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Institutionalization of University Civic Engagement

Universities' missions of producing graduates and human capital, as well as conducting research and producing knowledge have remained constant over time, however how universities engage socially or focus on what is usually referred to as the university's third mission, is a rather new phenomenon. Historically, higher education institutions have made outstanding social contributions through teaching and research, however in the last few decades, two new imperatives have been added to the universities' mission: the need to give back to society and having efficient management to address their operations effectively (Vallaey, 2009).

Tetrevova and Sabolova (2010) and Chen, Nasongkhla, and Donaldson (2015) suggest that University Social Responsibility or USR is emerging to describe these kinds of engagements more systematically. Citing Reiser (2008), Vasilescu et al. (2010) define USR as "a policy of ethical quality of the performance of the university community (students, faculty and administrative employees) via the responsible management of the educational, cognitive, labor and environmental impacts produced by the university, in an interactive dialogue with society to promote a sustainable human development" (p. 4178).

For Shek and Hollister (2017) USR refers to the shared responsibility universities have to address challenges and to advance societies. They believe USR-related policies must permeate all the missions of the university to reinforce their social roles. Similarly, Alzyoud and Bani-Hani (2015) hold that universities should create programs that raise ethical standards and encourage engaged citizenship among graduates and researchers. Vasilescu et al. (2010) argue that social responsibility overcomes traditional philanthropy, as it includes civil citizenship, engagement, and voluntary contributions of academia as steps toward sustainable development and proactive solutions to social and environmental challenges.

Along with these emerging ideas, universities are expanding their civic engagements beyond traditional academic work. Examples vary, but they include mobilizing volunteers, collaborating with governments, or addressing disasters (Shek & Hollister, 2017). Moja, Luescher, and Schre (2015) argue that student activism is pushing university leaders to reconsider their social roles and addressing social justice. In fact, it is through these initiatives that universities are working to overcome the image of the ivory tower, where only intellectuals create and profit from knowledge. Authors like Goddard and Kempton (2016) still argue that universities remain inward-looking and socially disconnected. Similarly, Hersh and Schneider (2005) maintain that even if universities mention in their mission statements their commitment to educating morally responsible and intellectually competent individuals, in reality, their focus on equipping students with intellectual skills usually surpasses that commitment. However, Benneworth (2013) believes that this pessimism may stem from the limitations in rigorous analysis of activities conducted by universities as social agents and therefore the mixed data produced.

The University Social Responsibility Network (USRN) was established in 2015 (see USRN website) as an initiative of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, congregating universities committed to making the world more just and peaceful; to making societies more inclusive, and to contributing to sustainable development through producing more engaged research, and providing an education that enhances a civic sense, for instance through Service-Learning. According to Hollister et al. (2012), the Network is a platform to boost cooperation among universities from around the world to consolidate and expand the action and impact of the two traditional missions of universities (i.e., education and research).

Universities' Consortia and the Rise of Online Education

Durkheim's (1964) idea that interactions in a network overcome individual actions and result in a new and different phenomenon validates the notion that universities can be nodes that interact with each other, with other organizations, with society at large, and within their own structures. As of December 2021, the USRN consists of 19 institutions¹ with well-established USR records bridging academic knowledge and social demands, promoting accessible and relevant research, and continuing to steer the global discussion about USR (Shek & Hollister, 2017). The network promotes a proactive mindset on how they can give back to society and the understanding that although the main beneficiary of USR is society, universities gain positive reviews that affect recruitment of students and researchers, foster and empower partnerships, and strengthen the universities' case when applying for funding.

Kyoto University and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University as members of the USRN affiliated with edX proposed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to introduce USR in a comprehensive yet easy-to-understand manner, to raise visibility of the USRN, and to showcase good practices, because as stated by Peterson (2014), MOOCs are a relatively new model of online learning that are offered online mainly through video lectures and are intended for a large number of learners without geographical boundaries and ubiquitous access.

Pathak (2016) argues that because higher education is an information-centric sector, developments in communications and information technologies (IT) have a direct impact on it, making it inevitable for the education sector to become increasingly digitized. Although many may disagree and assert that presential education will remain the main form of delivery, such as Nash (2015), who believes that the trend will continue to grow and eventually, most higher education will be offered online.

