"IT'S MY CHALLENGE":
EXPLORING THE MOOC TERRAIN

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Abstract

Many university students in Japan are unaware of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and their potential for learning. This paper explicates one cohort's exploration of MOOCs. A group of students (n=12) taking a 'Teaching with Technology' course at Nanzan University was encouraged to explore online courses provided by platforms such as Coursera, edX, and FutureLearn, as part of a semester-long research project. The overarching aim of the project was to broaden the students' knowledge of this growing field and they were given free rein to navigate the MOOC terrain in any way they wished. Throughout the project each student kept a diary in which they logged both their MOOC use, and their opinions of the courses. Interviews, diaries, focus groups, reports, and questionnaires all provided rich data. The author briefly outlines the design of the project, before discussing in detail the students' experiences of mapping the MOOC terrain.

1 Introduction

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) have become part of the pedagogical landscape. In Japan, however, MOOCs seem to have snuck in under the radar leaving them largely unnoticed. This paper describes a semester-long project which aimed to raise one group of Japanese university students' awareness of MOOCs, and encourage them to consider their potential for learning. At first a brief overview of the recent growth of MOOCs is provided, followed by an outline of the design of the project and data collection methods. The results and discussions section examines the students' experiences of exploring the MOOC terrain. It is hoped that this paper will help educators and students understand and navigate the shifting MOOC landscape.

2 Background

The rapid growth of technology has important ramifications for the field of education. The geography of the teaching and learning terrain has shifted with both teachers and students having to adapt to an ever-changing world. Prentsky's (2001) polemic 'Digital natives/immigrants' schism perhaps over-simplifies the much more confusing reality of a world where today's technology can become obsolete within a year. In a sense we are all digital 'explorers' who are coming to terms with changes in technology. MOOCs are one part of the teaching and learning landscape that is changing at an astonishing pace.

The past decade has seen the exponential growth of the Internet and social media. Increasingly, the use of technology in daily life, and for education, is taken for granted by

'digital natives'. However, the educational infrastructure that exists in Japan is, arguably, unable to meet the demands of these digital natives. In Japan the concept of providing courses online for students to take according to their needs and schedules is still in its infancy. Some universities, such as Keio and Waseda, have tried to establish portals which give students access to integrated course material (Keio, 2014; Waseda, 2014). Although Kyoto University offers courses on the edX platform and Tokyo University has a small number of courses on the Coursera platform, it is fair to say that Japanese universities are lagging behind the rest of the world in terms of online course provision.

In stark contrast to the situation in Japan, universities in other countries have taken up the challenge of designing and offering online courses. Prestigious institutions such as Stanford University and others (through the Coursera platform), Harvard University and MIT (through the edX platform), and 20 top universities in the UK (through the FutureLearn platform) are now providing free online academic courses, which are rich in content and make use of the latest technology (Coursera, 2014; edX, 2014; FutureLearn, 2014). The establishment of MOOCs by major international universities signals a sea change in education and the provision of online courses.

3 Research design and data collection

Nanzan University is a private Catholic university situated in Nagoya, Japan. Nanzan has a student base of approximately 10,000 students. The 12 students in this study (nine females and three males) were from the Department of British and American Studies. They signed up for an elective 'Teaching with Technology' 15-week course which was held in the spring semester of 2014. The course is taught entirely in English and is quite demanding in terms of reading, content lectures, and academic presentations. The students who register for this course each year are highly motivated and are interested in both teaching and technology.

For this research study my main intention was to explore the students' perspectives on MOOCs. At first, however, I wanted to get a general idea of the students' attitudes to technology. Additionally, I intended to investigate what they thought about using mobile phones and tablets for English teaching and learner support (for detailed information see Cripps, 2014). Aliases have been used throughout this paper.

3.1 Pre-course questionnaire and research project explanation

At the start of the course I administered Dudeney and Hockly's (2008, p. 160) questionnaire on attitudes to technology. Using a five-point Likert scale the students were asked to respond to a set of 12 items on technology, teaching and learning. Their responses provided general descriptive statistical information. After the pre-course questionnaire was completed, the students were given detailed information about the semester-long research project that they would take part in (Appendix 1). They were informed that throughout the semester they would research MOOCs. Specifically, they were asked to investigate one or more platforms and they were urged to consider signing up for a MOOC course of their choice. They were told to keep a diary of their thoughts on MOOCs throughout the research project. Each week I encouraged the students to explore the MOOC terrain and to write their thoughts down in their MOOC diaries.

