thousands of courses are made available through the MOOCs platforms, attracting hundreds of thousands of registrants for each course, from all over the world. A handful of these courses have been recognized in their countries of origin and have been accredited, which gradually makes MOOCs a viable option for higher education and also continuing professional development.

While MOOCs have gained a significant foothold in ODL, the hype surrounding it has eclipsed its limitations. The main cause for concern with MOOCs is the very low completion rate, as shown in data released by the big MOOC providers. Also, majority of the MOOCs are in English, which consequently excludes non-English speakers in the region from studying it. Most of the courses also come from HEIs from developed countries and from outside the Asia-Pacific region, the content of which might not be contextually relevant to the region that is still comprised mostly of least developed or developing countries. This does not contribute to the conservation and use of local and indigenous knowledge.

It is becoming more apparent that while MOOCs is in many ways a disruptive innovation, it is not the ultimate solution to the concerns surrounding the traditional models of higher education. On the other hand, MOOCs should not be totally disregarded; there is a need to identify areas where MOOCs can help improve the existing pedagogy and technology used in higher education. MIT, for instance, makes use of its MOOCs data to identify key concepts in the courses and their weak points in terms of teaching (Solomon, 2013). Universities have started using MOOCs to deliver standard course lectures; this enables the students to view and study standard course content outside the school, and frees up class hours for professor and students to have a more personalized, interactive, and meaningful teaching and learning sessions in the classroom. It is also noteworthy to consider the potential niche areas for MOOCs in basic formal education as well as non-formal education.

MOOCs provides an opportunity to revisit the existing pedagogical and technological approaches in HEIs in Asia-Pacific, while identifying ways on how to make best use of MOOCs in higher education in the region. The emergence of MOOCs and ODL is indicative of the increasing role of ICT in higher education; while the role of ICT should be duly acknowledged, HEIs should not lose sight of the bigger picture and strive towards quality and effective teaching and learning.

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References:


Jung, I. (2007). Changing Faces of Open and Distance Learning in Asia. The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, Regional Focus Issue on Asia Major, 8(1), 1–6.
Can MOOCs Help Democratize Access to Education? (by Fiona Hollands, Ph.D., Teachers College, Columbia University)

Written by an expert who has been conducting a study on MOOCs, Dr. Hollands questions their effectiveness, and also provides ways to use them in a useful way for teaching and learning. Hollands states that they might not be the panacea, but can add to the education field in interesting and possibly helpful ways.

Despite many prophecies that massive open online courses (MOOCs) would be a democratizing force in education, providing global access to top-quality education at low cost to providers, and at no cost to the learner, the reality is somewhat less glorious. It is true that many MOOCs are taught by world-class professors, that they have attracted learners from all over the world, and that they have been offered free to participants. However, MOOCs are costly and time-consuming to produce, most participants are already well-educated, and only around 5% of registrants actually complete their courses.

MOOCs may be an effective learning mechanism for highly motivated, self-directed learners who have strong reading skills and high bandwidth internet access. Short or “modularized” MOOCs may provide a cost-effective way for corporations to offer ongoing, just-in-time training for employees. However, for the less motivated but perhaps more typical learner, negligible instructor-student interaction in MOOCs and limited opportunities for constructive peer-to-peer engagement present a challenge. Improving access to learning opportunities for most individuals requires more than simply making the materials available. It is also necessary to help them select learning experiences that fit with their incoming level of preparation, interests, and goals for education, and to offer sustained guidance and support throughout the learning experience.

Schools and universities can leverage the educational resources being made freely available through MOOCs by adopting a “flipped classroom” strategy in which students watch online lectures at home and spend teacher-facilitated classroom time discussing or debating topics and working on problems in small groups. Downloading the online videos at school for later viewing can overcome the obstacle of limited internet access at home. Additionally, instructors in traditional face-to-face classrooms can adopt some of the instructional strategies being used in MOOCs such as “chunking” lectures, that is, breaking them up into short segments each a few minutes long, and interspersing questions and problem-solving between the chunks to help maintain student engagement and participation. Similarly, the use of frequent assessments can help assure that students are both engaging with the course content and comprehending it.

