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This OpenupEd special issue is best read [Online](#)



COVID-19 special issue

OpenupEd newsletter March 2021

OpenupEd is a community of European universities that offer MOOCs to 'open up' education to the benefit of individual learners and wider society. In this special issue we share the effect of the pandemic on the demand for online learning and MOOCs, as well as COVID-19 related publications, projects, courses and events.

---PUBLICATIONS---

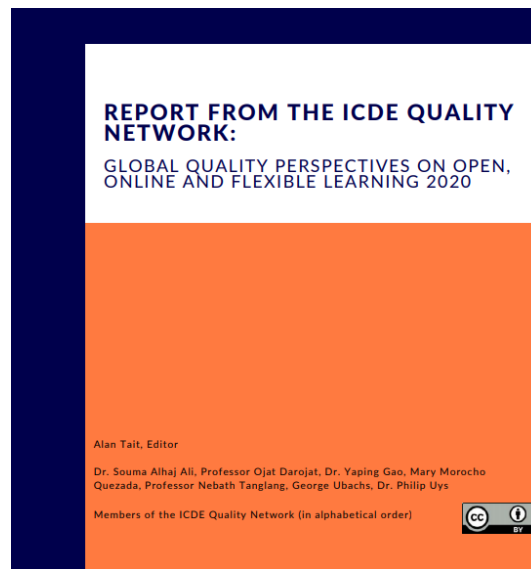
ICDE Report: Global Quality perspectives on Open, Online and Flexible Learning 2020

ICDE recently launched their publication on Quality Perspectives on Open, Online and Flexible Learning from the ICDE Quality Network.

EADTU contributed to this report specifically focussing on the European perspective by "Impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the growth of open, online, blended and flexible learning in the European region".

The report gives a full overview of perceived issues of quality and assessment related to the immediate shift to online and distance learning modalities that educators had to undertake when the pandemic hit.





---DEMAND FOR MOOCs---

2.5 Million Enroll With OpenLearn During Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic saw a large and rapid increase in demand for free online learning. OpenLearn's visitor numbers increased five-fold and, in the 12 months from 1 March 2020, saw more than 16.5 million visitors. The OpenLearn team quickly created content hubs with free courses focused on **home schooling subjects**, **mental health** and courses to support **healthcare and social care workers retuning to practice**, which has contributed to the more than 2.5 million enrolments in the 12 months from 1 March 2020 – more than four times the total of the previous 12 months – along with 1.1 million-plus course completions.



What do learners' choices say about pandemic priorities?

The increasing popularity of some free courses on OpenLearn – The Open University's free learning platform – reflects the changing priorities of learners during the pandemic. With increased concern over home finances, the **MSE Academy of Money** course had more than 37,000 enrolments, while there was a focus on the wellbeing of children – courses such as **Attachment in the early years** and **Introduction to child psychology** made the top 10 and had more than half a million visitors between them. Most notable, however, was The Open University's **Take you teaching online course**, which provides guidance on pivoting from classroom to online

learning – seeing a 16-fold increase in enrolments.

OpenLearn

Spring lockdown: what was the impact on the FUN MOOC platform?
Between the traffic statistics and the results of the survey carried out in June 2020, it appears that the lockdown from March 17 to May 21 in France had a significant impact on the platform's traffic.

During spring 2020 lockdown, France Université Numérique (FUN) in agreement with its members and partners, has reopened many closed MOOCs in "open archived" mode without interaction with the teachers. In addition, many institutions have agreed to extend the opening dates of their courses or to open them early than initially scheduled. As a result, the number of available MOOCs increased from 151 at the end of February to 365 at the end of March and 487 at the end of April. This expansion of available courses has resulted in a very strong increase in the attractiveness of the FUN platform: a four-fold increase of the number of new registrations to the platform compared to the same period in 2019 and a 3.6-fold increase of the number of registrations.

From March 9 to May 10, 2020, the traffic was twice as much as during the same period in 2019: 4.7 million visits versus 2.1 million, 33 million-page views versus 14 million, and 3 million visitors versus 1.4 million.



Survey: 'You, the MOOCs and the FUN Platform'

The survey "You, the MOOCs and the FUN Platform" sent out on May 29th on the use of the FUN platform during the lockdown period received nearly 4,000 responses. One observes a diversification of the learners' profile. Hence, proportionally more younger people registered on the FUN MOOC platform after March 17. While the number of employees is still in the majority, it is less than five years ago (55% against 61%) to the benefit of other categories: 13% job seekers against 11% in 2015; 15% students against 12% in 2015; 3% high school students against 1% in 2015. There is also an evolution of the learners when considering their highest degree, with more learners with lower degrees: 36% of learners have a master's degree compared to 41% in 2015, 31% have a bachelor degree compared to 19% in 2015, 24% have no university degree compared to 12% in 2015. While 63% of respondents are French, the platform has attracted 22% of African learners

AMERICAN LEARNERS.

