



Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium  
for Science and the Arts

The Ethical Forum: A systemic vision on the  
optimal exploitation of ICT and Internet for  
Higher Learning in Flanders and Beyond

*Will the academy's response to blended  
learning be moral panic or moral  
responsibility?*

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# The Ethical Forum Question

“Will university professors and universities become completely redundant in the near future as they can be replaced by Personal Computers and MOOCs?”

No, but the future of universities depends on our response to the challenges of digital technologies

“Will the academy’s response to blended learning be moral panic or moral responsibility?”

# Moral panic or moral responsibility?

“**Moral panics**... represent ...over-reaction, noisy clamor, and unnecessary moralizing. At the other pole is ... a tendency to silence, a pattern of under-reaction, a failure of the moral imagination” (Garland 2008)

Reducing the academic community; a second class education for the many; returning to HE as an elitist provision

The term "**moral responsibility**" refers to the duty that individuals and groups have to act in accordance with the moral principles that are important to their social communities and to humanity at large.

How does this translate to the actions of professors and universities?  
How might the role of the professor change?

# Ethical values evident in Flemish universities

**KU Leuven:** ... students integrate academic competences within a broad ethical, cultural, and social formation... This enables **them to assume their social responsibility as committed citizens...**

**Hasselt University:** aims **to widen participation, addressing all talents,** and inspires its students and staff to develop their full potential in a dynamic environment...

**University of Gent** wants a creative community of staff, students, and alumni connected by our **common values commitment, openness and pluralism...** to contribute to society from a unique scientific expertise...

**Vrije Universiteit Brussel** offers high-quality education and research... recognized in many disciplines of fundamental **and applied research ... with an outlook on Europe and the world...**

**University of Antwerp:** an academic community of students, lecturers and researchers ... acquire new scientific insights and develop skills ... enhance our own learning and are able to **contribute to the well-being of our society...**

# The social purpose of HE

## NCIHE Report (UK, 1997): Aims and purposes of HE

- Personal - to **inspire and enable individuals to develop** their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life
- Knowledge - to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and foster their application to the **benefit of the economy and society**
- Economic - **to serve the needs** of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels
- Social - to play a major role in **shaping a democratic, civilised and inclusive** society

# The global demand for education

By 2025, the global demand for higher education will double to ~200m per year, mostly from emerging economies (NAFSA 2010)

300,000 school-age children are refugees in Lebanon, without schooling

Student loan debt in US is higher than CC debt so students will demand new models of teaching and learning


The new UNESCO goals for education:

- Every child completes a full 9 years of free basic education ...
- Post-basic education expanded to meet needs for knowledge and skills ... (post 2015 goals)

→ So how does HE “play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised and inclusive society”



*1:25 staff:students??*

The background of the slide is a dense network diagram. It consists of numerous nodes of varying sizes, colored in shades of blue, green, and black. These nodes are interconnected by a web of thin, light-colored lines, creating a complex, interconnected structure. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, typical of digital or network-related graphics.

Could MOOCs help with  
addressing these challenges?

# Myths about MOOCs

## Content is free

- no, it has to be curated

## Assessment can be automated

- no, only for certain outcomes

## The younger generation learns better with digital technologies

- no, having digital skills is the equivalent of being able to read, not learn

## Traditional teaching is done via lectures

- no, always had tutorials, practicals, small groups, individual guidance
- the digital equivalents of these techniques are very under-developed

## Large-scale learning analytics provide the means to RCTs

- no, findings are context-dependent, you cannot isolate the cause
- the conditions for successful outcomes need to be explicit and shared
- better to see teaching as a design science, not a science