According to Hood and Littlejohn (2016), MOOCs show how technological advancements changed traditional higher education, the conventional format of classes, their contents, interactions, and evaluation methods. MOOCs are making it easier for educational collaborations to happen and literature accounts are being compiled. Sammour, Al-zoubi, and Schreurs (2019) suggest that joint MOOCs may lead to enriched educational outcomes as they rely on the expertise of all parties involved. Joint MOOCs may enhance learning, help raise international visibility and enhance quality assurance by sharing quality content among universities in different alliances. Examples of this are the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Network of Massive Open Online Courses strengthening regional

¹ USRN members: Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan; Ateneo de Manila University, The Philippines; Beijing Normal University, China; Clare Hall, University of Cambridge, U.K.; Kyoto University, Japan; Peking University, China; Rhodes University, South Africa; Sichuan University, China; Simon Fraser University, Canada; The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR; The University of Iceland, Iceland; The University of Manchester, U.K.; Tufts University, U.S.A.; University of Haifa, Israel; University of New South Wales, Australia; University of Pretoria, South Africa; University of Sao Paulo, Brazil; Washington University in St. Louis, U.S.A.; Yonsei University, S. Korea.

cooperation, in political, economic, socio-cultural and educational dimensions (Asia-Europe Meeting: ASEM Education, 2017) and the UNA Europa's "Joint-micro credentials" helping to make transitions from Bachelor to Master for those switching study fields (Futures, 2020).

In a study on the effect of MOOCs on teachers' and students' skills development, Viswanathan (2012) concluded that MOOCs can be utilized as a means of teachers' professional development, and it meets the demands of the constantly changing knowledge base in specific areas. Similarly, Florentine (2015) argues that MOOCs can make a difference in professional development due to cost-effectiveness and ease of access. In this sense, MOOCs function as hubs or floors where educators share their experiences and learn from one another because exchanges and interactions are easier and less costly.

The joint MOOC on USR, which is extensively discussed later in this paper, served as a vehicle to boost universities' social engagement, helping them to showcase good practices, to enhance ways to complement one another and to address social demands in a way that is easily communicated. Palacio and Choy (2019) assert that universities are called to "do the work", "show the work", and "work the show", implying that, although universities have done their work and accomplished their mission, (e.g., providing education and producing research), they are compelled to show and publicly disseminate what they do and accomplish to remain socially and financially accountable. University rankings push universities to rethink their visibility strategies, how they gather internal data through institutional research, and how they share this information in a way that is understandable, useful and connected to the reality of their social contexts. In doing so, universities strive to meet the increasing demands from governments and funding institutions in relation to the social impact of their work. Marginson (2013) states that universities need to be strategic to maximize institutional positioning because rankings serve as a source for comparison that influences the decisions of prospective students, their families, the university leaders and faculty, governments, and investors in higher education. In this sense, rankings are pushing universities to develop new strategies to "work their show."

Research Purpose and Objectives

This paper is a descriptive account of the experience of how a multilateral joint MOOC on USR was envisioned, designed and produced. Although other collaborative MOOCs have been created, there is no previous research reporting on their creation process, especially those created in the context of university networks. Furthermore, research on leveraging MOOCs for purposes other than subjects taught in higher education, although emerging, is still scarce in the literature and this article aims to address this gap. The paper depicts the process of creating a MOOC in the context of the USRN network, introducing the theory and practice of USR through short lecture videos, reading materials, quizzes and discussion, organized in four weekly sessions (or modules).

The course was officially launched in February 2021 during the USRN Summit organized by the University of Pretoria and covered by the University World News (Kigotho, February 3, 2021). Unlike others, this MOOC is unique because it builds on multiple contributions from the USRN and 13 of its members. The course introduces these universities' policies and programs, highlighting the diversity of their engagements internally and with surrounding communities, and how their work contributes to making relevant social differences.

The objectives of this paper are to:

- Describe the production of a cooperative MOOC in the USRN context,
- Demonstrate that even if universities have unique approaches to USR, there is agreement that USR exceeds academic outputs and that there exist common elements such as policy motivations and implementation,
- Share challenges faced in the process and how they were overcome, and
- Provide suggestions for success for similar cooperative projects

Method

Network Theory and Joint MOOC Creation

The premise guiding this paper is that regardless of each university's approach to USR and its distinctive settings, institutions participating in the MOOC share the idea that universities must give back to society, and that this motivation needs to be embedded in their institutional policy. At the same time, this MOOC proves that when universities cooperate in the context of networks, they can boost complementarity.

The network theory was considered appropriate to analyze the interactions among the USRN Secretariat, member universities, and the organizations within them to explain the creation of the MOOC given that the interactions described in the paper are, in essence, what the network is about. Of particular interest is the work of Boccaletti et al. (2014), who characterize interactions in a system as different from the interacting elements themselves, and as multilayered networks where membership to a group and partnerships represent a completely new phenomenon.

