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DIGITAL LEARNING REVOLUTION: MOOCS AS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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The article examines the role of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the professional activities of university teachers in Ukraine, particularly in the context of digital transformation and the disruption of traditional educational processes due to wartime conditions. The need for flexible, accessible, and resilient educational solutions has become increasingly important to sustain teaching and learning despite various institutional, infrastructural, and geographic challenges. Special attention is paid to the possibilities of translating the theoretical potential of MOOCs into practical language teaching, including their use for developing communicative competence, improving teachers' digital pedagogy, and enriching foreign language courses through authentic multimedia content, interactive tasks, and self-paced learning modules.

The study aims to explore the attitudes of Ukrainian university educators toward the use of MOOCs, identify the factors influencing their adoption, and assess how MOOCs contribute to professional development and

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the modernisation of higher education by outlining concrete ways MOOCs can be embedded into blended and language-oriented instructional models. A mixed-methods approach was employed, which combined an online survey with qualitative feedback to gather both quantitative data and deeper insights into educators' experiences. The results indicate that most respondents are aware of major MOOC platforms and actively utilize them for professional development. Educators recognize several advantages of MOOCs, including flexible scheduling, access to high-quality materials, opportunities for independent learning, and exposure to global expertise. They also noted that MOOCs aid in the development of digital skills and support innovative teaching practices. However, various barriers were identified, such as limited time resources, inconsistent digital infrastructure in certain areas, inadequate institutional support, and a lack of clear recommendations for integrating MOOCs into formal curricula. The study concludes that MOOCs have considerable potential to enhance the resilience and adaptability of higher education in Ukraine. Effective integration of MOOCs requires coordinated institutional policies, methodological guidance, professional development initiatives, and ongoing investment in digital infrastructure. The findings contribute to a better understanding of educators' digital practices and highlight strategic directions for improving the role of MOOCs in modern higher education.

Keywords: *blended learning, digital transformation, higher education, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), pedagogical innovation.*

Problem statement. The progressive digitalisation of contemporary society has significantly transformed educational practices, particularly through the integration of online learning resources. Among these resources, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have emerged as a central mechanism in the reformation of online education and have become a vital driver of global educational innovation [2]. In foreign language education, this transformation opens new opportunities for practical application, as MOOCs enable teachers to supplement classroom instruction with authentic listening materials, discipline-specific vocabulary acquisition, intercultural communication tasks, and professionally oriented language practice. The relevance of MOOCs is especially pronounced within the Ukrainian higher education system, which has experienced notable structural and pedagogical changes over the past decade. Rapid technological advancements have shaped these transformations, the country's integration into the European Higher Education Area, the need to adapt instruction to wartime realities, and the growing societal demand for flexible, distance, and blended learning formats.

The expansion of MOOCs in Ukraine accelerated following the nationwide shift to distance learning in 2020, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic [14] and further reinforced by the constraints brought about by russia's military aggression. During this period, MOOCs exhibited considerable effectiveness as supplementary educational tools due to their accessibility, practical orientation, and adaptability to diverse learning needs. Their significance has only grown as access to the physical infrastructure of certain universities has become limited or completely disrupted. As a result, many higher education institutions have adopted distance or blended modalities, enabling students to pursue academic programs regardless of their geographic location. In these circumstances, MOOCs play a crucial role in maintaining educational continuity and ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities [5].

Beyond formal academic curricula, MOOCs represent a valuable resource for non-formal education [1; 8]. They enable students to expand their competencies by engaging with supplementary content that is often absent from traditional university programs. MOOCs facilitate self-directed learning, offering individuals the flexibility to select courses that are relevant to them, study at their own pace, and earn certificates that validate their achievements. The opportunity to enrol in multiple courses simultaneously further enhances their utility as tools for lifelong learning and professional development.

The successful integration of MOOCs into higher education, however, is heavily influenced by the pedagogical attitudes and practices of university instructors. Academic staff play a crucial role in recommending online courses, curating digital content, and guiding students in choosing MOOCs that align with disciplinary objectives. International research has explored educators' perspectives on MOOCs, including their application in teaching, perceived benefits, and the institutional challenges they face [4; 6; 7]. Nonetheless, the attitudes of Ukrainian university teachers toward MOOCs remain insufficiently explored, despite the national importance of digital learning tools in the current socio-political context.

This study aims to explore Ukrainian higher education instructors' perceptions and experiences regarding the integration of MOOCs into their professional practice and self-development. Understanding these attitudes is crucial for identifying educators' preferences in choosing

online courses and for creating recommendations to promote the adoption of MOOCs in Ukrainian universities.

