

## La rivoluzione dei MOOCs: un'analisi di *policy framework* su scala europea

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### *Abstract*

Academic institutions all over the world, as well as active stakeholders in the field of education and supporting services, are exploring Moocs to try and understand how learning and teaching environments are changing, what are the outcomes of such a novelty for different countries and publics, to what extent the Moocs revolution can represent both a unique opportunity to open up education and a new business model. Born to help universities and academic institutions to innovate pedagogical models, Moocs are developing along different routes. Using a policy framework analysis approach, this paper presents the results of a European survey that questioned both public and private stakeholders on Mooc policy design, objectives and expected outcomes.

*Keywords:* Education, EHEA, Higher Education Stakeholders, Moocs, Policy framework.

### 1. *Moocs e contesto europeo*

Descritto come una *disruptive innovation* (Horn and Christensen 2013), uno *tsunami* (Brooks 2012; Bull 2012) e una *rivoluzione* (Koller and Ng 2012), il tema dei Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) è apparso con grande evidenza nel dibattito pubblico da un paio di anni. Sebbene le prime sperimentazioni risalgano al 2008, è nel 2012 che il fenomeno inizia a diffondersi, con lo sviluppo di piattaforme online dedicate all'erogazione di MOOCs<sup>1</sup> tanto che il *New York Times* lo celebrerà come l'anno dei Moocs. I Moocs sono un nuovo modello di *delivery* di corsi ad accesso aperto che, sfruttando la capacità di scala dei *tools* online, si prestano ad essere fruiti da *audiences* potenzialmente illimitate, varcando i naturali confini spaziali, e proponendosi come iniziative di qualità per la formazione accademica sul mercato globale (Pappano 2012).

Nel 2013 il fenomeno conquista nuove vette. Soprattutto negli Stati Uniti dove le sperimentazioni si allargano anche alle scuole superiori, i consorzi universitari vedono rafforzare i propri progetti per *membership* e fondi disponibili, mentre politiche di supporto all'*online learning* vengono avviate a livello statale e federale (O'Neil 2013). Molti osservatori descrivono il fenomeno come "in the midst of a hype cycle" (Coates 2013; Yang 2013), altri

# The MOOCs' (R)evolution. A policy framework analysis at a European level

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## *Abstract*

Academic institutions all over the world, as well as active stakeholders in the field of education and supporting services, are exploring Moocs to try and understand how learning and teaching environments are changing, what are the outcomes of such a novelty for different countries and publics, to what extent the Moocs revolution can represent both a unique opportunity to open up education and a new business model. Born to help universities and academic institutions to innovate pedagogical models, Moocs are developing along different routes. Using a policy framework analysis approach, this paper presents the results of a European survey that questioned both public and private stakeholders on Mooc policy design, objectives and expected outcomes.

*Keywords:* Education, EHEA, Higher Education Stakeholders, Moocs, Policy framework.

## 1. *The Mooc Novelty: Describing the European Context*

Variously described as a *disruptive innovation* (Horn and Christensen 2013), a *tsunami* (Brooks 2012; Bull 2012) and a *revolution* (Koller and Ng 2012), Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) have become a focus of public debate in recent years. Although the first MOOCs experiments date back to 2008, it was in 2012 with the development of bespoke MOOCs platforms that the phenomenon gained momentum<sup>1</sup> prompting *The New York Times* to dub it the year of the MOOC. MOOCs are a new way of delivering open access, online courses that can be scaled up to reach potentially limitless numbers of users, crossing geographical confines to offer quality learning content to the global market (Pappano 2012).

In 2013 the phenomenon reached new heights. Especially in the USA where pilot projects spread to secondary schools as well as HEI, university consortiums saw significant increases in the number of users, participating institutions and available funding, and policies supporting online learning were implemented at State and Federal level (O'Neil 2013). Many observers commented that it was like being "in the midst of a hype cycle" (Coates 2013

temono che proprio il grado di *overstatement* di cui il fenomeno è oggetto possa rappresentare il principale ostacolo al suo regolare sviluppo (Dillenbourg 2013<sup>2</sup>). Anche in Europa il tema ha creato molte attese e, allo stesso tempo, ha suscitato comprensibili ansie per il destino dell'università pubblica e per il livello di competizione che vecchi e nuovi players si apprestano a raggiungere su un mercato ormai aperto e globale. Per questa ragione è utile cogliere il momento in cui il tema è entrato nel dibattito pubblico europeo per analizzare il framework con il quale si è imposto all'attenzione di stakeholders e policymakers e comprendere se e come l'Europa intende raccogliere la sfida.

Riflettere sull'emergere di una prospettiva europea di MOOCs ha senso nella misura in cui la European Higher Education Area (EHEA) si configura come un'area capace di imporre la sua diversità linguistica e culturale come un valore non negoziabile. Allo stesso tempo, però, si mostra sempre più aperta a processi di *cross-fertilization*.

In tal senso, la recente Comunicazione della Commissione sulla European Higher Education conferma quanto lo sviluppo dell'online learning sia considerato strategico<sup>5</sup>. Un passaggio, in particolare, identifica il ruolo che spetterebbe ai Moocs nelle strategie degli stati membri per rendere più attrattiva la European Higher Education Area: "Digital education, and in particular the emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs) is also bringing new incentives for strategic partnerships between education institutions, and new opportunities to reach potential students who may not be able to travel or take a break from employment but who are eager to profit from higher education offers outside their country. Member States need to support these efforts by creating favourable conditions for internationalisation at national and regional level and by tackling remaining legal and administrative barriers to mobility" (3). Il documento fa emergere con chiarezza la necessità di cambiare i modelli di business, al fine di raggiungere nuove *audiences* (es. studenti internazionali fuori sede; individui che seguono un singolo corso invece di un programma completo; fasce di differenti età) e di avviare nuovi servizi (es. supporto all'apprendimento da parte degli insegnanti; valutazione; certificazione).

Ciò che colpisce è la consapevolezza del fatto che i nuovi modelli di business cambieranno radicalmente il ruolo sociale delle istituzioni "as providers of knowledge and innovation and as contributors to development, putting new pressures on HEIs to rethink their societal responsibilities in their local, national and regional context, including the responsibility to build capacity in emerging economies and developing countries of the world" (7). Riconoscendo, dunque, ai MOOCs la potenzialità di trasformare radicalmente il settore della higher education e il ruolo dell'università nel sistema sociale.

L'obiettivo di questa ricerca è dunque capire cosa stia accadendo nel contesto europeo: quali sono le diverse dimensioni del fenomeno e come vengono percepite dagli attori in campo; quali sono le componenti che operano nel sistema e con quali strategie e obiettivi. La *framework analysis*<sup>4</sup> si presta più di altri metodi a realizzare questo scopo perché consente di esplorare un contesto nuovo attraverso procedure d'analisi in cui il ricercatore prima individua le idee chiave e i temi ricorrenti, poi

Yang 2013), while others feared that it was the overstatement surrounding the phenomenon that would prove their greatest obstacle to success (Dillenbourg 2013<sup>2</sup>). Expectations are high in Europe too, but accompanied by a certain apprehension regarding the future of public universities and the way competition is increasing between old and new players for a position in this open and global education market. Since public debate is now starting to focus on MOOCs it would be a good time to analyse the frameworks that caught the attention of stakeholders and policymakers and try and understand if, and how, Europe intends to respond to the challenge.

It makes sense to reflect on a common European strategy for MOOCs, since the linguistic and cultural diversity that the EHEA offers is unquestionably a valuable addition. At the same time, it is an area which is increasingly open to processes of cross-fertilization.

The recent Communication from the Commission on European Higher Education also confirms the strategic importance of developing online learning<sup>3</sup>. A specific section invites member states to include MOOCs as part of their strategy to attract learners to the European Higher Education Area: "Digital education, and in particular the emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCs) is also bringing new incentives for strategic partnerships between education institutions, and new opportunities to reach potential students who may not be able to travel or take a break from employment but who are eager to profit from higher education offers outside their country. Member States need to support these efforts by creating favourable conditions for internationalisation at national and regional level and by tackling remaining legal and administrative barriers to mobility" (3). The document makes it clear that new business models need to be developed to reach new audiences (e.g. off-campus international learners; individuals following one single course but not a complete programme; different age ranges) and that new services should also be offered (e.g. learning support provided by teaching staff; assessment; certification).

The most striking thing to emerge is the awareness that new business models will radically change the social role of HE institutions "as providers of knowledge and innovation and as contributors to development, putting new pressures on HEIs to rethink their societal responsibilities in their local, national and regional context, including the responsibility to build capacity in emerging economies and developing countries of the world" (7). The potential of MOOCs to transform the Higher Education sector and the role of universities in the social system is thus recognised.

The aim of this research is to understand what is happening in the European context: how big the MOOCs phenomenon is and how MOOCs are perceived by key players in the field; what comprises the product and what the aims and strategies informing them are. Framework analysis<sup>4</sup> lends itself to this type of research because it enables us to explore a new context through procedural analysis. In effect, the researcher identifies recurrent themes and

identifica il framework emergente e indicizza il materiale; infine, estrapola e riorganizza i dati in mappe consentendone l'interpretazione. Il principale obiettivo di tale metodo è quello di descrivere un fenomeno nel suo stato nascente, cioè comprendere *what is happening in a particular setting* (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994), vale a dire quali sono le diverse dimensioni del fenomeno, come vengono percepite dagli attori in campo, quali componenti operano nel sistema, con quali strategie e obiettivi.

L'indagine è strutturata su tre livelli. Nella prima fase, è stata condotta un'analisi qualitativa su una selezione di articoli pubblicati da stampa e blogs europei. La seconda fase consiste in un'osservazione partecipante del *MOOCs European Stakeholders Meeting*, summit organizzato dall'Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) nel giugno 2013 al quale abbiamo partecipato in rappresentanza dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II e del suo progetto di weblearning <Federica.unina.it> (fondato da FESR 2007-2013). Infine, la terza fase è consistita nella somministrazione di una *survey* semi-strutturata a due *panels* di attori: agli *stakeholders* selezionati da EPFL e ai docenti già attivi nella preparazione di Moocs<sup>5</sup>. I primi rappresentano generalmente attori collettivi: organizzazioni, consorzi, associazioni, università, imprese, centri di ricerca, *think tanks*. Alcuni di essi possono essere considerati *peak associations* per ampiezza e attivismo della propria partnership, come, ad esempio, le European Association of Distance Education Universities (EADTU). Si tratta di attori generalmente dotati di maggiore potere di influenza e più capaci di attribuire una direzione al processo decisionale. I secondi invece non sono direttamente coinvolti nei processi decisionali ma, partecipando dell'interesse verso il tema a fini sperimentali, sono in grado di influenzare le scelte, quantomeno a livello del modello pedagogico. Fanno quindi anche essi parte di quello che possiamo definire un *policy subsystem*.

## 2. Rivoluzione o Evoluzione?

Sebbene il dibattito Europeo sullo sviluppo delle Open Education Resources (OER) si sia fatto sempre più intenso negli ultimi anni, la discussione è davvero partita solo nel 2013, pochi mesi prima della presentazione – a giugno – dell'iniziativa “Opening up Education”<sup>6</sup>, promossa dalla Commissione Europea<sup>7</sup>.