3.2 Mid-semester comments

In week eight of the course the students were asked to complete a questionnaire with open-ended questions on the use of technology in the classroom, the use of mobile phones and tablets for learning, and their general opinions on using MOOCs for teaching and learning. This data was analysed using grounded theory (Radnor, 2002; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I did not, however, ask for detailed information regarding their MOOC research project as I did not want to influence the students in any way. Also, I knew that many of them intended to start their MOOC research in the second half of the semester (i.e. weeks 8 to 15). A focus group allowed the students to freely express their thoughts on technology and MOOCs in general.

3.3 End of course data collection

At the end of the course, data on the students' reaction to the MOOC project was collected through peer interviews, a focus group, a self-evaluation questionnaire, and a written report on their MOOC project. The interviews, focus group, and self-evaluation took place in the final class after the students had handed in their reports. The interviews took the form of students interviewing each other using video cameras that I had provided. The students were free to ask their peers any questions on MOOCs and the research project.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Attitudes to technology

The pre-course questionnaire provided a valuable 'snapshot' of what the cohort thought about technology. Nine out of the twelve students agreed with the statement that they 'enjoy using technology'. There was strong support for the statements 'Teachers should know how to use technology in class' and 'I would be a better teacher if I knew how to use technology properly'. Somewhat surprisingly, considering the fact that the students seem to love using their mobile phones and the Internet, only three of the students expressed the fact that they were very confident when using technology and five out of the 12 students agreed with the statement that technology intimidates and threatens them (see Cripps, 2014).

Despite their interest in technology, demonstrated by the fact that they signed up for my course, when asked whether they knew what MOOCs were all students claimed that they had never heard of them. I had expected that one or two students would have heard of MOOCs but clearly this was not the case.

4.2 Mid-semester comments

The feedback I received from the students regarding the use of technology in the classroom and mobile phones and tablets was considered and measured. The students listed many pros and cons to using technology for teaching and learning. They stated that mobile phones and tablets were 'quick and easy'; 'convenient and useful'; 'effective and flexible'; and 'preferable to paper'. As one student succinctly put it, *"Students in this age prefer using mobile phones"*. The positive comments, however, were tempered by a sense of realism. The students said that using mobile phones and tablets as part of a course would be both expensive and unrealistic. In addition, they stated that using mobile phones and tablets impairs writing

skills and that students (*"especially younger children"*) need interaction with other students on a face-to-face level. As one student sagely observed teachers should not assume that all students can afford mobile phones and tablets, or want to use them: *"When teachers encourage students to learn by using these devices they need to think about such students"* (see Cripps, 2014 for detailed information on the students' attitudes to technology).

4.3 End of semester comments on MOOCs

> *"I think I was lucky to have this opportunity to learn about MOOCs deeply through classes."*

As stated earlier, the main aim of this research project was to provide students with the opportunity to explore MOOC platforms and to analyse their experiences of mapping the MOOC terrain. Grounded theory was used to extract themes arising from the data provided by the end of course interviews, focus group, self-evaluations and MOOC reports. These themes are discussed below.

4.3.1 General perspectives on MOOCs

> *"It's good for the students because they can choose wherever and whenever they learn and have a class."*

The feedback about MOOCs in general was very positive. The students enthused about the range of choice offered by various MOOC platforms and noted that taking a MOOC course was both motivating and convenient. They felt that MOOCs afforded them the opportunity to increase their knowledge and that it was good preparation for those who wished to study abroad. Finally, all of the students were surprised that the courses were free.

The initial reaction to MOOCs was a mix of being surprised, impressed and excited. As Yumi states in her diary extract:

> For the first time Tony explained MOOCs, I was really impressed it. I imagined if I got a certificate from Harvard University, I could take advantage more than people who do not have it. What's more, these courses were all free and in Japan few people know this online course. I talked about MOOCs to my boyfriend and my father with pride that I knew them. I was excited.