Beerkens and Derwende (2007) argue that globalization and regional integration have made international cooperation among universities a central institutional goal in higher education, which renders inter-organizational interactions a key element of how universities engage with others, mainly through consortia. Of interest for this paper are the similarities and differences among partners, and levels of complementarity and compatibility. By looking at how the MOOC was created, this paper validates the role consortia of universities can have in synergizing the diversity and commonalities of how universities understand and implement USR.

Based on that idea, this paper shows that even if USR is unique to each university, its essential core, being socially responsible, is what connects the USRN members. The interactions observed in the process of creating the MOOC represent a phenomenon larger than the sum of their contributions to the course. This is particularly true if one considers that the examples of policy and activities that universities submitted for the course are not an exhaustive representation of these universities' engagements. They represent demonstrative instances of their USR work.

Research Data, Data for the MOOC, and Content Creation Process

Two types of qualitative data were collected: (a) the materials shared by universities to describe their approach to USR (information shared by each university describing its USR work, compiled as a quilt of experiences and practices), and (b) the interactions in the process of creating the MOOC (e.g., emails, minutes) among the USRN Secretariat, the production team in Kyoto University and other contributors.

To create the contents of the MOOC, the production team in Kyoto University developed the guidelines clarifying technical aspects on how information by each contributing university needed to be shared. However, universities were given freedom to decide and choose their most representative projects, ensuring that validity of the data and the veracity of the stories relied on the decisions made by each individual university.

Gathering of materials for the MOOC took place in two phases: the USRN Secretariat requested that members share their institutional take on USR and good practices. Then follow-up meetings between contributors, the USRN Secretariat, and the production team in Kyoto University were held to adjust and connect the contents to the overall MOOC and to synchronize formats according to edX's requirements.

The materials shared by each university with the production team were secondary data which was collected from different sources in each institution including management and academic units, who shared their projects, adding diversity to how they address real-world problems. The only primary data that corresponds to USR initiatives in Kyoto University were collected by the authors of this paper, as staff of Kyoto University, who had direct access to those in charge of the representative projects.

Materials in the MOOC consist of qualitative accounts in the form of videos, websites, fliers, texts describing each university's case, and presented as stand-alone units in the course from the following universities: Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan; Beijing Normal University and Sichuan University, China; University of Haifa, Israel; Hong Kong Polytechnic University; Kyoto University, Japan; University of Manchester, UK; University of São Paulo, Brazil; University of Pretoria, South Africa; Tufts University and Washington University in St. Louis, USA; and Simon Fraser University, Canada. The variety of initiatives and locations of contributing universities renders the MOOC an entirely global experience.

The fact that most of the materials for the MOOC are secondary means that researchers had no control over what universities (other than Kyoto University) brought to the course, how that information was selected, gathered and shared. This shortcoming represented a challenge at the time of equalizing the projects in such a way to be representative of all forms of USR as well as of geographical locations.

Collaboration and Production of the MOOC

During the 2018 USRN Summit at the University of Haifa, members of the USRN agreed to foster cooperation to raise visibility of the network and its achievements. To do it, a joint MOOC would be produced to share experiences and strategies, based on the agreement that the definition of USR varies depending on universities' institutional priorities. The MOOC was envisioned as a feasible project that would accommodate the members' diverse approaches to USR, their regional distribution and priorities.

The MOOC is an answer to the call for universities to continue doing their work and contributing to society or what Palacio and Choy (2019) refer to as "do the work". It also helps raise visibility of the achievements that these universities have had through their social engagement or "show the work;" the MOOC also offers opportunities to strategically consider ways to portray those achievements. In

turn, this process makes the USRN more visible and contributes to raising awareness of the USR movement or “work the show.”

With the leadership of Kyoto University and Hong Kong Polytechnic University, as edX partners, USRN members agreed to share their USRN experiences for a joint MOOC aiming to (a) increase awareness of USR, (b) gain support for the USR movement, (c) foster universities’ civic engagement, (d) disseminate successful practices and strategies, and I promote international exchange and collaboration.

Special thoughts were given to the expected audience of the MOOC and, although enrollment would be open to the general public, unlike other MOOCs targeting traditional learners, this one targets university managers, staff and those designing and implementing institutional policy, which led to the decision of designing the evaluation of the course through quizzes oriented to reinforce understanding of concepts rather than to check on knowledge retention.

