



Learning Analytics and Learner Experiences of a MOOC under Coursera: ‘What Future for Education’

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ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of technology into education strengthens the teaching-learning process by promoting greater learner engagement. One such innovation is Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which make learning affordable, authentic, outcomes-oriented, purposeful, individualized, and democratic. This paper is based upon learning analytics and learning experiences of a MOOC, ‘What future for Education?’ offered through Coursera. The study analyses learning engagements in pursuing the course. It may be a depiction of experiential learning in the form of a research article. The findings revealed that the course videos were interview-based, professionally developed, engaging, and included activities that were helpful for learners to comprehend complex topics. Every module has short videos of length 5-7 minutes to enhance the engagement of the learners. Videos also include subtitles, transcripts, and playback controls, enhancing accessibility and flexibility. The e-content part of the course included multiple readings in the form of articles/websites, continuous readings suggested by the teachers during the progression of the course, etc. Interaction forums were available 24/7, so that learners can get help, regardless of their time zone. The assessment part of the course included quizzes and peer-reviewed assignments that helped the learners to reinforce their learning and comprehend the concepts effectively. Upon successful completion of the course, a certificate was awarded by the University of London and the UCL Institute of Education. A few limitations have also been noticed; they were limited personal interaction and subjectivity in peer-graded assignments. In conclusion, it can be said that the course was not only academically enriched but also strategically implemented. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are accessed by millions of users worldwide to

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access high-quality learning. There has been a continuous growth in MOOCs. Fig. 1 shows the growth in MOOCs; this number is increasing year by year. The rapid expansion reflects the growing acceptance of online learning as a flexible and accessible mode of education. Furthermore, advancements in digital technologies, increased internet penetration, and the demand for lifelong learning have significantly contributed to the widespread adoption of MOOCs worldwide.

Keywords: MOOCs, Coursera, University of London, UCL Institute of Education

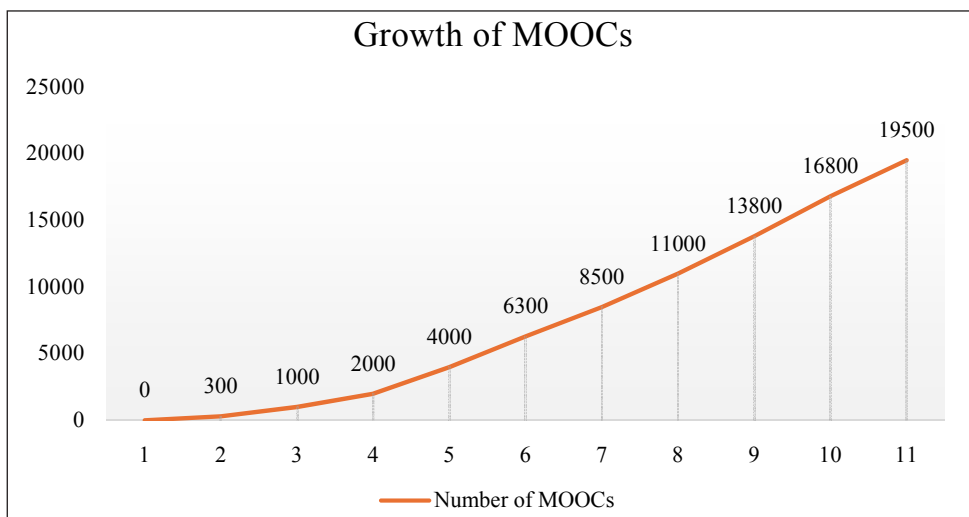


Fig. 1: Growth of MOOCs over the years (Source: Class Central, 2021)



Dave Cormier

To comprehend the term MOOCs, Dave Cormier, in the year 2008, first coined the term MOOC in reference to a course CCK08 by George Siemens and Stephen Downes (2008).

There are two types of MOOCs given by Stephen Downes, namely cMOOCs that focus on collaborative learning and xMOOCs that focus on content knowledge and skills (Vaishali & Dey, 2023).

Stephen Downes (2012) named two types of MOOCs- cMOOCs: The ‘c’ in cMOOCs stands for ‘connectivism’. The focus of cMOOCs was on collaborative learning, creation of knowledge, and network building among the learners. It is based on the pedagogy of the connectivism learning approach (Vaishali & Dey, 2023). It



Stephen Downes

was less structured than xMOOCs, mostly addressing learners' autonomy and self-directed exploration. cMOOCs are learner-centered, and assessment often relies on self-reflection and peer assessment.

xMOOCs: The 'x' in xMOOCs stands for 'extension.' The delivery of xMOOCs was on content knowledge and skills in a more structured format than cMOOCs. It was based on the pedagogy of constructivist learning theories, with a focus on well-defined learning outcomes. Structurally, it revolves around the traditional teaching model, including lectures, quizzes, tests, and assignments. Assessment in xMOOCs often relies on tests and quizzes to assess learners' understanding (Vaishali & Dey, 2023).

Presently, it has gained popularity worldwide, and numerous MOOC platforms exist, including Coursera, EdX, FutureLearn, Moodle, and SWAYAM, among others. These MOOC platforms, in association with various institutions/universities, offer online courses to students (Daniel, 2012). Fig. 2 shows the graphical representation of the MOOC users in millions. According to the data, Coursera has 142 million learners, and FutureLearn has 22 million learners by the year 2023.

