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The Influence of Massive Open Online Courses on Youth Job Search Behaviour: An  
Explorative Case Study of Durban Youths

Submitted in partial requirement for the  
Master of Arts Population Studies Degree  
In the School of Built Environment and Development  
College of Humanities Howard College Campus

May 2018

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I, Jonathan Gabriel Brady, Declare that this dissertation is my original work and that all information borrowed from other authors and sources is duly acknowledged. This is to fulfil the requirements the degree, Master of Population Studies, in the School of Built Environment and Development, located within the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal Howard College

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02/05/2018

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## **Abstract**

This study attempts to merge South African job search behaviours with massive open online course (MOOC) literature in an attempt to discover what effects online certification can have on youth outlooks and job search behaviour. This dissertation begins with a literature review of each component, followed by a practical longitudinal study, comprising 15 unemployed youths from a local Durban area, over 16 weeks in a pre and post-study period. The attitudes and world outlooks of these youths is assessed through interview data, with suggestions for local, regional and national programs in South Africa for utilising MOOCs as a tool for addressing youth unemployment and achieving the human capital development necessary for taking advantage of the country's demographic dividend.

## **Acknowledgements**

My family – who have perhaps waited too long for this to all come together; my uncle, Ian Africa, for your belief in me at times when I did not actually believe in myself. Your advice and gentle opinion have been a guiding light as I quested to complete this project while pinned to duties at home. My supervisor, Gerard Boyce, for your constant re-visioning of my ideas and how they could be applied. You have my deepest thanks for our conversations both inside and outside the walls of academia. My grandfather and mother – for allowing me the time and space to complete this project. I thought your questioning would grow as time wore on, but your silence only showed the faith you both had in me and my research idea. To all the lecturers in the school of development studies. Zubair Bhabha, my close friend, confidant and fellow traveller in life. Thank you for your willingness to help me set up the computer room. I would not be here without your help old friend.

To the Young Men’s Christian Association, your enthusiasm, support, and belief in this study are warmly appreciated. After much searching, attempts to source funds and start my own project, your warmth and graceful welcome in receiving my study has truly been God sent. To all staff, directors and study participants, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It has been both an honour and a privilege to have impacted the lives of young people the way I have been fortunate enough to have done. Finally, once again, my thanks to my mother for her faith in my ability and drive to succeed. I have come this far only because you allowed me to.

***Thank you all***

## List of Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMDI	Advancing MOOCs for Development Initiative
ANC	African National Congress
ALISON	Advanced Learning Interface Systems Online
AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CAPS	Cape Area Panel Study
CHE	Council for Higher Education
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICDE	International Council for Open and Distance Learning
IT	Information Technology
MANCOSA	Management College of South Africa
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course[s]
NI	Naturalistic Inquiry
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
NDP	National Development Plan
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PwC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
ROER4D	Research on Open Educational Resources for Development
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDT	Self Determination Theory
UN	United Nations
UCT	University of Cape Town
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNISA	University of South Africa
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The plight of youth finding jobs around the world has become more urgent, as the global youth population swells and jobs become increasingly scarce. ‘Harnessing the demographic dividend’, or ‘youth bulge’ has become a priority for developing country governments, (including South Africa) as regional bodies have recognized the need for youth-focused discussions and policy. For context, 2017 was the year deemed “Harnessing the Demographic Dividend” (Brady: 2017) for the African Union. This is important, especially since the United Nation’s global youth estimates of 1.8 billion are constituted in large part by the African populous and developing regions more generally (Das Gupta: 2014). The majority of these unemployed and low skilled youths in developing regions are afflicted by poverty, political uncertainty or instability, affecting self-development prospects for young people to fully realize their potential. These economic, social and political travails are mostly said to be caused by the ineptitude of leaders and heads of state (Das Gupta: 2014).

The advent of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has offered much promise in spite of these failings, allowing for agile learning and up-skilling of people. This is especially true since digital communication and internet access have become more widespread across socio-economic divides. It has also, however, meant the disruption of traditional workspaces and notions of work as well. Services, skilled jobs and more recently, education, have all been affected by digitization as a result of artificial intelligence. It is in this regard that education has taken new forms in the digital space, beginning to transform areas of work and initiating discussions around uncertainty and youth employment.

Massive open online courses (MOOCs), as a means of harnessing the demographic dividend, are slowly gaining traction in academic and larger social circles. Research in this field has abounded since the latter half of the last decade, with many projecting their eventual ubiquity as the next chapter in education, rendering orthodox institutions obsolete. Though this has not happened as quickly (even if at all) as many thought it would, calls for the use of MOOCs as initiators of self-development and skills bridging programs have been made through numerous academic studies in recent years (Outland: 2014, Damevska: 2015, Brady: 2017, Loizzo: 2015, Morris: 2014, Olin: 2015, Webb: 2015, Nana-Sinkam: 2014).