While MOOCs are unlikely to be the panacea once predicted for unequal access to education, they are a useful addition to the growing array of educational opportunities. They may also serve other goals of
educational institutions such as building or maintaining brand or fostering innovative teaching in the classroom. Given the large number of participants, MOOCs offer a setting with a large sample size that can facilitate research and experimentation with pedagogical strategies. However, findings from such studies can only be generalized to the kinds of learners that choose to engage in MOOCs and complete the relevant research activities. They are not representative of the types of learners that need the most help in the form of improved educational opportunities.

MOOCs of the future are likely to be more targeted at specific audiences as it is difficult for any single learning experience to meet the needs of thousands of participants with varying starting levels of relevant knowledge and experience. MOOCs are also likely to offer credentials of economic value such as college credits, badges or certificates of competency. If employers begin to consider such credentials for hiring and promotion decisions, participants should be willing to pay fees to cover the costs of MOOC production, thereby assuring the sustainability of MOOCs into the future.

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Further information:

- MOOCs at Columbia University

Note: The opinions expressed in the articles included in this newsletter are those of the authors and editors, and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNESCO, nor of any particular Division or Office.

Sub-Regional Corner:
Reflecting on the feedback from our readers, and as mentioned above, each monthly edition will feature a “Sub-region Corner”. This corner will have an expert from the area share their projects or other relevant ICT in Education information.

For the next issue, the October edition, we will focus on "1-to-1 Computing" in South Asia.

We welcome your contributions from the sub-region, sharing first-hand experiences, success stories and innovative projects. To share your stories, please contact ict.bgk@unesco.org.

Programmes and Projects:

- India and the US signed for a joint partnership for SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)
  India’s Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the U.S. Department of State signed a Joint Declaration for SWAYAM, an online education program. This partnership (IUPOE) will allow top U.S. universities provide online courses on the SWAYAM.

- UNESCO and UNEP MOOCs for Development/MOOCs for UN
  There are now a few courses available offered by UN agencies, such as UNESCO and UNEP, for educators and leaders within the education field.
University of Geneva professor Barbara Moser-Mercer set up a MOOC case study in Dadaab refugee camp (Somalia). Two refugees took Coursera’s “Foundations of Teaching and Learning” MOOC.

InZone, an initiative of the interpreting department of the University of Geneva whose mission is to train interpreters in conflict zones, trained a couple of interpreters at Dadaab (the world’s largest refugee camp located on the Somalian border), using the MOOC “Foundation for Teaching and Learning”. InZone trained the interpreters via a blended learning approach, using the MOOC for the lecture component of the training.

The MOOC, created in partnership with the Commonwealth Education Trust, is “intended primarily for people who are currently teaching but have had no formal teacher education” (see URL to course). Inzone worked with UNHCR staff in the refugee camp and with Coursera, the platform where the course is made available, on how to provide access to the course in consideration of the technological, cultural and linguistic challenges; these involved downloading the lecture videos in advance, troubleshooting and documentation of the interpreters’ learning experience.

Further information:

- inZone

News and Events:
UPenn MOOCs Conference
This conference brought together various experts in the fields of education and technology. The objective was to discuss the MOOCs, understand them better and come up with projects and initiatives regarding this phenomenon in a more effective way.

This conference and the following report hoped to bring together opinions and thoughts on MOOCs and begin a conversation for their realities and future possibilities.

Some of the moderators and speakers included Dan Wagner, Abdul Waheed Khan, Bakary Diallo, Michele Petochi, Clara Ng, Michele Rimini, Juliana Guaqueta, Turbat Renchin, Nguyen Hoi Nghia, Rory McGreal, Dendev Badarch, Ticora Jones, Papa Youga Dieng, Sandra Klopper, Steven Duggan, Stephen Downes, Russell Beale, and many others.

One of the speakers, Michele Petochi pertinently remarked that “pedagogy to be dictated not by tradition but by the individualized needs of learners”.