Enacting the Collaboration in USRN

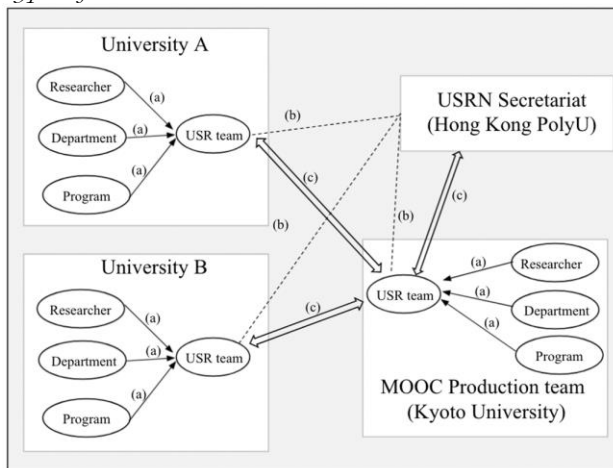
Drafting the Overall MOOC

The USRN Secretariat, as the focal point, had a key role in igniting the project, recruiting the contributors, ensuring their commitment, managing logistics and distribution of tasks, ensuring consistency of data provided by universities, coordination with the production team in Kyoto University, and supporting interactions with edX.

Following Munsayac’s (n.d.) notion that clusters of common interest within networks tend to intensify communications, it became clear that during the production of the MOOC three levels of interaction happened among the contributing universities, the USRN Secretariat and the production team. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

Types of interactions



Note. Lines marked (a) indicate internal interactions. Lines marked (b) indicate interactions with USRN Secretariat. Lines marked (c) indicate interactions with MOOC production team.

As shown in Figure 1, interactions among contributors to the project were multilayered, and took place both among and within institutions themselves. The complexity of these communications are represented in the graph as: (a) researchers, program managers and the teams in charge of gathering information on what USR projects to share in the MOOC in each university; (b) the teams in charge of gathering information and the USRN Secretariat; and (c) all the aforementioned parties with the production team in Kyoto University. Eventually, these interactions boosted new connections among managers of the universities in the network as it became evident during the 2021 USRN Summit organized by the University of Pretoria and new joint projects, including a second collaborative MOOC, were proposed by USRN members.

The production team at Kyoto University drafted the structure for the course, containing: (a) a theoretical introduction to USR, (b) good practices and policy by contributing members presented as university cases or mini cases, and (c) strategies for success in design and implementation.

To ensure consistency, a guideline was shared containing details of the MOOC; explanations about the format of the contributions by members, time allotments, the tentative structure of each case (introduction, core USR, outcomes), and technical specifications regarding quality of videos and other materials. A suggested structure to guide members on how to organize and present their materials as cases and mini cases was included (See Figure 2). Cases consist of 40-minute-long lecture videos and other materials are presented in English and showcase broader approaches to USR (policy and activities) while mini cases consist of materials portraying more in-focus stories (specific programs or activities) displayed in approximately 15 minutes.

Figure 2

Suggested structure for cases and mini cases

Introduction ≈ 3 Min	University USR engagement	President
Description of projects Case ≈ 40 Min Mini case ≈ 15 Min	WH's of the project Outcomes & challenges Future & sustainability	Project manager
Evaluation ≈ 2 Min	Reflections Future applicability	USR Representative

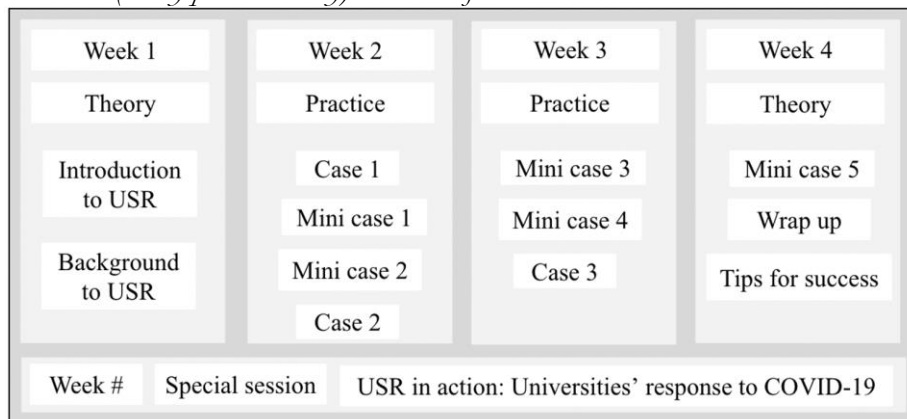
Balance among the Contributions

When developing the structure of the course, it was important to balance these universities' take on USR and how they portray their stories. The MOOC is organized as a four-week course, each weekly lesson (80-90 minutes) containing learning units presented through videos. The first week introduces the history, the underpinning theory and manifestations of USR, and background of the USRN. The second and third weeks showcase example practice of USR as cases and mini cases. The fourth week contains one more mini case and strategies for success in the design and expansion of

USR as part of the theoretical approach, giving the visual idea of a sandwich. In other words, weeks one and four, are theory-based and wrap over weeks two and three that showcase practices. (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

Sandwich (theory-practice-theory) structure of the MOOC



Cases include (a) Mandatory Service-Learning program at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, (b) University of Manchester’s decision to make USR a core institutional priority and its flagship programs, and (c) Kyoto University showing a multidisciplinary and multi-layered approach to USR ranging from individual programs, department-level programs, multi-department level programs, university-wide programs with international and multilateral collaboration.