Analysis of current research. Recent studies show that Ukraine's digital educational environment has gained significant support from international partners, enhancing access to technological tools for teachers and students. Companies like Google and Zoom have provided free software solutions, improving distance learning capabilities. Google offers its cloud-based educational ecosystem, while Zoom enables unlimited video conferences for universities. Additionally, MOOC platforms like Udemy, Coursera, and edX have broadened access to their course catalogues to ensure continuous learning during crises.

Some research reveals that both international platforms (like Coursera, edX, and Cisco) and local Ukrainian platforms (such as Prometheus and EdEra) are highly regarded among Ukrainian university students [10; 14]. These platforms differ in their course offerings, user interface design, levels of interactivity, and monetisation strategies, thereby providing diverse learning pathways within the broader online education landscape.

A comprehensive body of literature firmly establishes the structural elements of MOOCs and their vital pedagogical roles. Most MOOCs are built around several essential components: video lectures, supplementary learning materials, and assessment tools [13]. Video lectures provide learners with the opportunity to access instructional content asynchronously and take control of their own study pace. Supplementary materials, such as presentations, expert interviews, and informational articles, significantly enhance students' understanding of the subject matter. Assessment components, including automated tests and practical assignments, enable precise monitoring of students' mastery of course content. Additionally, progress indicators displayed in personal accounts actively promote self-regulated learning [12].

In specialised subject areas, MOOCs often incorporate advanced features that further enrich the learning experience. For example, programming courses typically include annotated code samples, interactive compilers, and problem-solving exercises, empowering learners to apply theoretical concepts in a practical context [11]. Moreover, many MOOCs integrate interactive elements like discussion forums, webinars, and message boards, which foster lively communication and enhance learner engagement. This strategic

combination of core and optional components greatly enhances the flexibility and pedagogical effectiveness of MOOCs.

The literature identifies several key advantages of MOOCs. Firstly, they embody the concepts of massiveness and openness, providing unrestricted access to educational content from prominent global institutions, often at no cost. Learners can choose courses that align with their personal goals and develop relevant professional skills accordingly [1]. The flexibility of MOOCs allows individuals to combine studies with work or other commitments, thereby facilitating broader participation in lifelong learning [15].

Secondly, MOOC-based education fosters the development of independent learning skills. Students are required to manage their study processes, assess the relevance of content, and critically reflect on their own educational needs. Engaging with digital platforms also contributes to the cultivation of digital literacy skills, such as navigating online educational environments, retrieving and processing digital content, and utilising internet browser tools [5]. These digital competencies enhance self-regulation and bolster motivation for continuous self-improvement among both educators and [9].

Thirdly, MOOCs facilitate the digital transformation of higher education institutions. They complement other distance learning tools, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), online conferencing technologies, and recorded video lectures. By integrating MOOCs into discipline-focused instruction, educational programs can harness greater innovative potential [1] and cultivate a shared virtual learning environment. This is particularly crucial in situations with limited face-to-face interaction, as MOOCs can maintain a sense of social presence among students [3]. Additionally, digital services such as Google Workspace, Padlet and Kahoot! further enhance opportunities for interaction and collaboration within academic groups.

MOOCs are valuable for fostering virtual academic mobility, enabling students to access international expertise without physical relocation. They can also enhance formal higher education curricula, enrich distance and blended learning, and support personalised learning pathways through non-formal education principles [8; 1].

Contemporary research shows that MOOCs serve as both an emergency response during crises and a long-term strategy for modernising education in Ukraine. Their flexibility and accessibility enhance the quality and inclusivity of higher education.

The aim and tasks of the research. This research aims to investigate the attitudes of Ukrainian university teachers toward the integration of MOOCs into their professional practice and self-development with a particular focus on their practical application in higher education language teaching. The objectives include identifying educators' preferences when making a choice of online courses, determining the factors that influence their use of MOOCs, and outlining methodological recommendations to promote the implementation of MOOCs in higher education.

Methods of the research. The research employed a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, including an online survey of Ukrainian university teachers, semi-structured interviews to obtain deeper insights into educators' perceptions of MOOCs, and statistical analysis of survey responses to identify prevailing trends, factors influencing MOOC usage, and patterns in teachers' professional development practices.

Presentation of the main material. Understanding the integration of MOOCs into the Ukrainian higher education system requires consideration of the broader context of the country's technological, social, and geopolitical realities. In recent years, international partners have played a crucial role in supporting the continuity of educational processes. Companies like Google have facilitated institutional access to cloud-based learning environments, while Zoom Video Communications provided universities with unrestricted access to videoconferencing tools. This support has been particularly critical since 2022, when many institutions lost access to their physical infrastructure due to security threats and forced displacements.

Major international MOOC providers like Coursera, edX, and Udemy offered free or conditionally free access to their courses for Ukrainian students and teachers. Domestic platforms, such as Prometheus and EdEra, also expanded their offerings and worked with universities to integrate online courses. These platforms have become widely used resources for Ukrainian learners due to their accessibility and diverse subject coverage [11; 14].