Some of the themes covered were the “Economics of MOOCs”, during which sustainability was mentioned as key to a successful strategy; “National and Global Perspectives”, where advantages and disadvantages of MOOCs were discussed; "MOOCs, ODL and OER", during which the importance of access and language were brought up; “Expanding Inclusion” that focused on local needs and how such technology can help; and many more.

As Stephen Downes stated, “There is enough knowledge for everyone and there is enough access for everyone, but we have not taken it to heart to make that access and distribute that content to those who need it”.

Further information:

- Report of the Conference

17th UNESCO-APEID International Conference (29-31 October 2014, Bangkok, Thailand)
The theme of this conference will be “The Powerhouses of Education: Teachers for the Future We Want”. The goals of this conference are to present innovative ideas and projects that can help teachers perform better, promote collaboration among global, national and regional stakeholders, encourage networking, and increase understanding of the teaching profession.

KMOOC for Knowledge Sharing
This first workshop in September, 2014 aimed to provide collaboration through MOOCs in Korea and spread this movement to other continents with shared responsibility and vision of the future for this new avenue in education.

This first workshop, “KMOOC for Knowledge Sharing”, aimed at promoting cooperation and collaboration in Korea, passing it onto all other continents with the values developed through this network.
The speakers included the Director of UNESCO Bangkok, Dr Gwang-Jo Kim as well as Sir John Daniel, Fred Mulder, Mohamed Ally, In Sung Jung, Chon Hong Kim, and many others. The session covered themes from challenges within MOOCs and ODL, to pedagogical approaches, content to the future of MOOCs, especially within the Asian context.

Further information:

- KMOOC for Knowledge Sharing

Resources:

- **A MOOC for Teachers in 7 Languages**
  Starting on the 27th of October, this free five-week course will focus on helping teachers better design ICT-based classroom activities, and is a product of the ICDE Bringing Educational Resources for Teachers in Africa (BERTA) and the Hands-On ICT projects. Available in 7 languages, this MOOC is the first of its kind. It will also focus on the Learning Design Studio (LDS) approach for course design and activity development.

- **CourseTalk website for student’s reviews of MOOCs that they’ve taken**
  Learn what students think of their courses, learn about the most popular classes, and get all of the information you need by searching a subject, direction or institution.

More resources on [CourseTalk type of websites](#).

- **MOOCs website for researchers** (funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation)
  This website will help all those interested in MOOCs explore the topic further and assess their impact on the field of education. Here you can find information on projects, reports, conferences and more.

- **Useful apps on MOOCs**
  A collection of useful apps on MOOCs which can be accessed with smart phones or tablets.

  - [MOOCs4U](#) for beginners free for iOS and Android. Free MOOCs from different providers
  
  - For courses: [Coursera](#)’s free iOS and Android app for phones or tablets; [Udacity](#) for iOS and Android; [edX](#) (partnership between Harvard, MIT and Berkeley); [Khan Academy](#) app free on iOS; [Canvas Network](#); [NovoEd](#) (focus on online collaboration and focus on entrepreneurship and innovation)
  
  - To organize timetables, study time and deadlines, the [GroupMOOC](#) (free on iOS), [Sunrise](#) (free on iOS and Android), [My Study Life](#) or [Omni Study](#) apps are useful
  
  - [Student Time Tracker](#) (iPad or iPhone) allows you to track time spent on a course, keep up with deadlines, and other useful tools to maximize efficiency. [Studious](#) app combines a planner and a note-taker (for Android)
• edX’s partnership with Google that will have teachers create their own courses on mooc.org. Other institutions affiliated with this are now the University of Texas, Boston University, University of Washington, and Georgetown University.

New Publications:

• **ICT for Literacy**  
  UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has released programs using ICTs for Literacy Teaching and Learning from around the world.

• **Central Asia Symposium (CASIE) Outcome Document**  
  The Central Asia Symposium took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan of this year. Its goal was to promote a collaborative network among regional officials and stakeholders to debate and exchange ideas on better practices. The theme of this symposium was “Embracing Technologies, Empowering Teachers”.

**Next Issue:** The October issue will focus on “1-to-1 Computing”. If our readers are interested in contributing to this edition, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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