



MOOCs and Retention: Does it really matter?

Tharindu Liyanagunawardena, **Karsten Lundqvist**, Patrick Parslow and Shirley Williams

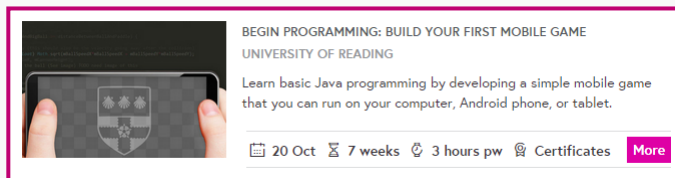
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#FLmobigame

- Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)
 - Very popular on FutureLearn
 - Two sessions have been run.
 - First capped at 10000. Was full in less than 24 hours
 - Second run 38000+
 - Next one to start end of October
 - Right now ~20000
 - Expect (at least) to double that by end of October



Retention

- As an educator – the retention data looks grim!
 - ~50% never shows up
 - Participants showing up: ~7%-8% participate fully
 - Although over the last year that means more than 4 times the students in the School has finished this course...
- We tried to find excuses!

Excuses: #FLmobigame is different

- 7 weeks is long
- Christmas / Easter
- Overrepresentation of
 - Young
 - Male
 - Less educated
 - Working / education
- Week 1 is difficult!
 - hardest of the weeks
 - It is a show stopper

Low Retention: We are not alone

- Coursera
 - According to (Koller et al 2013)
 - 50%-60% takes part in the first class
 - On average 5% of sign ups officially finish the course
- Too many websites/sources that mention this retention problem!

Investigate importance of
participation retention

Traditional Retention

- Students typically pay a fee to be enrolled on a course. There is always an upfront commitment.
 - # of students graduating from the cohort who started the course is taken as a measure of success
 - Thus retaining learners is important for students
 - In the end they get what they pay for
 - And it is important for institutions
 - Better league table positions
 - More income

MOOC Retention

- MOOCs are a disruption to traditional higher education
 - In order to comprehend these disruptive innovations they are generally compared against the old norm even though they are very different
 - “our official culture is striving to force the new media to do the work of the old” (McLuhan 2001, p94).
- Similarly MOOCs are viewed as an extension of the traditional higher education where retention, completion and dropout are used to measure the success of the offering despite them being two very different concepts.

MOOC Retention

- ‘[w]e insist on thinking about educational ventures in institutional terms’ even when those are “disruptions” to institutionalized education’ Stewart (2013)

Is retention the right metric by which
to measure success in a MOOC?

MOOC Retention

- Coursera Signature Track option
 - Upfront payment (\$30-\$90)
 - 74% of the learners completed course (Koller et al 2013)
- No upfront commitment
 - The offering is free
 - thus there is no financial commitments
 - The engagement contract becomes voluntary
 - learners “drop in” for specific topics in a course that they find interesting
 - MOOCs are giving the opportunity for auditing courses or trialling them

MOOC Retention

- Begin Programming: Build your first mobile game MOOC
 - First run pre-course survey out of 3,611 responses
 - 64% said that they enrolled for the course to ‘tryout FutureLearn or massive open online courses (MOOCs) in general’
 - 45% said they wanted to ‘try out learning online’
 - These participants’ objectives to join the course could be fulfilled in the first week

MOOC Retention

- MOOC retention must be viewed in the light of participants' objectives
 - College students may take a MOOC on a subject to supplement a missed lesson
 - 'Auditing learners' who want to explore the subjects to get a feel for them
 - We want to recruit students to our University who know what they go into

MOOC Retention

- Retention is more important in Connectivist MOOC?
 - Social learning approach is applied
 - Losing a participant who would have otherwise contributed to a knowledge creation exercise or would have a different perspective that could have sparked a meaningful discussion could hinder the learning experience for other participants

Alternative Measures of Success?

- 5Rs – Andy White, Birmingham University, FLAN meeting #FLANsoton
 - Retention
 - Research
 - Reputation
 - Recruitment
 - Revenue

Questions

k.o.lundqvist@reading.ac.uk