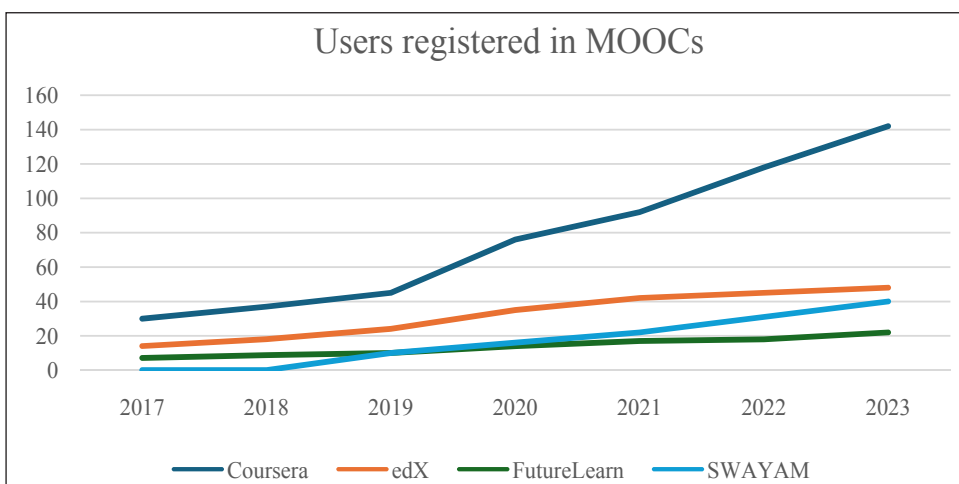


Fig. 2: Users registered in MOOCs **Source:** Class Central, 2023

Coursera offers courses, degree programmes, and certificates in partnership with top universities and companies. It was established in 2012 by professors at Stanford University, USA.

Key features of Coursera

- **Courses:** Thousands of paid and free courses from institutions like Yale, Stanford, Google, and others.
- **Certificates:** Professional certificates from industry leaders like IBM, Google, etc.
- **Degrees:** Coursera offers online degree programmes from reputed institutions.

- **Learning flexibility:** It provides an opportunity for self-paced and flexible learning at any time and from anywhere.
- **Certificates of completion:** Course completion certificates are awarded and can be linked to LinkedIn.
- **Scholarships and financial aid:** Scholarships and financial assistance are also available for many paid courses, up to 90% depending on the courses.
- **Language support:** Subtitles are available, and course materials can be accessed in multiple languages to support global learners.

A post-pandemic slowdown can be seen in the number of new registered users in MOOCs, including Coursera, from 2020 (71M) to 2023 (142M) (Fig. 3). According to the data by Class Central, Coursera has the largest number of registered users worldwide.

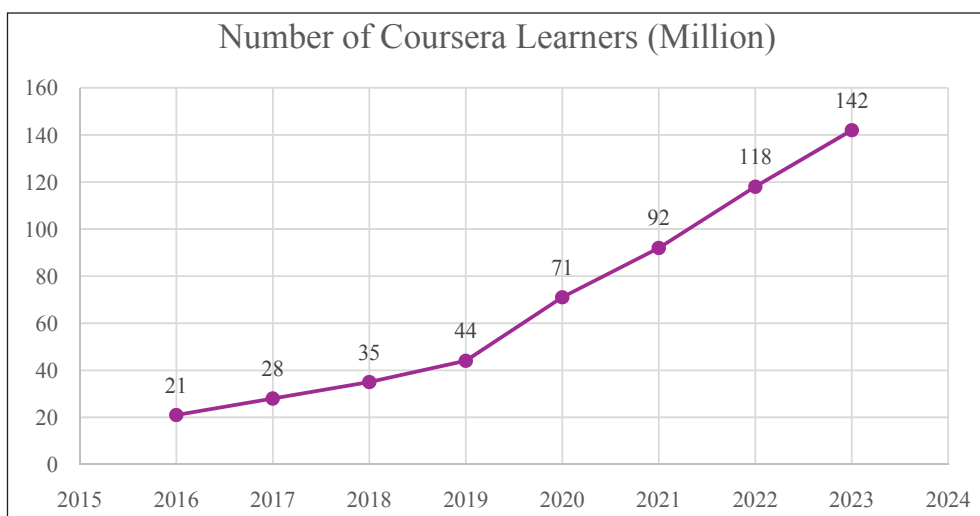


Fig. 3: Number of users registered with Coursera (**Source:** Open2study, 2023)

Objectives of the Course Pursued: ‘What future for education’-

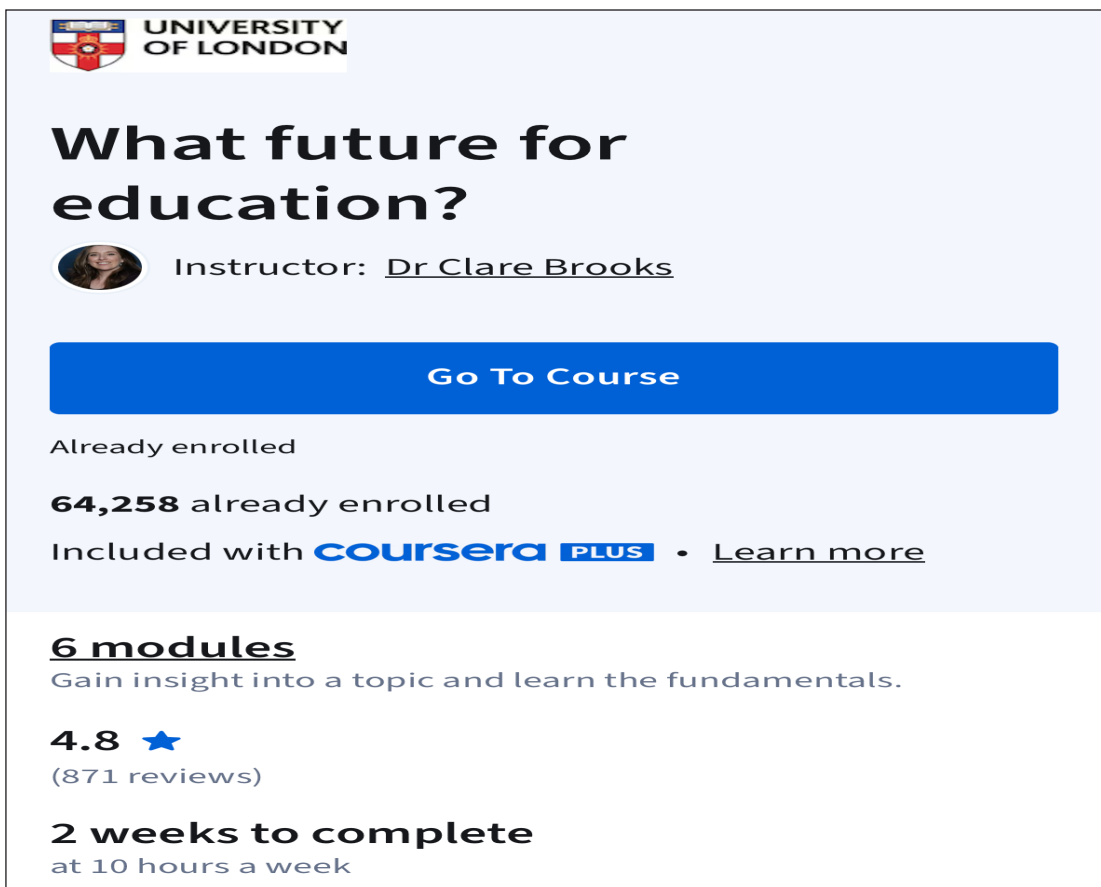
The present research has the following objectives:

1. To critically evaluate the structural design, pedagogy, instructional content, and delivery methods utilized in the course, ‘What future for education.’
2. To analyse the effectiveness of the discussion forum in facilitating learner interaction and exchanging knowledge.

3. To examine the design, implementation, and effectiveness of the assessment strategies of the course.
4. To identify the strengths and limitations of the course.
5. To analyse the relevance of the course to the current and future educational needs of the learners.

Overview of the Course: ‘What Future for Education’

‘What Future for Education’ was an online non-credit course authorized by the University of London and the UCL Institute of Education, offered through Coursera. The instructor of this course was Dr. Clare Brooks, a senior lecturer at the UCL Institute of Education in London. There were 6 modules in this course covering the duration of 2 weeks (10 hours a week), where learners can learn at their own pace (Fig. 4).



 **UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

What future for education?

 Instructor: Dr Clare Brooks

Go To Course

Already enrolled

64,258 already enrolled

Included with **Coursera PLUS** • [Learn more](#)

6 modules
Gain insight into a topic and learn the fundamentals.

4.8 ★
(871 reviews)

2 weeks to complete
at 10 hours a week

Fig. 4: Overview of the course (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

For a critical review of the course, 100 reviews were analysed, including video lessons, e-content, interactions, and Assessments (Table 1). The graphical representation of the data is shown in Fig. 5. This data shows that the video lessons have the most constructive reviews (68%) and the discussion forums had the most critiques (7%).

Table 1: Critical review of the course by the learners (figure given in %)

Different aspects of the review	Constructive reviews	Critique
Video lessons	68%	4%
E-content	30%	3%
Interactions (Discussion)	50%	7%
Assessments	49%	2%

Source: <https://www.coursera.org/>.

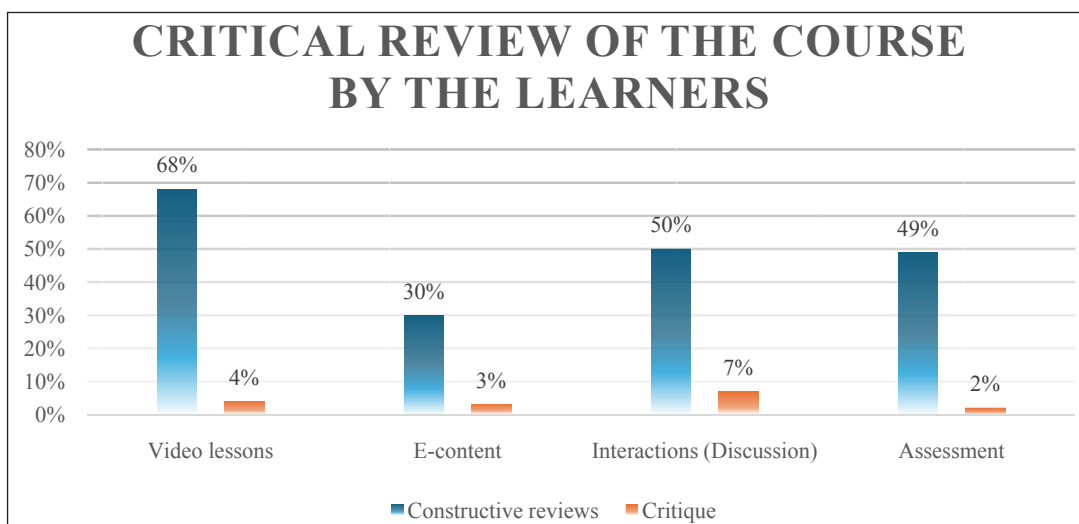


Fig. 5: Critical review of the course by the learners (**Source:** <https://www.coursera.org/>)