Mini cases consist of contents submitted by (a) University of São Paulo on its strategy for social inclusion through arts and culture, (b) Simon Fraser University on engagement with local communities and revisions of their institutional procedures in procurement and purchasing, (c) University of New South Wales on policies for gender equity and contracts, and (d) University of Pretoria’s student volunteering program in Engineering. Other universities mentioned in this paper contributed not as cases or mini cases in the main body of the MOOC but through sharing their experience in the Special Session on Universities Response to COVID-19.

Diversity and Unity of USR Approaches

As mentioned, individual universities have their own understandings of what USR is, and there is no universal agreement among scholars on how to define it. For the MOOC however, it was agreed that contributing universities would accept Shek and Hollister’s (2017) definition when they stated that:

USR is a wide-ranging and evolving concept, which is open to interpretations, we propose, in its broad meaning, that university social responsibility could be understood as the responsibility shared by universities in contributing to social betterment through the integration of social responsibility policies into institutional management, teaching, research, services and public activities. (p. 13)

Addressing the diversity of approaches brought by all contributors to the MOOC was challenging because each university's policy and programs depend on their priorities and contexts. What they do have in common, however, is the fact that all endeavors are motivated by a proactive decision to contribute to the betterment of society; and it is in this sense that the MOOC brings that diversity in USR into a coherent phenomenon.

To ensure consistency, the first draft of the materials and proposals for cases and mini cases were shared with and reviewed by the production team and the USRN Secretariat to verify the relevance and uniqueness. The production team then made suggestions and upon this feedback, each contributing university made final edits and proceeded with producing their own materials.

Once all cases and mini cases were ready, the production team at Kyoto University created a series of videos to connect all the pieces. These videos help the learners navigate the MOOC and facilitate the transitions between all learning units. These short videos not only create internal connections among the pieces but also make the course more meaningful by pointing out commonalities in USR policy and implementation.

Evaluation Procedures in the Course

Because of the targeted audience of the MOOC, evaluation of learners was designed as quizzes meant more to reinforce understanding of concepts. Different from other contents of the MOOC (videos, websites and reading materials), that were produced by each university, quizzes for the evaluation were produced by the production team at Kyoto University and confirmed with each contributor. Quizzes consisted of questions presented in different formats, including multiple choices, true and false statements, and connecting clauses of statements.

Aiming to assure a unified approach to the quizzes format according to edX's requirements, the production team drafted the quizzes based on the contents provided by each contributor. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University team suggested improvements and added variety to the formats of the quizzes to encourage the engagement of the learners. Once the drafts were ready, they were shared with each contributing university to solicit feedback and suggestions.

Distribution and Accessibility

The MOOC is hosted on edX, an open-source platform that welcomes learners at a global scale and that accommodates courses from a large number of universities and other providers. Partnering with edX meant a valuable opportunity to make the course accessible beyond the USRN including staff and senior management who are interested in USR in different institutions and geographical regions. As a regular procedure, the MOOC also needed to be co-hosted by its producers, and hence respectively presented both on Kyoto University's KyotoUx, and Hong Kong Polytechnic University's PolyUx sites. Because this was the first time for edX to co-host a course, a special website had to be created within edX showing the names of both organizations providing the course jointly; this meant that the name of the course itself was coded to allow both universities to host it on their respective sites.

Promotion and dissemination of the MOOC started by using a trailer created by the Kyoto University team as a YouTube video, the websites of the USRN as well as those of each individual contributing university. Dissemination was conducted through newsletters, internal mailing systems and

networks, social media, the USRN itself, and other related organizations such as ministries of education.

Implementation and Outcomes of the MOOC

Learners' Demographics

The MOOC was first launched in February 2021 and for the first run, 248 learners registered, a seemingly low figure compared to other massive courses, however, the analysis of participants' profiles and their engagement revealed reassuring outcomes. For example, more than half the learners (51.9%) were 41 years old or older, and learners had high educational backgrounds: bachelor's degree (19.4%), master's degree (38.9%), and PhD (30.6%) clearly related to the target audience.

