What difference does a MOOC make?

A Preliminary Review
Feb 2019
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Report Authors
Professor Warren Turner, Professor Sally Hardy, Susan Maddox, Clare Nadaf, Dr Keiron Spires & Professor Eddie Chaplin.

Conflict of Interests
Sponsorship for this Intellectual Disabilities MOOC was achieved from the HEE South of England for the filming and course development, which was a most welcome collaboration.
Background and Rationale for MOOCs in Health Education

The term MOOC is an acronym for ‘Massive Open Online Course’ and was pioneered by Universities in the United States (including Harvard, Stanford, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and delivered via platforms such as Coursera and edX. More recently, MOOCs have developed in the UK, through the FutureLearn project, led by the Open University and partners. The feature characteristic of a MOOC include, being; free to access, open to everyone, requiring very little (or no) tutor support and delivered on a platform able to support large numbers of simultaneous learners. As a result, MOOCs have typically tens of thousands of students studying simultaneously around the World.

MOOCs typically include learning materials in the form of short video presentations, annotated or narrated slides, handouts and online activities. Tutor input is restricted to the creation of the key learning materials (videos/presentations etc.) and to participation in scheduled live broadcasts, or discussion forums, often in the form of live Q&A sessions. Learning materials are supplemented by formative self-test assessments, or quizzes, which aim to feedback to the student their progress throughout the course. Such tests and assessments are normally computer assessed or assessed via peer feedback. Most MOOCs are structured to be semi-synchronous – i.e. learning materials are released at set times (e.g. once or twice a week), with students being able to learn in their own time and at their own pace once the materials have been released. The pre-prepared materials are often supplemented by asynchronous discussion forums and scheduled live tutor sessions. To further enhance the learning environment, students often form local peer support networks, which can be physical/virtual or a mix of both approaches. Students may choose to complete an end of module assessment or project which consolidates their learning. Most MOOCs allow students to submit an assessment for peer feedback, with those completing all aspects of the MOOC being eligible to receive an unaccredited certificate of completion. Alternatively, students may choose to have their final work assessed by one of the partner Universities for academic credit, although there is often a fee for this service.

The School of Health & Social Care at London South Bank University has a strong track record in the production of courses and modules designed to meet the learning needs of health and social care professionals. The School has an established track record in the development of distance learning programmes, and more recently distributed and electronic learning courses. The development of MOOCs is therefore a natural progression for the School.
MOOC Development and Structure

A project steering group was established chaired by Professor Warren Turner, including a range of clinical and academic, as stakeholders external to the University. These were complimented by subject specialists from within the school academic teams, with technical expertise gained from Dr Keiron Spires. In addition to the steering group, there was a project team, which focussed on the day to day operational aspects of developing the MOOC. The project team consisted of a project lead (LSBU), subject specialist academic experts (LSBU), clinical expertise (including specialist external clinician), e-developer (LSBU) and an e-learning lead (LSBU).

Understanding Intellectual Disabilities MOOC

This report focuses on the intellectual disabilities\(^1\) (ID) MOOC , which was devised as part of an LSBU suite of programmes that includes MOOCs in:

- Mental Health awareness MOOC
- Physical Health MOOC
- Health and Wellbeing for Older People MOOC

\(^1\) The phrase Intellectual Disabilities (ID) was deliberately chosen rather than Learning Disabilities (LD), because of its widespread international use. In the UK, LD is still the preferred term for people living with ID, and used by many of those who support them.
This online Understanding ID MOOC is aimed at those working with or supporting people with ID, or those with an interest and wanting to develop a greater awareness of the abilities and needs of this group. The MOOC has been set up to cover a diverse range of situations in which a person may encounter someone with an ID.

The course materials for the ID MOOC were developed and devised in conjunction with people with a lived experience of ID, their family members, carers and clinical collaborators. This made for a lively and person-centred approach to developing course materials, which people with ID could identify with. The MOOC was piloted on both staff and student groups, with evaluation concentrating on feedback to maximise accessibility of materials and practical delivery of the course.

The ID MOOC is delivered over six weeks. Each week is a stand along module with materials becoming available as the week’s progress. To acknowledge diversity and the wide variation in academic abilities and clinical experience, each week’s content is provided at both universal and higher academic levels.

There are discussion forums that take place each week, designed for students to share their learning and experiences across the international participant’s different contexts and levels of experience. There are also regular exercises along the way for students to test themselves on the course content and review their level of learning.