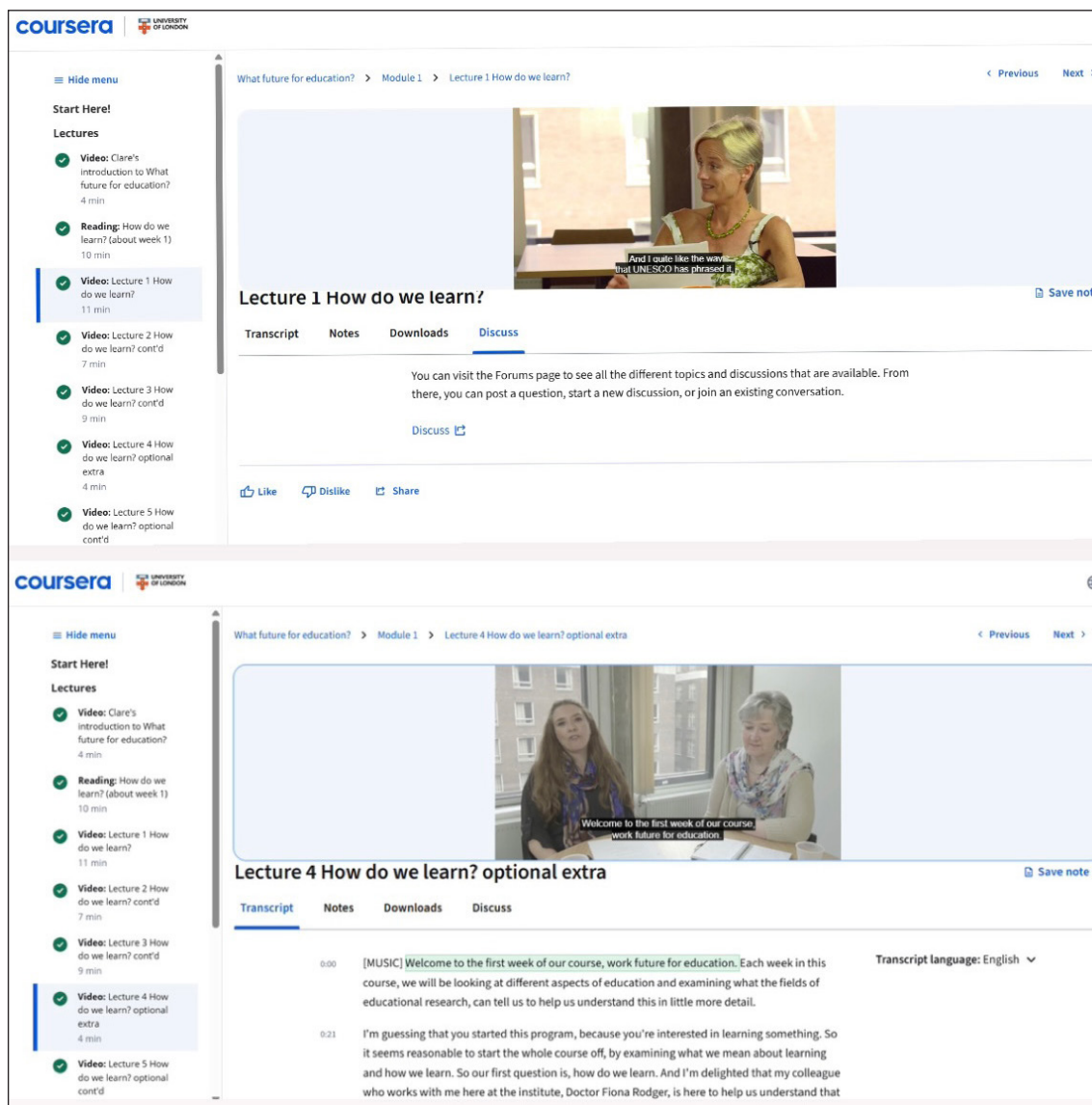
Course Design and Pedagogy

The course starts with the syllabus, grading pattern, glossary of terms, and reading time. The syllabus included the details of the course, with the objectives of each week. For grades, weekly journal submissions had a weightage of 25%, with each unit of 5% weightage, and the final reflection had a weightage of 75%.

Before the lecture starts, a 4-5 minute introductory video was given each week, along with readings for learners. As the lecture concluded, the reading for the week, discussion, and reflections were provided.

Video Lectures

The video lecture was mostly interview-based, which included detailed information about the course. Every week, new teachers were a part of the course with Dr. Clare Brooks (Fig. 6). It was just to break the monotony of the teachers and to bring variety with different contexts and perspectives to comprehend the concepts during the course progression, and in the process of teaching-learning.



The figure displays two screenshots of the Coursera interface for the course 'What future for education?' under 'Module 1'.

Top Screenshot: Lecture 1 How do we learn?

- Left Sidebar:** A 'Start Here!' section followed by a 'Lectures' list. The first lecture, 'Video: Clare's introduction to What future for education?' (4 min), is highlighted. Other lectures include 'Reading: How do we learn? (about week 1)' (10 min), 'Video: Lecture 1 How do we learn?' (11 min), 'Video: Lecture 2 How do we learn? cont'd' (7 min), 'Video: Lecture 3 How do we learn? cont'd' (9 min), 'Video: Lecture 4 How do we learn? optional extra' (4 min), and 'Video: Lecture 5 How do we learn? optional cont'd'.
- Main Content Area:** The video player shows Dr. Clare Brooks. Below the video, the title 'Lecture 1 How do we learn?' is displayed. Tabs for 'Transcript', 'Notes', 'Downloads', and 'Discuss' are visible. A message states: 'You can visit the Forums page to see all the different topics and discussions that are available. From there, you can post a question, start a new discussion, or join an existing conversation.' Below this is a 'Discuss' button and social media icons for 'Like', 'Dislike', and 'Share'.

Bottom Screenshot: Lecture 4 How do we learn? optional extra

- Left Sidebar:** Similar to the top screenshot, but the 'Video: Lecture 4 How do we learn? optional extra' (4 min) is highlighted in the 'Lectures' list.
- Main Content Area:** The video player shows two women. Below the video, the title 'Lecture 4 How do we learn? optional extra' is displayed. Tabs for 'Transcript', 'Notes', 'Downloads', and 'Discuss' are visible. The 'Transcript' tab is active, showing a transcript with timestamps (0:00 and 0:21) and text. A 'Transcript language: English' dropdown is on the right. A 'Save note' button is in the top right corner.

Fig. 6: Multiple teachers as part of the course (Source: Screenshot taken from the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

Features of the course

- **Multiple teachers as a part of the course:** Multiple teachers were part of the course, with expertise in different areas (Fig. 6).
- **Subtitles:** The original language of the course was English, but subtitles can be changed according to the convenience of the learners. For example, the subtitles were available in multiple languages like Hindi, Italiano, English, etc. (Fig. 7).
- **Downloading options:** The videos can be downloaded in multiple formats so that the learners can view the lectures anytime and anywhere.
- **Adjustable playback speed:** The speed of the video can be adjusted according to the learners.

