E-Learning – Challenges of the Next Phase

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Sandrina Heinrich, Steffi Engert, Anke Petschenka

Centre for Information and Media Services
University Duisburg-Essen (Germany)
Agenda

- Presentation University of Duisburg-Essen
- E-Learning at the UDE
- Main Challenges
- MOOCs: Promise – Risks – Opportunities
University Duisburg-Essen: Intro

- Dual-Campus (ca. 20 km distance)
- Students: 39,000 (50% women, 16% from outside Germany, 63% from commuter belt)
- Staff: 4,385 (academic: 2,600, professors: 447; women: 42%, prof.: 20%)
- 11 faculties (all major subjects except Law)
- Revenue: € 441 million (third-party funds: € 28 million)
- University Alliance Metropolis Ruhr (UAMR) – together with the University Bochum and the TU Dortmund
Centre for Information and Media Services

- Combines Computing Centre, Media Services, Learning Technologies, ERP applications and IT project management
- Main provider of IT, media and learning technologies
- Diversity of “customer” groups: students, lecturers and researchers, central units, administration and university management/board
- Competence-Centre for the university
- Cooperation with University Library (joint sector Information, Communication and Media)
- Cooperation and to some extent division of labour with the University Alliance Metropolis Ruhr
E-Learning UDE: Technologies

- Main strategic platform: Moodle since 2005; currently version 2.4.2 (32,529 active users; 2,608 courses)
- Video-audio/streaming: recording of lectures, pod- and videocasts, DuECast, YouTube, iTunesU
- Multimedia-Server DuEPublico
- PC supported exam centre (‘PC Hall’) professional eAssessment software LPLUS: Between 15th July 2008 and 31st March 2013 399 exams involving 34,125 students
- Videoconferencing: 12 rooms and studios on 2 campuses, between 12 and 295 seats
- Mahara eportfolio system – first pilot projects
E-Learning: Strategy & Structures

- 3-Level support Centre for Information and Media Services (Helpdesk, Training, Consulting)
- Cooperative Structures:
  - Moodle Competence Centre (CIM / University Library)
  - E-Learning Alliance: university-wide projects, strategies (Centre for Higher Education and Quality Development, chair for Media Didactics, CIM and University Library)
- E-Learning Strategy: presently under discussion at the rectorate
Challenges I

- “Mass University” - Dual Campus University - Diversity of students (first generation academics, high proportion with immigrant background, part-time students)
- E-Learning is an accepted everyday feature - mostly in the shape of basic electronic support for class-room teaching
- Lecturers very much weigh didactic and organisational advantages vs. investment of labour which goes largely unacknowledged
- University management: “Push” to increase e-learning mostly pragmatic: a) channel great numbers of students b) students’ demand for flexibility c) cost-effectiveness
Challenges II: Cooperation and Competition

- National and Global: all universities have to compete for resources, the best lecturers and the best students, at the same time as finding new ways for cooperation, learning and teaching.
- Regional experience: UAMR – cooperative courses in more than one university: Ruhr Campus Online. Showed a number of obstacles re curricular integration/mutual recognition and – generally – sustainability.
- Division – students highly active in e-learning and students with little experience in e-learning.
- Competition of new players: company colleges – international consortia.
MOOCs – Challenges

- No consistent method dealing with web 2.0 or how to structure varied online resources (lost in hyperspace / information overload)
- Structured higher education vs. self-regulated web content
- No verified accreditation system or uniform learning targets
- How is an integration of these different systems possible?
  Opening from both sides
- MOOCs = “the opening“?
- Most needed: conceptions of self-regulated learning, of learning motivation and of controlling interests
cMOOCs – Innovation potential?

- Self-regulation/self-activation/interaction (user generated content)
- Transparency of learning process and facilitation of new learning styles and variety of (multimedia) methods
- New role models of teacher and students
- More flexible model beyond study paths
- New learning culture (i.e. ‘dropout rates are not that bad‘)
- Contents are mixed, not exactly synchronized but related through MOOCs!
(Massive Open Online Courses – ein relevanter Trend für Hochschulen? Dr. Johannis Moskaliuk, University Tübingen)
The Promise of MOOCs

MOOCs seem to be a promising solution for a number of pressing problems

- High quality content
- Remedy for overrun lecture halls and scarce teaching resources
- Flexibility
- Self-responsibility of students
- Peer-Assessment (collaboration and teamwork)
- Extension of interconnected thinking and learning
Crossroads

- The present discussion is not only about MOOCs, but about the future role of the institutions of higher education in the e-learning sector.

