# Chapter 12
# To MOOC or not to MOOC?
## A Case Study of Norway

**Cathrine Tømte**
*Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research, and Education (NIFU), Norway*

**Arne Fevolden**
*Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research, and Education (NIFU), Norway*

**Dorothy Sutherland Olsen**
*Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research, and Education (NIFU), Norway*

## ABSTRACT

*Inspired by examples in the US and Europe, many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Norway are exploring how they can use Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) and other technologies to shape the classrooms of the future. This chapter briefly reviews expectations of MOOCs including both xMOOCs and cMOOCs and what they might do for higher education in a national context. Thereafter, it considers the development of MOOCs in relation to theories of disruptive technologies and national adoptions and/or adjustments to MOOCs. In this, the authors examine how Norwegian educational institutions are utilizing digital technology to support various solutions of online learning to address educational challenges. This approach is relevant as it serves as an example of how countries around the world explore the new possibilities that come with the MOOCs and other ubiquitous technologies and how they relate these to their existing organization of higher education.*

## INTRODUCTION

"To MOOC or not to MOOC[1]" was the heading of a posting on the web page of the Norwegian Business School (BI) this winter. Inspired by examples in the US and Europe (Allen & Seaman, 2011; OECD, 2012; Bacow, Bowen, Guthrie, Lack, & Long, 2012) many higher education institutions (HEIs) in Norway are now exploring how they can use 'Massive Open Online Courses' (MOOC) and other technologies to shape the classrooms of the future. Online learning is not particularly new; for example every university in the U.S. offers one or more online courses (Anderson, Boyle, & Rainie, 2012), and we are witnessing a similar trend in Norway (Ministry of Education, 2013) The novelty

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-6154-7.ch012

of MOOCs is that they provide a technological platform allowing large numbers of students e to follow the same course online and that everyone can become a student. Most MOOCs currently offer free, high quality education developed at leading U.S. universities (Gaebel, 2013). Wikipedia states that MOOC as a term was first used by Dave Comier and Bryan Alexander in 2008 and that it stems from initiatives from Open Educational Resources. Moreover, efforts to conceptualize what MOOC stands for have differentiated between two groups of MOOCs; namely "cMOOCs" and "xMOOCs" (ibid). The first enhances personal learning through interaction with a distributed network of peers; the second emphasis individual learning. Conole states that xMOOCs combine content delivered by prestigious institutions such as Harvard and Stanford, with the technology that enables the distribution and mass participation, offered by companies such as Audacity, EdX and Coursera (Conole, 2013).

This chapter briefly reviews expectations of MOOC's including both xMOOCs and cMOOCs, and what they might do for higher education in a national context, namely Norway. Thereafter it will consider the development of MOOCs in relation to theories of disruptive technologies and national adoptions and/or adjustments to MOOCs. In this, we will examine how Norwegian educational institutions are utilizing digital technology to support various solutions of online learning to address educational challenges. This approach is relevant as it serves as an example of how countries around the world explore the new possibilities that come with the MOOCs and other ubiquitous technologies and how they relate these to their existing organization of higher education.

## RELEVANCE AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

When the Pew Research Centre asked 1,021 technology experts and technology stakeholders in the U.S. how they envisioned the future impact of the Internet in higher education, most agreed that market forces would exert pressure on universities to expand online education – creating hybrid learning environments, a movement towards "lifelong learning" models and new forms of credentialing structures, by the year 2020. The technology experts were, however, divided on whether such developments would lead to better educational outcomes (Anderson, Boyle, & Rainie, 2012).

These approaches include proprietary technologies such as systems for massive open online courses (MOOCs), "traditional"/"old" technologies that support online learning, such as learning management platforms, as well as more ubiquitous technologies such as social media.

There seems to be a shift in how the Information- and Communication Technology (ICT) and education issues are approached; moving away from thinking about how ICT might support education towards thinking about how ICT might change education (Granberg, 2011). In this respect, MOOCs might be a driver of change. Bearing this in mind, the chapter aims to illuminate the following questions:

- In which ways do Norwegian higher education institutions make use of technologies that support online learning?
- What are their experiences and thoughts about online learning?
- What are the prospects on future teaching and learning with online learning?