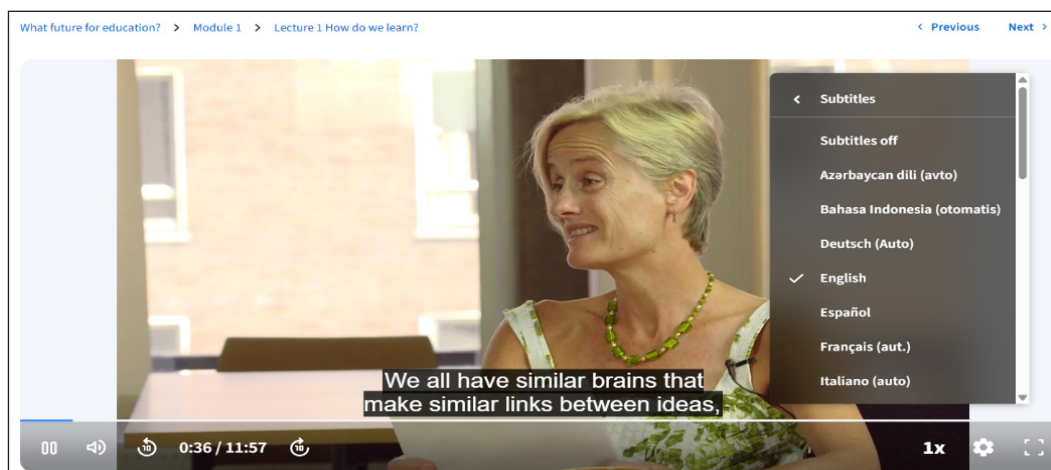


Fig. 7: Subtitles available in the course (**Source:** Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

- **Transcript:** For easy understanding of the course, transcripts were synced with every video. The transcript can also be changed in multiple languages as per the learners.

Benefits of Video Lectures on Coursera

- Learners could pause, rewind, or rewatch videos at any time, allowing better understanding and personal control over the learning speed.
- Videos include subtitles in multiple languages and transcripts, which is great for learners with hearing impairments or non-native English speakers.
- Many video lectures were broken down into 5–7-minute segments to enhance the engagement of the learners by maintaining attention.

- ☐ Supports flipped or blended learning approaches that were used by the educators as pre-class materials.
- ☐ Videos could be downloaded in multiple formats that can be viewed by the learners anytime, anywhere.

E-content of the Course

The e-content was divided into two sections, one was ‘How do we learn?’ and the other one was this week’s readings. ‘How do we learn?’ included the task to be accomplished, learning task, reading and learning resources, etc. This week’s readings included the articles/websites with the texts mentioned by the teacher in the course, with their references.

Features of e-content

How do we learn? Every week of the course includes reading in the form of How do we learn?, which includes the tasks to be accomplished of the week, the learning components in the form of a reflection task, engaging with the reading and learning resources, discussing, and reviewing with an introduction about the course (Fig. 8).

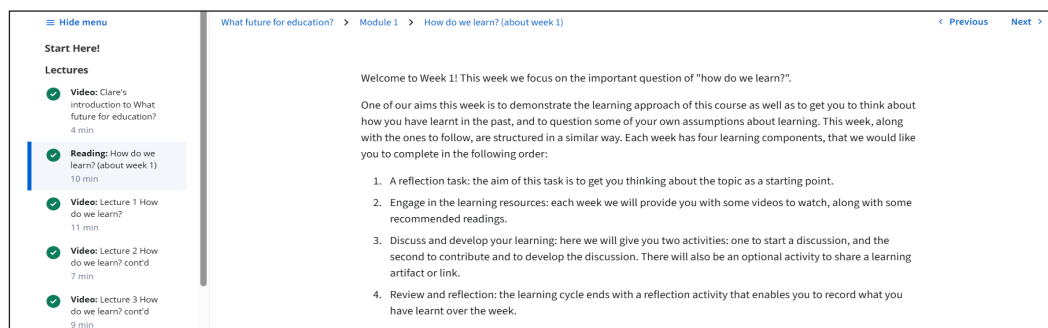


Fig. 8: How do we learn? (e-content) (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

Benefits of e-content

- ☐ Learners could access content anywhere, anytime, allowing learners to study at their own pace.
- ☐ Content was accessible from any device (mobile phone, tablet, pc, etc.).
- ☐ Courses were developed by top universities, ensuring accuracy and depth of the e-content.
- ☐ Multimedia and interactive content helped learners engage deeply with the concepts.
- ☐ The e-content could scale millions of learners globally without loss in quality.
- ☐ E-content was organised into modules and weeks, providing a clear roadmap.

Supports blended and lifelong learning, encouraging continuous skill development in the fast-changing world.

Discussion Forum

The discussion forum of Coursera is designed to facilitate the interaction between peers, instructors, etc., of the course.

The main features of the discussion forum were:

- **Course-specific forums:** Forums were tied to individual courses or specializations in the form of general discussions to discuss things related to the course, and a meet and greet where learners can introduce themselves and interact with their fellow learners (Fig. 9).

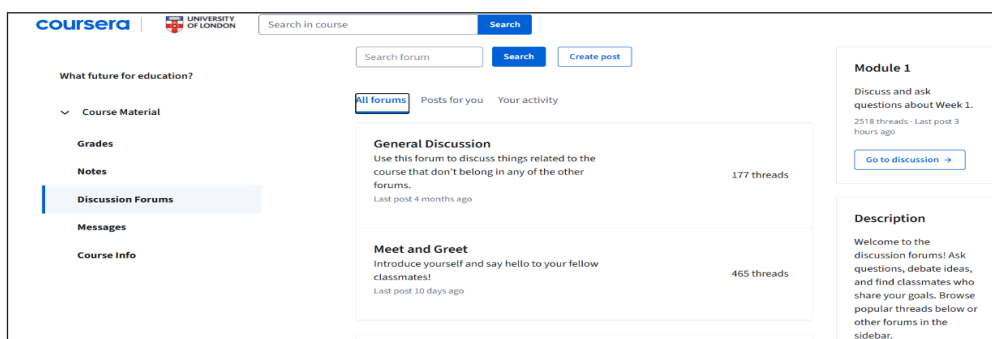


Fig. 9: Course-specific forums (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

Module-wise forums: The course had 6 modules, each of which was organized as discuss and ask questions about week 1, week 2, week 3, etc. (Fig. 10).