- This discussion is not new but has been an ongoing background music throughout the history of e-learning.

- MOOCs are the present focus of this discussion, they are also the driving force of ushering in this future – in one way or another.
What is at Stake?

- Not: To MOOC or Not To MOOC
- Doubtful even: differentiation of “good” cMOOCs and “bad” xMOOCs
- Quality of higher education under increasing outside pressures: globalization, demands of labour enterprises, and cost constraints
- The self-image of universities and their ability to reinvent themselves: to bring the real advantages of e-learning to bear – so far fettered by established, but outlived institutional structures (i. e. openness, cooperation across institutional boundaries within and without the university; intelligent integration of formal and informal learning; flexibility)
Risks and Fears I

- Higher Education becoming “just another (purely market-driven) business” dominated by a few potent consortia
- Streamlined contents killing off diversity and ultimately academic freedom
- Professors: to become unnecessary or reduced to mere middle-persons (i.e. devaluation of their own teaching; fear of being ‘exposed’)
- Students: left to their own devices (esp. in view of the myth of the digital native; also lack of guidance and support)
- “Facebookisation” of higher education/learning processes
- Despair on the one hand, overrating ones own ability on the other
Risks and Fears II

- Expecting easy solutions of cost, space/lecture halls etc.
- Adopting MOOCs as a panacea without
  - Consideration of what is involved (initial costs, but more importantly: rethinking roles, functions of the university, didactic, support etc.)
  - Strategically defining how to MOOC and for which goals exactly
  - “Business Plan” for one’s own MOOC strategy (how is it paid, how does it generate revenue)
How to Benefit as a Non-Elite University I

No-Nos:

- Dismiss MOOCs as “just another hype” or consider MOOCs as un-innovative (“we have been doing this all along”)
- Take stock of the real situation (re claims and fears)
- Reinvent towards cooperation and learning (instead of fragmentation of faculties/chairs) within university and without
- Define own role and advantages to be gained and map course from there
- Review the different types and goals of MOOCs and develop your own strategy to fit in with your institution and its goals
How to Benefit as a Non-Elite University II

Towards institution and professors:

- Define areas of possible success in global/national/regional competition, boost these and bring them to the market
- Prepare for a role as integrator and facilitator of a mixed approach of teaching/self-learning
How to Benefit as a Non-Elite University III

Towards students:

- Develop the competencies and deep understanding of academic work and how digital media and technologies are used within this framework
- Teach how to discern and to learn
- Support system is requirement and basic condition at once!
Modelling E-Learning towards 3.0

- Overall definition of goals for a strategy of 3 to 5 years including but not restricted to the role of MOOCs

- Exemplary MOOCs
  - Image MOOCs with large mass appeal in areas with cutting-edge contents attractive for world-wide audience
  - xMOOCs to relieve overcrowding and provide for diversity of students audience
  - cMOOCs to facilitate self-learning
Modelling E-Learning towards 3.0

- Define financial, organizational and support requirements
- Retrain lecturers to being hosts, facilitators, integrators, and advisors as well
- Organizing mixed contents and cooperation processes with outside partners and experts
- Re-fashion study entrance phase: to introduce and teach students how to learn, how to organize themselves, and how to discern good learning contents
Modelling E-Learning towards 3.0

- Invest in largely augmented didactic, technical and organizational support: e-tutors and tutors, technical infrastructure oncampus/offcampus, mobile infrastructure, training and consulting
- Reframe the planning of space – provide virtual and real spaces for the self-organisation of students’ learner groups: e-learning cafes, rooms for student groups, silent rooms, single-user workstations, opening hours (till 24h), Wi-Fi, PC stations and multimedia workstations
Thank you for your attention!

Sandrina Heinrich
CIM, University Duisburg-Essen
sandrina.heinrich@uni-due.de