Surveys with learners revealed that over 76% of learners watched all videos, 69% completed all quizzes, and more than 70% asserted they were very satisfied because they became familiar with the theory and practice of USR, as well as with strategies to envision their own USR schemes. Respondents mentioned being inspired to apply the knowledge they gained in their own workplaces, that the course is a useful toolkit to guide policy-making and activities in their own institutions. 71% of respondents agreed that they would like their institutions to join the USRN. According to 12% of learners, the MOOC could have a better theory-practice balance, showing more connections to activities in their own institutions, and allocating time to address feminism, strategies for advocacy and negotiation with governments and other institutions. This information is of much relevance at the time of considering revisions to the MOOC as well as to possible upcoming similar experiences.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Due to its joint nature, the production of the MOOC faced several challenges at the network and human levels, and because of the wide dispersion of materials used. The following paragraphs describe some of the most important difficulties addressed in the process.

At the Network Level

Deciding the targeted audience, after having members agree on the goals and expected achievements of the project, the next step was agreeing on the audience of the MOOC. Soon, it became clear that the MOOC would be targeting university managers, faculty and academic staff, and the challenge would be how to gain their interest and maintain the engagement from this typically busy audience.

One of the interesting aspects of the project is its collaborative nature built on a broad range of available, yet very diverse, resources (materials on USR). As in a potluck, each contributing university designed and produced its own piece, providing its own content and resources. The USRN Secretariat's leadership brought those individual contributions together, and the production team at Kyoto University organized and stitched all the pieces together.

Although collaborative MOOCs have been produced in the past, they have typically been bilateral efforts. This project gathers 13 universities and the USRN; this variety of stakeholders made it challenging to decide who should lead negotiations and exchanges with edX and who should host the course. It was agreed that Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Kyoto University as edX members and course providers on the platform should take the lead. This resulted in an integrated

approach from the USRN where Kyoto University acted as the representative of the network in the exchanges with edX.

The diversity of contents in the materials shared was one of the most thought-provoking challenges faced. To address these differences, the production team needed to fairly address the contrasting ways universities understand USR. A list of areas describing kinds of approaches to USR and initiatives helped put the constellation of contributions in an understandable frame for the MOOC as a whole.

The USRN has members from all continents and this global representation was to be shown in the MOOC. Some of the problems that universities address through their USR engagement are of global relevance, while certain initiatives address issues of local importance. Hence planning the allocation of time to each piece in the structure of the course was sensitive, yet essential. To address this problem, contributions were organized and grouped based on the relation among their contents. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the University of Manchester shared cases portraying engagements of more global nature; while University of São Paulo, University of Pretoria, Simon Fraser University and New South Wales University shared initiatives with a local focus. Lastly, Kyoto University opted for a mix blending regional and local activities.

To address the issue of internal balance in the MOOC, depending on the nature of each contribution, cases and mini cases were grouped to support and to serve as examples to each other, by showing USR activities of similar nature. The challenge here was how to embed cases and mini cases in a way that would preserve the balance within the course. For example, some of the mini-cases contained a brief description of the university's USR activities while demonstrating the uniqueness and significance of what they do.

Some members raised concerns about the copyright and ownership of the materials shared through the MOOC. Although initially not considered a major problem, in a few cases these issues resulted in some members having to drop out although they had originally been expected to participate. The overall solution found among the contributing parties later was that information presented in the MOOC would belong to the USRN and edX. To this end, the USRN requested all contributing universities to sign an agreement stating that they waive the copyrights to the USRN and edX only for the materials presented in and formatted for the MOOC.

At Human Level

Reaching out and engaging both internally and externally with colleagues to gather necessary information and materials for the MOOC was particularly challenging in some of the universities and it required more networking efforts than initially expected. This became evident, for example, when needing to explain the project to researchers, program managers or administrative staff who were unfamiliar with USR or MOOC. Delivering the message and inviting people to produce and share materials was also time-consuming for the Kyoto University team and the representatives. Producing the Guideline mentioned in the section (Enacting the Collaboration in USRN, and Figure 2), helped not only spread awareness on the relevance of the project but also thoroughly explained why this was important and what was expected to be done.

Most member universities announced their interest at the start of the process, stating that they would share their unique USR perspectives or programs. However, it became clear that not all

participants could actually participate and share the necessary information, mainly due to the limited time and resources to produce video materials. Hence, there was a need to compensate for these dropouts, which proved challenging in terms of the balance of the whole structure and specifics for each kind of USR activity. Examples of topics that were withdrawn include universities' approaches to SDGs, engagement with indigenous communities, or conflict management and peacebuilding. One more factor that affected the project was the spread of the COVID-19. The pandemic had a deep impact on all aspects of the production of the MOOC since universities were overwhelmed by addressing lockdowns and other protocols.