In the developing country context, this makes good sense, where educational institutions have become overburdened by greater student influxes every year. This ranges from primary all the way to tertiary level (Brady: 2017). Higher booms and slower contractions in populations are all taking place in developing regions, even though greater strides toward family planning and birth control are being made. This necessitates access to alternate educational sources which provide accessibility beyond time and geographic limits (as normal contact-based education would). This is where open education and online course content have been pivoted as provisional aid for these conditions (Sengupta: 2016, Schulze: 2014).

## **1.2. Motivations for the study**

Educational and employment deficits in South Africa are at crisis levels. With the influx of students into brick and mortar institutions, academic staff have been unable to deliver quality instruction to students whose ultimate goal is to gain employment with the requisite skill sets. Massive Open online courses have been touted as possible aids to the crisis of South African educational delivery.

This study, through the creation of a novel program for unemployed youths, seeks to test the efficacy of massive open online courses in real-world situations, as often proposed by exponents and fanatics of technological education platforms. Through utilizing self-determination theory as an analytical tool, discussions, and data extrapolated from interviews respondents will offer insight into whether MOOCs can be a viable alternative. Literature around massive open online courses often revolves around theoretical applications, citing attrition rates owing to students studying alone and without support. This study, being set in a controlled environment with support in the form of the writer offering technical expertise and encouragement, offers a new perspective for testing theories and assumptions in the literature.

This study aims to germinate thought about programmatic implementation utilizing massive open online courses for youths in a setting which could equip youths with desires, hopes and positive life outlooks – soft skills often overlooked in favour of certifications from reputable institutions which cost exponentially more than most MOOCs. Moving into the realm of technological intervention and disruption, studies and literature should not only speak about intervention and disruption but set out to create situations which test these technologies and

their real-world applications for our populations (especially youth). It is for this purpose, that this explorative case study has been conducted, as an alternative to empirical research so often published in the field of MOOC research (Hakami *et al*: 2017), with deeper subject concerns often ignored.

The Research objectives for this study are to:

1. Investigate whether massive open online courses (MOOCs) are a positive learning experience for those who come to know of it for the first time
2. Determine whether MOOCs act as a catalyst for unemployed youths to search for employment. If so, determine what exactly about online courses motivates youths to search for work.
3. Determine what drivers potentially motivate participant youths to search for work (before and after the program)
4. Inquire and identify what [potential] positives young people take away from supervised and aided programs utilizing massive open online courses (MOOCs)
5. Glean the levels – if any – of satisfaction gained from participating in the program from where this satisfaction potentially emanates

Further discussions around project conceptualization and implementation will be divulged as the study is unpacked. In summary, it is hoped these questions will in tandem, reveal what (if any) connections exist between job search behavior and qualification attainment amongst unemployed youths. Firstly, however, it is useful for the reader to get some contextual background about what exactly a MOOC is and from what background it evolved from.

### **1.3. MOOCs: what are they and where did they come from?**

The pervasiveness of online content and communication has pervaded all aspects of life, with education being no exception. Explaining MOOCs requires differentiation between a few other forms of online-based education. Historically the oldest, training programs are corporate forms of up-skilling which started as a way to create skilled employees in the United States during the Second World War. Currently, companies use training programs as part of either transforming or up-skilling their workforce. Computer-based programs - now the common

medium for instruction and testing – were initially developed within companies, as they believed this method to best match their processes and work requirements.

This has however moved to entire ranges of programs for employee testing and instruction, as technological advances have allowed minute customization suited for any entity according to their requirements. The second type of online educational delivery is web-based education.

This has its history rooted in the turn of the millennium, when increasing numbers of students filtered into brick and mortar institutions, bringing increasing demand for accessibility with them. The best way institutions could address this was through online course construction, allowing for greater student numbers, ease of communication (between students and instructors as well as between students themselves), and almost twenty-four-hour course accessibility (Argawal: 2003). This development was, however, still within the confines of formal tertiary education, where structured degrees were the only qualifications offered (Torraco: 2016).

The final type of online education is the most democratic and is perhaps the most talked about. The previously mentioned types of education included in house delivery which was limited to institutions of either formal education or work. The actual arrival of the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is disputed, as numerous online educational professors and providers now tout their earliest experiments to be the world's first MOOC. Most people consider Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig's 2011 artificial intelligence course at Stanford University to be the first ever demonstrably successful MOOC, attracting approximately 160,000 registrants. Scaled up versions of this followed in 2012 with the announcement of platforms Coursera (partnered and powered by Andrew Ng and Dianne Kohler) and Udacity (founded by Sebastian Thrun) respectively. These courses, unlike the previous two mentioned, seldom have entrance requirements, and usually, have enrolment numbers like that of Thrun and Norvig's artificial intelligence course. Instruction is usually delivered through online multimedia such as audio clips and videos (the latter being the primary choice for most online courses today), with grading being automated and instructors offering live video sessions for questions and answers regarding the course itself.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mcgill.ca/maut/current-issues/moocs/history>

Platforms like Courser, edX, Udacity and others partner with formally recognized institutions for various qualifications which can include certificates, Diplomas or even full degrees. The last of these is fully developed and administered by recognized universities – referred to in the MOOC space as partner institutions. These can range from bachelors to Masters Degrees and usually entail subject matter related to computational technology. Such has been the excitement and contesting of this educational format, that people across various sections of society debate the usefulness and efficacy of MOOCs and online-based education.

