An Overview of MOOC Platforms: Applications in Turkey

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Abstract: Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) can appeal to very large masses as a distance education model and provide the same quality and standard education with large user groups worldwide via the internet. In MOOC systems, users can get the course they want for free or for a small fee in the application they are registered with, using videos, lecture notes, booklets, and interactive forms. In this system, which is open to everyone, different countries have various applications. In this context, this research aims to briefly introduce the MOOC platforms in Turkey and give opinions and suggestions for MOOCs. This study is important in that it sheds light on future studies by giving information about MOOC platforms in Turkey.

Keywords: MOOC, distance education, e-learning

Introduction

Developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) have increased interpersonal communication and interaction as well as developing interpersonal communication and interaction opportunities. This transformation has changed the ways of accessing information and led to the emergence of more flexible learning ways and environments such as distance learning and e-learning (Bozkurt, 2015; Ergüney, 2017). With these developments, lifelong learning has become continuous. As an extension of this development, MOOCs have enabled the same standard and quality of education to be carried out worldwide with unlimited users (Ergüney, 2015).

MOOCs are designed to address large audiences on web-based platforms without time and space restriction, and they contain course materials such as lectures, tests, assignments, videos, and discussion platforms (Glance, 2013). In a MOOC system, courses are offered free of charge or for a small fee. The courses are taught synchronously or asynchronously in this system, supported by various materials by field experts. Certificates are issued to those who successfully complete the course (EADTU, 2013). While the courses on some MOOC platforms are free, certification is available for a fee.

MOOCs may vary according to each country's own culture and education system. In Turkey, a MOOC platform was first launched with "E-Üniversite" (*E-University*) in 2013. In this initiative, MOOCs in English were translated into Turkish and Turkish content suitable for the business and education world began to be designed. Thus, different methods and technologies used in this system were utilized by taking part in the international education system.

In this context, this study aims to give brief information about the MOOC platforms developed in Turkey, introduce these platforms and emphasize the importance of MOOCs. This study is important because it gives information about the MOOC platforms developed in Turkey to the people concerned about taking courses and giving lectures, and it is expected to shed light on future studies.

MOOC Platforms in Turkey

Although MOOC platforms in Turkey are less developed than in Europe and America, they are experiencing different developments day by day. The first MOOC platform in Turkey started with "E-Üniversite" (*E-University*) in 2013 (Özbek et al., 2018). The most common MOOC platforms in Turkey are as follows:

E-University (In Turkish: E-Üniversite)

It is the first MOOC platform launched in Turkey. In 2013, it started to offer courses under the name of E-Üniversite *(E-University)* at http://www.e-universite.com.tr. It provides equal opportunities for those who want to receive education independently of time and place (Ergüney, 2015). E-Üniversite *(E-University)* provides significant advantages for those who cannot find the time and money to study or for those who have a physical disability, as it is free of charge. In addition to offering courses to earn undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate degrees, there are also various e-certificate programs. However, the website at http://www.e-universite.com.tr/ was found to be inaccessible during the research process.

Anadolu MOOCs

It is a MOOC platform created by the Anadolu University of Turkey for the vision of lifelong learning. The platform's purpose is to enable learning activities to be carried out more systematically and planned. In addition to the features of course management systems, it has many functions, such as live chat that supports open and distance education, assigning homework, online assessment, and evaluation (Anadolu MOOCs, 2021). It is accessed online through the website http://mooc.anadolu.edu.tr.

AtademiX

It is a non-profit MOOC platform established in 2014 with the technical infrastructure and experience of Atatürk University Distance Education Application and Research Center (ATAUZEM) and Atatürk University Open

Education Faculty (ATA-AÖF). Turkey's first corporate platform, AtademiX, started its teaching process in 2014 with four courses and more than three thousand students. Lessons for people with different education levels are taught synchronously or asynchronously with various materials and applications on the internet. Successful students are given certificates of participation by evaluating with homework, exercises, quiz or online exam. Besides, digital badges are awarded according to the rate of participation in course activities (AtademiX, 2021). It is online through the website https://atademix.atauni.edu.tr.

Akadema

It is a free MOOC platform open to everyone whose infrastructure was completed by Anadolu University in 2014 and started its activities in 2015. As a product of the openness movement in education, it provides flexible and free learning opportunities to anyone who wants it. Although it usually includes asynchronous activities, simultaneous activities are also included. Educational activities at *Akadema* are designed for lifelong learning, and the courses are of two types according to their structure: guided lessons and individual lessons. In guided-supervised learning, the courses are carried out under the guidance of an instructor according to a specific start and end date, while in individual learning, it is self-directed learning that the participants start and finish whenever they want. *Akadema* is also a social responsibility project (Akadema, 2021). The platform can be accessed on https://www.anadolu.edu.tr/e-egitim/akadema.

Bilgeiş

It is a project established by Middle East Technical University in 2015 with the motto of "*business world developing with informatics.*" It aims to provide 100 online courses to everyone to increase the professional competence of employers and employees. Thus, it was thought to increase the managers' professional capacities and create a labor market compatible with the technology. Although SME employees are considered the target audience, they are open to many audiences such as students, disabled, and unemployed individuals (Bilgeiş, 2021). The website of the platform is https://www.bilgeis.net.

Advanced Education (In Turkish: İleri Eğitim)

It is a distance education platform that continues its activities within the scope of the Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology project through the Dokuz Eylul University Technology Development Zone (DEPARK). It was created for every individual to have widespread access to education under all circumstances. Published courses are produced in a studio environment with green box technology. In addition to many free or low-cost courses and certificate programs, it has a wide portfolio of courses in many fields, such as KPSS and ALES courses (countrywide exams in Turkey). Students enrolled in the course can continue their education from any device (*İleri Eğitim*, 2021). The system operates on https://www.ileriegitim.com.

University Plus

It is an education platform where everyone who aims at lifelong learning can continue their personal and professional development in any field. Courses are given by Yeditepe University and Istanbul Technical University. The content on this platform is in the form of videos. It offers a social learning experience by asking questions about the course through discussion and social platforms (Universite Plus, 2021). The website is available at https://www.universiteplus.com.

Lifelong (In Turkish: Hayatboyu)

Yaşar University shares the open course materials of the university through the open education environment it has created. Although it does not offer course credits or any degree, there is easy access to course materials of interest (Hayatboyu, 2021). It is accessible at http://hayatboyu.yasar.edu.tr/about.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The number of MOOC participants is increasing day by day, and these platforms provide various opportunities to learners by offering various courses that are open to everyone willing to learn, flexible, and free or for a small fee. Therefore, it is perceived as a promising approach along with technological developments (Bozkurt, 2015). In order for the advantages of MOOCs, which are considered as the learning opportunity of the future, to be recognized and effective, it may be beneficial to have various language translations of the MOOC contents and support the contents with appropriate animations and simulations. It could be better to make the assessment system efficient, which differs MOOCs from video sharing sites. Making informative posts about MOOCs can create awareness about them so that more people can produce content or take courses. Various incentives can be designed to enrich the course content further. Since the teaching takes place in the online environment, necessary improvements can be made to optimize the technological opportunities. Methods such as group work, feedback, student opinions, and having experienced guides in the system can be developed to increase the effect of MOOCs. It can be ensured that different sectors serve within this structure to reach a more agile and flexible structure.

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