Each module is underpinned by a specific situational case study scenario. To support this there is bespoke films of people with ID in the different localities each week that specifically reflect that week’s scenario (refer to week content below). Learning is built around how to help people and understand their needs within those different contexts. This strategy of case driven ‘drama’ episodes, aims to address the issue of traditionally poor student engagement via MOOCs, so by providing case based ‘drama’ episodes that follow the patient’s life experiences during a period of health deterioration or any other challenges faced. These case based drama’s act as a central experientially engaging learning experience.

Watching clinical skills being undertaken, both good and best practice examples, aims to support previous research into student engagement in MOOCs (Wilkowski, Deutsch and Russell, 2014). LSBU HSC was one of the first UK based institutions to be using this mode of learning for health related MOOC content.

Consideration of the audience, when building the MOOC content has become paramount in capturing the diverse needs of a global audience through enhanced technology.
A professional script writer and actors were used to bring the patient storylines alive. Working from a conventional televised dramatic episode approach provided opportunity for an immediate level of rapport and ongoing interest in what would happen next for the central character. This dramatic episode approach to online learning we suggest enables extensive potential to identify creative learning for multiple perspectives and audiences (for example, qualified health care professionals through to curiosity from members of the general public.

**ID MOOC course content**

The six week programme contained the following content:

- **Week 1**: Supporting people with intellectual disabilities and their families in their homes
- **Week 2**: Supporting children and young people with intellectual disabilities in education settings and transition.
- **Week 3**: Health promotion with people with intellectual disabilities
- **Week 4**: Supporting people with intellectual disabilities in general hospital settings
- **Week 5**: Supporting mental health needs of people with intellectual disabilities
- **Week 6**: End of life care for people with intellectual disabilities

Aims for each session and an overview of content can be seen in Appendix 1:

**Evaluation Student and Engagement Patterns.**

This evaluation of the Understanding Intellectual Disabilities MOOC is based on the first two deliveries of the course during 2017/8. Prior to enrolment, all students were encouraged to complete a profile of themselves, although not all active students completed this. In terms of the demographics of participants, the first course recruited 36, which increased to 64 for the running of the second course. In terms of age, those 35-44 years old were most likely to enrol as were females compared to other gender identities (see Table 1). Of all of the students in the first course only two had not previously enrolled on an online course.
Table 1: ID MOOC Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>45-54</td>
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<td>55-64</td>
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<tr>
<td>65+</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 females</td>
<td>45 females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 males</td>
<td>18 males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 other</td>
<td>1 other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although originally the ID MOOC was originally intended for the NHS and independent sector audience in England. It was apparent at an early stage that increasing numbers of International students undertaking the MOOCs. In total seven geographical areas were represented as taking part, which were Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Middle East/North Africa, North America, Sub Sahara Africa, and the United Kingdom.

In terms of prior academic experience, the majority of students identified themselves as either having undertaken 2 – 4 years at college, however this ranged from those who had obtained Doctorate and Master’s qualifications to those with no formal academic credit.

Student experience, outcomes and impact

Student feedback from the MOOC experience has been highly positive. The course was consistently evaluated as informative, and influential in their learning. In terms of motivation, some were keen to learn more about ID to improve their working practices, whilst for others it was to enhance personal and professional knowledge advancement or to help to identify a future career working with people with ID, see tables 2-4 which form part of the evaluation for course 1.
Table 2: Students primary reason for undertaking the ID Mooc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Series 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy learning about topics that interest me</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope to gain skills for a new career</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the format (online)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am preparing to go back to school</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy being part of a community of learners</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Student hours intended to be spent on the MOOC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Series 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 2 and 4 hours</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 4 and 6 hours</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 hour</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 and 2 hours</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of individual student feedback, the most frequent response was ‘having an increased awareness’ and understanding of how to ‘be kinder to people and help them’. Other students were motivated to improve themselves in their occupations working with people with ID, whilst others used the course to prepare for forthcoming academic courses.

A more detailed synopsis of feedback is included in Appendix 2.

For more details on dissemination see Appendix 3.