Whether or not we agree or disagree, the fact remains most people spend a large portion of their days in front of some kind of a mobile or computer screen. Administering education programs through mediums other than formal institutions is not meant to eradicate formal based education but add to it. Developments since the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have taken place not just in the developed but also in the developing world, where recognition, rapid adoption, and planned integration of these online education platforms into formal educational spaces has taken place. A short history of MOOCs in South Africa helps give the reader an understanding of government positions with regard to online education, and what the future may hold for this digital space in the country.

#### **1.4. MOOCs in South Africa: A Story in the Making**

##### **1.4.1. Government Policies and Adoptions: The 2012 White Paper**

South Africa's approach to the MOOC phenomenon has been relatively quick and integrated when compared to the rest of the African continent. Many point to the landmark White Paper by the Council for Higher Education (CHE), which recognized and outlined a comprehensive plan for online education to supplement and eventually align with formal higher education structures. One paragraph in the report outlines this quite decisively, stating:

“as digital technology, and therefore e-learning, have become more accessible in South Africa, it becomes necessary to incorporate this dimension into conceptualising different possible modes of provision. E-learning can be usefully categorised on a continuum, ranging through categories including digitally supported, digitally dependent, Internet-supported, Internet-dependent and fully online.” (Council for Higher Education: 2012: 49)

Such an admission has been taken by some as the turning point, whereby the government has realized the potential for MOOCs as an assistive tool in aiding its educational and developmental goals. Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande, has been positively associated with promoting online education in South Africa, making it a priority in policy and showcasing events. An example of the latter includes the recent International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) conference hosted by the University of South Africa (UNISA), on the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> October 2015.<sup>2</sup> Building upon the CHE's white paper, this convention connected international planners with local and international policymakers, equating an earnest approach from policy South African educational heads. Additionally, a government listed MOOC website, detailing various courses and information for both learners and instructors have been in step with the aims and intentions of policies emanating from these documents and events, with the intention of propagating the MOOC option to South Africans seeking alternate educational access (<<http://moocs.org.za/>>). In comparison to international brands and courses however, it is easily gleaned upon first entering this website that much work needs to be done from the public department. The response from higher education institutions, specifically universities, and some private colleges has been more concomitant with levels and standards associated with online learning and brand marketing.

#### **1.4.2. Universities and Online Colleges**

South African Universities, like their counterparts across the globe, have taken the MOOC phenomenon in their stride, with most major institutions adopting the MOOC model for purposes of expanding their brand, as well as income streams (Olin: 2015). Institutions such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Witwatersrand (Wits), and the University of Cape Town (UCT) have all initiated their own for-profit online content on various platforms. Some (like Wits) have partnered with esteemed international course providers, to share free content while maintaining their own for-profit models, while others have gone and established their own platforms and content.<sup>3</sup>

Another recent institution to have announced itself is 'Skillsacademy'. Built by a former INTEC College manager, this platform offers what it purports are various in-demand courses

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.icde.org/icde-news/26th-icde-world-conference-a-complete-success->

<sup>3</sup> [www.ukznnextndedlearning.ac.za](http://www.ukznnextndedlearning.ac.za), [www.getsmarter.com](http://www.getsmarter.com), [www.wits.ac.za/part-time/online-learning](http://www.wits.ac.za/part-time/online-learning)

in fields of accounting/book-keeping, IT, management, forensics and a host of others, all of which are accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority – or SAQA.<sup>4</sup> Given that most concerns surrounding MOOCs are about credibility and vetting from educational bodies, this feature the website boasts is a welcome element for most learners and prospective job seekers in the country. The [limited] attention paid to, and adoption and development of MOOCs by South African formal institutions has been denoted by some as an attempt by these institutions to safeguard orthodox programs like degrees, diplomas and other accepted and vetted forms of qualification.

Given the limited internet access of most in the country, it should be safe to assume this objective is mostly unimpeded, as international platforms are less known to individuals and employers (Czerniewicz, Deacon, Small & Walii: 2014, Garrido *et al*: 2016). This is owed to a number of factors, chief of which are the country's communications services, which will be unpacked in the next chapter.