Personal and institutional commitment to the project among participants was also diverse. Partners like The Hong Kong Polytechnic University showed full support to both the network and the course whereas in other universities there were active and engaged individuals, who, however, lacked support from their own faculties or universities. In the middle, some institutions offered support through specific departments but not the university as a whole. Managing the diversity in commitment and support required an extra effort from the production team of the course. A solution to this was being flexible and allowing each participant to contribute with their available resources and experiences.

Although guidelines were distributed to ensure consistency among all the contributors, once all materials were gathered a great dispersion among the materials submitted (contents and formats) became evident. This led to new rounds of negotiations to reformulate and re-accommodate contributions in a way that would fit the whole structure of the course.

Pace of production was also challenging because even if there were initially agreed timelines, actual submissions were made over a considerably longer period of time. This delayed the entire project, which was even further affected by the outbreak of the pandemic. Another problem was the diversity in the quality of the materials presented, both in terms of contents and formats. Clearly, what defines quality across universities is not always consistent. Although the production at Kyoto University shared the guidelines with all contributing universities at the start of the project, what was received as finalized materials, differed from the initial expectations. Through a series of follow-up meetings with each contributor, eventually a new consensus on quality could be reached and applied to the course.

With the video production, also, the technical aspects required key efforts to communicate issues with all parties. This refers to the consistency of video formats, how these videos were submitted, and the quality of the videos in terms of content or length. In some cases, language proved a difficult barrier since some of the staff involved in the production could not communicate in English.

Other challenges related to cooperation from internal and external stakeholders of each contributing university, in sharing data or offering visually appealing and learner-friendly materials, such as photos, videos, or other supplementing information.

At times, some partners shared materials through external websites, such as YouTube, rather than making the original data directly accessible or downloadable. This, in turn, affected the quality of some of the videos used in the course.

Another glaring problem was the provision of scripts for video subtitles. Although the contributing parties had initially agreed to share the scripts of their videos, only some did. The fact that the team

had to transcribe the videos together with the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the production. The pandemic also impeded internal communication in contributing universities as lockdowns were put in place. Contributors got increasingly busy by the sudden shift to online mode, social distancing, and other protocols. Thus, they became less responsive.

Suggested Strategies for Building a Collaborative MOOC

Building a joint MOOC is an exciting process, however, there are always unforeseen challenges. Based on the experience described in the previous pages, the next section of this paper offers suggestions for those who decide to embark on similar endeavors. Two levels of engagement will need to be considered throughout the collaborative process: (a) challenges faced by all contributing members and (b) the difficulties faced by members leading the process.

Suggestions to all for Contributing Members

Being responsible for one's own commitments is key. As a contributor to a collaborative project, individuals and institutions should remember that their timely response is essential in the process. Individual delays in delivering tasks hinder the pace of the whole project. Collaborative efforts depend on everyone's prompt responses and inputs.

The initial excitement of the project may lead to unrealistic expectations. Thus, it is crucial to consider the feasibility and review one's capacities in offering contributions before committing oneself or one's institution to a collaborative project. Good communication within one's institution is key to setting up the framework and conditions to assure that tasks can be delivered, while also being transparent with the external stakeholders.

Once a commitment to a project has been made, the institution should develop its strategy to mobilize staff and resources to design, create and share necessary data. Contributors should be certain about the capabilities and willingness of their staff to participate in the project. They should gather their data and share it in a timely form.

Suggestions for the Leading Members of the Project

Collaborating partners may have different ideas about what is expected of them. Thus, a clear message is essential. The overall vision will give a sense of shared direction, while a clear understanding of small deliverables and tasks will lead to concrete steps and achievements. A comprehensive and clear guideline at the beginning of the process is helpful.

Similarly, time management should be taken into consideration. The leading partner should consider the following levels in relation to the goals and tasks required for the leading team: (a) setting up agreed timelines with external partners to clarify when individual contributions should be expected and (b) benchmarking the processes at the individual, partner, and whole-project levels.

The nature and hence the responses from partners can be different, hence engaging in effective dialogue with all stakeholders is an essential communication strategy. Colleagues in the academic world, for example, think and function differently from people working in the public sector or the media. Therefore, an approach that includes common methods of correspondence (e.g., emails, calls, online meetings), as well as a personalized approach to each counterpart (e.g., in the time allocation) to meet the needs of partners in different time zones are vital.

In terms of organizing the contents and messages, a clear agenda of topics, goals and expected decisions is a key to success and these need to be delivered beforehand. Preserving records and sharing the outcomes, through minutes or briefings is an effective way to track the process and maintain accountability.