Future plans

At the School of Health and Social Care, London South Bank University, this MOOC has been developed in conjunction with Health Education England and aimed at promoting understanding of ID. This report was compiled to provide further opportunity to explore the MOOC development as a creative learning tool for skill development that will benefit others wishing to engage in this mode of learning. However, we are aiming to recruit new staff, and there is ongoing potential to continue to roll the completed MOOC at least another two times a year, once our internal staffing has been returned to a better capacity to engage and deliver an interactive student experience through this mode of learning. In the meantime, we are using expertise from within the department and from external stakeholders to evaluate and update both the course content and materials based upon feedback received and current contemporary and emerging issues facing people with ID and those working with them.
It appears that the MOOC potential to inform and change people’s understanding has been achieved, and that on its second run, an increased number of participants were drawn to the materials.

The infrastructure has now been achieved, and the MOOC materials are currently locked into the canvas.net contract, however, there are potential opportunities for us to consider rolling the programme out, with external teachers being invited to help participate in the group and online discussions. This may then bridge the gap between our current internal staffing recruitment process, and the desire to run the MOOC again sooner, rather than later. One issue is to consider using an alternative platform to Canvas to allow immediate and all year access to the MOOC materials for students and NHS staff in England.

The academic delivery team’s role was to review the e-learning materials are reviewed by clinical and academic reference groups and any recommended amendments made prior to publication.

Add on assessment will be developed and accredited via LSBU as work based learning module and inclusion of additional updated videos will be required to ensure materials remain up to date and clinically relevant.

This is excellent opportunity for extending the international reputational reach promoting LSBU HSC profile and challenging understanding of working with people with ID in different settings. As the course continues to roll out, it appears more countries and higher numbers of students are taking part each time.
Appendix 1:

MOOC for Practitioners working with people with learning disabilities

Title You Matter: Understanding intellectual disabilities

Outline of content/care scenarios:

**Week 1:** Supporting people with intellectual disabilities and their families in their homes

**Aims:**
1. To introduce the course
2. To develop understanding of the places where people with intellectual disabilities live and the support they might receive (Karen Singleton?)
3. To highlight issues related to safeguarding, abuse and hate crime

**Week 2:** Supporting children and young people with intellectual disabilities in education settings and transition

**Aims:**
1. To present types of educational provision and the relative merits of each
2. To introduce total communication as a method of supporting the communication of children and young people with intellectual disabilities at all levels (SLT from Spa School, depending on timings)
3. To present good practice in developing successful transition from children to adult services

**Week 3:** Health promotion with people with intellectual disabilities

**Aims:**
1. To identify health inequalities experienced by people with intellectual disabilities
2. To identify good practice in supporting people with intellectual disabilities to access screening
3. To practise strategies to introduce health promotion to people with intellectual disabilities

**Week 4:** Supporting people with intellectual disabilities in general hospital settings

**Aims:**
To identify good practice in preparing people with learning disabilities for planned admissions

1. To consider the support needs of people with intellectual disabilities who present in Accident and Emergency departments
2. To introduce supports for people with intellectual disabilities in hospital settings

**Week 5:** Supporting mental health needs of people with intellectual disabilities

**Aims:**
1. To understand how people with intellectual disabilities are affected by mental ill health
2. To recognise the different ways that mental illness presents in people with intellectual disabilities
3. To identify good practice in supporting mental wellbeing for people with intellectual disabilities and signposting to mental health services

**Week 6:** End of life care for people with intellectual disabilities

**Aims:**
1. To consider the needs of people with intellectual disabilities at end of life
2. To present a focused discussion on Dementia care
Appendix 2: Student Feedback

Below is a selection of student feedback and motivations for enrolling on the course:

**Academic**
‘..my dissertation topic includes this area, so I wanted to get that global insight’

‘I am hoping to apply for my Master of Social Work this coming fall, but in the meantime I am missing school and appreciate any opportunity to learn while saving for my degree.’

‘My dissertation topic includes this area and I wanted to get a more global insight.’

‘I am a student of psychology’

**Professional and skills development**
‘...this course will help to enhance the skills I use in caring and understanding the mentality of special needs and aging people my work’

‘I really want to develop myself and skills and know different things through online courses and this course it is going to give me some common knowledge.’

I work in a professional field where we take care of people with disabilities so this course seems to have information that will be useful to me.’

‘It will help me in my home and professional life.’

"To maintain a broad range of skills.’

‘To stay up to date in fast-changing fields."

‘I work in adult social care, with responsibility over care homes, including LD homes.’