In Europa l'avanzata dei MOOCs è stata, infatti, accolta con molti dubbi, come appare evidente dallo spazio limitato che la stampa ha dedicato al dibattito sul tema. L'eccezione più significativa è quella del quotidiano inglese *The Guardian* che nel 2013 ha pubblicato almeno una ventina di articoli dedicati ai Moocs<sup>8</sup>. A confronto, *Le Monde* ne ha pubblicati meno di venti da agosto 2012 ad agosto 2013, *El País* una decina, mentre *Die Spiegel* solo tre. In Italia, il quotidiano *La Repubblica* se ne occupa in cinque articoli mentre il *Corriere della Sera* non copre il tema in nessun modo. Il *Sole 24 Ore*, giornale economico, se ne occupa con sette riferimenti nell'ultimo anno, di cui quattro negli ultimi tre mesi, da cui emerge la necessità di tradurre presto i Moocs in un nuovo settore di business (Formica 2013; dello Iacovo 2013). Il numero esiguo di riferimenti sulla stampa europea non consente un campionamento significativo, per questo

key ideas before moving on to define the emerging framework and indexing the materials. The final stage involves extrapolating the data and mapping it in order to facilitate interpretation. This approach is designed to explore and describe the initial stages of a new phenomenon i.e. understand *what is happening in a particular setting* (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994).

The research is structured on three levels. The first stage is a qualitative analysis of a series of articles published in European blogs and newspapers the last two years. For the second stage we attended the *MOOCs European Stakeholders Meeting*, as both observers and participants. This was a summit organised by the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne (EPFL) in 2013 and we represented the University of Naples, Federico II, and its weblearning project <Federica.unina.it> (funded by FESR 2007-2013). The last stage involved carrying out a semi-structured survey on two different tiers of players: the stakeholders selected by the EPFL and teachers involved in authoring Moocs<sup>5</sup>. The first tier comprised collectives for the most part; consortiums, associations, universities, companies, research centres and think tanks. Some of these fall into the *peak association* category in terms of size or active membership, for example, the European Association of Distance Education Universities (EADTU). Associations like these generally have more influence and can even contribute to decision-making processes. The second set have no decision-making power but their interest in the topic, and their contribution to experimentation and research, enables them to influence the choice of pedagogic models at least. These players, therefore, also form part of what can be defined as a *policy subsystem*.

## 2. *Lost in translation: the Moocs' (R)evolution in Europe*

Although European debate on the development of Open Education Resources (OER) has intensified over recent years, it didn't really take off until 2013, a few months before the presentation – in June – of the “Opening up Education”<sup>6</sup> initiative promoted by the European Commission<sup>7</sup>.

In Europe MOOCs have been viewed with circumspection, as is demonstrated by the limited press coverage they receive. The only significant exception is the British Guardian newspaper, which has published at least twenty articles on the subject of MOOCs in 2013<sup>8</sup>. In comparison, *Le Monde* published less than twenty from August 2012 to 2013, *El País* ten, and *Der Spiegel* only three. In Italy, the *Repubblica* newspaper published five articles on MOOCs, *Corriere della Sera* made no mention of them at all, while the financial newspaper, *Sole 24 Ore*, made reference to them in seven articles in the last year, four of them in the last three months. What emerges from their articles is the need to translate MOOCs into a new business sector (Formica 2013; dello Iacovo 2013). The limited number of articles on MOOCs in the European press means that the sample is too small to be significant. We

motivo ci limiteremo a riassumere i temi chiave che al momento stanno emergendo dal dibattito. Questi sono sostanzialmente tre: la definizione di MOOCs e del loro grado di *disruption*; il modello di business e l'impatto potenziale sulle università pubbliche; e, infine, lo sviluppo di un modello europeo autonomo o alternativo a quello statunitense.

Mike Boxall in un articolo su *The Guardian* dell'8 agosto 2012 si interroga sulla prima questione affidando la sua argomentazione a un parallelismo fra i Moocs e la storia delle dot.com. Definiti come "the latest addition to the acronym-bound lexicon of higher education, and quite possibly the most significant of them all", i Moocs vengono considerati come una *feature* non veramente nuova nel panorama dell'offerta video destinata all'apprendimento, tuttavia essi si segnalano per scala, portata e ritmo delle iniziative. In altri termini, la portata dei Moocs potrebbe essere pari a quelle che le cosiddette dot.com ebbero sul finire degli anni Novanta, quando "disruptive innovations have reshaped the global information, media and news industries, by shifting market power from the established players to parvenu start-ups and alternative providers" (Boxall 2012). Il nodo non sciolto del dibattito diventa quindi se sia effettivamente praticabile "a business model based on giving away your core products and potentially also your intellectual property rights", ricordando che: "In the post-dot-com world, value and profits have come mainly from ownership of the technology platforms through which users access information and services. This gives the platform owners huge amounts of market intelligence and sales opportunities, generated by having hundreds of thousands of captive customers" (ivi).

La seconda questione su cui il dibattito tende a concentrarsi è l'impatto potenziale dei Moocs sull'intero comparto della *higher education*. Su questo piano gli addetti ai lavori si sono schierati intorno a due posizioni principali. Da un lato, il timore è che i Moocs possano diventare la *killer application* della formazione accademica, finendo con il cannibalizzare l'offerta tradizionale. Martin Bean, professore e *vice-chancellor* della Open University inglese definisce la situazione come "the Napster moment for higher education" (Fazackerley, Interview with Martin Bean, 2012) mettendo in guardia le università, soprattutto quelle piccole, dal lanciarsi nel settore. Il business, infatti, potrebbe riguardare essenzialmente i proprietari delle piattaforme. Coerentemente alle affermazioni del suo *vice-chancellor*, la Open University sarà, infatti, la prima università a lanciare una piattaforma multi-istituzionale *made in Uk*: "FutureLearn". Sul fronte opposto c'è chi – come Adrian Smith, professore e *vice-chancellor* of the University of London – definisce l'innovazione come una big wave: "you have to work out how to surf it rather than drown under it" (ivi). Qualunque sia l'approccio adottato, la domanda che resta senza risposta è la stessa che Boxall aveva posto qualche mese prima: "when the elements of higher education – content, courses, support, assessments, awards – are all separately available from world-class providers, what will be the role of the university?" (ivi).

Infine, il terzo focus. Un articolo pubblicato su *The Guardian* (Katsomitros, Interview with, 2013)<sup>9</sup> conferma l'atteggiamento fin troppo cauto dei paesi europei e prospetta l'idea che i Moocs possano rappresentare un'opportunità unica

therefore limited our conclusions to a summary of the key issues currently emerging, of which there are three: the definition of MOOCs and their disruptive potential; the business model and its impact on public universities; the development of an autonomous European model or alternative to the American model.

Mike Boxall in an article for *The Guardian*, 8 August 2012, explores the first issue, comparing the evolution of MOOCs to the dot.com phenomenon. Defined as “the latest addition to the acronym-bound lexicon of higher education, and quite possibly the most significant of them all”, MOOCs are considered a not-particularly innovative *feature* in the field of teaching videos, but one which is attracting attention because of the scale, status and speed of new initiatives. In other words, the effect of Moocs could be similar to that of the so-called dot.com companies at the end of the Nineties when “disruptive innovations reshaped the global information, media and news industries, by shifting market power from the established players to parvenu start-ups and alternative providers” (Boxall 2012). The thorny issue remains of whether it is possible to invent “a business model based on giving away your core products and potentially also your intellectual property rights”, remembering that “In the post-dot-com world, value and profits have come mainly from ownership of the technology platforms through which users access information and services. This gives the platform owners huge amounts of market intelligence and sales opportunities, generated by having hundreds of thousands of captive customers” (ivi).

The second major issue of concern is the potential impact of MOOCs on the Higher Education sector in general. Experts in the field tend to fall into two camps. On the one hand are those who see MOOCs as a killer application for academic learning that will cannibalise traditional higher education as has already happened in other sectors. It is Martin Bean, professor and vice-chancellor of the Open University UK who defines the situation as “the Napster moment for higher education” (Fazackerley, Interview with Martin Bean 2012) warning universities, especially smaller institutions, against rushing into MOOCs. The business advantage may regard only the owners of the platforms. In line with its vice-chancellor’s statement, the Open University will be the first to launch a UK-made multi-institutional platform: “FutureLearn”. In the opposite camp we have people like Adrian Smith, professor and vice-chancellor of the University of London who describes the innovation as a big wave “you have to work out how to surf it rather than drown under it” (ivi). Whatever position people adopt, the question raised by Boxall some months earlier remains unanswered: “when the elements of higher education – content, courses, support, assessments, awards – are all separately available from world-class providers, what will be the role of the university?” (ivi).

The third point regards the development of an independent European model for Moocs. An article published in *The Guardian* (Katsomitros, Inter-



per dotare l'Europa di una organizzazione online per la formazione superiore di livello europeo. Un obiettivo ambizioso che potrebbe rafforzare il consenso di cui godono le istituzioni e contribuire alla creazione di un'identità genuinamente europea. Sul piano concreto lo sviluppo di un progetto Mooc europeo si pone in relazione a tre assets principali. Il primo in ordine di importanza è la costruzione di un brand europeo e del suo posizionamento sul piano internazionale. Il secondo riguarda la componente linguistica, che, con la sua diversità espressa da 23 lingue ufficiali, rappresenta un'opportunità straordinaria per raggiungere nuovi targets in ambito internazionale. Infine, la legacy sviluppata nelle relazioni di cooperazione scientifica e accademica con altri paesi attraverso i progetti di mobilità pan-europea e lo sviluppo di titoli di studio congiunti (degree recognition).

Il tema inizia a prendere dunque una configurazione sempre meno pedagogica e sempre più politica, ma un attore leader nella costruzione di una policy a livello europeo tarda a presentarsi.

### 3. Creare reti per guidare l'innovazione

L'occasione per vedere una *policy community* in azione si presenta con il "MOOCs European Stakeholders Meeting", un pre-summit organizzato dal Center for Digital Education de l'Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne – diretto da Pierre Dillenbourg – a giugno 2013. Con 4 Moocs già lanciati, 17 in preparazione e un invidiabile posizionamento fra le migliori università del mondo per le discipline ingegneristiche, l'EPFL può essere considerato un key-player nell'arena europea.

Il pre-summit, infatti, è espressamente orientato a comprendere come l'Europa si stia organizzando per affrontare la questione dei Moocs, quali sono i key players e le strategie che ciascuno di essi sta mettendo o pensa di mettere in campo<sup>11</sup>. Ne emerge una situazione complessa, *geopardized*, con aree più attive di altre e con una straordinaria diversificazione degli attori (pubblici, privati, nonprofit), alcuni dei quali con obiettivi e modelli di business alternativi<sup>12</sup>. Dillenbourg, nella chiusura dei lavori, rileva anche il disequilibrio con cui procedono le diverse aree dell'UE, con una sperimentazione avviata o in corso di avvio nella maggior parte dei paesi dell'Europa occidentale (Inghilterra, Spagna e Germania guidano la classifica) e una assenza di reale interesse nei paesi dell'Europa orientale. D'altra parte, i segnali che vengono dalle istituzioni europee sono ancora poco chiari o poco significativi e stakeholder che potrebbero svolgere un ruolo chiave, come le associazioni di università (fatta eccezione per la EADTU, che ha dato vita a una delle prime piattaforme europee di MOOCs, OpenupEdu), sono ancora in fase di studio del problema. Quel che è certo è che si registra un *overstatement* del tema che costringe le università ad affrontare la nuova situazione senza una visione e un approccio chiari, riducendo spesso il potenziale di innovazione dei Moocs in potenziale di competizione.