#### **1.4.3. Internet Access and Data Provision in SA: The Unchallenged Hurdle?**

South Africa's economy, despite being considered the most sophisticated in the African continent, still lags behind internet access rates. Recent uproars around this came to the fore as parliamentarians debated the issue in early 2017. Access rates for extended or unrestricted internet access are priced mostly in the echelons of the country's middle to the upper-income bracket. By late 2016, South African public discourse reached concerns over data rates, as other furores around recent scandals involving the Gupta family gained increasing traction. Paralleled next to the infamous family's call for imprisonment with #GuptaMustFall, the hashtag #DataMustFall saw public grievance directed at the country's four main cellular providers constituting majority market share in [mobile] data provision. All four were found to have rates (in global comparative terms) second highest only to Brazil, with pricing benchmarked far beyond what developed countries pay (Van Zyl: 2016).

Ironically, some studies and global indices show that despite this, South Africa ranks among the top 10 countries in time spent on the internet, beating out countries like the UK (Brady: 2017a). This can only strengthen the resolve of policymakers to increase their attention to

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<sup>4</sup> [www.skillsacademy.co.za](http://www.skillsacademy.co.za)

online course content as vital to harnessing the demographic dividend. Other encouragements also include the development of NAPAfrica, a revolutionary hub. Unlike conventional connecting points which eventually lag due to increased user traffic, NAPAfrica acts as an exchange hub for internet service providers (ISPs) to exchange their data and increase connectivity speed, as well as reduce operational costs (Staff Writer – BusinessTech: 2017). This can only be good news for South Africans starved of internet access and ultimately, opportunities.

## **1.5. Summary**

This chapter, in highlighting the global context of technological advancement and uncertainties around youth employment, sets the tone for the purpose of this study as well as giving the reader a sense of the need for this study. Youth unemployment in South Africa, along with increased attention by formal institutions given to MOOC content, does signal measures by the state to provide alternative access to youths whom the educational system has long been letting down. The opportunities for online educational attainment, despite these strides in policy and publicizing on government's part, are still hampered by the structural challenges like data access rates. This is another area which this study attempts to stoke conversations and campaigns around, should conclusions reached be favourable for replication and expansion. Further emphasis on MOOC inclusion in curricula and whole educational systems is made in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter details the MOOC phenomenon since inception and how it has impacted scholarly research (especially in fields of education). Aspects of course completion and enrolment get special attention here, as low-income groups and regions will be highlighted as potential enrollees for social mobility. This is then followed by literature on youth unemployment and job search strategies in South Africa. The inclusion of both themes is meant to draw attention to how well MOOCs can be used for the unemployment crisis in South Africa, justifying the study, and possibly greater policy resolutions toward fighting this scourge and tackling youth unemployment. First, an introduction to the literature on MOOCs is needed.

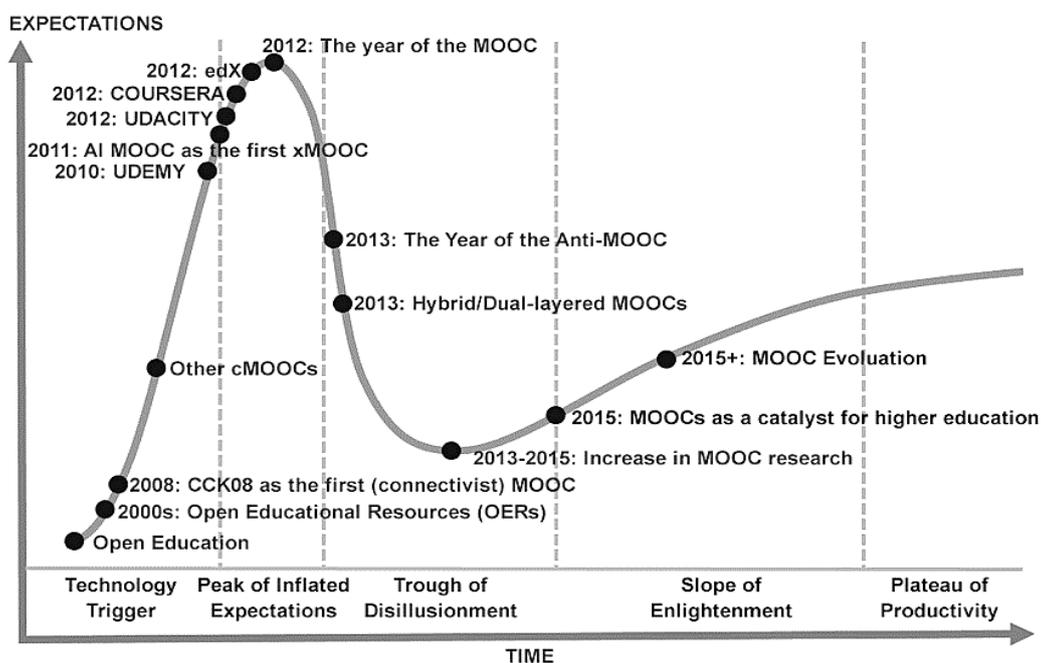
### **2.2. Massive Open Online Course Literature (MOOCs): An Introduction.**