Some students spoke about being *"astonished"* when they heard about MOOCs for the first time. Others, however, were cautious as the idea of learning online seemed to challenge their way of thinking as regards education: *"Honestly speaking, I have never seen such a course since I learned in this class, so I could not rely on the system so much. It is so natural for me to attend the class every day at university."* They were also worried about providing personal information online when registering for courses (I advised them to use aliases and to create a separate e-mail account).

There was a rich mixture of positivity and negativity with regard to how the students reacted to the opportunity to study using MOOCs. Maho described her initial struggle with trying to use MOOCs for the first time: *"My first day was full of 'I don't knows.'"* Others, such as

Hiroyuki, were trying to overcome their negative feelings to *"surviving"* compulsory education in Japan:

> Honestly, I have never felt fun during the bored nine year Japanese English education. After I entered this university I sometimes feel interest in some classes, but my junior high and high school classes were a tragedy.

Others regarded the challenge of MOOCs with relish and saw it as an opportunity to broaden their knowledge base. Aoi's comments encapsulate this enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge: *"In Nanzan University, I belong to the department of British and American, but I also have interests in environment, biology, health and ethics. Therefore, I thought it was a great opportunity to learn what I want to learn."*

Yasuyuki liked using the discussion board feature: *"The most unique things I felt is there are the discussion board is crowded by foreigners and different ages."* He also liked the fact that MOOCs use *"recent technology"* and that *"the content level seemed highly academic."*

4.3.2 MOOC platforms

Almost all students chose to register for, or browse, courses on the Coursera, edX, or FutureLearn platforms, although one student did register for a course on Udacity (Udacity, 2014). The topics of the MOOC courses they chose to examine are shown below.

Table 1. MOOC courses selected by the students

Introduction to ecology	Natural disasters	English grammar
Young children and their behaviour	Japanese history	United States health policy
Managing people	The music industry	Food security

There was a degree of overlap as some of the topics were very popular and studied by more than one student. This diverse range of topics accurately depicts the wide range of interests and needs that my students have.

Coursera was said by some students to be the easiest platform to navigate with the 'Courses at a glance' feature being singled-out as being very helpful as Haru explains:

> Clicking on 'How it works', Coursera explained me Mission of Coursera, How it works, and Our Approach. The webpage is consisted of precise explanations with easy illustrations. I was beginner of platforms, so these two sections helped me use it.

Many students who used the edX platform were surprised by the number of courses that the platform offered: *"When I first looked at edX, I was excited to see a great number of course genres they offer."* However, once the students started to explore the platform they discovered that the choice of courses was limited, that the level was sometimes too high, and that the selection interface was too primitive – as Hiroyuki describes:

I was in edX. I put 'music' into a box for searching. I found only four course then. To make matters worse, these courses were beyond my ability. I was disappointed and thought that if only there were searching system according to learners' level

4.3.3 Positive aspects of MOOCs

"As I learn through MOOC, it was easy and fun to learn. This variable study platform should be installed in Nanzan."

The students stated that they liked the videos which the platforms provide – especially as the creators of the videos could add graphs and pictures to make the content easier to understand. Aoi comments that most of the videos are fairly short and this makes them more manageable: *"...the length of the video. It is rather short and takes us just around 4 or 5 minutes, so it is very easy to try. If it were longer than that, it would be difficult to concentrate on it and also would be a burden for learners."* This view seems to mirror those who advocate short lectures as, arguably, students nowadays are not used to watching and listening to large chunks of information.

Maho liked the subtitles which her FutureLearn course provided:

The videos of Future Learn have subtitles. This is very helpful for learners, for they are not only native English speakers but also includes many people from all over the world. edX didn't have this system. So, considering for non-native English speakers, FutureLearn is much kinder and easier to begin.