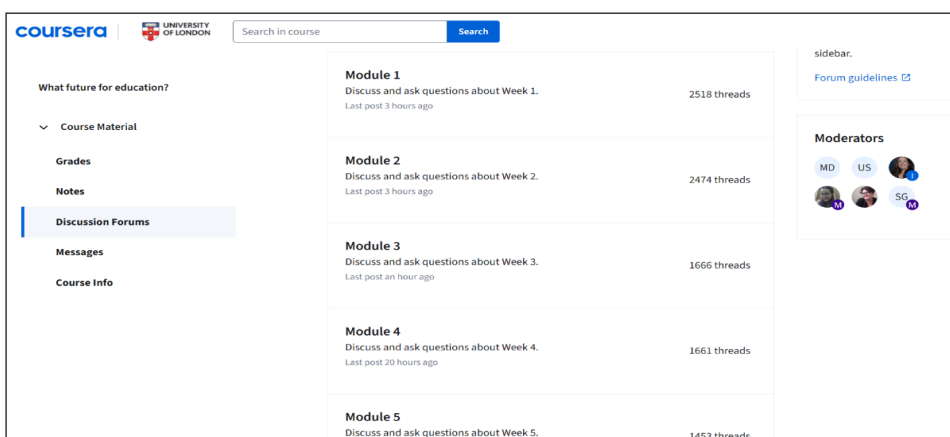


Fig. 10: Module-wise forums (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

- ❑ **Create a post:** A new post could be created by the learners by mentioning the title, body of the discussion, and selecting the forum, for example, module 1, module 2, etc.
- ❑ **Threaded discussion:** The conversations were organized into threads where the students can:
 - ❑ Start new threads (Create a post).
 - ❑ Reply to existing ones.
- ❑ **Upvoting and sorting:** Posts and replies could be upvoted by the learners, and threads could be sorted into recent, most replies, etc.
- ❑ **Search and filter:** The ‘search’ option allows learners to find specific topics or keywords within the discussion easily, and it can be filtered into answered and unanswered.

Benefits of a discussion forum

- ❑ Learners could ask questions and share knowledge with their peers. Observing different perspectives helps learners to build a more developed comprehension of the course.
- ❑ Course staff and mentors actively participate in the forums to clarify doubts of the learners, making learning more interactive and supportive.
- ❑ Forums were available 24/7, so that learners could get help, regardless of their time zone.
- ❑ Discussion forums encourage collaboration and communication among a global learning community where learners can share ideas, experiences, etc.
- ❑ Discussing topics, ideas, and explaining solutions solidifies understanding that encourages critical thinking among the learners.

Assessment Component in the Course

Assessment in Coursera was a key part of the learning experience, which was designed to help learners engage with the course, test their knowledge, and comprehend the course.

Features of Assessment

Journal entry submission: For every week, the journal entry was divided into —

1. **Graded Assignment:** The graded assessment included submission of a Journal of 200 words or more. The instructions for the graded assessment were given in the course, exemplified in Fig. 11. For example, the assignment for week 3 was to reflect back on the teachers you considered to be good before the start of the week. Reconsider what it was about them that made you consider them to be so good. Would others that were taught had the same conclusions?

2. **AI grading:** The assessment was graded by AI, with plagiarism detection. The scores were given based on a scoring of 2 points.

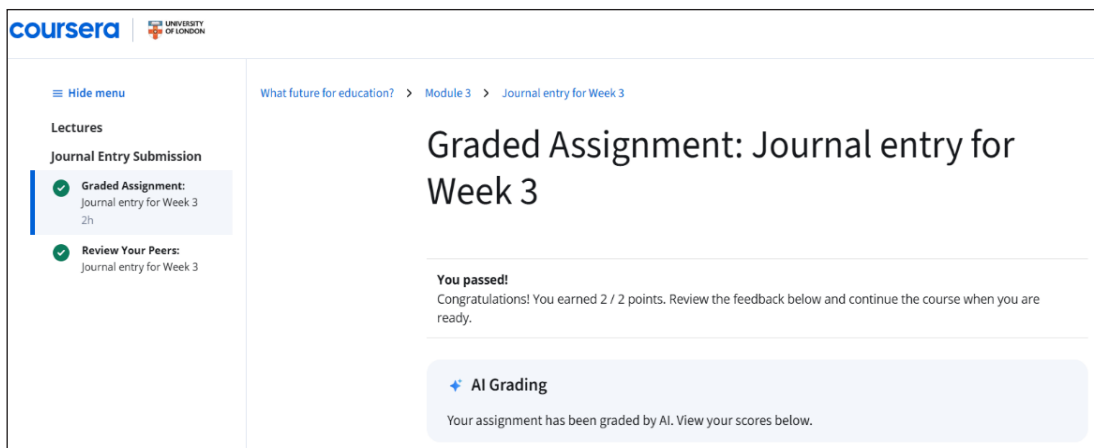


Fig. 11: Graded Assignment (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

3. **Peer Review by the Learners:** Grading classmates' work was also a part of the assignment, which aids the learning process. It allows one to reflect on one's knowledge and discover different ways the peers responded to the assignment prompt (Fig. 12).

