Call for papers – Special issue
Massive Open Online Courses and their role in digital teaching at universities

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To the main topic

Massive Open Online Courses have become world-famous at the latest since Sebastian Thrun's online course on artificial intelligence (CARSON & SCHMIDT, 2012). The possibility of making educational content openly accessible and available on the internet at university level has led to a surge in the number of learners, often reaching up to 100,000.

These first success stories were immediately followed by scientific studies and accompanying research (YUAN & BOWLE, 2013; GAEBEL, 2013). The aim was to explore how collaborative learning can work with such masses of learners or why the drop-out rate was so high at the very first beginning (KHALIL & EBNER, 2014). In the course of time, more and more universities began to produce such kind of online-courses and other platforms sporadically emerged. The first courses were also developed in German-speaking countries and made available to the general public in 2014. The field of research in the area of educational technology increasingly began to deal with the phenomenon – whether through technical as well as pedagogical considerations or analyses of their own practical experiences in such courses. As the market shows, today the German-language website called MOOChub (https://moochub.org) offers over 500 online courses that learners can attend at no further cost.

Since the Covid19-pandemic, digital teaching in higher education institutions has taken on an unintended but all in all a significant momentum (PAUSITS et al., 2021). Overnight, institutions were forced to switch at least partly to exclusively full distance teaching. This also helped MOOCs to gain further momentum, as it was precisely these courses that were already available and these platforms that could already handle large masses of learners. It is now those platforms that not only have to withstand the high frequency of use, but can also drive future developments: Developments such as the creation of common course standards across borders, the provision of digital certificates or common authentication procedures are just a few upcoming challenges. The emerging debate and discussion on microcredentials is also closely linked to MOOCs, as are the new innovative didactic scenarios such as inverse blended learning and flipped classroom, which are suitable learning materials in the context of the prevailing teaching and learning videos (EBNER et al., 2017).

In this call, we call to consider the topic of Massive Open Online Courses from all perspectives. The following questions can be taken as suggestions, but are by no means exhaustive:

- We ask for experiences with the use of Massive Open Online Courses in higher education teaching.

- Which strategic role will freely accessible courses play in the future in the higher education context?

- What technical developments can be expected in connection with MOOCs?

- How should the topic of MOOCs be addressed from a pedagogical perspective? Which pedagogical questions need to be answered? Which didactical implications are associated with MOOCS?

- How do MOOCs influence the Bologna Process or the continuing education sector (e.g. microcredentials)?

- Which role do MOOCs play in the third mission?

- Which specific content can be particularly conveyed through MOOCs? What experience and evidence-based studies are there on this?

- What influence do MOOCs have on educational equity or access to higher education?

- What are the implications of MOOCs for the function and understanding of higher education?

We are looking forward to contributions about MOOCs and their role in higher education teaching from as many different perspectives as possible and thus to point out their use, development and role. Take part in the international discourse, send us your academic results and actively help to shape this issue!

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Guidelines regarding the journal

The ZFHE is a peer-reviewed online journal that publishes scientific contributions of practical relevance concerning current higher education development issues. The focus is on didactical, structural, and cultural developments in teaching and learning. Topics that are innovative and still regarded as open in respect of their design options are preferred.

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Submission information

German or English contributions may be submitted in two possible formats:

Research contributions should meet the following criteria. The paper:

- addresses a systemic question in transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary or subject-specific contexts;
- has a research gap as its starting point;
- is extensively embedded in current scholarly discourse;
- has a robust methodological approach;
- includes reflection on the author's own work;
- explains the research methodology;
- employs a method that is suitable for answering the research question;
- presents the scientific discourse in a reflective manner;
- makes a clearly recognizable contribution to answering the research question or to the research discussion;

- consistently follows relevant citation rules (APA style, current edition);
- comprises between 20,000 and 33,000 characters (with spaces, including cover page, bibliography and author information).

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- features a higher education development perspective with a sound research base;
- discusses and differentiates a systemic problem in teaching development;
- is an academically grounded "institutional research" contribution;
- is supported by a literature review;
- meaningfully addresses the interaction between science and praxis and/or the link between the two poles of "research and development"
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Development contributions should meet the following criteria. The paper:

- deals with a concrete problem in higher education development in the (author's) higher education institution;
- addresses a practical need;
- is embedded in the scientific discussion and literature (without claiming to provide an overview of the literature);
- offers suggestions for teaching and university development, with recommendations for action (if applicable);
- offers a systematic and transparent discussion (e.g. no incomprehensible references to specifics or details in a field of practice);
- elaborates on generalisable aspects relevant to theoretical development;
- addresses considerations related to the transfer to practice;
- mentions possibilities for further research;
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- comprises between 20,000 and 33,000 characters (with spaces, including cover page, bibliography and author information).

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October 28, 2022 – Submission deadline for complete articles: Please upload your contribution(s) to the ZFHE journal system (https://www.zfhe.at) in the corresponding section (research contributions, research-driven development contributions, development contributions) of ZFHE 18/1 issue in anonymous format. To do so, you must first register as an author in the system.

January 13, 2023 – Feedback/Reviews: Scientific contributions and workshop reports are evaluated in a double-blind process (see below).

February 3, 2023 – Revision deadline: Where necessary, contributions may be revised according to feedback and recommendations from the reviews.

March 2022 – Online publication: In March 2022, the finalized contributions are published under https://www.zfhe.at and also made available in print.

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All submitted contributions will be examined in a double-blind peer review process to guarantee scientific quality. The editors of the current issue propose the reviewers for the respective theme and allocate individual contributions to the reviewers; they also determine which contributions will be accepted. The selection of reviewers and the review process for each thematic issue are always supervised by a member of the editorial board.

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Questions?

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For technical and organizational questions, please contact Elisabeth Stadler (office@zfhe.at).

We look forward to your submissions!

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