Il dettaglio dei casi presentati al summit è disponibile sul sito dell'iniziativa. In questa sede, anche per esigenze di sintesi, i *key themes* emersi sono organizzati in tre sub-aree: *policy issues*, *instructional design* ed *ethical issues*.

view with, 2013)<sup>9</sup>, confirms that Europe has been over-cautious in its approach so far and suggests that Moocs offer a unique opportunity for organising and offering a truly European higher education online. An ambitious goal, that could reinforce institutional consensus and work towards a genuinely European identity. On a more pragmatic level, a European MOOCs project would need to develop in three ways: the most important is the creation of a European branding and position on the international stage; secondly, with 23 official languages in Europe there are enormous opportunities for reaching target audiences in other parts of the world; thirdly, the legacy of scientific and academic cooperation that has developed through pan-European mobility programmes and degree and credits recognition.

Debate around MOOCs, therefore, is focusing on political rather than pedagogic issues, but no leading player has yet stepped forward to set a policy framework for Europe.

### 3. *Networking is leading*

The *MOOCs European Stakeholders Meeting*<sup>10</sup> in June 2013 offered the opportunity to see a policy community in action. This was a pre-summit organised by the Center for Digital Education at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne – directed by Pierre Dillenbourg – in June 2013. With 4 Moocs already up and running, and 17 others in the making, and an enviably high position amongst the world's top-ranking universities for engineering, the EPFL could be considered a key European player. The meeting was designed to find out how Europe is addressing the issue of Moocs, who the key players are and what strategies they are using<sup>11</sup>. The summit highlighted a complex *geopardized* situation with some areas much more active than others but also an incredible range of key players (public, private, non profit), some of them with different objectives and business models<sup>12</sup>. Dillenbourg, in his closing session, focused on the differences between European areas, showing how most Western European countries already have MOOCs projects under way or about to start (UK, Spain and Germany head the field) whereas Eastern European countries seem to show very little interest. European institutions, on the other hand, continue to send out very mixed and rather weak signals, and stakeholders who could take on a leading role, like university associations (with the exception of EADTU which set up one of the first European MOOCs platforms, OpenupEdu), are still busy studying the problem.

A certain amount of *overstatement* undoubtedly surrounds MOOCs, and this is forcing universities to confront the issue without any clear vision or approach. This is reducing the innovative potential of MOOCs to competitive potential. Details regarding the individual cases presented can be seen on the Summit website. Here, for reasons of space, we will try to synthesise the key themes into the three sub-areas that emerged from the debate: policy issues, instructional design and ethical issues.

La prima sub-area è, dunque, quella delle *policy issues*, vale a dire, l'insieme di quei temi intorno ai quali la *policy community* si riconosce come attore collettivo, a cui spetta di proporre o richiedere interventi organici e informati. Nel caso di una policy in formazione, gli interventi non possono che essere considerati come di tipo costitutivo, riguardano cioè quei *position statement* ufficiali dai quali si comprende: il ruolo e la posizione di ciascun attore e il tipo di investimento culturale e finanziario che ciascuno è disposto a effettuare per raggiungere i risultati attesi. Le *issues* emerse dalla discussione delineano un'arena complessa, in cui gli approcci e gli obiettivi sono disegnati in funzione degli interessi di ciascuno *stakeholder* e del paradigma di *policy* che si intende adottare. Emergono tre scenari diversi. Nel primo domina il paradigma economicista, secondo cui l'openness si configura in termini di apertura del mercato, di eliminazione dei vincoli che lo proteggono, di creazione di nuove opportunità di lavoro e di business, di sperimentazione di modelli alternativi di sostenibilità, per far fronte alla progressiva riduzione delle risorse e alla crescita della competizione. Nel secondo scenario, l'idea della publicness della missione universitaria enfatizza l'openness come agente della democratizzazione dell'accesso alla formazione accademica e del *soft power* culturale esercitabile su quelle aree del mondo in cui c'è minore tutela dei diritti civili. Obiettivi considerati raggiungibili attraverso l'innovazione delle metodologie didattiche e il trasferimento del sapere; nonché facendo della divulgazione dei risultati della ricerca scientifica finanziata dalle istituzioni pubbliche il primo banco di prova per politiche OER con reale capacità di impatto. Infine, l'approccio dell'europeizzazione considera la sfida a processi che appaiono completamente guidati dagli Stati Uniti la vera questione sul tappeto. Per questo motivo, parte del dibattito tende a mettere al centro i temi del *branding* e del *marketing*, su cui si valuta la capacità di canale delle piattaforme americane come Coursera, Edx, Udacity, che ai brand prestigiosi aggiungono la posizione di preminenza conquistata anche sul piano dell'online education. Senza adeguate *policies*, l'Europa potrebbe non riuscire a contrastare la capacità di attrazione delle iniziative americane con conseguenze pesanti in termini di concentrazione di iniziative e risorse, centralizzazione del mercato educativo e omologazione dei modelli culturali di riferimento. Per le piccole università e per quelle che non hanno modelli di business alternativi, lo scenario che viene a delinearsi non è dei più positivi. Delle chance di sopravvivenza potrebbero provenire tuttavia da un'offerta di alta qualità e specialistica, come teorizzato da Anderson nella teoria della *long tail* (Anderson 2006).

Il terzo scenario sembra articolarsi, dunque, lungo la dimensione *europeism vs platformism*, pro o contro l'adozione di una policy protezionistica, in cui il processo di Bologna, che definisce i termini per il riconoscimento dei crediti, viene concepito come uno strumento per rafforzare (chiudendoli) i confini geografici dell'EHEA. I dati della survey, come si vedrà in seguito, su questo aspetto sono significativi.

La seconda sub-area – quella dello *instructional design* – riguarda la necessità di modellare i nuovi processi di apprendimento tenendo conto dei contesti di riferimento, delle abitudini di fruizione dei prodotti culturali da parte dei *digital natives* e dei modelli pedagogici sottostanti allo sviluppo delle piattaforme. La letteratura sulle differenze

The first sub-area, therefore, is *policy issues*, where the policy community is called on collectively to provide informed and comprehensive answers. Where educational policy is concerned, this response needs to be an official *position statement* that clearly set out: the role and position of the different players and the type of cultural and financial investment each one is prepared to make in order to attain the desired results.

A complex scenario emerges, whereby individual stakeholders decide their own approaches and objectives depending on the policy paradigm adopted. There are three alternative paradigms. The first is an economic paradigm, where openness means freeing up the education market and removing some of the traditional obstacles, creating new job and business opportunities and experimenting with new sustainability models to respond to government cuts in education spending and increased competition. In the second, openness is interpreted as a way of democratizing access to higher education, and of wielding cultural soft power in parts of the world where there is less protection for human rights. Innovative teaching methodologies and knowledge transfer could help to achieve these objectives. Making results of publicly-financed research available would be a major demonstration of the impact that OER can have.

The last one sees the Europeanisation issue in terms of providing an adequate response to an education process which seems to be currently dominated by the Americans. This is why branding and marketing are key issues, as these define the power of platforms like Coursera, Edx, Udacity, because leading brands gain the top positions in online learning rankings as well. It would be impossible for Europe to compete with the attractiveness of the American products without an adequate marketing policy but if they do not do so the consequences could be very damaging: in terms of concentration of initiatives and resources, centralisation of the education market and uniformisation of cultural references. The outlook for smaller universities and those with no alternative business model is not good. One of their only chances of survival could lie in quality and specialist output, as Andersen discussed in his *long tail theory* (Anderson 2006).

The third scenario seems to hinge on the Europe vs platform debate; i.e. for or against the adoption of protectionist policies. The Bologna Process is a policy for recognition of university credits, but, in this context, it becomes a tool for limiting standardisation to the geographical confines of the EHEA. We will see later that the survey data in this regard were very interesting.

The second sub-area – that of *instructional design* – regards the need to devise new learning process models that reflect the context students live in, the way digital natives use cultural products and the pedagogic models underlying the development of platforms. A significant amount of literature now exists that deals with the structural, organisational and pedagogic differences between cMoocs, xMoocs and the advantages of one particular model over another. Siemens says that cMoocs, compared to the Coursera and EdX

strutturali, organizzative e pedagogiche fra cMoocs, xMoocs e sui vantaggi dell'uno o dell'altro modello è ormai copiosa. Nella descrizione di Siemens, i cMoocs, rispetto al modello definito da Coursera e EdX (xMoocs), sono peculiari per numerosi aspetti, in particolare per la visione generativa, connettiva, distribuita e sociale della conoscenza nella quale al docente spetta un ruolo di guida – non di istruttore – e allo studente viene garantita maggiore autonomia nella regolazione dei tempi e delle modalità di apprendimento. Per gli scettici, queste stesse caratteristiche rappresentano altrettante criticità per la validità dello strumento, dalla rarefazione del rapporto tra insegnante e discente al minore controllo sui processi di costruzione orizzontale dei contenuti, che determinano la difficoltà di definire criteri e procedure univoci di valutazione dell'apprendimento. La questione della qualità viene posta con forza e talvolta brandita come un'arma a difesa del vecchio sistema educativo, fondato su sistemi di verifica consolidati, sebbene non necessariamente ed efficacemente discriminanti. Sul versante opposto gli xMoocs hanno quel vantaggio di *scaling up* che ai cMoocs non è consentito oltre un certo limite, mantengono un controllo pressoché esclusivo sulla produzione dei contenuti e tendono a rafforzare lo status e l'autorità del docente.

La terza dimensione è quella delle *ethical issues*. La raccolta massiva di dati sui partecipanti ai Moocs, in un mercato sostanzialmente ancora privo di regolamentazione, potrebbe diventare – e forse in parte già lo è – un settore molto remunerativo per agenzie di profiling, di marketing commerciale e politico, con il rischio di ricadute pesanti sulla privacy e tutela dell'integrità della persona. Si tratta di una problematica che emerge spesso nei feedback degli studenti che hanno seguito dei corsi Moocs, evidenziando il timore che il loro eventuale insuccesso in tali corsi possa influenzare la ricerca di lavoro. Il ricorso alla pubblicità più o meno occulta è, invece, già un fatto con cui fare i conti: alcuni docenti organizzano Moocs intorno ai propri testi, altri sembrano promuovere specifici prodotti, come gli strumenti musicali utilizzati nella lezione. Infine, il tema del riuso dei materiali e della regolamentazione dei diritti di copyright sembra muoversi su un terreno ancora piuttosto ambiguo. Come conferma chiaramente anche l'Horizon Report 2013 in merito a Coursera: "Although the quality of the video and related content provided is high, this delivery model is very much based in traditional models of instruction, and does not include the notions of openness and connectivism outlined by Siemens and Downs. Indeed, the content of each of the major sites is not "open" as pervasive copyright notice make clear" (12). Si tratta di una questione di non poco conto, anzi cruciale, che sta già producendo degli effetti in controtendenza, come la decisione di alcuni illustri professori – come Mitchell Duneier della Princeton University – di non consentire il riuso del proprio corso in altre università al fine di evitare tagli indiscriminati ai finanziamenti a loro destinati (Parry 2013). Il rischio è, infatti, quello di "replacing faculty with cheap online education", come evidenziato nella lettera aperta che il Dipartimento di Filosofia della San José University ha indirizzato al prof. Sandel della Harvard University, rifiutando di adottare il suo corso di Justice con la seguente motivazione: "We believe that education in a democracy must be focused on responsible citizenship, and general education courses in the liberal arts are crucial to such education. The move to outside vendor

model (xMoocs), are unusual in a number of ways but especially because of the generative, connectivist, sharing and social vision of knowledge that underlies them, where the teacher acts as guide – not instructor – and the student has greater autonomy where time-management and learning style is concerned. Sceptics question the validity of this type of learning, and the lack of teacher-student relationship. They criticise the limited control over the learning content, which makes it difficult to define assessment criteria and procedures. The question of quality is often raised and brandished like a weapon in defence of the old teaching system, based on tried and tested methods of assessment, regardless of whether they are effective discriminators. xMoocs, on the other hand, have the advantage that they can be scaled up whereas cMOOCs cannot go beyond a certain number of students. They also maintain almost exclusive control over the teaching content and tend to reinforce the authority of the teacher.

