

Basil room
12.45-1.10pm

iMOOC—A quest for success

Aileen LAM*, Jodie LUU, and Sarah CHONG

Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore

*elclwa@nus.edu.sg

In line with the National University of Singapore's vision to "harness good technology-enabled pedagogical practices for the enhancement of learning outcomes" (National University of Singapore, n.d.) as well as the growing interest in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) within the education communities, we launched a five-week ungraded internal MOOC (iMOOC) entitled "Influential Social Publishing Through Blogs" in August 2017, which was designed to model a connectivist MOOC (cMOOC) with a focus on creating knowledge through participation and interaction via online discussions. Participation in the course was voluntary and no certificates or modular credits were awarded upon completion of the course. Unfortunately, the course recorded low enrolment, engagement, and completion rates. This propelled us to turn to literature and research to improve the course.

We found that learners progressed through the "funnel of participation" for MOOCs (Clow, 2013) and so we used the four stages of awareness, registration, activity, and progress as a framework to relook how we could attract and retain learners. We postulated that students' positive sentiment about course content (Hone & El Said, 2016; Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Drago, 2007), more engaging and succinct instructional videos (Santos-Espino, Afonso-Suárez, & Guerra, 2016; Kramer & Bohrs, 2016), a preference for traditional xMOOCs over connectivist cMOOCs (Daniel, 2012; Downes, 2010), better timing (Zheng, Rosson, Shih, & Carroll, 2015), and more effective promotion of the course may improve enrolment and retention rates. Hence, we conducted a survey from January to February 2018 to understand students' perceptions and expectations of iMOOCs.

The survey drew participation from 175 NUS undergraduates, and the findings unveiled compelling learning points about learners' expectations of the course content, presentation of materials such as lecture videos, learning activities, timing of the course and lastly, promotional channels.

Our findings suggest that, in terms of communication courses, learners are most interested in public speaking skills, interview skills, and writing for online media. Material-wise, the respondents indicated their preference for videos, followed by quizzes, readings and lastly, online discussions. They also preferred short videos of no more than six minutes and “explainer” type videos such as animated and hand-drawn videos to formal videos such as lectures or voiceover slides. Furthermore, they preferred taking such courses during term breaks, and the best channels to reach out to them for publicity are through email and IVLE.

Armed with these findings, we revamped and renamed our course “Effective Online Writing” to cover a wider scope of online writing beyond just blogs and launched it in May 2018 (Special Term I). The enrolment rates increased drastically by five-fold and the engagement rates have improved too.

Our experience serves as a timely reminder that online course designers should not neglect the needs and wants of students, our primary target audience, especially when the course is not a requirement for their formal education. To generate more awareness and interest among NUS students in registering for an online course, course designers should align the course content with their interest and highlight the practical values of the course, be it in the academic or professional realm. Pedagogy-wise, bite-sized and dynamic video clips with snippets of insights as well as learning activities that promote self-directed and/or self-paced learning are recommended to better engage with young learners, the “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001), in a fully online learning environment.

Keywords

MOOC, iMOOC, online learning

References

- Clow, D. (2013, April). MOOCs and the funnel of participation. In *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Learning Analytics and Knowledge*, 185-189.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2460296.2460332>
- Daniel, J. (2012). Making sense of MOOCs: Musings in a maze of myth, paradox and possibility. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, 2012(3), 18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/2012-18>
- Downes, S. (2010). Learning networks and connective knowledge. In H. Yang, & S. Yuen (Eds.), *Collective intelligence and e-learning 2.0: Implications of web-based communities and networking* (pp. 1-26). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-729-4.ch001>
- Hone, K. S., & El Said, G. R. (2016). Exploring the factors affecting MOOC retention: A survey study. *Computer & Education*, 98, 157-168. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.03.016>
- Krämer, A., & Böhrs, S. (2016). How do consumers evaluate explainer videos? An empirical study on the effectiveness and efficiency of different explainer video formats. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 6(1), 254-266. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p254>
- National University of Singapore. (n.d.). *Frequently Asked Questions Note (FAQs) on iBLOCs offered from January to June 2017*. Retrieved from http://nus.edu.sg/ibloc/iBLOC_FAQs_2017.html.
- Peltier, W. J., Schibrowsky, J. A., & Drago, W. (2007). The interdependence of the factors influencing the perceived quality of the online learning experience: A causal model. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 29(2), 140-153. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0273475307302016>
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants part 1. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-6.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816>
- Santos-Espino, J. M., Afonso-Suárez, M. D., & Guerra-Artal, C. (2016). Speakers and boards: A survey of instructional video styles in MOOCs. *Technical Communication*, 63(2), 101-115. Retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/stc/tc/2016/00000063/00000002/art00004>
- Zheng, S., Rosson, M. B., Shih, P. C., & Carroll, J. M. (2015, February). Understanding student motivation, behaviours and perceptions in MOOCs. In *Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on Computer-supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing*, 1882-1895.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2675133.2675217>