‘..give a better understanding’

"I am a teacher at a high school center so it is important for me to learn how to deal with students who show different limitations when learning. Therefore, this course is going to help me a lot for it will show me different new techniques or perspectives on how to include everybody in class.’

‘I am a teacher, this course will help me understand my students better.’
"As an ESE Teacher, I have students whom have intellectual disabilities. I hope to learn information that will help me in providing the best possible education for them.’

‘As a future nurse, I am planning on working with many different patients and having this understanding of both patients and their caregivers with regards to intellectual disability is a great tool’

‘...working with adults with LD, I'm hoping this will give me more general knowledge to do my job better’

‘It help me as a teacher to understand the basics of intellectual disabilities as I find myself in a class where most of the students are not academically up to task.’

‘Both personal and professional enrichment.’

**Subject Interest**

‘This Course will give me awareness on the Subject Matter I am Happy to Join This Course’

‘improve knowledge and skills.’

‘I'm not sure.’

‘It will increase my knowledge.’

‘To be kinder to people and help them.’

‘...the course should help me to understand more about learning disabilities and the intellect of peoples with learning disabilities.’

‘The course will support my career for online accessibility and fulfill my interests how to make learning effective for people with intellectual disabilities.’

‘Lifelong learning’

‘Better understanding’

‘I am positive that this will help me because all of the information or the lessons in this course are facts and this will help myself and my future students.

I have practical experience working with children with intellectual and physical disabilities, so this course will add to my theoretical understanding to enable me to provide the best care I possibly can.’

‘help with understanding and interacting’

‘Adding knowledge for my career.’
‘This course will help to enhance the skills I use in caring and understanding the mentality of special needs and aging people my work,’
Appendix 3: MOOC Dissemination and Conference Presentations

Below is a record of national and international dissemination relating to the ID MOOC.

**INCORPORATING DRAMA AND EPISODIC SHORT FILM IN HEALTH MOOCs**

**A conference presentation given by Prof W Turner, Prof S Hardy, Sue Maddox and Keiron Spires, at the Instructional Technology Councils e Learning conference, Las Vegas. Feb 18-21, 2015**

In spring 2014, the United Kingdom’s health service commissioned London South Bank University to create two MOOCs focusing on deteriorating health from a physical and psychological perspective. The project team offered content via six dramatic episodes and ended each week’s MOOC with a soap opera style cliff hanger. The drama for their MOOC on deteriorating physical health contains a decision tree, where the viewer/learner/students chooses one or two optional actions that determine the drama’s outcome. The presenters outlined the process they followed to create the dramas, and link them to educational outcomes and frameworks. They will also provide an analysis of the MOOCs first run outcomes in terms of student feedback and stakeholder satisfaction.

As a result of attending the conference, the team were better able to consider additional online student engagement strategies (e.g., gamification) that can be used to further enhance uptake and sustainability of student engagement. Attention needs to be paid to engaging with students online and forming interactive dialogue with them, on a personal level, as well as group discussions. The utilisation of course analytics to further hone course activities, throughout the six weeks, focusing on areas where students are losing interest, through introducing more quizzes and games, offering students the chance to enhance their experience and improve successful completion rates.

Online learning strategies are required for Universities and colleges, although staff training and investment needs to remain in line with the fast pace of change taking place in technologies, therefore training and updating becomes a continual process. Five M’s are recommended, in terms of Modelling, Mentoring, Meetings, Maintaining and Maturing. Modelling, is the educating of faculty staff to understand the position of the student, working online and getting ideas of what students are interfacing with. Course preparation and resources are needed to invest and experiment to ensure courses are functional, engaging and informative. Meeting, is about ensuring people are using online discussions, with potential for annual symposia, and bringing the online faculty together in person. Maturing is about dissemination and spread of materials to other audiences, quality review and further upgrades required to remain current and relevant. Maintaining, is the need to remain fresh, lifelong learners for all involved in the process. For the LSBU team, we would add an additional M to
this list, in terms of marketing the materials. Flyers have been used for use in NHS Trust sites across London, whose fire walls and security IT systems often do not translate to clinical staff, for whom the MOOCs are targeted.

Discussion also at the conference focused on safety, quality and accessibility for those with learning needs. Being clear about the learning objectives and audience the MOOC materials are aimed at is essential in ensuring the right people have access to what is relevant to their lives and work. Students need guidance in their time management of the MOOC materials, with some racing through to the end, whilst others engage in a weekly steady pace. Releasing materials weekly was the initial response to this, but in the final run through, the team made all materials available, so students had the choice at which level and at what speed they engaged with the material.