*Ethical issues* are the third and final category. The collection of massive data regarding MOOCs users in a market which is basically unregulated, could prove to be – or maybe already is – a lucrative sector for profiling agencies and commercial and political marketing, and could threaten individual and privacy rights. Many students who have taken MOOCs refer to this in their post-course feedback, fearing that their failure to do well or complete the course could affect their chances in the job market. The insertion of, more or less, overt publicity is an issue that already needs to be tackled. There are teachers who base MOOCs on their own textbooks, others who seem to encourage the purchase of particular products or brands, like the musical instruments used in their lessons. And guidelines regarding the use and reuse of the materials and copyright seem, for the moment, to be somewhat vague. As the Horizon Report 2013 states about Coursera “Although the quality of the video and related content provided is high, this delivery model is very much based in traditional models of instruction, and does not include the notions of openness and connectivism outlined by Siemens and Downs. Indeed, the content of each of the major sites is not ‘open’ as pervasive copyright notices make clear” (12). This is a significant, if not crucial, aspect of MOOCs, and one which is leading people to make some apparently contradictory choices. Certain renowned professors – like Mitchell Duneier from Princeton University – have decided to veto the use of their courses in other universities to prevent the indiscriminate cuts in their funding that would result (Parry 2013).

The risk with MOOCs is, in fact, that of “replacing faculty with cheap online education”, as is highlighted by the open letter that the Department of Philosophy at San José University sent to prof. Sandel from Harvard University, explaining why they were refusing to adopt his course on Justice “We believe that education in a democracy must be focused on responsible citizenship, and general education courses in the liberal arts are crucial to such education. The move to outside vendor MOOCs is especially troubling

MOOCs is especially troubling in light of this it is hard to see how they can nourish the complex mix of information, attitudes, solidarity and moral commitment that are crucial to flourishing democracies”<sup>13</sup>.

#### 4. L'indagine: chi e perché<sup>14</sup>

La fase conclusiva della nostra indagine, come anticipato, ha previsto la somministrazione di un questionario semistrutturato a due panel di intervistati. Gli intervistati sono per la maggior parte provenienti dall'ambito accademico: ricercatori, consulenti o docenti coinvolti in Moocs (Grafico 1). Vi sono rappresentati nove paesi Europei (Belgio, Danimarca, Francia, Germania, Italia, Lituania, Olanda, Spagna, Svizzera) con una maggiore presenza di italiani (20%), inglesi (15,4%), francesi e spagnoli (11,5%) (Grafico 2).

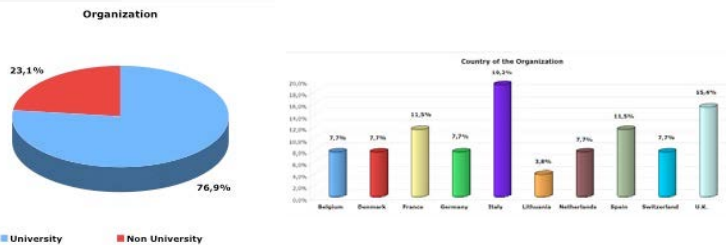


Fig. 1 e 2: Composizione del campione (rispetto ai Moocs). Fonte: elaborazione propria (sett. 2013)

Nel 70% dei casi l'Università presso cui gli intervistati lavorano ha attivato direttamente un proprio progetto Mooc (Grafico 3), implementato attraverso l'impiego di piattaforme diverse – undici per l'esattezza – con una prevalenza schiacciante di Coursera (38,9%) seguita da EdX (11,1%) (Grafico 4). Nell'opinione di quel 31% che fa capo a Università che non hanno ancora attivato Moocs è evidente la necessità di procedere in questa direzione e non restare fermi rispetto alle grandi tendenze internazionali: “University is changing in the world and MOOC represent a new democratic vision of higher education, a more efficient delivery mode, possibly a better learning experience for students”; “the higher education is changing a lot all over the world. Do not try to change as well it means going out of the market”. Con esplicito riferimento a tre ordini di ragioni di questa necessità: il cambio di paradigma pedagogico, l'accesso alla cultura e quindi la sua maggiore inclusività, e il marketing delle università.

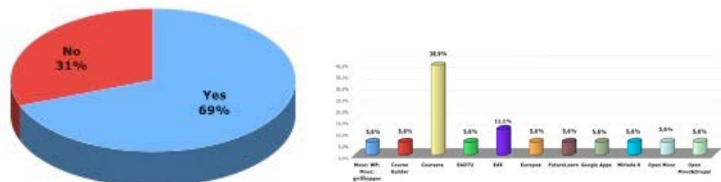


Fig. 3 e 4. Has your organization developed its own MOOC yet? E. If yes, on which platform? (valori in percentuale). Fonte: elaborazione propria

in light of this it is hard to see how they can nourish the complex mix of information, attitudes, solidarity and moral commitment that are crucial to flourishing democracies”<sup>13</sup>.

4. Stakeholder survey: who and why<sup>14</sup>

For the final stage of our research we carried out a semi-structured questionnaire on a two-tier sample. Our interviewees are mainly from the academic world: researchers, teachers or consultants involved in MOOCs (Fig. 1) and they come from nine different European countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland) with a higher concentration of Italians (20%), British (15,4%), French and Spanish (11,5%) (Fig. 2).

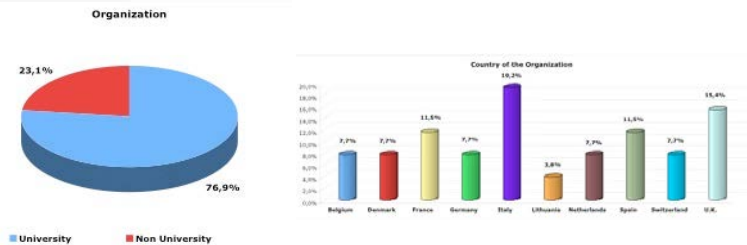


Fig. 1 and 2. Sample composition. Source: own elaboration (data September 2013)

In 70% of cases, the university where the interviewee works has already launched its own MOOC (Fig. 3) using diverse platforms – eleven to be exact – but with the vast majority on Coursera (38,9%) followed by EdX (11,1%) (Fig. 4). The 31% of interviewees who belong to universities that have not yet launched their own MOOCs clearly believe that they should proceed in that direction and not stand still while the rest of the world moves on “University is changing in the world and MOOC represent a new democratic vision of higher education, a more efficient delivery mode, possibly a better learning experience for students”; “the higher education is changing a lot all over the world. Do not try to change as well it means going out of the market”. This makes explicit reference to three major reasons dictating this need for change: changes in pedagogic paradigms, better access to knowledge and issues of inclusion, and marketing of universities.

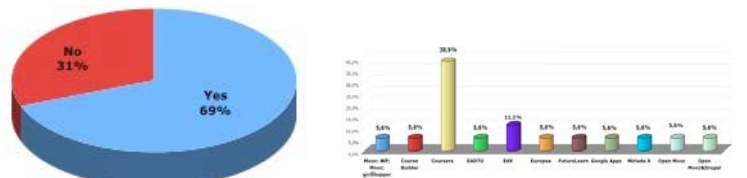


Fig. 3 and 4. Responses to the questions: *Has your organization developed its own MOOC yet?* And *If yes, on which platform?* (percentage values). Source: own elaboration



Il primo nodo da sciogliere è quello relativo alla componente più critica dell'acronimo Massive Open Online Courses: l'idea di *openess* comunemente associata ai Moocs e intesa come un carattere distintivo del formato. A tal proposito, il campione si divide quasi uniformemente fra quanti concordano sull'idea di *openess* associata comunemente ai MOOCs (53,8%) e quanti vi concordano solo in parte (42,3%) (Grafico 5).

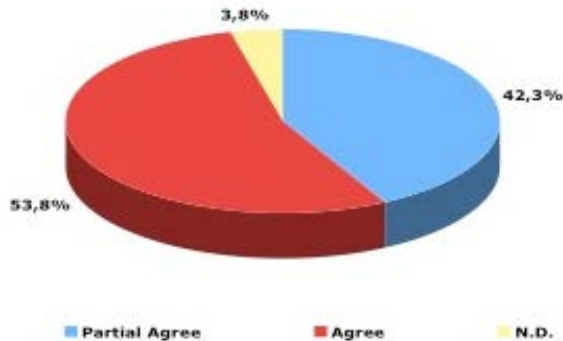


Fig. 5. Percentuale di accordo con la definizione di *openess* proveniente dal concetto di MOOC.

Fonte: elaborazione propria

Coloro che non si sentono a proprio agio con la definizione di Mooc individuano una evidente dissonanza tra il concetto e la sua traduzione empirica, vale a dire che ritengono che non si tratti del principio realmente dominante in tutti i corsi attivati come Mooc: “Moocs have the tendency to be not available for a large time of the year”; “Some courses are open to everyone, some others are not. There is not a single model for moocs”; “Some are not completely open: private enrollment or payment required”. Inoltre, rilevano un eccesso di semplificazione del concetto in quanto l’openness è qualcosa di più complesso di quanto emerge dall’uso comune del termine: “it means open to anyone from everywhere but also open the higher education market to new actors”; “Openness may also refer to students openness: choosing parts of course, and its own objectives”; “Open is more than just the access. The current moocs don’t fully adopt the openness as I would like to see”; “Some participants ask for free MOOCs, some other are ready to pay for MOOC related services, such as certificates, premium content, specific mentoring, etc.”. Infine, considerano il concetto in modo normativo, per come questo andrebbe declinato, per esempio, aperto per ciò che riguarda il riuso dei materiali o le licenze di copyright: “It would be nice if MOOC providers would embrace a clearer licensing policy, using CC licences”.

Lo scenario auspicato è quello di un impegno sempre più significativo nella sperimentazione e nella ricerca sui Moocs, come risultato di una specifica strategia delle Università, con lo scopo di affermare la centralità degli strumenti impiegati per la formazione continua e la natura strategica del settore. I Moocs sono spesso inseriti in progetti legati all’impegno dell’Università nel settore dell’Open Education, ma è

One of the major stumbling blocks to tackle as regards MOOCs is the critical issue of Openness, a term which is part of the acronym and one which would seem to be a defining characteristic of this type of learning. Our sample was divided on the issue in pretty equal measure, with those agreeing that MOOCs are open standing at 53.8% and those expressing some reservations at 42.3% (Fig. 5).