Often the platform allowed students to change the speaking speed and provided the option to use subtitles: *"The course I took let me adjust the speed of the voice either fast or slow…. Another point is that there was a subtitles next to the video, so I could follow them if I did not understand what the teacher said."*

Japanese students generally have more confidence in their reading skills compared with their oral communication skills. Thus, many of my students appreciated the fact that some courses provided transcripts: *"One good thing I noticed is that there were transcripts of videos in PDF form. I did not need it but it would be useful for those who have trouble understanding."*

Having access to free handouts and the possibility to buy the course textbook were appreciated. Risa notes how easy it was to get the information she needed:

I found some convenient tools and they are very unique to the MOOC course. I could get handout and textbook easily (through Amazon). Coursework was very efficient. Although all contents were provided in English, I could get most of it because there were script of what he is speaking in the movies and some important words were shown on the screen. Besides, I could download those movies and I watched them several times without difficulty."

Four words *"simple"*, *"easy"*, *"fun"* and *"open"* were often used by the students to describe the courses they used. Many saw MOOCs as *"very effective tools"*. The simplicity of some of the courses and platforms was welcomed: *"The way of learning was much better than I*

expected because there are some helpful constructions to review, using multiple choice or short answer questions at the end of each lectures that is divided into several segments."

The students agreed that MOOCs were very useful for helping learn content-based information: *"I thought the varieties of content-based courses can easily improve the retentive memory of students."* They often asked me *"Why don't we have MOOCs at Nanzan?"* or *"Why did no one tell us about MOOCs before?"* Yasuyuki sums up the positive feeling towards MOOCs by the cohort: *"I felt that anyone can take the top level of courses from famous Universities."*

4.3.4 The motivational power of MOOCs

> *"I said I have never felt fun during the bored nine year Japanese English education. But what I felt first after using MOOC was fun."*

The positive reaction towards the MOOC platforms and the courses they house stems from the fact that many students said they were motivated by their MOOC experiences. The freedom to choose what to study and when to study seemed to be quite a new and liberating experience: *"Finally I can choose a course that I am interested in. I think this is the strongest point of MOOCs because interest encourages people."*

Some students agreed that learning through a MOOC was very efficient and effective – *"It's a new way of education."* The fact that many materials were provided for free was also welcomed: *"The teacher in the VTR said "There are so many materials that you can use for free", and I am motivated."*

However, all this enthusiasm for the motivating power of MOOCs was rightly tempered by considered comments from the students. Ayumi noted that the success or failure of MOOCs varied:*"...depending on the students' motivation, MOOCs become either brilliant success of new teaching methods, or useless materials just ignored by students."* Others noted that Japanese university students are *"lazy"* and *"need a teacher to push them forward"* – Maho explains the situation:

> I wonder that most of courses are not finished because MOOCs learners are not encouraged in the real world. For example, if I am lazy in the university, my teacher warns me to work harder. On the other hand, in MOOCs courses, we cannot meet real people. To accomplish the aim, I need a person to encourage me.

At the end of my course many students said that they felt motivated by taking MOOC courses and felt some regret when their MOOC course was over: *"I am a little bit regretful to retire, but moreover I am having a huge sense of achievement. I realized my motivation went up when I was able to find the right class for me."* Some students seem to thrive on online access and the provision of online courses where they can study what they like and when they like is highly motivating. MOOCs may provide one answer to their needs.

4.3.5 The advantages of flexibility

The flexible nature of MOOCs was highly appreciated by the students. They liked the fact that they could study at their own pace and were not constrained by time: "I missed doing my lesson on week 3. But I was able to take the class. The previous classes, week 1 and week 2, was also accessible. I think this is one of the good points about MOOCs."

Shiho is funding the entire cost of attending university by herself. She strongly appreciated the fact that many of the MOOCs were offered free of charge: "… gradually I really came to love it (MOOCs) because of some reasons. Firstly, it is free system for me. That means I can take this course without money and considering time, place and situation."

Shinsuke was the only student who had some experience of online learning. He strongly appreciated the active environment that some MOOCs can provide:

> When I was taking online or blended courses in a college in the US, I always enjoyed discussion boards. I like to discuss with classmates all the time. One advantage of MOOC discussions I found is that since a lot of learners all over the world are participating and the forums are open as long as the course is open, there are a great amount of comments and active discussions.