The phenomenon of massive online open courses (MOOCs) has spawned multitudes of research since first appearing in 2008. From painting it as a panacea to dissecting it in more detail, the development of MOOCs, along with reviews and critiques, has taken numerous turns. Rooted in population and development, this study is still not accompanied by many similar studies before it in MOOC research. Most scholarly works - in the form of postgraduate theses - (from 2008-2015) have tackled the MOOC phenomenon mostly through an educational lens. Usually, the approach most MOOC studies take, is applications for improved learner experience, rather than measuring learner experience in a social or psychological setting. The landscape of postgraduate research (MA dissertations and Doctoral theses) in MOOCs has been mostly in the fields of education, ICT, and Engineering and computer science (Bozkurt *et al*: 2016).

### **2.3. MOOCs: Reports vs. Quantitative and Empirical Research: No Silver Bullet**

Indeed, the negative connotations surrounding access and usability of MOOCs across global and socio-demographic backgrounds have seen their initial popularity come into question. Studies by those looking more closely at MOOCs revealed most users to be incapable of or unwilling to complete MOOCs they enrol for (Christensen *et al*: 2013, Ferguson & Clow: 2015, Hansen & Reich: 2015, Shrader *et al*: 2016, Shiokawa-Baklan & Saltarelli: 2016). Questions around access, completion rates, recognisability of certificates by universities and employers saw the initial craze around MOOCs take a dip around the 2012-2013 period.

This has become well-known by most researchers, pre-empting such highs and lows around MOOCs to Garter’s ‘Hype Cycle’ (Olin: 2015, Bozkurt *et al*: 2016). More of this critical research into the viability of MOOCs led to more sobered approaches in research surrounding the MOOC craze, puncturing initial panacea like fads characterizing it in earlier years. Concerns around completion and retention rates have now dominated literature in both academic and conventional writing spaces, as increased enrolment rates are [always] matched by high attrition rates (Christensen *et al*: 2013, Ferguson & Clow: 2015, Hansen & Reich: 2015, Shrader, , Bozkurt *et al*: 2016, Morris: 2014, Schulze: 2014, Loizzo: 2015, Nesterko *et al*: 2016, Shrader *et al*: 2016, Shiokawa-Baklan & Saltarelli: 2016).



**Figure 1. The Gartner Hype Cycle.**  
 Source: Bozkurt, A Keskin, N and de Waard I, 2016, pp. 205

These barriers have become worrisome to exponents of the MOOC trend since the democratizing aspect of this phenomenon becomes redundant in the face of drop-out and incompleteness rates. The investment which some actors have in the MOOC phenomenon, is understandably immense, especially in the case of higher education institutions and professors looking to expand their brands or status in a particular field. Many of these institutions and experts have been alleged to hastily craft online content without as much concern for the quality of content in their field as for expanding their own visibility and brand potential. This in many cases has backfired against both institutions and professors alike (Olin: 2015, Loizzo: 2015).

As one aspect of new research coming out, low completion rates could signal the plateau of productivity within the Gartner hype curve (as seen above). Such a plateau signals limitations within a given subject, with only gradual progress being made over extended periods of time. Such gradual progress, in the case of developing countries, is more expected since barriers like access (internet, computers, etc.), language, adaptive content according to context, attrition (incomplete courses or dropouts after signing up) and various others still slow the uptake of MOOCs as a human development catalyst. As is [sadly] the case in most instances, Sub-Saharan Africa is the baseline at which all these aforementioned challenges are set (Nana-Sinkam: 2014). That said, the increasing prevalence of technology across socio-economic divides (currently and even more so in the near future) means chances for innovative solutions only increase year on year. This gives Africa a greater ability to address its problems more fervently and creatively. Education is just the first crucial step in this process.

#### **2.4. MOOC Demographics**

Assertions that most who take online courses are generally well-educated males, already with post-school education have been commonplace in research on MOOCs (Christensen *et al*: 2013, Nesterko *et al*: 2016, Dillahunt *et al*: 2014a, Glass *et al*: 2016). Globally, the age median is dominated by the 25-34 bracket, is generally male, and with either an undergoing or completed college/university education. With participants from developed countries forming the bulk of enrollees, enrolment from developing countries is lacking in comparison. This comes as constraints in ICT access and language barriers still present major obstacles for the majority of households in the developing world, and more so in [developing] countries where English is not a first language (Dillahunt *et al*: 2014a, Brady: 2017).