Many learners appreciate the platform and the courses it offers: 94% of respondents find the platform pleasant to use and 95.5% of respondents intend to take another online course. If 69% of respondents appreciate having access to old courses in "open archived" mode launched during the confinement, even though they could not ask questions on the forum or to get a certificate, the survey reveals that 68% of them prefer to use the forums. Finally, 98% of respondents would recommend the platform to their friends and family.

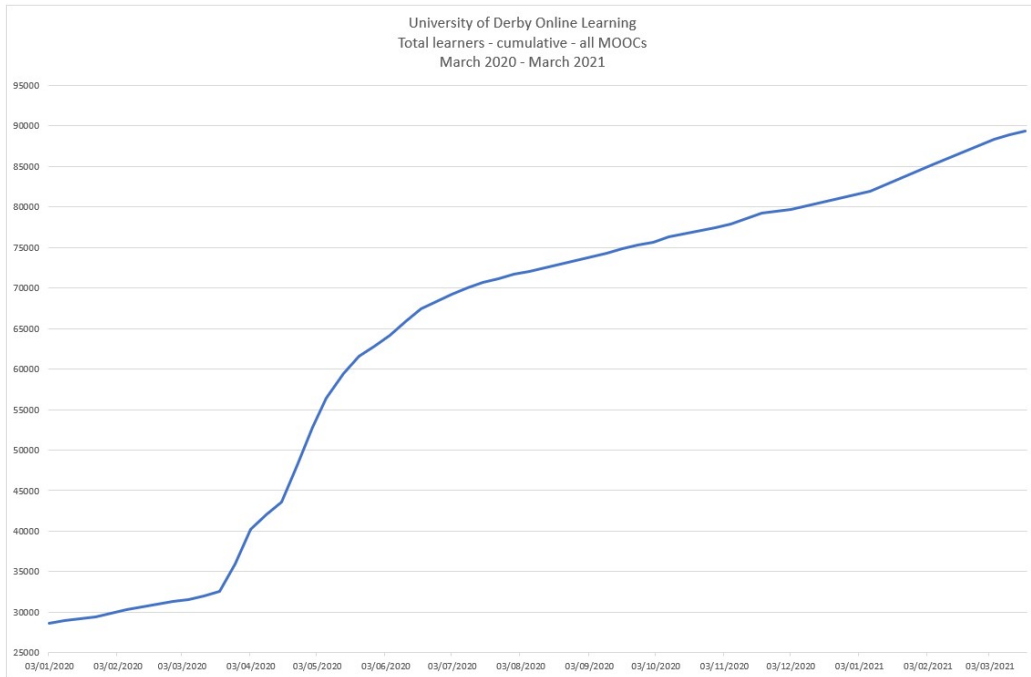
Fun published [a detailed results of the survey](#) (in French).



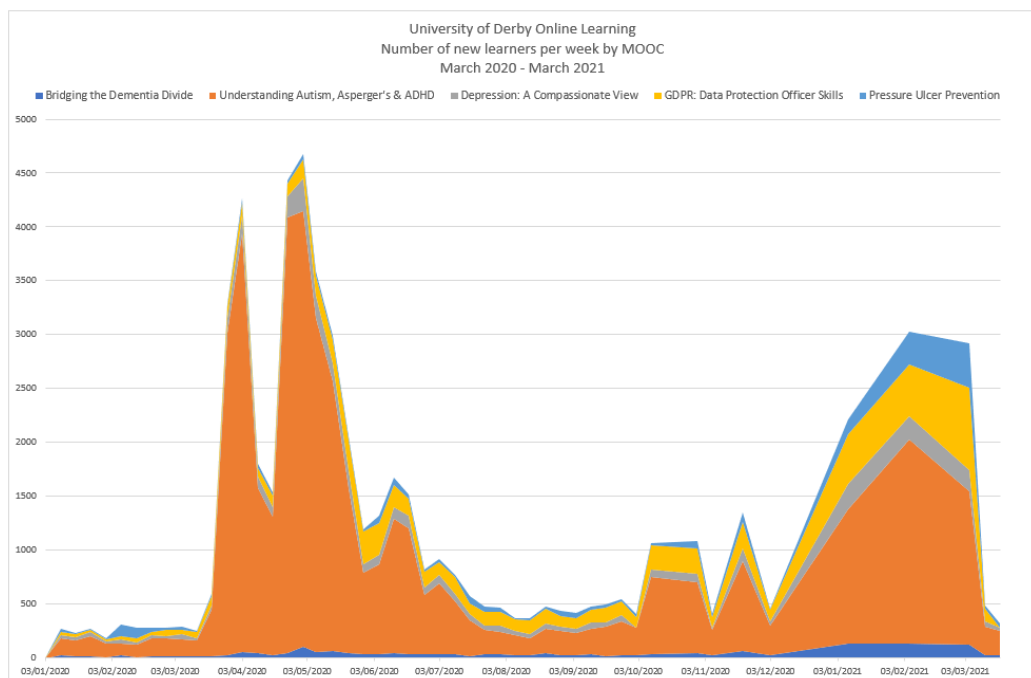
Increasing Demand for AKADEMA Courses during COVID-19
Anadolu University's social responsibility project, AKADEMA MOOCs Platform has attracted more learners than before in each cycle of offerings. These guided courses are offered 4 times in a year with the facilitation of real university instructors. During the COVID-19, each cycle approximately 10000-20000 new learners enrolled in the courses. The completion ratio also increased from 3 percent to 7 percent during the Pandemic. Introduction to Digital Education Environments, Natural Pharmacy, Introduction to Russian, English Pronunciation and Corona Viruses courses rapped more learners than others.