4.3.6 Useful for job hunting

> *"I can get credits of famous university. This will add a spice to university students' resume, and it means that MOOCs help them to get a job."*

My students are usually very pragmatic and, as all of them were third- or fourth year students, their minds were very much centered on finding a job. Thus, they saw MOOCs as offering something unique which would stand out on their resumes: "I thought if I could keep up with the topic or the level of classes, I would be able to get the credit for the classes, and it would help my job hunting in some way. For university students, this point could back up their motivation."

The students also realized the long-term benefits of using MOOCs to further their knowledge base, especially as they get older, as Maho describes: "MOOC course allows learners to gain new knowledge of something they cannot learn at their school or deepen their thoughts of something they major in. It is a great opportunity for people who are busy and want to take lessons at their own pace."

4.3.7 Negative aspects of MOOCs

The students' responses to using MOOCs were balanced and considered. As such they also focused on some of the problems that they experienced when trying to use MOOCs. Predictably some reported difficulties using the technology and platforms. Although my students could be termed 'digital-natives' they still have much to learn, especially when it comes to registering for courses online and navigating the online platforms. Many students stated that they had problems registering for Coursera courses however this may be due to the browser that was installed on the PCs at our university and/or the security protocols. Serie

admits that: "At first it was a little bit troublesome…" and that: "MOOC is not popular and there are few students who use it in Japan, so firstly I had trouble collecting information and knowledge." Hiroyuki noted that MOOCs are effective for students whose English level is high, but believes that weaker students will have problems: "MOOCs is very useful for students who are good at reading, listening and writing in English. In short, studying on MOOCs are not easy for every university student."

Another obstacle that students faced was their lack of confidence. It appears that the idea of communicating with *"unknown people online"* is a daunting one. Serie explains her fears: "I couldn't attend MOOC class because I hesitated to participate in online discussion. I wanted to have more courage to do that!!!" Similarly, Yuki wanted to register for the course on young children and their behaviour but had second thoughts: "I hesitated to enter this course because every learner was required to attend online discussion. I was not good at discussion, so I did not sign up for it."

"Lack of courage" was a reoccurring expression that arose from the data. Yuki offers one solution:

> I did not have much courage to work on MOOCs because I did not know people around me have took the classes before. I hesitated to take it. This problem can be solved if we have a friend to start taking the classes together. If we have to start MOOC alone, many students will feel uneasy because they do not know about MOOC.

Some students regretted the fact that there was no teacher present. They want to be able to ask a teacher for help and guidance when they need it. As Shiho explains: "I was so worried about how can I follow the content of this course because there are no face-to-face lecture system and real teachers. I like asking teachers when I have a question, so it was new type for me. In other words, I strongly resist the MOOC at first."

A further obstacle is the fact that the stated (or perceived) level of a course may deter some Japanese students. Yasuyuki sums up this feeling: *"Students need high English skills to make sense of what main point is or video says. I cannot help feeling that many Japanese students' English ability is quite low."* By contrast, Ayumi complained that some of the material provided by the English grammar course that she took was boring and that the delivery was mechanical. She described the teaching of one センター試験 (Center examination – a general examination used for entering university in Japan) course thus:

> The teacher in the VTR wrote down almost all scripts of the question, and translated each sentence. It was so boring. It was like real English class for センター試験 in Japanese high school. The videos for reading in this site should stop being just "A machine reading answers."

4.3.8 MOOCs and the problem of motivation

> *"I found using MOOCs would be one of the good ways to learn something you are interested in. However, there is one big problem, motivation."*

Almost all students noted that motivation could be a problem when using MOOCs. Hiroyuki states that he found online discussions interesting but cautions that without such discussion students may lose their enthusiasm: "Seeing those (online) discussions was very interesting because I found that students are not only English speakers but also Asian or Latin American like me… If there are not platform to make discussions and students have to take class and think about the topic alone, they might be less motivated and get bored of it."

Aoi cautions that students need to be told the purpose or benefits of studying using MOOCs: "If there is no purpose or no clear practical benefits for students, they will no longer be motivated to study." Hiroyuki is brutally honest regarding students and their motivation: "Students are usually lazy, so it is tough for them to keep their motivation to MOOCs."

