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Abstract

The last couple of years have witnessed a growing debate about online learning in higher education, notably in response to the global massive open online course (MOOC) phenomenon. This paper explores these developments from an institutional policy perspective, drawing on an analysis of the initial stages of different approaches to MOOCs and e-learning being taken up at three Australian universities. It points to four commonalities emerging from the institutional constructions of these initiatives including (1) the use of e-learning policy as a vehicle for curriculum redesign; (2) an emphasis on internal curriculum redesign as a core rationale for MOOCs; (3) a desire to capitalise on promotional opportunities but a reticence around wholly embracing the concept and structure of MOOCs and (4) the absence of access-driven concerns in university policy despite the prominence of such concerns in broader public debate. The approach is framed by a consideration of change dynamics in higher education and highlights the emphasis on internal university work within the policy narrative, suggesting this could represent an attempt to reframe the debate about MOOCs away

29.12.2025

from popular arguments about systemic disruption and instead use them to progress forms of change that align to broader strategic objectives. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) O'Connor, Kate, E-Mail: koconnor@unimelb.edu.au