The pedagogical structure of MOOCs available in Ukraine adheres to global design principles. Typical MOOCs consist of video lectures, supplementary materials, and automated assessment tools, which provide learners with flexibility in scheduling and pacing. The inclusion of interactive discussion forums, webinars, peer-reviewed

assignments, and, in some cases, built-in programming environments enhances practical engagement and allows learners to deepen their disciplinary competencies [13].

The digital expansion within higher education has undeniably driven a significant transformation in university practices. The shift towards blended learning, alongside the demand for resilient educational models in wartime, and the increasing focus on academic mobility, have created an environment ripe for the adoption of MOOCs. MOOCs are essential components of the broader digital ecosystem of higher education, effectively complementing institutional LMS, video lessons, and communication tools.

In Ukraine, a dynamic interplay of external support, internal modernisation, and the growing strategic significance of MOOCs is witnessed as a vital instrument of educational resilience and innovation. An empirical investigation into the attitudes and experiences of Ukrainian university educators regarding their engagement with MOOCs has yielded compelling insights.

First, the majority of participants exhibited a robust awareness of leading MOOC platforms, with Coursera, edX, Prometheus, and EdEra standing out as the most utilised resources [14]. Most educators reported having completed at least one MOOC, primarily in fields such as pedagogy, digital literacy, and their specific academic disciplines. They emphasised the value of high-quality content, expert-led instruction, and structured opportunities for self-development.

Second, teachers' choices when selecting MOOCs were driven by several key factors. Clarity of course structure, relevance to their professional tasks, availability of certificates, and the incorporation of practical assignments were all decisive criteria. Respondents recognised the effectiveness of video lectures and automated quizzes, which correspond with the pedagogical framework [12]. Furthermore, courses featuring interactive elements, such as webinars or guided discussions, were regarded as notably more engaging and conducive to long-term knowledge retention.

Third, the study identified several motivational factors influencing the use of MOOCs. Participants reported that MOOCs helped them maintain professional competencies, enhance their digital skills, and access global knowledge without geographical limitations [1]. The flexibility of learning schedules was particularly appreciated, as it allowed teachers to balance coursework with their professional

responsibilities [15]. However, participants also faced several barriers. Key obstacles included limited time resources, inconsistent internet connectivity in some regions, and a lack of institutional incentives.

Some respondents expressed concerns about how MOOCs align with university curricula and the lack of guidance for integrating online courses. However, most educators were optimistic about the future of MOOCs, especially with institutional support and methodological recommendations.

Overall, Ukrainian university teachers see MOOCs as valuable for professional development and teaching improvement, while noting the need for structural enhancements. This finding aligns with global research on the potential of MOOCs, reflecting a growing acceptance of online learning for professional growth. The respondents recognised MOOCs' role in expanding teaching possibilities and enriching course content [4].

A key insight from this study is the dual role of MOOCs as both a professional development tool and a means for curricular innovation. While Ukrainian educators often use MOOCs for personal learning, they express caution regarding their integration into university programs. This tension may arise from the lack of standardised institutional policies on MOOC accreditation, a challenge also noted in international contexts [6].

Additionally, respondents emphasised the importance of flexible scheduling and independent learning skills, reflecting recent scholarship on digital self-regulation [5; 9]. Teachers who regularly engage with MOOCs tend to show greater confidence in their digital competencies and demonstrate a stronger motivation for lifelong learning.

The identified obstacles, such as limited time, inadequate technological infrastructure, and insufficient organisational support, highlight the need for systemic improvements in Ukraine's education system, particularly under wartime conditions that worsen access to stable Internet and digital tools. Despite these challenges, educators show a strong interest in MOOCs as a key element for educational modernisation, contingent on supportive institutional frameworks.

The findings suggest that while Ukrainian educators are eager to utilise MOOCs, successful implementation depends on structured guidance, administrative assistance, and clear integration strategies within academic programs. Based on the study's findings and an

analysis of existing research, several recommendations can be put forth to enhance the effective use of MOOCs in Ukrainian higher education:

1) Institutional support and strategic planning. Universities should develop internal policies that formally recognise MOOCs as a valuable aspect of professional development and, where applicable, facilitate their integration into academic curricula. Establishing clear procedures for course selection, accreditation, and evaluation will help alleviate uncertainty among educators.

2) Development of methodological guidelines. Educators would greatly benefit from practical recommendations that outline how to incorporate MOOCs into blended learning models, how to merge MOOCs content with traditional instruction, and how to assess learning outcomes achieved through external online platforms. Such guidelines should be tailored to meet the specific needs of institutions [1; 8].

3) Enhancing digital infrastructure. Reliable access to digital tools and a stable Internet connection are crucial for sustained engagement with MOOCs. Universities should continue to collaborate with international partners to maintain and expand technological support, as evidenced by previous initiatives from Google and Zoom.