Among those who do register from developing countries, the socioeconomic status of those enrolled is largely skewed toward those who come from privileged backgrounds, a lot of whom have histories of higher educational attainment (Palin: 2014, Oyo & Kalema: 2014, Christensen *et al*: 2013, Boga & McGreal: 2014). This trend extends even into developing regions. For example, the majority of MOOC participants from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) are the degreed population, about 5%, which form the majority of those enrolling for courses about 79% (Christensen: 2013). Those from BRICS countries often take online courses more as a means of advancing career opportunities, as opposed to satiating their

curiosity. All of these aspects mentioned have recently spawned multitudinous studies aimed at disseminating this demographic data. Some call for better MOOC course development and educational policy, and others for more nuanced approaches in learner identification through categorization (Sharma *et al*: 2015).

Categories include those who are ‘observers, enrollees, near finishers, late finishers, and keen finishers’. These categorizations have proven a popular topic with MOOC research of late, as most studies in this field have used data to inform policy or course augmentation for improved completion rates (Ferguson & Clow: 2015, De Boer *et al*: 2015, Coleman: 2015). This gendered and class-based disparity has put the socio-economic bridging qualities of MOOCs at odds with those who express reservations through orthodox access patterns. Studies conducted in the United States, like that of Hansen & Reich (2015) show American registrants on the United States based platforms like HarvardX were found to have shown significant disparities between socio-economic clusters. Neighbourhoods above median annual incomes of \$50,000, were found to constitute the majority percentage of applicants, with many of these boasting parents with formal post-schooling educational attainment (Hansen & Reich: 2015).

This corroborates data available from developing countries, which shows middle to high-income having proportionally higher percentages of enrolment compared to lower-income groups. This is despite lower income brackets forming the majority of populations in this region (Hansen & Reich: 2015, Garrido *et al*: 2016, Glass *et al*: 2016, Nesterko *et al*: 2013). Contrastingly, others have reached different conclusions in their studies. For example, one study showed that those without formal education constituted half the sample of those who completed the Coursera program in ‘Critical Thinking’ (Dillahunt *et al*: 2014a). Collected electronically, the information provided by learners taking the course – via a survey within duration of the course –gave only a subjective indication of ‘what affordability meant to respondents’ since they were asked to input whether they could or could not afford formal education (Dillahunt *et al*: 2014a). Although this raises questions of validity (as the sample may not have been fully representative of demographics), it does warrant further studies similar to this. More good forays into real world applications of MOOCs and how they may better provide opportunities for those less materially fortunate are worth pursuing on merit alone. Such results, and aspects worth further mention, in other potential studies, are what makes learners tick. This will be explored in the next section.

## **2.5. Learner Styles and Behaviours**

Some of the more recent phenomena uncovered in MOOC research has been learner preference and style. What this has done for research in the field has helped researchers suggest new ways of developing or augmenting course content for a more efficient learning experience. Styles of engagement, based more on age and learner level than geography, take precedence across developing and developed countries when determining those who successfully complete MOOCs. Older (post-graduate) students generally prove more successful in Guo & Reinicke's study (2014) suggesting course content by postgraduate learners is more thoroughly combed and revisited during engagement periods with work, while younger learners' concentration and commitment levels were found lagging when compared to older students or MOOC enrollees (Guo & Reineke: 2014).

Recently, studies have leaned toward identifying and categorizing learner behaviour, offering suggestions to tailor MOOC courses to suit learner preferences and styles. The five categories they use to quantify learner types also suggests there is a wide array of reasons for people who engage in MOOC education (Brooks Teasley & Thompson: 2015). Other aspects worthy of notable mention are those detailing pedagogy as a determining factor in learner engagement with MOOCs (Wu & Fitzgerald: 2014). These calls would have little to no bearing in a non-academic environment though, as unemployed youths seek any means available to help them attain jobs.

## **2.6. Factors Affecting Course Completion and Attrition**

Of all the most researched aspects of online learning, learner rates of completion and dropout have taken a central role among researchers. Aims of increasing learner retention in this space have largely been informed by a need to understand learner behaviour and how MOOCs can be better designed. This forms part of the larger aim to democratize education – a realization of the platform's potential for levelling socio-economic disparity. This, however, has not transpired the way many proponents of this new platform would have wished. Studies state that of all those enrolled in online courses, only 10% manage to complete their chosen course. Additionally, a large contingent of this 10% possess tertiary qualifications (Hew & Cheung: 2014, Shrader *et al*: 2016, Breslow: 2016). Controlled studies examining MOOC educational backgrounds of enrollees found correlations between levels of education and completion rates,

with those possessing bachelor's degrees generally completing more often than those without degrees, and those possessing postgraduate qualifications completing more often than participants with just an undergraduate degree (Gomez-Zermano *et al*: 2016, Pursel *et al*: 2016).