However, sometimes in collaborative projects like the one described in this paper, it is usually the case that unexpected issues will arise as original plans unfold. Although sharing and distributing tasks with partners is typically a core part of a collaborative project; as the leading member, one should be aware that motivation tends to wear out as time passes, especially when requests are always changing. Having a cheerleading role and investing additional time to mobilize and inspire partners is essential to keep the momentum alive.

Last, but not least, sometimes partners are or become unresponsive, even if they committed to supporting the project at first. Although the motivation may decrease as other priorities arise in contributing institutions, it is important to stay connected and constantly follow up with the partners and to re-engage with them. In some extreme cases, the leading team may decide to substitute a given part of the project as the partners opt-out mid-way through.

Conclusion

IT solutions have made communications and international academic cooperation easier and faster; they have also increased the social expectation that universities must step out of their comfort zones and not only do their work, but they also need to show their achievements and in a socially understandable way. Understanding how universities approach and enact USR brings to light not only their motivation to contribute to society but also shows that these contributions go beyond traditional academic activities and that these contributions can complement and boost the work of other universities.

The creation of this MOOC confirms Munsayac's (n.d.) view that formal communications take place in existing networks and these interactions may create and develop new connections within and amongst members of the network. Some universities in the USRN have long histories of bilateral cooperation, while for others, membership to the USRN is the only point of connection. When considering that one of the goals of the MOOC was introducing USR and that these universities have different understandings of what that means, it became clear that cooperation for the MOOC would bring a stronger sense of partnerships and belonging to the USRN as well as a renewed feeling of belonging and partnership.

By applying the network theory in the creation of this MOOC, this article describes types of connections happening at different levels: (a) in each university at the time of deciding what USR activities represent them best, (b) among the members of a consolidated network, like the USRN, through a central mechanism, in this case, the USRN Secretariat and (c) engaging with other organizations outside the universities and the network, in this case for example with edX. More significantly, this paper shows that these connections can lead to new and more fruitful ones, as well as new potential areas of cooperation among universities.

Although the synergies created through the connections forged in the context of the MOOC cannot be tested in this research, this paper corroborates Carpenter, Mingxiang, and Jiang's (2012)

proposition that dissimilarities and the complementarities brought these partners closer. In the process of creating the MOOC, it was exactly the differences in approaches and understandings of USR that made it possible for these universities to cooperate.

USR is challenging traditional paradigms of how universities engage with society, overcoming the traditional notion of the university as an ivory tower. This debate promotes an organic connection between society's needs and universities' capabilities, bridging actual problems with solutions emanating from academic strengths. Emerging from why USR should be a priority in higher education; the paper provides an account of the steps the USRN took to produce this joint MOOC through an inclusive process that respects regional representation, diversity in meanings, implications on what USR is and how it is implemented.

As an endeavor with global scope, the importance of the MOOC described in the previous pages lies in the fact that it brought together a range of universities to collaborate, and mainly because this course is the first attempt to provide an agreed framework that contains and portrays the so-called third mission of the university, the ways it functions and how effective strategies can be designed to promote the social impact of universities.

Historically, universities have done their work. They have made conscious efforts to accomplish their missions through the provision of education, preparing human resources to function as human capital in their communities while enshrining knowledge and producing innovative research outcomes. Emerging evidence, as portrayed in this MOOC, suggests that these missions have grown to include management and administration, inspired by the notion of giving back to society.

Although the teaching and researching missions are essential, recently universities are becoming aware that doing the work is not the same as showing their work, that is, making society aware of their contributions, and bringing their knowledge out of the academic realms to make it accessible and usable to society.

Universities are increasingly aware that they need to 'work their shows'. Making their achievements socially visible and understandable to the general public is crucial, and for this reason, strategically putting their contributions at the center of the public scenario is a way to, not only maintain their legitimacy but also to ensure their own sustainability into the future.

A decisive factor here has been the role university rankings play in shaping social perceptions of universities. This new factor clearly compels universities to display what they do (i.e., to show the work) in such a way that society at large can shape, own and utilize the information. University managers are increasingly conscious of the need for their organizations to (a) gather and make their own internal data (academic achievements) permeable from and understandable to society, (b) be transparent so as to ensure their own institutional accountability, and (c) understand that if they cooperate with their partners, they can obtain larger and unexpected positive outcomes.

In this sense, the work conducted by the USRN in general, and specifically through the Introduction to USR MOOC enhances synergies leading to the promotion of universities' responsible branding. The goal of the MOOC described in this paper relates to how universities in the network are working to bridge this gap.

This initiative served as a platform to accommodate a wide range of universities to share their own USR experiences; the project proved to be an effective medium to disseminate what universities do to achieve their missions, to produce synergy in promoting collaboration among members of the network, and as such to work the show.

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