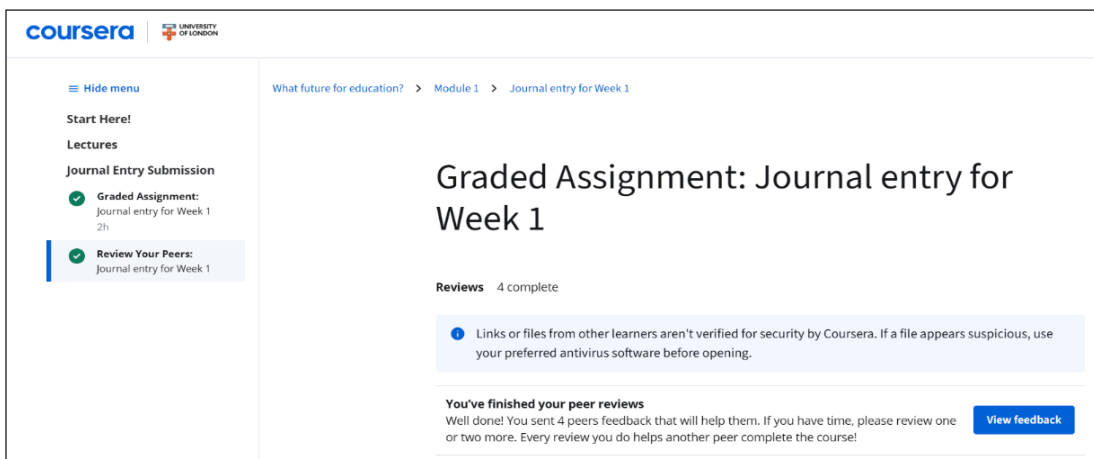
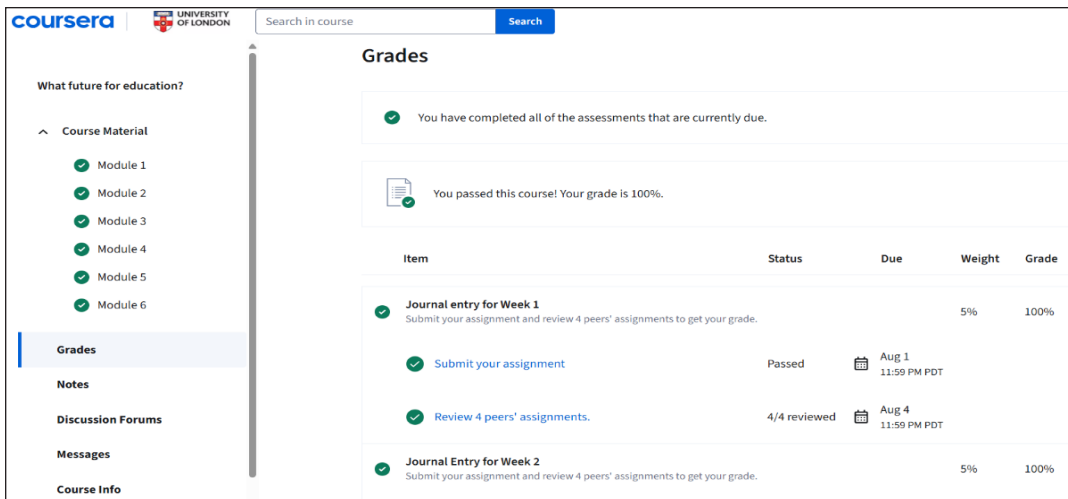


Fig. 12: Review your peers (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

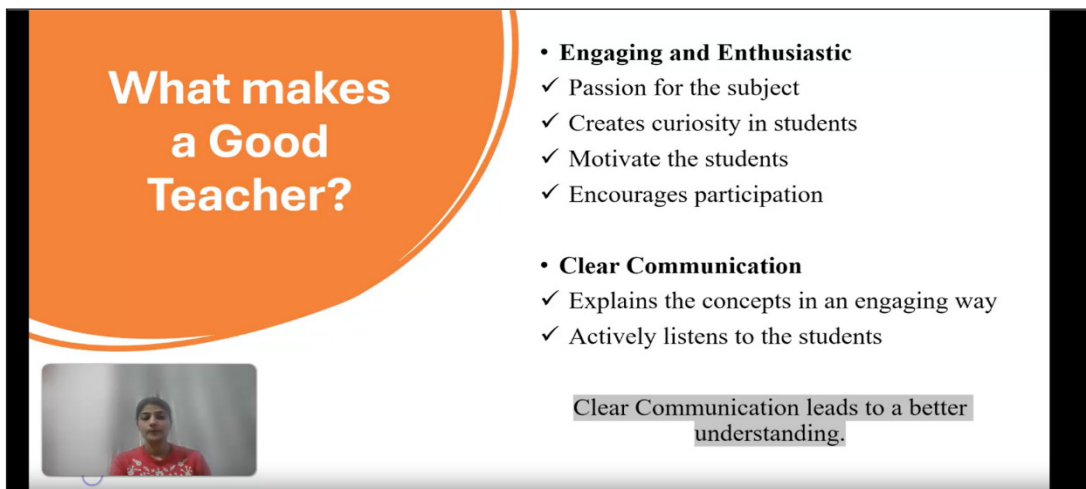
4. **Grades:** The grades could be viewed by the learners upon successful completion of the assignments, and the status could also be checked (Fig. 13).



Item	Status	Due	Weight	Grade
Journal entry for Week 1 Submit your assignment and review 4 peers' assignments to get your grade.			5%	100%
Submit your assignment	Passed	Aug 1 11:59 PM PDT		
Review 4 peers' assignments.	4/4 reviewed	Aug 4 11:59 PM PDT		
Journal Entry for Week 2 Submit your assignment and review 4 peers' assignments to get your grade.			5%	100%

Fig. 13: Grades in Coursera (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://www.coursera.org/>)

5. **TED Talk:** A TEDx Talk is a showcase for speakers presenting great, well-formed ideas in a short period. In module 6, the learners had to submit a TED Talk on any topic they liked during the course (Fig. 14). The assignment was dependent on the grades given by the peers.



What makes a Good Teacher?

- **Engaging and Enthusiastic**
 - ✓ Passion for the subject
 - ✓ Creates curiosity in students
 - ✓ Motivate the students
 - ✓ Encourages participation
- **Clear Communication**
 - ✓ Explains the concepts in an engaging way
 - ✓ Actively listens to the students

Clear Communication leads to a better understanding.

Fig. 14: TED Talk for the module (Source: Screenshot of the course page, <https://coursera-assessments.s3>)

Benefits of the Assessment Component of the Course

- ☐ It encourages active learning and knowledge application.

- ☐ It provides immediate feedback on the assignment to the registered e-mail ID, aiding quicker improvement, etc.
- ☐ It builds practical skills with hands-on assignments.
- ☐ It supports collaborative learning through peer reviews.
- ☐ It enhances understanding and increases engagement of the learners.

After successful completion of the course, a certificate was awarded by the University of London and the UCL Institute of Education, offered through Coursera.

An example of an award of certification after completion of the course is presented in Fig. 15.