The eLearning conference was a brilliant opportunity to engage and learn from advanced technological expertise of the audience, who were interested in making available the MOOC materials for the military services and other such connections, across the world.

**WORKING WITH MASSIVE ONLINE OPEN COURSES (MOOCS) TO PROMOTE CLINICAL SKILLS.**

A conference presentation was given by Prof W Turner, Prof S Hardy and Clare Nadaf at the Sixth International Clinical Skills Conference, Prato Italy, May 17-20, 2015.

Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) have taken the world of distance learning by storm; offering students, from across the globe, connections to university based courses of study. However, critics have raised concern over the lack of formal qualifications and academic credit from MOOCs which they claim has led to a poor quality student experience and high dropout rates. Yet for many computer literate students, accessing information via a MOOC opens many exciting avenues of learning.

At London South Bank University, two pilot MOOCs have been developed in conjunction with Health Education England North Central London aimed at promoting understanding deteriorating health of someone from a physical and another from a mental health perspective.

In order to address the issue of poor student engagement, the approach undertaken was to provide ‘drama episodes’ that follow the patient experience as a central learning resource. A professional script writer and actors were engaged in bringing the patient storylines to life. Working from a conventional dramatic episode approach provided an immediate level of rapport and interest in what happens next, that enables extensive potential to identify chunks of learning from multiple perspectives.
The workshop will provide opportunity to explore the MOOC development as a creative learning tool for skill development. We outline lessons learned from co-writing the script development of learning through the filming process and subsequent building of the learning resources to address student engagement from the outset.

Watching clinical skills being undertaken, both the good and the best practice examples aims to support previous research into student engagement in MOOCs (Wilkowski, Deutsch and Russell (2014). Consideration of the audience, when building the MOOC content has become paramount in capturing the diverse needs of a global audience through enhanced technology.

The international audience participating in the MOOCs, has enabled knowledge, skill and attitude changes in both areas of deteriorating physical and mental health. The online forum and discussion is where students are asking questions that they would not feel comfortable to ask someone in person, exposing their lack of knowledge online appears to be an easier method than conventional face to face learning. The MOOC platform also provides limitless opportunity for contemporary topics to be aired and views exchanged across continents. We were able to identify at the conference that we are the first University to be using a patient storyline and video as the core feature of a MOOC in health care, and that presenting at the conference enabled LSBU to be seen and recognised as a contemporary institution leading in health care innovative teaching and learning.

**HEALTH MOOCS: What difference does it make?**


The theme of this prestigious annual mental health conference organized by the RCN and Mental Health Nurse Academics UK, provided opportunity for the Department of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities to showcase the What Matters, Understanding Mental Health MOOC, to an audience of academics, researchers, clinicians and student mental health nurses. We concentrated the presentation on sharing the versatility of this online learning experience, and the impact evaluation undertaken from vast amount of narrative feedback received from the thousands of international MOOC alumni we have amassed through the multiple running of the MOOC via the canvas platform. Interest from the audience was how we had managed to achieve the high recruitment and sign up number of students each time the MOOC ran, and how could they take back the MOOC to embed this rich learning resource into their own educational programmes. One person suggested this should become a mandatory NHS activity for all health care staff and students. We managed to hand out
over 200 MOOC postcards, so we were encouraged that this presentation has enabled further reach and reputation for LSBU HSC.

Learning brought back to LSBU was about considering an alternative platform to Canvas to allow immediate and all year access to the MOOC materials for students and NHS staff in England.
## What difference does a MOOC make?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture or symbol</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="MOOC icon" /></td>
<td>This report is about an online course called a MOOC taught by London South Bank University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Participants" /></td>
<td>People did the MOOC course to learn about people with intellectual disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Course venue" /></td>
<td>The MOOC was run two times in the year. A 100 Students started the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students did the course from 6 different countries across the world using their computers and phones to get online.

Students liked the course. Here are some of the things they said:
‘.. be kinder to people and help them’.
‘ this course will help to enhance the skills I use in caring…..’

Best of all the students said the MOOC increased awareness and understanding about the lives and needs of people with intellectual disabilities.

Finally we will use student feedback to improve the course and run it again in the future.