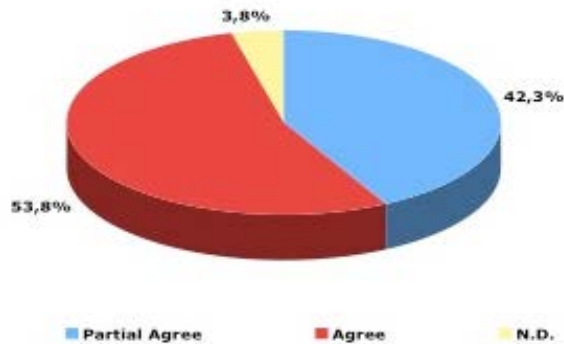


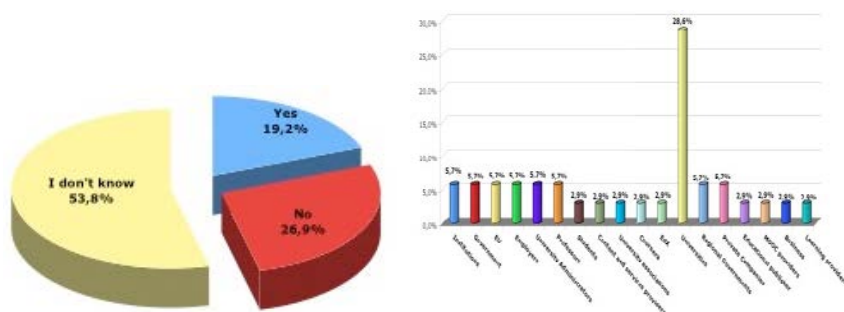
Fig. 5. Percentage of agreement with the definition of openness emerging from the concept of MOOC. Source: own elaboration

Those who expressed reservations about the definition of MOOCs as open, pointed out that there are obvious contradictions between theory and practice, and that openness is not one of the dominant features of many of the MOOC courses available today “Moocs have the tendency to be not available for a large time of the year”; “Some courses are open to everyone, some others are not. There is not a single model for moocs”; “Some are not completely open: private enrollment or payment required”. Interviewees also pointed out the tendency to over-use and over-simplify the term. Openness is a much more complex issue as “it means open to anyone from everywhere but also open the higher education market to new actors”; “Openness may also refer to students openness: choosing parts of course, and its own objectives”; “Open is more than just the access. The current Moocs don't fully adopt the openness as I would like to see”; “Some participants ask for free MOOCs, some other are ready to pay for MOOC related services, such as certificates, premium content, specific mentoring, etc”. They also refer to the legal aspects of openness, including issues of copyright and reuse of learning content: “It would be nice if MOOC providers would embrace a clearer licensing policy, using CC licences”.

Most people would like to see increased research and experimentation with Moocs as part of an overall university strategy to reaffirm the strategic importance of online learning and its role in lifelong learning. Moocs are often included as part of a University's commitment to Open Education, but many people strongly feel that universities should go beyond experimental

forte la percezione della necessità di andare oltre la sperimentazione e di utilizzare i Moocs come supporto all'insegnamento tradizionale e come strategia di orientamento in uscita. Gli obiettivi per i quali si sollecita una politica attiva da parte delle istituzioni accademiche riguardano la possibilità di: "developing MOOCs for private companies, to reach new audiences, improving innovations in teaching and learning; to support students mobility, to understand how students learn, to help to lower the cost of degree courses, improving innovations in teaching and learning, promoting the organization's brand".

In generale, emerge un quadro di solipsismo ed estemporaneità delle singole iniziative: ad esempio, quasi un quarto del campione (23,1 per cent) non sa se nel proprio paese sono in corso altre iniziative sui Moocs e più della metà non sa se nel proprio paese esiste una strategia nazionale per l'innovazione nell'higher education: il 53,8% degli intervistati, infatti, non ha notizie in tal senso (Grafico 7). L'opinione generale, d'altra parte, è che debbano essere le Università a gestire autonomamente questa partita, senza l'ingerenza di istituzioni nazionali o locali (Grafico 8).



Figg. 6 e 7: *Is your country going to develop a national strategy for innovating higher education? E Who are the main stakeholders that would be involved in the process over the next few years?* (valori in percentuale).

Fonte: elaborazione propria

Quale sia il destino dei MOOCs in Europa per stakeholders intervistati è abbastanza chiaro: essi rappresentano una prospettiva di business e di formazione parallela a quella tradizionale, ma non sostitutiva ad essa (Grafico 8 e 9). Metà degli intervistati, inoltre, non concorda con l'idea che i MOOCs debbano essere riconosciuti per l'acquisizione di crediti universitari per diverse ragioni. La più ricorrente nelle risposte è la difficoltà di concordare uno standard per la verifica, tale da consentire una corretta valutazione ed evitare plagi. La consapevolezza del problema non esclude la considerazione di una terza via, vale a dire intendere i Moocs come uno strumento di supporto o parallelo alla formazione tradizionale. Gli intervistati in questo caso non considerano i MOOCs come potenziali sostituti della formazione "tradizionale", soprattutto perché considerano irrinunciabile il contatto faccia-a-faccia per la trasmissione dei contenuti e per la socializzazione degli studenti, entrambe necessarie per la realizzazione di un corretto

projects and use MOOCs as an integral part of traditional degree courses and as an orientation tool for graduate job seekers. The major areas in which interviewees would like to see concrete policies implemented by educational institutions are “developing MOOCs for private companies, to reach new audiences, improving innovations in teaching and learning; to support students mobility, to understand how students learn, to help to lower the cost of degree courses, improving innovations in teaching and learning, promoting the organization’s brand”.

In general, the picture that emerges is one of solipsistic and extemporaneous individual projects. One quarter of our sample, for example (23, 1 per cent), has no idea whether other MOOCs are running in their country or not and over half were unaware whether their country has any national strategy for innovation in Higher Education. 53.8% of the people interviewed, in fact, were unable to answer that question (Fig. 7). The general opinion, on the other hand, was that the universities themselves should lay down the rules for MOOCs delivery, without interference from regional or national institutions (Fig 8).

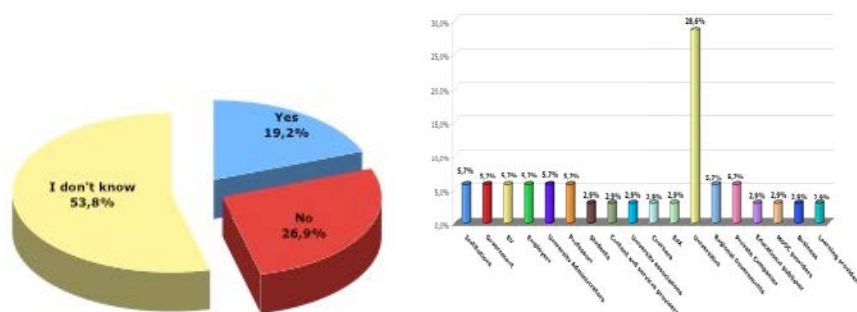


Fig. 6 and 7. Responses to the questions: *Is your country going to develop a national strategy for innovating higher education? Who are the main stakeholders that would be involved in the process over the next few years?* (percentage values). Source: own elaboration

The future of MOOCs in Europe as far as stakeholders are concerned is fairly clear. They see MOOCs as a new business model and a parallel alternative to traditional teaching, though not a substitute (Fig.8 and 9).

Half the people interviewed were not in favour of offering university credits for MOOCs. The most common reason given was the difficulty in setting common assessment standards to ensure proper evaluation, and the dangers of plagiarism. Awareness of this problem does not prevent interviewees from considering a different option; that of using MOOCs as a support or parallel pathway to traditional teaching. Here, the interviewees did not see MOOCs as a substitute to “traditional” courses, especially because they consider face-to-face classroom contact as indispensable to the transmission of content and for encouraging socialisation amongst the students; both of which are deemed a necessary part of proper learning processes “students

processo formativo: “students need specific places to develop autonomy and social life”; “For long life learning moocs can be fully online, but for full time students, moocs alone cannot work. They have to be integrated into a mixed online / in class teaching”; “Face to face is needed in human relationship”; “students need specific places to develop autonomy and social life. By no way, it can be an office at home, or learning after work”; “e-learning is different for teachers and students, the emotive part is absent”.

La maggior parte degli intervistati vede nei Moocs un'importante opportunità di business e più di un terzo li considera come un'opportunità di business almeno in parte, mentre solo un'esigua minoranza non li considera tale.

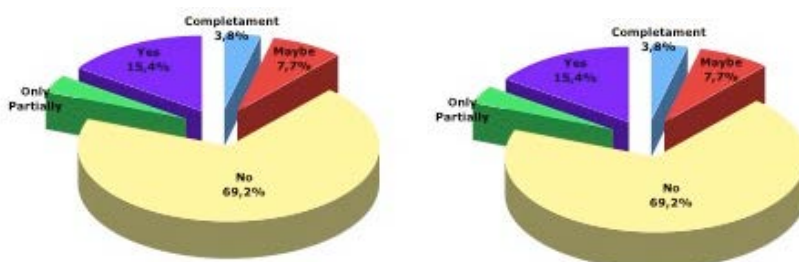


Fig. 8 e 9. *Do you believe MOOCs represents a business opportunity? Do you think they can substitute traditional academic education?* (valori in percentuale). Fonte: elaborazione propria

L'orientamento verso il *policy change* si intravede oltre che nella definizione di nuovi obiettivi, anche nel cambio delle *audiences* alle quali i Moocs dovrebbero puntare (fig. 11). Quasi un terzo degli intervistati, infatti, ritiene che il principale obiettivo da raggiungere siano i professionisti, mentre, solo un quarto considera gli studenti universitari come i migliori referenti. I Moocs sono anche intesi come “guide” alla scelta universitaria e alla ricerca di impiego. Quasi un quinto degli intervistati ritiene invece che l'audience principale sia formata dagli studenti delle scuole superiori e da chi ancora non trova una collocazione nel mondo del lavoro. Solo l'1% include tra le opzioni di scelta anche i ricercatori.

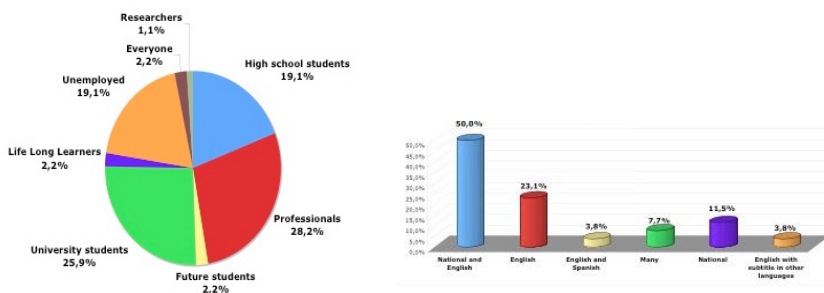


Fig. 10 e 11: *What are the audiences your organization should reach through MOOCs initiatives? In which languages should they be produced?* (valori in percentuale). Fonte: elaborazione propria

need specific places to develop autonomy and social life”; “For long life learning MOOCs can be fully online, but for full time students, MOOCs alone cannot work. They have to be integrated into a mixed online / in class teaching”; “Face to face is needed in human relationship”; “students need specific places to develop autonomy and social life. By no way, it can be an office at home, or learning after work”; “e-learning is different for teachers and students, the emotive part is absent”.

Most of the people interviewed saw MOOCs as an attractive business opportunity and more than a third saw them as a business opportunity at least in part. Only a small minority saw no business opportunity in MOOCs.