This presents a challenge, as motivations for course enrolment, usually to gain workplace advancement or credentials for better employment, do not materialize. It could be since most enrollees take courses, not as a means to advance their capacities or careers but to stimulate curiosity (Christensen *et al*: 2013, Loizzo: 2015, Bayeck: 2016, Shrader *et al*: 2016). Material backgrounds can present significant reasons as to why individuals either complete or desert an online program. This holds true across the socioeconomic divide, where enrolment and completion rates between developed and developing countries may be presumed disproportionate at face value (Hansen & Reich: 2015, Gomez-Zermino & Aleman De La Garza: 2016). That said though, recent studies have shown that higher completion rates were more consistent with those who registered and stayed in contact more significantly with peers throughout a chosen course (Li *et al*: 2014, Barak *et al*: 2016). This may hint at external motivation(s) to maintain social standing among peers enrolled in the same course (Barak; Watted & Haick: 2016). Other studies have found that motivation lacks when learners enrol by themselves, as isolation and disconnect take hold. Exacerbating this is an inability for most to self-organize, eventually leading to incapability in completing tasks and assessments, preceding attrition (Gütl; Rizzardini; Chang & Morales: 2014).

This dropout rate is further compounded by more immediate concerns for those in less materially secure circumstances. Students coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds may find it harder to stay enrolled if their material base or household income is lacking. In developing country contexts (like South Africa) this is invariably common (Wittenberg: 2001). This could also be exacerbated by learning environments, which for a large number of learners who have gone through South Africa's public school system, detracts from, rather than encourages, autonomous learning and exploration. Other factors like language, have often been identified as impediments for online learning, where students whose first language is not English, often find themselves struggling to learn concepts in academic formats while struggling to understand basic first-hand English. Even though some studies have contrasted this notion, groups used in different language MOOC studies were still in subjects requiring

higher cognitive ability and technical background (Barak *et al*: 2016). This does not detract from the usefulness of online course content, which if packaged properly, can be helpful to English as a second language, as well as native English speakers. This comes since

*“Online courses provide a compelling opportunity for domain-specific language learning. They supply a large corpus of interesting linguistic material relevant to a particular area, including supplementary images (slides), audio and video”* (Wu; Fitzgerald & Witten: 2014: 354)

This supplementary material as well could be of use to students who may have trouble with understanding concepts and terms of expression crucial for in-depth course understanding. This may well apply to wider living experiences where communication and expression form vital parts of one’s personal and professional life. The importance of this communicative ability may also assist in forming larger social networks and ties, vital for job seekers trying to establish contacts (Burns *et al*: 2010, Friedkin: 1982). All this potential wealth in the growth of communications bodes well for developing countries as MOOC accessibility among developing country populations is steadily growing (Dillahunt *et al*: 2014a 2014b). Global growth in mobile access is now largely accounted for in developing countries with double-digit rates. Africa, as a prime example, has shown that mobile access constitutes the main form of internet access for most people, with communication and IT use in Nigeria exceeding countries like South Africa (Brady: 2017, 2017a). Although population sizes account for this difference (South Africa at roughly 55 million, and Nigeria at around 200 million citizens), the use and frequency of internet programs (whether for communicative, educational or, other purposes) shows not only ingenuity, but possibly greater motivation to try new platforms among those who cannot afford formal education. This necessitates more research in developing countries as well as that among the [relatively] poor in developed countries (Dillahunt *et al*: 2014a, 2014b, Nesterko *et al*: 2016, Brady: 2017).

## **2.7. MOOC Research in Developing Regions**

The use of online content as the panacea for developing regions achieving their economic goals through human capital development has long been a calling card for MOOC exponents. Beyond the positive versus negative hype surrounding the MOOC phenomenon of most recent times, more nuanced studies into the pedagogy of MOOC platforms and content have begun to take shape. One example is the collaborative inter-country project – Research on Open Educational

Resources for Development (ROER4D). This research hub already connects and facilitates cross-border collaboration between researchers working on numerous studies and projects from the global south (including South Africa). One particular project looks at the feasibility of public funding for basic transition from a contact based to MOOC system, the findings of which have considerable ramifications for South Africa's basic educational system<sup>5</sup>. Such initiatives are not just welcomed, but needed, when looking at how young people in Africa can be leveraged to catalyse economic growth by promoting their skills development.

Sprouting from responses to global north dominance in the pedagogy and disbursement of MOOC content, researchers also attempt, through ROER4D, to address questions surrounding trends, preferences and developments around online platforms. This is an attempt to hopefully inform educational policy surrounding this new educational landscape. Other research collaborations include the 'Advancing MOOCs for Development Initiative' (AMDI), where collaborations between researchers from Columbia, South Africa, the Philippines, and Washington have produced studies relating to employability and completion rates of MOOCs in developing regions<sup>6</sup>. Studies have shown in one AMDI report that most who access MOOCs in the sampled countries of South Africa, Columbia and the Philippines are from low to middle-income households, a positive indicator for those seeking to promote them (Garrido *et al*: 2016). This is adverse to study results mentioned earlier, which highlighted only educated middle income earners as those accessing MOOCs.