Finally, an extract from Aoi's MOOC diary encapsulates the struggle that students face when using MOOCs. Initially motivation is high, but *"making time"* for MOOC classes is problematic:

> I signed up for "Introduction to ecosystems" last week, but actually I didn't go to class at all, which I was afraid of. At first I had great motivation for learning what I haven't learned, but because I can take the class "whenever' I want, I couldn't make time for it, making a good excuse that I didn't have a time to go to MOOCs because of other assignments. Now I think making certain time for MOOCs like class schedule of schools would be better to keep studying it continuously. However, if it became "what I have to do", not ""not "what I want to do", it would lose a value of MOOCs. This is a difficult problem."

4.3.9 Barriers

Taking a MOOC course requires students to have access to basic hardware and an Internet connection. Although many students at Nanzan University have access to computers, some still do not own their own computer. Haru notes that she had a PC but could not take part in one course because she did not have a webcam: "I did not have a web camera for online talking. Then I understood one of barriers for online course is the problem of required equipment."

The notion of a digital divide is one that has been raised by many commentators (Warschauer, 2004; Kauza, 2014). We must be aware of the fact that many students cannot afford the hardware that MOOCs require. Yasuyuki raises the matter of English skills and how MOOCs may be creating a divide in terms of English ability: "If you do not have sufficient English skills, it is hard to understand (the content). The disadvantage is this situation creates a bipolarization of education for non-natives." MOOC designers should consider making multi-level versions of their content so that they can be accessed and understood by as wide a range of students as possible.

4.3.10 Problems with flexibility, quality, and time

> *"While I was reading comments on the discussion forums I felt a lot*
> *of participants were not reading much of these."*

A common theme that arose when sifting through the students' comments is that the flexible nature of MOOC learning may actually turn out to be a disadvantage. The students pointed out that generally university students are *"lazy"* and put off doing work until the last moment. This leaves them in a situation where they have to try and cover a lot of work in a short period of time at the end of a MOOC course. Maho outlines the problem:

> I think there are some disadvantages in MOOCs such as learners postponing the class. Because the class is available on the website anytime, learners might not take the class until the last minute. And teachers will not be able to check the students' progress.

The lack of face-to-face interaction also raises problems. Asynchronous and synchronous discussions can lead to misunderstanding and confusion as Ayumi illustrates:

> Another disadvantage is learners cannot interact with others face-to-face. Unlike school, this lesson is through the Internet. Although you share your opinions by posting them on the discussion page, it could lead to misunderstandings because you are not actually talking with them.

This brings us back to the question of the role of the teacher in an online environment such as a MOOC. It is simply not practical for one teacher to oversee, let alone respond to, thousands of chat entries. Shinsuke notes that the quality of online comments is also problematic:

> On the other hand, one of the disadvantages of MOOC forums is quality. Especially in a topic like international relationship such as drone strikes discussed in the first chapter, there were always many emotional comments which I always try to ignore… I always want to avoid unproductive discussions but it may be difficult in MOOC classes because anonymity of the Internet might lower civility of a discussion.

Shinsuke strongly feels that people are too emotional online and that the quality of comments is not high during the discussion of emotive issues.

Finally, one major concern for all students is that of time management. Haru notes that: *"For MOOC learners, I guess that time is the important issue to think about."* This comment is echoed by Serie who states that she is interested in MOOCs but that finding time was problematic: "It was interesting for me. However, I did not have enough time to do it. Browsing MOOCs courses is interesting. If I have time, I want to try to register courses because the contents of the courses were interesting."

4.3.11 MOOCs and the future

> *"I want MOOCs to do the thing that real classes cannot."*

This final section concentrates on what the students feel about MOOCs and the future. Aoi points to the potential that MOOCs have in terms of flexibility. She believes that MOOCs can not only help improve students' English skills, but also help them expand their knowledge base:

In Japanese university, we generally have one major, so using MOOCs will definitely be useful in that not only improving our English skill but giving us a lot of information. I would like to continue working on MOOCs to get more information which I didn't know so far from now on too.