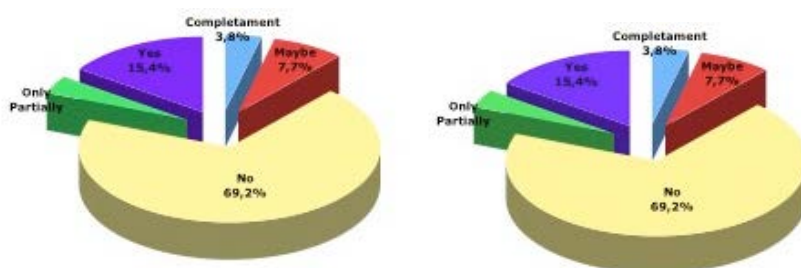


Fig. 8 and 9. Responses to the questions: *Do you believe MOOCs represents a business opportunity? Do you think they can substitute traditional academic education?* (percentage values). Source: own elaboration

A desire for *policy changes* is clear from the way interviewees responded to questions about aims and objectives and new target audiences for MOOCs (Fig. 10). Almost a third of respondents said that the professional market was the main target while only a quarter see university students as the majority users. MOOCs are also seen as a “student guide” to inform choices of subject and university, and also to choose their future employment. Almost a fifth of all respondents said that final year school students and job-seekers were the main audience. Only 1.1 % included researchers amongst their top choices.

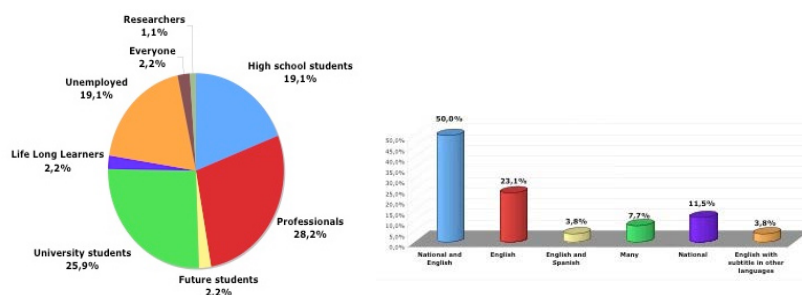


Fig. 10 and 11. Responses to the questions: *What are the audiences your organization should reach through MOOCs initiatives? In which languages should they be produced?* (percentage values). Source: own elaboration

Il potenziale professionalizzante e la volontà di rivolgersi a un'audience più ampia possibile porta la metà degli intervistati a considerare come migliore opzione quella di realizzare Moocs in doppia lingua (lingua nazionale e inglese) (Grafico 12), perseguendo in tal modo l'obiettivo di ampliare le audiences raggiungibili e di rafforzare allo stesso tempo l'audience nazionale, offrendo maggiori chance di confronto multiculturale: "Different languages means the possibility of multicultural comparison and improvement". Come prevedibile, solo un decimo degli intervistati ritiene che i corsi andrebbero implementati solo nella lingua nazionale; mentre quasi un quarto auspica l'impiego dell'inglese come unica lingua (che solo in alcuni casi coincide con quella nazionale).

Per quanto riguarda la percezione dell'efficacia del progetto cui gli intervistati hanno preso parte e del quadro nazionale in cui il loro progetto si muove emerge un grande interesse, ma anche molto disorientamento. In generale tutti gli operatori direttamente coinvolti nei Moocs si dicono soddisfatti o abbastanza soddisfatti dei risultati, salvo qualche riferimento a limiti tecnici delle piattaforme impiegate: "High user numbers require new technological platforms which are not very mature yet. High maintenance to keep forums happy. Peer activity was not enough". O della competenza di operatori e utenti: "Not all teachers has experience in online courses and management of such courses"; "weakness of self-learning capability from students". Emerge, però, anche il problema relativo alla valutazione dell'efficacia dei corsi, che generalmente non viene effettivamente realizzata ma affidata alla percezione degli stessi operatori: "We're producing MOOCs without meeting any big problem, so I guess we're effective". Inoltre, gli stessi operatori si rendono conto che non è semplice confezionare degli strumenti efficaci per la valutazione, basti considerare che l'indicatore più rappresentativo di insuccesso – la percentuale di 'drop-outs' – appare poco significativo. Gli utenti dei Moocs, infatti, non hanno sempre l'obiettivo del conseguimento di un titolo o di una certificazione, per questa ragione anche utenti molto interessati e soddisfatti del corso possono finire nel calderone dei "drop-outs": "so-called 'drop-outs' in reality have a very clear goal that is fulfilled".

È stato, ancora, chiesto agli intervistati di esprimere un giudizio circa gli obiettivi futuri che la Commissione Europea dovrebbe perseguire su varie iniziative concernenti la diffusione e l'utilizzo dei MOOCs. Ad ogni item è stato assegnato un punteggio da 1 a 5 in riferimento al grado di accordo/disaccordo con l'affermazione di volta in volta proposta.

Quasi tre quarti degli intervistati (73,1%) concorda sulla necessità di una strategia europea circa lo sviluppo di MOOCs, che dovrebbe centrarsi su un maggiore impegno in termini di finanziamenti (di progetti e della ricerca) e di coordinamento delle strategie nazionali: "It is important for Europe to have its own statements, standards, and programs for MOOCs in education, professional training and lifelong learning"; "Universities should work together to use the strength of Europe (multilingualism and multiculturalism) to enhance MOOCs"; "Funding for research into data arising from MOOCs, Funding for investigation of social and peer learning, Funding for development and analysis of MOOC software". La consapevolezza diffusa è che si tratta ormai di una partita mondiale in cui i singoli Stati europei sono troppo piccoli

The potential to professionalise MOOCs and to make them available to as wide an audience as possible meant that half of our interviewees think MOOCs should be bi-lingual (in the national language and English) (Fig. 11), enabling institutions to increase their potential audiences abroad while reinforcing their national audience by offering the opportunity to study in two languages: "Different languages means the possibility of multicultural comparison and improvement". Predictably, one tenth of respondents felt that MOOCs should be offered in the official language of the provider's country only, while a quarter stated a preference for using only English (which was not the official language of the country they represent).

As regards perception of the success of the project the respondents were involved in, and the national framework that their project fits in to, answers revealed a mix of enthusiasm and confusion. In general, the people who were directly involved in MOOCs said they were satisfied or fairly satisfied with the results, except for some misgivings about the limitations of the platform they had chosen "High user numbers require new technological platforms which are not very mature yet. High maintenance to keep forums happy. Peer activity was not enough". Or some criticism of teachers or students: "Not all teachers have experience in online courses and management of such courses"; "weakness of self-learning capability from students". Another thorny issue that emerges, however, is that of proper evaluation of courses. This is no inbuilt, systematic analysis of MOOCs for the most part, and definitions of success are limited to the subjective opinion of the providers and teachers "We're producing MOOCs without meeting any big problem, so I guess we're effective". Providers also realise how difficult it is to create effective evaluation tools. We only have to consider that one of the major indicators – drop-out rates – is not considered a useful measure of success. MOOCs users, in fact, are often not interested in a certificate which is why even enthusiastic and satisfied participants may be happy to finish in the drop-outs category "so-called "drop-outs" in reality have a very clear goal that is fulfilled".

Participants were also asked to state what objectives the European Commission should set for the uptake and use of MOOCs. They were asked to express their agreement on a scale of 1-5 for each proposal. Almost three quarters of respondents (73,1%) agreed that a common European MOOCs strategy was necessary and that central to this was increased funding for projects and research and coordination of national strategies "It is important for Europe to have its own statements, standards, and programs for MOOCs in education, professional training and lifelong learning"; "Universities should work together to use the strength of Europe (multilingualism and multiculturalism) to enhance MOOCs"; "Funding for research into data arising from MOOCs, Funding for investigation of social and peer learning, Funding for development and analysis of MOOC software". The general view is that MOOCs are competing globally, and that single European nations are too

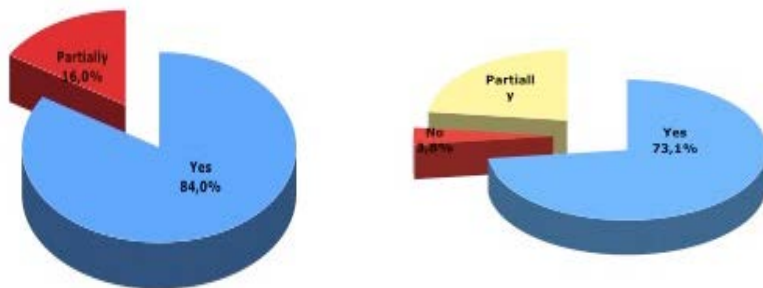


per essere rilevanti. In questo contesto, bisogna ragionare con un approccio olistico all'economia della conoscenza: "We need a continental vision".

All'Europa, però, si chiede un sostegno finanziario e politico, ma non un coinvolgimento diretto. Metà del campione, infatti, non concorda con l'idea che si debba sviluppare una piattaforma europea di Moocs, più della metà (il 61%) non concorda nemmeno con l'idea di sviluppare un modello europeo di Moocs, mentre ritiene più percorribile lo sviluppo di un framework europeo per la valutazione. Tale dato non stupisce alla luce delle risposte e delle riflessioni precedenti, anzi è una conferma della volontà di difendere l'autonomia organizzativa delle singole iniziative ma anche di mantenere libero il mercato dell'higher education da eventuali tentativi di regolazione sovranazionale. Quello attribuito all'Europa sembrerebbe essere il solito ruolo di soggetto abilitatore, una presenza politica e funzionale ma non un soggetto attivo, per puntare al coordinamento e non all'omologazione; piuttosto la valorizzazione delle specificità e delle differenze resta il cuore della questione, tant'è che oltre la metà (57%) dei rispondenti auspica la creazione di piattaforme multilingue. Per l'individuazione di criteri per la certificazione della qualità dei corsi e l'interazione tra pubblico e privato le opinioni invece tendono a essere meno omogenee. Salvo sulla necessità di investire in progetti di ricerca e progetti speciali che vede d'accordo il 48% e il 46% del campione.

La parte conclusiva del questionario è stata rivolta agli aspetti più applicativi dei MOOCs e alla comprensione dei vantaggi e dei limiti che gli esperti intravedono nell'impiego di questa nuova tecnologia dell'educazione.

In riferimento al *Life Long Learning*, i MOOCs sono giudicati in grado di migliorare la qualità dell'istruzione e della formazione (84%) e anche dell'istruzione superiore (73,1%), mentre più del 60 per cento non pensa possano rappresentare una alternativa alla formazione universitaria tradizionale.



Figg. 12 e 13: *Do you believe MOOCs can improve the quality of training education and LLL? Do you believe MOOCs can improve the quality of higher education? E Do you think they can substitute traditional academic education?* (valori in percentuale).

Fonte: elaborazione propria

small to be of relevance. In this respect, a holistic approach to the knowledge economy is more useful “We need a continental vision”.

Participants wanted financial and political support from Europe but rejected the idea of direct European involvement. Half the respondents, in fact, were against the idea of a European Moocs platform, and more than half (61%) do not even want to develop a European MOOCs model. The idea of a common assessment framework for Europe was greeted more favourably, which was predictable in view of responses to previous questions. It reflects a desire to protect the autonomy of the individual institution and to keep the higher education market free from any attempt at supernational regulation. The role that would be attributed to Europe would be typically that of the enabler, a functional and political presence but with no active role. The aim would be to guarantee coordination not uniformisation. People are also concerned that the specific value and diverse nature of European MOOCs is successfully promoted, so much so that more than half of respondents (57%) were in favour of creating multilingual platforms. As far as setting criteria for judging course quality, and interaction between the public and private sectors is concerned, opinion tended to be more divided. Apart from the need to invest in research and special projects where 48% and 46% of respondents agreed.