4) Professional development workshops. Institutions ought to offer training sessions that focus on navigating MOOC platforms, selecting high-quality courses, and utilising digital tools effectively. These workshops can also address challenges related to self-regulation and time management in online learning environments.

5) Encouraging communities of practice. Establishing informal teacher networks or discussion groups centred around specific MOOC topics can promote collaborative learning and peer support. Communication tools such as Google Workspace, Padlet, or LMS forums can facilitate these interactions.

6) Supporting virtual academic mobility. In light of limitations on physical mobility, universities should advocate for the use of MOOCs as a means to access international expertise, thereby broadening academic perspectives and strengthening global connections.

Collectively, these measures have the potential to significantly enhance the adoption of MOOCs, promote sustained professional development among educators, and facilitate the broader digital transformation of higher education in Ukraine.

Conclusions. In conclusion, this research underscores the growing importance of MOOCs in Ukrainian higher education, emphasising

their potential for professional development and pedagogical innovation. Ukrainian university educators generally perceive MOOCs positively, valuing their accessibility and flexibility in acquiring new knowledge and enhancing digital competencies, especially amid current geopolitical and infrastructural challenges.

From the perspective of language education, MOOCs can be effectively used to support blended learning models, develop students' receptive and productive language skills, expand exposure to authentic professional discourse, and foster learner autonomy through independent online practice.

The study reveals a strong awareness of MOOC platforms and highlights existing challenges related to institutional frameworks and methodological support. Addressing these challenges would allow language teachers to systematically integrate MOOCs into syllabi, align online course outcomes with learning objectives, and use external platforms as a meaningful extension of classroom-based language instruction.

Overall, MOOCs present valuable opportunities for international collaboration and skills enhancement, contributing to the modernisation of educational practices. With appropriate support, they could become essential to professional development and curricular innovation, bolstering the resilience and competitiveness of Ukrainian universities. Future research should focus on student perspectives and effective integration models tailored to specific disciplines.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. Furthermore, the authors have fully adhered to ethical norms, including avoiding plagiarism, data falsification, and duplicate publication.
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ЦИФРОВА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ ОСВІТИ: МВОК ЯК РЕАЛЬНА АЛЬТЕРНАТИВА УНІВЕРСИТЕТСЬКІЙ ОСВІТІ

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У статті проаналізовано роль масових відкритих онлайн-курсів (МВОК) у професійній діяльності викладачів українських закладів вищої освіти в умовах масштабної цифрової трансформації та воєнних викликів, які суттєво змінили формат організації навчання. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена потребою у стійких, доступних та гнучких освітніх інструментах, здатних забезпечити безперервність навчання за умов обмеженого доступу до аудиторій, нестабільної інфраструктури та необхідності швидкої адаптації до нових технологічних вимог. Особлива увага приділяється можливостям застосування теоретичного потенціалу масових відкритих онлайн-курсів (МООС) у практиці викладання мов, зокрема їх використанню для розвитку комунікативної компетенції, вдосконалення цифрової грамотності вчителів та підвищення ефективності навчання іноземних мов за допомогою автентичного мультимедійного контенту, інтерактивних завдань та модулів самостійного навчання.

Метою дослідження є з'ясування ставлення викладачів до використання МВОК, визначення чинників, що впливають на їх прийняття, та оцінка можливостей інтеграції онлайн-курсів у професійний розвиток і навчальні програми, зокрема створення мовно-орієнтованих навчальних моделей. Методологія дослідження ґрунтується на змішаному підході, який поєднує онлайн-анкетування з якісним аналізом відкритих відповідей учасників.

Результати засвідчили високу обізнаність викладачів щодо найпоширеніших платформ МВОК і значний досвід їх використання для підвищення кваліфікації, оновлення змісту навчальних дисциплін та розвитку цифрових компетентностей. Серед основних переваг респонденти відзначили гнучкість навчального темпу, доступність якісних матеріалів, можливість навчатися без територіальних обмежень і долучатися до глобальної експертизи. Водночас ідентифіковано низку бар'єрів: нестачу часу, нестабільний інтернет у частині регіонів, обмежену інституційну підтримку та відсутність чітких рекомендацій щодо включення МВОК до освітніх програм.

У висновках підкреслюється, що МВОК мають значний потенціал для зміцнення гнучкості, стійкості та інноваційності української вищої освіти. Для їх ефективного впровадження необхідні узгоджена інституційна політика, методичні орієнтири, розбудова цифрової інфраструктури та системна підтримка професійного розвитку викладачів.

Ключові слова: *вища освіта, змішане навчання, масові відкриті онлайн-курси (МВОК), педагогічна інновація, цифрова трансформація.*

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