University of Derby MOOC learners surge during COVID-19
The University of Derby Online learning has seen MOOC enrolments triple over the past year during COVID-19 from 28,000 in March 2020 to 89,000 in March 2021.



The largest spikes of new learners were seen in the **Understanding Autism, Asperger's and ADHD** MOOC which peaked at 4000 new learners in both April and May 2020 and then again in February 2021 with nearly 2000 new learners. The peaks align with the first and second COVID-19 lockdowns, respectively. Interestingly, although the second peak demonstrates another spike in the Autism, Asperger's and ADHD MOOC, enrolments are more diversified across the other MOOCs as seen in the following graph.



--PROJECTS--

VISITOR Project

The VISITOR project is an action accepted in the framework of the Erasmus+ KA2 "extraordinary calls to support digital education readiness and creative skills" as a response to the Coronavirus impact on education. VISITOR aims to deal with the hindrance of educational visits to museums that the pan-European lockdowns and social distancing measures have caused. The intellectual outputs (content aggregator, toolkit, digital applications, use cases and MOOC for teachers' training) aim to train teachers in integrating digital exhibits to foster students' intercultural awareness. The partnership brings together France, Greece, UK and Belgium, and ensures the European added value of the project. The partners are the Hellenic Open University, the UK Open University and three private companies: Interactive4D, LogoPsyCom, and IDEC.



--NEW MOOCs--

A Digital Edge: Essentials for the Online Learner

With special COVID-19 research funding, the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) at Dublin City University (DCU) designed a new FutureLearn course, [A Digital Edge: Essentials for the Online Learners](#), to help students learn how to learn online. This free two-week course was first offered in September 2020 and again in February 2021. So far over 7,500 learners have registered for the course, with a completion rate of over 50% and high levels of engagement.

The course is developed around the European LifeComp Framework and is based on the assumption that learning online is different from learning in a physical classroom; it requires a different set of skills to master. Notably, the course was co-designed with students and is co-facilitated by a group of DCU Student Ambassadors.





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A Special MOOC: Awareness on Disabled Individuals' Differences & Successes by a Special Individual

Hatice Ozkan is active and special student in [Anadolu University](#)'s Online Master's Program on Distance Education. She is special due to her Spinal Musküler Atrofi (SMA) Type 2 illness started when she was 10 months old, and so, she cannot use 98 percent of her body. Miss Özkan holds 6 undergraduate degree in various fields including child development, law, sociology, and currently is going for her third masters' level graduate education. She has designed, produced and conducted a MOOC in AKADEMA platform aiming to increase awareness about individuals who have similar limitations but reached significant achievements in their lives. In the first run, a total of 157 learners enrolled this 6-weeks long course and 23 completed all the activities including synchronous sessions.

[The course](#) materials are currently available as OERs but will be available on April 5, 2021 for the second cycle with the facilitation of [Hatice Ozkan](#) (link to a video). It is currently offered in Turkish.



--EVENTS--

Webinar Week: Online Education during & after Covid-19

[Empower](#) presents a Webinar Week on Online Education during & after COVID-19. It takes place online, from 6 – 8 April. You can Register for free on the [Eventbrite page](#)!



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EMOOCs 2021 x Learning@Scale 2021 - Double Conference
The seventh European MOOCs Stakeholder Summit (EMOOCs 2021) and Learning at Scale 2021 (L@S 2021) will take place as a hybrid conference. Whether online or on campus at the Hasso Plattner Institute, Potsdam, Germany - we know you will be excited about the presented sessions and the networking possibilities.

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