

Challenges & opportunities for Open Online Education – A group concept mapping study



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BACKGROUND

The Dutch Government is aiming to stimulate better and more use of educational innovations, and especially Open Online Education (OOE) in higher education institutions (HEIs). The aim is to create a more expedient, accessible and personalized learning experience for students, that contributes to an improvement of the quality of education in general and increased study success. There are many examples of Open Online Education innovations, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), that seem promising. However, a lot of OOE projects seem to only have local success, and are not able to embed OOE in the institution to make it a sustainable educational practice. Finding out what exactly the failure and success factors are might help to solve this problem.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are challenges and opportunities for (OOE) innovation projects within higher learning institutions in The Netherlands?

METHOD

- Group concept mapping (GCM) technique is a structured mixed-methods approach, applying both quantitative and qualitative measures to identify an expert group's common understanding.
- Participants with interest and experience in OOE generated and sorted ideas, then rated generated themes by importance and influence.
- Multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis were used to analyze the themes.

CONCLUSION

- We were able to identify six bigger clusters that represent bigger themes for challenges and opportunities for OOE represented in table 1 and figure 2.:
- With the identification of these clusters we were able to link these to the rating criteria (i.e. importance and influence). The following conclusions can be drawn:
 - Clusters 1, 4 and 6 were found relatively important for the success of OOE, the institution is in a lesser extend able to have control over or influence these. This can imply that *collaboration and internationalization*, *online teaching* and *quality of education* are the real challenges that HEIs face in order to make OOE a sustainable educational practice.
 - Clusters 2 and 5 were rated as not so important for the success of OOE, but are within the circle of influence of the institution. Thus, *assessment* and *institutional organization* could therefore be a lower priority for HEIs to focus on when aiming to make OOE a success.
 - Cluster 3 was rated very important, and also highly controllable by the institution. This could mean that the low hanging fruit to improve the success of OOE is related to the *accessibility and transparency of education*.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

The study identified expert consensus for challenges and opportunities for OOE. Some outcomes considered most important were among those considered most difficult to influence by an institution. However, there are also outcomes that are important, and within the circle of influence of an institution. This implies that for some aspects regarding OOE, institutions can take steps in making OOE a sustainable educational practice. Identifying this is a first step in this process.

KEYWORDS

Higher Education, Organization, Open Online Education, Group Concept Mapping, Challenges, Opportunities

RESULTS

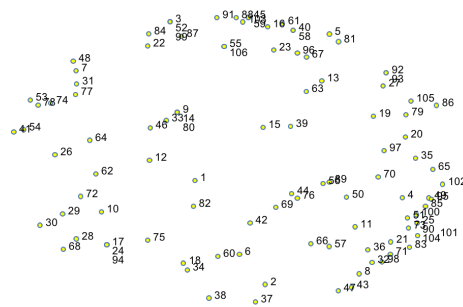


Figure 1.

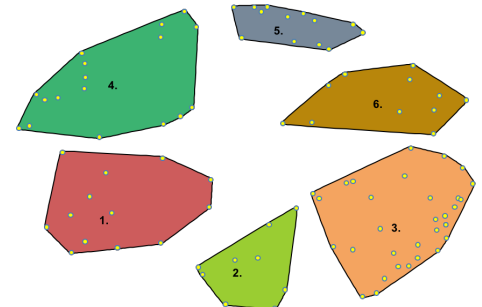


Figure 2.

Cluster	Number of statements	Description
1. Collaboration & Internationalization	16	This cluster mainly encompasses statements in relation to sharing materials and collaboration within and between institutions, as well as the international aspect of this
2. Assessment	8	Statements are mostly about assessment, more specifically with regard to their methods, quality, feedback and interaction
3. Accessibility & transparency of education	33	This is a very large cluster, and mainly encompasses statements about time independent learning, flexible learning paths, personalized learning and connecting education with practice
4. Online teaching	20	Statements are mainly about the differences in workflow for OOE and traditional education, the role of the teacher, skills to teach in OOE contexts, and building a reputation in online teaching, and return on investment of online teaching
5. Institutional organization	16	This cluster represents statements about policy, management and knowledge of regulations within the institution, support by the institution, and organizational strategy alignment and commitment of the board
6. Quality of education	13	The majority of the statements is about quality guidelines and standards for OOE, the bigger scale of OOE and the addition of OOE to campus education

Table 1.

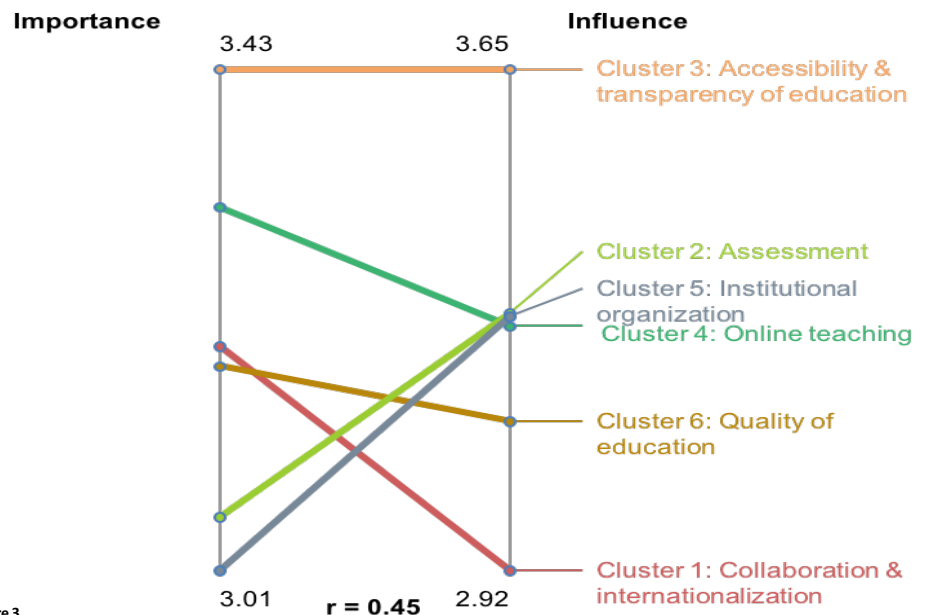


Figure 3.