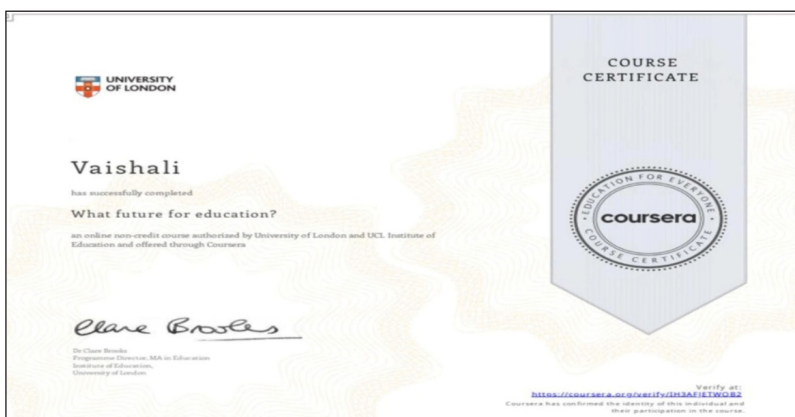


Fig. 15: Certification after completion of the course (**Source:** <https://www.coursera.org/account/accomplishments/certificate/IH3AFJETWOB2>)

Strength of the Course: What Future for Education?

- ☐ High-quality content created by top universities and industries.
- ☐ Content was taught by the professors who are experts in their fields.
- ☐ Learning could be done anytime, anywhere, and at one's own pace.
- ☐ Shareable certificates that could be added to a LinkedIn profile.
- ☐ Includes articles/websites, references mentioned by the professors during the lectures, with interactive assignments.
- ☐ Videos included subtitles in multiple languages and transcripts, which is great for learners with hearing impairments or non-native English speakers.
- ☐ The e-content could scale millions of learners globally without loss in quality.

- ☐ Discussion forums encourage collaboration and communication among a global learning community where learners can share ideas, experiences, etc.
- ☐ Assessment encourages active learning and knowledge application.
- ☐ Financial aid was also available for this course up to 90%.
- ☐ This course encourages deep analysis of personal educational experiences.
- ☐ A practical assignment in the form of a TED Talk was given in module 6 to enhance comprehension and increase engagement of the learners.

Limitations of the Course: What Future for Education?

- ☐ There was limited personal interaction or no real-time interaction with the instructors.
- ☐ Peer-graded assignments may be graded subjectively or unfairly.
- ☐ There was a dependency on the internet connection. Without a stable internet connection, the videos cannot be seen (unless downloaded). (It may be the limitations of the learners' end) Is it a limitation of the Course? Clarify...
- ☐ Success was solely dependent on the learner's discipline and commitment; no strict deadlines were given except the due date for assignments.
- ☐ AI grading and peer review mean learners cannot get detailed feedback on the assignments.
- ☐ Courses were designed for a broad audience, which may not suit learners with specific needs or backgrounds.

Relevance of the Course

This course was highly relevant to both current and future educational needs, as it equips learners to critically engage with educational theory and practice. The course relevance can be articulated in the following lines:

- ☐ ***Encourages critical thinking on established beliefs:*** This course pushes learners to reflect on their ideas, think critically, and encourages them to move beyond unexamined assumptions. This is important for:
 - ☐ Challenging outdated practices.
 - ☐ Ensuring equity and inclusivity in education.
- ☐ ***Personalisation of educational vision:*** By guiding learners to develop their preferred future education, the course fosters agency and vision among educators and policymakers. This personalization is key to:

- ☐ Empowering educators to be a change agents.
- ☐ Responding flexibly to the challenges.
- ☐ ***Weekly thematic exploration:*** Each module focuses on key questions, allowing deep engagements, such as:
 - ☐ The purpose of education.
 - ☐ Roles of teachers and students in different course-based discourses.
 - ☐ Equity and access.

This approach promotes well-rounded, critical thinking, context-aware thinking, aligning well with contemporary educational priorities like future readiness, inclusion, etc.

- ☐ ***Prepare for future educational demand:*** The future of education requires innovative professionals who can adapt to challenging situations. This course develops:
 - ☐ Critical thinking
 - ☐ Literacy to inform decisions
 - ☐ Responding flexibly to global challenges
 - ☐ A mindset towards sustainable educational development

CONCLUSION

Coursera, a popular learning platform, offers courses, degree programs, and certificates in partnership with top universities and companies. It was founded in 2012 by Stanford professors Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller. What future for education? was an online non-credit course authorized by the University of London and the UCL Institute of Education, offered through Coursera. The instructor of this course was Dr. Clare Brooks, a senior lecturer at the UCL Institute of Education in London. The e-tutorials of this course were interview-based, professionally produced, engaging, and helped learners to grasp complex topics at their own pace. Each module had videos of length 5-7 minutes to enhance the engagement of the learners. Videos often include subtitles, transcripts, and playback controls, enhancing accessibility and flexibility. The e-content included multiple readings in the form of articles/websites, readings suggested by the teachers during the course. For example, Week 1 readings included the article/websites for reading, with the texts mentioned by Dr. Eleanore in her interview. The discussion forum fosters peer interaction and community support. Forums are available 24/7, so learners can get help regardless of their time zone. The assessments, including quizzes and peer-reviewed, helped reinforce learning and gauge understanding effectively. Upon successful completion of the course, a certificate was awarded by the University of London and the UCL Institute of Education, offered through Coursera.

But there were certain limitations of the course; there was limited personal interaction or no real-time interaction with the instructor, peer-graded assignments may be graded subjectively or unfairly, and

there was a dependency on the internet connection, success was solely dependent on the learner's discipline and commitment; no strict deadlines were given except the due date for assignments, AI grading and peer review mean learners may not get detailed feedback on the assignments, courses were designed for a broad audience, which may not suit learners with specific needs or backgrounds. Overall, Coursera offers a comprehensive digital learning experience, balancing multimedia content, interaction, and evaluation tools.

In essence, this course was not just academically enriching; it was also strategically essential. It fosters a generation of educators and thinkers who are better prepared to navigate and shape the rapidly evolving educational landscape, making it deeply relevant to current and future educational needs.

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