

Know It All - A Portal for MOOCs (Nov 13)



by Nic Laycock

November 7, 2013

“Some observers describe the MOOC as a silent revolution. Certainly it is an experiment in progress, and one that is shaking up thinking about the value and methodologies of tertiary education at a time when education costs are spiralling upwards. Education’s value as a route to employment is paramount in the emerging world, but that value is under question in the hard pressed industrialized areas of the world.”

“Know It All”—I think I have now heard it all!

Poetically, I was in Athens, the ancient seat of learning, as a guest speaker at the [GUIDE Association 6th International Conference](#). While the delegates were there to address the impact of the global economic crisis on national education systems, and in particular the contribution made by online education, the hot topic of the conference was of course that “M” word again—the MOOC.

Introducing the GUIDE Association and its conference

The GUIDE Association, created in 2005 by [Marconi University in Rome](#), has become a truly global body. GUIDE is predominantly academic and boasts a global affiliation of 120 universities. The GUIDE Conference drew delegates from every continent. The content and debate were challenging and robust, applying strict pedagogical and economic arguments to the long-held beliefs that tertiary education is a driver of economic health, and that possession of a degree is a path to personal upliftment.

So why that “M” word again in that context? The MOOC is turning academia upside down and inside out. Whether it is the idea of free information, non-assessed study, scale of take-up, or the technology that modern online learning requires, academia is questioning itself—and, on the basis of this experience, very positively.

[Andrew Ng](#) and his incredible enthusiasm for the [Coursera](#) initiative were a real treat in the first session of the conference. (Coursera, by the way, recorded its five-millionth enrollment that day!) But from around the world came examples of MOOCs of different sizes, technological complexities, business and operating models, and on-the-ground case experience.

Know It All: A worldwide portal for MOOCs

It is in that arena that GUIDE has created [Know It All](#), launching an international MOOC portal in response to the explosive growth of the genre in the last two years. Now with over six-million enrolled students on the three major MOOC networks, and with US-based Georgia Institute of Technology having launched the first fully MOOC-based degree, the scene is changing fast. Krista Di Eleuterio

fronted the launch during a session entitled “MOOCs: A Revolution in the Making,” hailing Know It All as having benefits for universities and students. It is a portal affording access to a wide range of MOOC opportunities from around the planet.

Do we need a portal for MOOCs? Krista emphatically says, “Yes,” but in launching the initiative GUIDE has no fixed outcome in mind. Krista told me, “The first stage is to get universities and their MOOCs to sign up to being accessible through Know It All. Once that happens we will be able to test whether the vision has substance.”

Know It All is a global network that will provide students free access to higher-education courses and at the same time give universities an international forum to exchange and promote their own online courses.

Krista explained, “It is a forum where universities can promote their MOOCs to the widest possible audience free of charge. If it works, it will be a one-stop shop for students to choose from a fast growing and bewildering range of opportunities, directing them from the portal directly to the MOOC of choice. For the university there will of course be the direct benefit of their MOOC being visible to a wider pool of potential students. But for them, the opportunity is also for the university to increase its visibility because MOOCs are emerging from universities that are hardly known outside their own national boundaries. It is also a wonderful opportunity to join a network of common interest in the MOOC as a means of promoting a global culture of quality and excellence in education, and of innovation in its delivery methodologies.”

Why the interest in the MOOC?

Some observers describe the MOOC as a silent revolution. Certainly it is an experiment in progress, and one that is shaking up thinking about the value and methodologies of tertiary education at a time when education costs are spiralling upwards. Education’s value as a route to employment is paramount in the emerging world, but that value is under question in the hard pressed industrialized areas of the world. Cost reduction for the university, affordability and access for the student, and an open source of information for the professional seeking personal development all contribute to the attraction.

Know It All may provide a focus for gathering the learning as the revolution becomes a trend!

Want to know more?

For further information, or to affiliate to Know It All, send email to info@guideassociation.org or contact Krista Di Eleuterio directly at k.dieleutrio@unimarconi.it or +39 06377 25548

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