# Digital versions of pedagogies for large classes



Conceal answers to question  
Ask for user-constructed input

Introduce content  
Self-paced practice

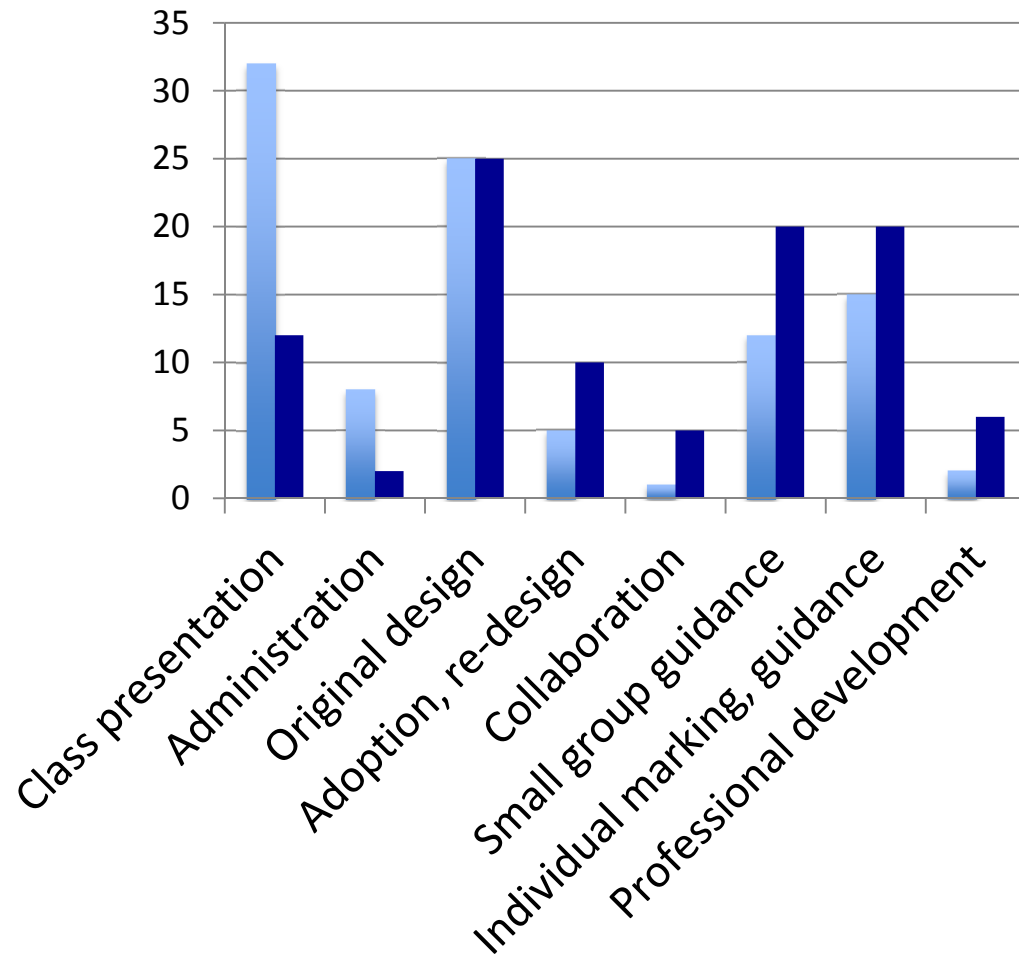
240 individual students produce  
response to open question  
Pairs compare and produce joint  
response  
60 groups of 4 compare and produce  
joint response and post as one of 10  
responses...  
6 groups of 40 students vote on best  
response  
Teacher receives 6 responses to  
comment on

# Teaching as a design science



***Building learning technology knowledge***

# Imagining alternative distributions of teacher time



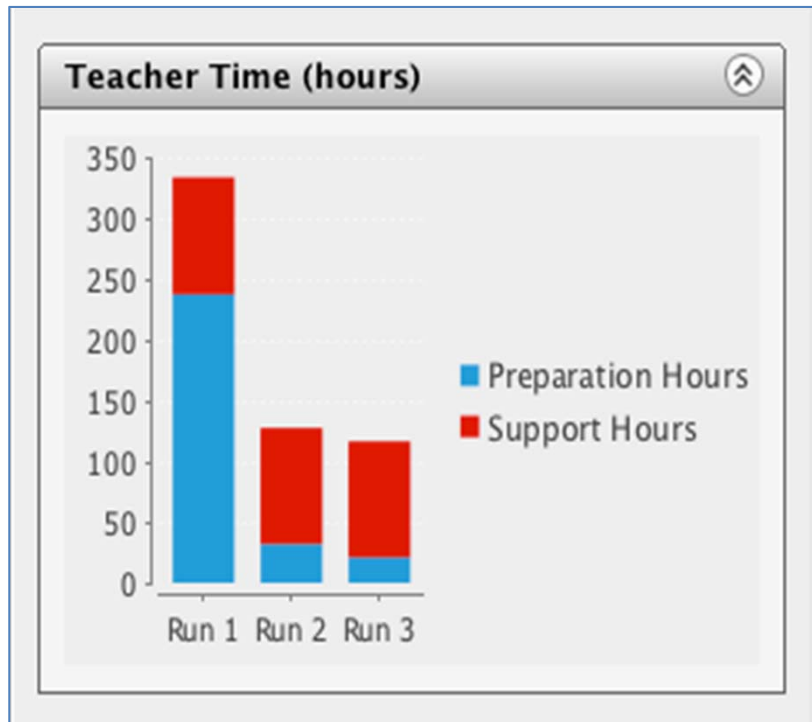
■ Conventional

■ Blended

Conventional distribution is an average, with wide variations across individuals, departments and sectors

BL distribution will prioritise:  
specialist original design;  
generalist adoption;  
collaboration;  
more guidance;  
professional development

# Modelling teaching costs and learning benefits



To achieve the learning benefits, it is likely that Blended Learning will change:

- the distribution of teaching activities
- the pattern of the teaching workload

It is essential that this is well understood and planned for by

- Academic staff
- Heads of department
- The finance department
- The senior managers

# Problems for which MOOCs are a solution

MOOCs work well for online collaborative professional development:

- Low fixed cost production and curation of resources
- Low variable costs via orchestrated peer group contributions, support and feedback

MOOCs can support online collaborative learning to professionalise HE teachers as learning design scientists operating at scale

# The technology solution to meet the Millennium Goal challenge

1,600,000 new teaching posts needed for universal primary education by 2015 (*UNESCO, 2014*)



8 teacher global team

Professional development MOOC @ 1000:1

8000 national teachers on CPD

Local college training courses @ 25:1

200,000 regional teacher trainees

Village support groups @ 8:1

1,600,000 local teachers