Hiroyuki argues that, despite the expansion of MOOCs, there will always be roles for teachers: "Though there were many interesting courses on MOOCs platform, I prefer to take face-to-face lectures even if they seem to be difficult." Others noted that teachers who want to encourage their students to use MOOCs should be cautious and provide clear instructions: "Many students do not like to study. If teachers introduce MOOCs to students, they should emphasize the point that people can study what they like."

Many students mentioned that they would like to continue using MOOCs after they had completed my 'Teaching with Technology' course. Some of them even suggested that they would use MOOCs when they were in employment. There was some element of disbelief concerning the paucity of courses being offered in Japan as Yasuyuki explains: "While I was taking the courses, I was wondering, 'Why Japan does not introduce this wonderful system more widely?' Japanese must know this revolutionary system." He hopes that MOOCs can be a vehicle to help spread Japanese culture: "MOOC is an epoch-making innovation. In the future, I hope and recommend that Japanese culture such as manga and anime should be introduced through MOOC."

Finally, Hiroyuki provides us with a quote which summarises the hope of all thestudents who wish for the expansion of MOOCs in Japan: "In the future, it is possible that MOOCs spread in Japan more and colleges take them into their classes. I hope this new educational system, MOOCs, will help learners get knowledge and viewpoints in more effective way."

5 Limitations

This small-scale study can only serve to offer a snapshot of what the students in this cohort feel about MOOCs and their first experiences with MOOCs. It is hoped that this study will be the first of many which will investigate students' engagement with MOOCs. Next year I plan to undertake an extensive, two-year study of MOOCs and their efficacy.

6 Conclusion

The students who took part in this research project provided a plethora of views regarding MOOCs. Many celebrated the potential of MOOCs, whilst others were guarded with their comments. Some enjoyed the experience of *"wrestling with the MOOCs",* whilst Ayumi described her experience as: *"It's my challenge."* What is significant is the fact that all students recognized the potential of MOOCs for providing opportunities for students to learn what they want, and when they want. This bodes well for the future of MOOCs.

Do MOOCs represent the future of higher education, or are they simply another fad that will fade and die over time? Some detractors point out that no one has really addressed the question of 'How much learning is actually going on with MOOCs?' (Kauza, 2014). Since the role of the teacher in a MOOC scenario is often diluted to an almost negligible state this has surely affected the role of the learner. Without guidance how can we be sure that 'meaningful

learning' is taking place? These are questions that MOOC research needs to address. The exponential growth of the Internet, combined with the educational opportunities that MOOCs offer, provide an expanding terrain which our students can both explore and exploit. The onus on us, as researchers and educators, is to take up the challenge and explore the MOOC terrain along with them.

Acknowledgment

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Appendix 1

<u>Teaching with Technology Final Report Information</u>

Each student has to submit an **<u>individual</u>** final report.

An 800 word research paper based on your MOOC research.

Your research paper should be a combination of the following:

1. A summary of what MOOCs are and the different platforms that are available
2. Your detailed thoughts on your experiences with MOOC (i.e. What platforms did you investigate? What course or courses did you sign up for? How did you find the course(s)?
3. Your MOOC diary showing your thoughts and MOOC access
4. A summary of your MOOC experience

Please use appropriate in-text citation and include a bibliography at the end of your report. **<u>Please follow APA guidelines.</u>**

- A preliminary questionnaire will be administered in May re. your choice of platform and your experiences with MOOC up to that point.

You should submit your final report (in a folder) to me in our last class. Make sure that your final report has a cover page which states:

- ❖ Your name
- ❖ Your student Id. number
- ❖ Your e-mail address
- ❖ The subject name (Teaching with technology)
- ❖ The date of submission

Late submissions (unless in special circumstances) **<u>will not</u>** be accepted. Failure to submit your final report on time may seriously affect your grade for the course.

- The final report is worth **<u>40%</u>** of your final grade so please make sure you put enough effort into it.
- Proofread your report **<u>carefully</u>** before submission. Substandard work will lower your grade.
- Please make sure that you have understood these instructions. If anything is unclear please consult me.

Dr. Tony Cripps – Teaching with Technology Course – Final Report Information