The final part of the questionnaire dealt with more practical aspects of MOOCs and the advantages and limits that the experts saw in this new learning technology. In terms of *Life Long Learning*, 84% of respondents felt that MOOCs could improve the quality of teaching and learning, and even higher education (73.1%), though more than 60 per cent still feel that MOOCs do not represent a valid alternative to traditional university teaching.

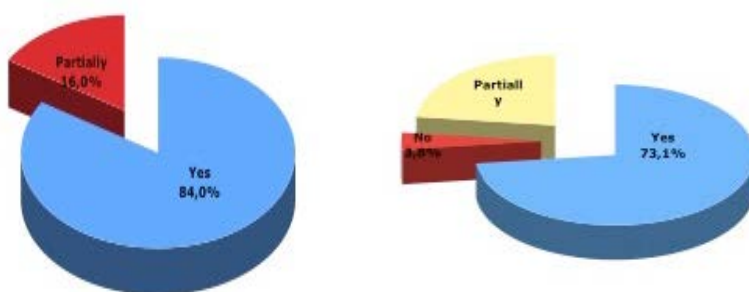


Fig. 12 and 13. Responses to the questions: *Do you believe MOOCs can improve the quality of training education and LLL? Do you believe MOOCs can improve the quality of higher education? Do you think they can substitute traditional academic education?* (percentage values).

Source: own elaboration

Alla domanda sui motivi per cui i MOOCs sono considerati capaci di migliorare la qualità dell'insegnamento (LLL e higher education), circa un terzo delle risposte riporta la qualità dei contenuti come la ragione principale: "Such materials as video lectures, video tasks, discussions, test in the courses can improve the quality of trainings". Il risultato, però, dipende dal modo in cui i MOOCs vengono concepiti e progettati: "Of course, if you put a lot of specialist effort in creating courses that are done right, you get better products"; "The best teachers are publishing their best courses". Quasi un quarto, invece, considera la *openness* come la più importante qualità dei MOOCs, intesa sia come apertura del mercato dell'educazione che incentiva una democratizzazione del sistema educativo, sia come apertura a un numero potenzialmente illimitato di contenuti anche di grande qualità, immediatamente disponibili da chiunque e ovunque: "wider access, democratization of learning, re-access by those who have quit"; "A system that take advantage of knowledge availability"; "A lot of moocs will be available for everyone, mainly for unemployed and professionals who wishes to learn more on they field of interest". L'accesso, inoltre, viene in genere associato alla collaborazione – come terza qualità rilevante – concepita come collaborazione tra studenti, che contribuisce ad accrescere la qualità dei materiali condivisi e l'efficacia del processo di apprendimento, e collaborazione fra insegnanti, che consente un confronto costruttivo sui metodi e sui risultati: "broader access to high quality educational materials; improvement by collaboration"; "pedagogical sharing between professors; contact with students". A queste caratteristiche viene immediatamente associata anche la flessibilità, definita come customizzazione del percorso in funzione dell'utente perché consente la flessibilità dei contenuti e la flessibilità dei modi di fruizione, essendo disponibile anche per chi non si dedica alla formazione a tempo pieno: "Because they will (although currently they do not) allow to customize courses for each student (regarding level, schedule, ...)". La flessibilità riguarda, d'altra parte, anche chi insegna: "give the Professors the opportunity to teach small groups, advise students, and do research instead of giving lectures ex cathedra". Infine, pochi significativi riferimenti sono fatti alla rilevanza dei MOOCs per la specializzazione professionale: "There may be other big target groups to whom the concept of MOOCs might be of interest, e.g. further training of teachers"; "In the knowledge economy, every employee needs continued training and life long learning. The demand is so enormous, that only by upscaling practices, like MOOCs do, we could ever think to meet the demand".

I punti di forza e debolezza dei MOOCs e le opportunità e i rischi connessi alla loro diffusione, infine, contribuiscono a delineare un quadro di sintesi chiaro di come i MOOCs sono vissuti in Europa (Tabella 1). Le risposte sono state classificate secondo due variabili. La prima, di inquadramento, distingue le valutazioni rispetto al focus sui contenuti o sul processo, vale a dire, su come i MOOCs sono realizzati o sul loro ruolo nel sistema formativo. La seconda variabile, valutativa, individua le principali caratteristiche dei MOOCs in rapporto alla loro utilità rispetto alla formazione tradizionale: *quality*, intesa come capacità di contribuire

When asked why they thought that MOOCs would improve the quality of teaching and learning (for LLL and higher education), almost a third cited the quality of the learning content: “Such materials as video lectures, video tasks, discussions, test in the courses can improve the quality of trainings“. Much depends, however, on how MOOCs are designed and structured: “Of course, if you put a lot of specialist effort in creating courses that are done right, you get better products”; “The best teachers are publishing their best courses”. Almost a quarter of our sample considered openness the most important aspect of MOOCs, both in the sense of openness of the education market to encourage democratisation of the education system, and in the sense of opening up education to potentially infinite numbers of people making quality content available to anybody, anywhere: “wider access, democratization of learning, re-access by those who have quit”; “A system that take advantage of knowledge availability”; “A lot of moocs will be available for everyone, mainly for unemployed and professionals who wishes to learn more on their field of interest”. Access is generally associated with collaboration – and is the third relevant quality – whereby collaboration and contributions from students improves the quality of shared materials and the effectiveness of the learning process, and collaboration between teachers allows for constructive comparison of methods and results: “broader access to high quality educational materials; improvement by collaboration”; “pedagogical sharing between professors; contact with students”. Flexibility is another characteristic associated with this type of approach, defined as customisation of the course on the part of the user because it enables learners to select their learning content as well as the way they exploit it, making the materials more useful for those who are not interested in full-time study: “Because they will (although currently they do not) allow to customize courses for each student (regarding level, schedule, ...)”. The notion of flexibility also applies to the teachers: “give the Professors the opportunity to teach small groups, advise students, and do research instead of giving lectures ex cathedra”. There were also a few significant references to the potential usefulness of MOOCs in vocational training and CPD: “There may be other big target groups to whom the concept of MOOCs might be of interest, e.g. further training of teachers”; “In the knowledge economy, every employee needs continued training and life long learning. The demand is so enormous, that only by upscaling practices, like MOOCs do, we could ever think to meet the demand”.

The strengths and weaknesses of MOOCs, and the opportunities and threats that they represent, provide a clear and concise view of how MOOCs are perceived in Europe (Table 1). The answers fall into two categories depending on two variables. The first one focuses on content and process, i.e. how MOOCs are designed and their role in the learning process. The second is an evaluation and looks at the main features of MOOCs and how useful they are compared to traditional methods: *quality*, i.e. to what extent they

al miglioramento del processo formativo; *openess*, che si riferisce all'accessibilità dei contenuti e all'inclusività del sistema; *collaboration*, vale a dire l'orientamento alla cooperazione ed integrazione dei *peer* nel lavoro di produzione e di gestione dei corsi; *flexibility*, intesa come libera fruizione del percorso formativo; *promotion (business)*, intesa come opportunità per aprire il mercato dell'Education a nuovi attori e come possibilità di policy change per le tradizionali istituzioni accademiche. Quello che appare particolarmente evidente, al di là del merito di tutte le risposte che sono state ampiamente riportate nel corso di quest'analisi, è che l'attenzione degli operatori si concentra sulle dinamiche di processo più che sui contenuti, perché considerano che lì si giochino le sfide più importanti.

### 5. Conclusioni

Lo scenario delineato fin qui appare articolato ma comprensibile. Da un lato si tende a riconoscere la natura *disruptive* dei Moocs e ad agevolarne il corso, mantenendo libero il mercato da ogni ingerenza pubblica. Dall'altra il percorso di sviluppo si mantiene entro gli argini tracciati dalle istituzioni già operanti nel campo dell'educazione a distanza, che hanno sviluppato una forte legacy nel settore, attraverso la ricerca e l'esperienza internazionale. Non sorprende di ritrovarle, dunque, fra gli stakeholder più attivi in Europa. Per questi attori, lo sviluppo dei Moocs si configura quindi più di tipo *evolutionary* (continuità rispetto al passato, ma mercato più ampio in cui muoversi), che *revolutionary* (cambio radicale di paradigma). Il framework che ne emerge ricalca, infatti, molto da vicino il paradigma del libero mercato, un mercato che si vuole aperto, ma protetto. Quello stesso framework di tipo neoliberista che, recentemente, l'inventore dei Moocs G. Siemens ha respinto con forza: "if we do take a stance that neoliberalism is some combination of open markets, deregulation, globalization, small government, low taxes, death of the public organization, and anti-union, then MOOCs are not at all neoliberalist" (Siemens 2013).

Paradigma di policy a parte, non c'è dubbio che stiamo assistendo alla creazione di un mercato parallelo con forte capacità di attrazione. Una "shadow education" - come l'ha definita Siemens (2013) - i cui effetti non tarderanno a farsi sentire, nel bene e nel male.

improve the learning process, *openness*, which refers to accessibility of content and inclusiveness of system; *collaboration*, i.e. the extent to which peer collaboration forms part of course construction and management; *flexibility*, which refers to free exploitation of courses; *promotion (business)*, i.e. the opportunities they offer for opening up the higher education market to new players and for policy change within the traditional academic institutions. Apart from the answers to the different questions, which are covered in the text, what is clear is that practitioners in the field are more focused on the dynamics of process than on content because they feel that is the area where the greatest challenges lie.

### 5. *Final remarks*

The scenario that we have outlined so far appears coherent. On the one hand, people recognise the disruptive power of MOOCs and encourage their development, making sure the market is kept free from public interference. On the other hand, development of MOOCs is largely restricted to those confines that distance-learning institutions impose. These institutions have a strong legacy in the sector because of their research base and international experience. It comes as no surprise to discover that they are major stakeholders in Europe. For players like these, MOOCs represent more of an *evolution* (continuity with the past, but a wider market to work in) than a *revolution* (radical change of paradigm). The emerging framework is very similar to that of the free market, a market which people want open but protected. The same kind of neo-liberalist framework that G. Siemens, the inventor of MOOCs, rejected so forcefully: “if we do take a stance that neoliberalism is some combination of open markets, deregulation, globalization, small government, low taxes, death of the public organization, and anti-union, then MOOCs are not at all neoliberalist” (Siemens 2013).

Regardless of the paradigm, there is no doubt that we are witnessing the creation of a parallel market, which could prove very attractive. A kind of “shadow education” – as Siemens (2013) defines it – whose effects are making themselves felt, for better or worse.

