

Leiden University is a research-intensive institution, but we care deeply about teaching, too. Because of that, in April of 2013, we became the first Dutch university to embrace the use of MOOCs.

MOOCs are Massive Open Online Courses that engage thousands of students all over the world in online lectures and instruction; they draw students into online discussions, assignments and exams.

It would be fair, though, if you were to ask me why MOOCs are important to Leiden. Is it just a trend? Do we just want to be hip and happening? Do they have potential for impact, or should we just admit that the acronym would be better spelled out as Massively \*Overrated\* Online Courses.

Over the past 18 months, we have produced MOOCs in the fields of European Law, Counter-terrorism, global politics, and world order. These four courses have attracted 170,000 students internationally; over 8,000 completed a course and 2,200 earned certified diplomas.

By comparison, we give out approximately 5,000 regular diplomas every year.

Our MOOCs are not just for students in other countries and on other continents; they are changing on-campus teaching in profound and positive ways.

This is possible because the innovations that come with MOOCs fit Leiden University's strategy in at least three important ways.

One element of our strategy is that we want to reach out to the world and contribute to solving the grand challenges of our time. We do this by reaching learners everywhere and offering the opportunity for real change.

Abdinor Hassan Dahir is a 24-year-old from Mogadishu in Somalia. As a student in professor Madeleine Hosli's course The Changing Global Order, he tells us how he grew up in an environment of violence and is now learning about the politics of peace. "Taking the course enabled me to understand how I can participate in a political process intended to boost peaceful coexistence. I am very much eager to take part in my country's future policy by using peaceful methods"

The second strategic goal which MOOCs feed is our vision for teaching our students to think globally. This emerges in part from international classrooms and MOOCs help us provide that. Professor Maurits Berger from our Humanities Faculty earlier this year transformed a regular course called 'Sharia in the West', and offered it online to 25 international learners and 15 regular Leiden University students. The international students were attracted through our MOOC-platform, Coursera, and their presence created a fascinating international classroom for our own students.

The third point of overlap involves our goal of creating a tight-knit academic community with students as active and engaged participants. MOOCs are a useful tool here as we use them to stimulate our own students to work actively and closely together with their teachers. New possibilities are already emerging through our blended learning model, which combines online and in-class teaching. As we experiment, we monitor and study the effects this has on students' learning and on our pedagogy.

Beyond these three pedagogical strategies, MOOCs also give us the opportunity to build new partnerships with other top universities. The world's best universities are actively engaged in online learning, and Leiden University will collaborate with some of them on these exciting innovations for university teaching.

Today we are very honoured that professor Vivek Goel is here. Dr. Goel has served as vice-president and provost at the University of Toronto. Today, he is the chief academic strategist at Coursera, the prestigious, US based MOOC-platform that has been pivotal to Leiden University's recent online successes. Coursera hosts top universities such as Stanford, Princeton, Yale, Peking University, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Munich.

We feel fortunate to be able to work together with the best in changing global higher education. And we feel fortunate to have Dr. Goel with us today, giving us the opportunity to hear his thoughts about the development of MOOCs and their future and sustainability.