SWOT Analysis: Punti di forza e debolezza dei MOOCs, opportunità e pericoli connessi alla loro diffusione

WEAKNESSES	QUALITY	OPENESS	COLLABORATION	FLEXIBILITY	EXPLOITATION
<b>STRENGTHS</b> <b>CONTENT</b>	1. Free high quality contents; 2. Better quality of teaching	1. Contents availability; 2. Use of different languages			1. Professional use
	1. Non attractive design of courses				1. USA-led cultural approach
<b>PROCESS</b>	1. Free high quality contents; 2. Better quality of teaching	1. Democratization (massive participation)	1. Social interaction/ Peer learning; 2. Feedback for the teacher	1. Independent learning/Voluntariness/ Self-assessment; 2. Active learning/Flip peed learning; 3. Balance between freedom and flexibility	1. High time and costs investments; 2. Strong broadization of the mood scenario; 3. Lack of integration with national quality agencies for high education regulations; 4. MOOCs are not integrated within Higher Education; 5. Difficulties to integrate with some pedagogical models; 6. No- peer review; 6. No-degree
	1. MOOCs can't replace online classes; 2. Lack of learning scenarios; 3. Teachers lack experience in online courses and management; 4. Technological platforms and infrastructures (ex. connections) are not mature yet; 6. Social kharma and competences are not yet defined		1. Reductio in a mass consumption service	1. Weakness of self-learning capability; 2. Weak interaction with teachers; 3. Not enough peer activity	2. University system is difficult to change; 3. High rate of drop-out; 4. Weekly schedule doesn't fit right with job

SWOT Analysis: MOOCs weaknesses and strengths, treats and opportunities

WEAKNESSES	QUALITY	OPENESS	COLLABORATION	FLEXIBILITY	EXPLOITATION
<b>STRENGTHS</b> <b>CONTENT</b>	1. Free high quality contents; 2. Better quality of teaching	1. Contents availability; 2. Use of different languages			1. Profession al use
<b>PROCESS</b>	1. MOOCs can't replace online classes; 2. Lack of learning scenarios; 3. Teachers lack experience in online courses and management; 4. Technological platforms and infrastructures (ex. connections) are not mature yet; 6. Social kharms and competences are not yet defined	1. Democratization (massive participation)	1. Social interaction/ Peer learning; 2. Feedback for the teacher	1. Independent learning/Vol untariness/S elf-assessment; 2. Active learning/Flip ped learning; 3. Balance between freedom and flexibility	1. High time and costs investments; 2. Strong broadization of the mooc scenario; 3. Lack of integration with national quality agencies for regulations; 4. MOocs are not integrated within Higher Education; 5. Difficulties to integrate with some pedagogical models; 6. No- poster review; 6. No-degree



THREATS	QUALITY		OPENESS		COLLABORATION		FLEXIBILITY		EXPLOITATION	
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	1. enhance the quality of teaching; 2. develop pedagogical concepts of learning with media; 3. Life long learning at a high level	1. too many low level courses; 2. MOOCs reduce interest in "normal" learning; 3. Boredom	1. access to knowledge; 2. open up education	1. To high concentration	1. establishing networks within specific areas of teaching; 2. Staying in contact with student	1. promote different perspective and cultural diversities;	1. Social benefit; 2. Promote education research; 3. experimenting a new field	1. Nationalism; 2. Intellectual property protection for authoring		
<b>PROCESS</b>	1. Testing of new PLEs and functionalities; 2. A way to select the best students; 3. Pedagogical innovation and improvement; 4. try out new pedagogies; 5. have a strong technical support; 6. break the reluctances of a number of teachers	1. Lack of professional managers; 2. Manpower to build high quality courses	1. have new potential audience; 2. democratize HE; 3. reach new audience	1. Non-ethical use of the student data; 2. Teachers may not want to publish their material on an open platform; 3. Hard to manage the massive aspect of Mooc: more students, more needs and more different opinions	1. Will students want to learn with each other on campus in the future if everything is provided online?	1. personalize learning; 2. understand more deeply the education needs of the society	1. the extrem fragmentation of curricula	1. the need to get a profitable business model; 2. complete privatization on the higher education; costs might outweigh the benefits; the University decreases its commitment to research which will be disconnected from learning		

THREATS	QUALITY	OPENESS	COLLABORATION	FLEXIBILITY	EXPLOITATION
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<p>1. enhance the quality of teaching; 2. develop pedagogical concepts of learning with media; 3. Life long learning at a high level</p>	<p>1. access to knowledge; 2. open education</p>	<p>1. establish networks within specific areas of teaching; 2. Staying in contact with student</p>	<p>1. promote different perspective and cultural diversities;</p>	<p>1. Social benefit; 2. Promote education research; 3. experimenting a new field</p> <p>1. Nationalism; 2. Intellectual property protection for authoring</p>
<b>PROCESS</b>	<p>1. Testing of new PLEs and functionalities; 2. A way to select the best students; 3. Pedagogical innovation and improvement; 4. try out new pedagogies; 5. have a strong technical support; 6. break the reluctance of a number of teachers</p>	<p>1. have new potential audience; 2. democratize HE; 3. reach new audience / broaden audience (dissemi nate knowledge)</p>	<p>1. Rethink the way we teach: More integration of social networking , simulated environme nis, real-time exercises and situations, tutoring and mentoring</p>	<p>1. personalize learning; 2. understand more deeply the education needs of the society</p>	<p>1. promote and advertise universities; 2. To explore new markets; 3. internationalize HE; 3. Exchange finances and for further development</p> <p>1. the need to get a profitable business model; 2. complete privatization on the higher education; costs might outweigh the benefits; the University decreases its commitment to research which will be disconnected from learning</p>

### Note

\* Valentina Reda ha contribuito alla stesura del terzo paragrafo. Il resto del testo, come l'approccio d'analisi e le scelte metodologiche, sono da attribuire a Rosanna De Rosa

<sup>1</sup> Le più note fra le piattaforme statunitensi in ordine di anzianità sono: Udacity (febbraio 2012), Coursera (aprile 2012) e Edx (maggio 2012). Per un'analisi delle diverse iniziative si rimanda a: Li Yuan and Stephen Powell 2013: <<http://publications.cetis.ac.uk/2013/667>>. Si veda anche Hill (2012).

<sup>2</sup> P. Dillenbourg, *MOOCs in Europe, an overview*, slides presentate alla Conferenza EPFL di Losanna, 6-7 giugno, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Comunicazione della Commissione al Parlamento Europeo, il Consiglio, il Comitato sociale ed economico europeo e il Comitato delle regioni, *European Higher Education in the World*, Brussels, 11.7.2013 COM(2013) 499 final.

<sup>4</sup> La framework analysis è un metodo di ricerca qualitativo che trova applicazione nella *policy research*, in particolare nel settore dello *health care* e dell'*education*. Simile alla *grounded theory*, la *framework analysis* per essere correttamente applicata richiede l'esistenza di alcune condizioni, vale a dire: che il tema indagato sia molto specifico e, quindi, circoscritto nel tempo e nello spazio; che si possa fare affidamento su un campione prestabilito (a pre-designed sample, come - ad esempio - un campione di esperti di settore o professionisti) e su un set di issues individuate a priori (a priori issues) (Srivastava and Thomson 2009). Nella fase esplorativa di una ricerca, tale metodo permette di: "defining concepts, mapping range and nature of phenomena, creating typologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing strategies" (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, 186).

<sup>5</sup> Sono state invitate a rispondere alla *survey* 140 persone, di cui 70 *stakeholders* e 70 docenti attivi nella preparazione di Moocs. Il tasso di risposta è pari al 20% con un equilibrio tra i due sottocampioni.

<sup>6</sup> Una Roadmap intitolata: *European Initiative to enhance education and skills development through new technologies*. Su cui è stata attivata anche una consultazione pubblica, ancora accessibile in ottobre 2013 nel sito web della EC: <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/consult/open\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/open_en.htm)> (10/2013).

<sup>7</sup> L'idea di considerare le risorse prodotte dai Moocs nell'ambito del programma Erasmus era stata già inclusa nel programma *Europe for All* alla metà del 2012: <<http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/>> (10/2013).

<sup>8</sup> Molti di più (circa duecento) se consideriamo anche le citazioni in articoli dedicati ad altri temi o alle presentazioni di Università per la guida per l'orientamento universitario.

<sup>9</sup> Alex Katsomitos è un *research analyst* presso l'Observatory on Borderless Higher Education.

<sup>10</sup> Un pre-summit organizzato dal Center for Digital Education della Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale di Losanna, diretto dal Prof. Pierre Dillenbourg.

<sup>11</sup> Moocs European Stakeholders Summit: <<https://documents.epfl.ch/groups/m/mol/mooc-summit/www/documents/meeting/IntroMESS-v3.pdf>> (10/2013).

<sup>12</sup> Vi partecipano 36 fra università e centri di ricerca, 12 fra associazioni, consorzi e istituzioni, 13 *corporate actors* fra i quali le principali piattaforme Moocs (Coursera, Edx, Udacity, FutureLearn, Google Mooc Maker).

<sup>13</sup> "An Open Letter to Professor Michael Sandel From the Philosophy Department at San Jose State U", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2 May 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Per l'elaborazione dei dati si ringrazia Maddalena Molaro, Natascia Palmino d'Amico e Rosaria Pescatore.

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Anderson Chris (2006), *The Long Tail. Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*, New York, Hyperion.

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## Notes

\*Valentina Reda contributed the third paragraph to the article. The remaining parts, the analytical approach as well as all the methodological choices are by Rosanna De Rosa.

<sup>1</sup>Udacity, Coursera and Edx are the most acknowledged platforms in US, respectively founded in February, April and May of 2012. For an analysis of these initiatives, see: Li Yuan and Stephen Powell 2013, <<http://publications.cetis.ac.uk/2013/667>>. See also Hill (2012).

<sup>2</sup>P. Dillenbourg, *MOOCs in Europe, an overview*, slides presented to the EPFL Conference held in Lausanne, June 6-7, 2013.

<sup>3</sup>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *European Higher Education in the World*, Brussels, 11 June 2013 COM(2013) 499 final.

<sup>4</sup>The Framework Analysis is a qualitative method, commonly used in policy research, in particular, in the Health Care and Education fields. Similarly to the Grounded Theory, the Framework Analysis requires some basic conditions: a well specified object, limited in time and space; a pre-designed sample, such as an expert sample; a set of a priori issues (Srivastava and Thomson 2009). In the exploratory phase of a research, this method enable at: “defining concepts, mapping range and nature of phenomena, creating typologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing strategies” (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994, 186).

<sup>5</sup>We invited 140 subjects to answer to our questionnaire: 70 stakeholders and 70 Professors involved in the implementation of MOOCs. The response rate was 20 per cent, with an equilibrium of the two subsamples.

<sup>6</sup>A Roadmap entitled: *European Initiative to enhance education and skills development through new technologies*. A public consultation has been activated to test the policy proposal, wich is still available in October 2013 on the EC website: <[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/consult/open\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/open_en.htm)> (10/2013).

<sup>7</sup>The idea of considering the MOOCs under the Erasmus program had already been included in the program “Europe for All” at mid-2012. Accessible to the page: <<http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/>> (10/2013).

<sup>8</sup>Much more (about two hundred) if we include the references to MOOCs contained in articles devoted to other topics or in the presentations of Universities aimed to orientation.

<sup>9</sup>Alex Katsomitros is a Research analyst at the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education.

<sup>10</sup>A pre-Summit organised by the Center for Digital Education de l’Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Lausanne, directed by Professor Pierre Dillenbourg.

<sup>11</sup>Moocs European Stakeholders Summit accessible to the page: <<https://documents.epfl.ch/groups/m/mo/mooc-summit/www/documents/meeting/IntroMESS-v3.pdf>> (10/2013).

<sup>12</sup>The Summit involved 36 among Universities and Research Centers, 12 among associations, consortia and institutions e 13 corporate actors (including major MOOCs’ platforms: Coursera, Edx, Udacity, FutureLearn, Google Mooc Maker).

<sup>13</sup>“An Open Letter to Professor Michael Sandel From the Philosophy Department at San Jose State U”, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2 May 2013.

<sup>14</sup>We thank Maddalena Molaro, Natasha Palmino d’Amico and Rosaria Pescatore for the data processing.

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