Although such indicators are positive, they only relate to the alternate forms of education and training youths will pursue since they do not have equitable access to resources and opportunities. This is especially true in South Africa, possessing amongst the highest rates of unemployment (and inequality) in the world. Despite the outcry for developing countries to develop their own epistemological approaches – with learning steeped in cultural nuance, some institutions like the UCT affiliated 'Get Smarter' platform, have grown to develop, structure and administer courses on behalf of universities like Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and are in line to secure a lucrative agreement with a top tier university in the United Kingdom (Hicks: 2016).

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<sup>5</sup> <http://roer4d.org/oer-11-mapping-public-funding-for-oer-in-africa>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.roer4d.org>

Such is the ability of local MOOC developers that lending their skills to educational, personal and professional development, for long-term youth development is not such a totally far-fetched idea. What should then follow is an assessment of how MOOC certificates can be accredited, and whether they can be geared toward mainstream awareness and acceptance by both employers, students, and government officials alike. Strategies for youth should emanate urgently from a desire to up-skill this cohort while increasing productivity and addressing economic concerns. Looking at the effects of MOOCs among youth in a population study is not just novel, but also has directly applicable findings and suggestions for unemployed youths at a local, and perhaps up to a national level. This, in a South African context, has not been looked at as yet, and given the country's extremely high youth unemployment rate, could well provide a positive foundation for other studies to further expand youth and educational policies.

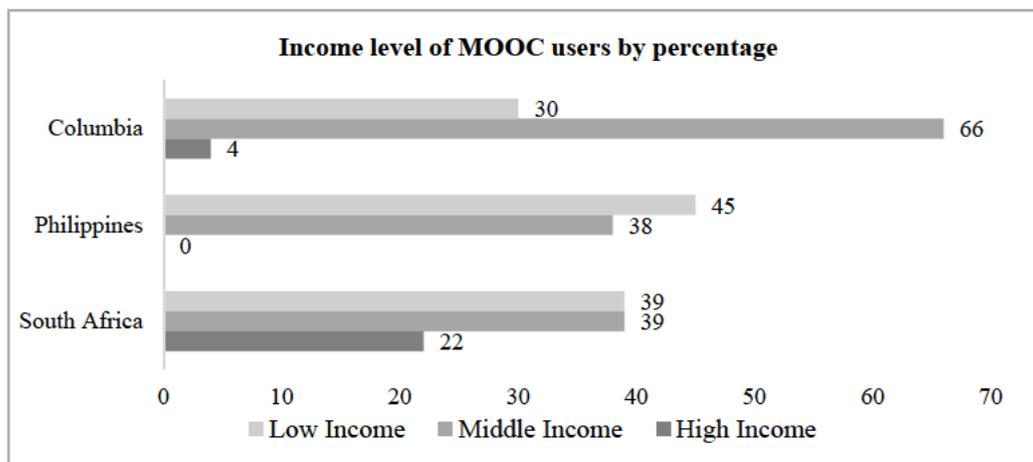
Aspects like employer perceptions of MOOCs have been documented, with positive findings for employees, despite cautious optimism from employers and business professionals (Radford *et al*: 2014, Banks & Meinert: 2016). This same research has shown tentative optimism in South Africa and other developing countries well. Most South African employers admit they have little knowledge of online content, attributing reasons for this to lack of certification by state authorities like SAQA, to lagging internet access and knowledge of such content on the web. These are cited as only some of the reasons employers have been tentative to fully embrace MOOCs in the country (Garrido *et al*: 2016).

Such a discovery, despite lamenting the scales of education tipped in favour of the developed world, only increase the urgency for bold, creative approaches to education and certification for youths in developing countries. Some online platforms have taken such steps. Methods such as identity verification - uploading an applicant's ID document with a recent picture of themselves - and keystroke verification to determine [genuine] student participation are methods used by platforms like edx<sup>7</sup>. Such methods challenge employer preferences for degreed candidates since throughputs by higher institutions [globally] do not accommodate the influx of youth seeking quality education any more (Banks & Meinert: 2016, Outland: 2014, Webb: 2015).

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<sup>7</sup> <https://support.edx.org/hc/en-us/articles/206503858-How-do-I-verify-my-identity>

Secondary data (displayed in figure. 2) suggests MOOCs are already being utilized by those who need them most in South Africa when compared to other countries (Columbia and the Philippines). These statistics are valuable for determining job search behaviour levels and initiatives, especially among youths, who most believe, are despondent or under-resourced to look for work. Along with the relative affordability of MOOCs, it can be supposed that most who use MOOCs in this low-income bracket are of the 15-24 age bracket. With this, it would seem through discussions in the previous chapter that South Africa’s government has recognized the coming importance online learning will have in the educational landscape.



**Figure 2. Estimated Comparisons of MOOC users by socio-economic status between developing countries. Source: Garrido, M. *et al*, 2016. pp. 31**

Aiding South African youth in their quest for qualification attainment, and thus a better standard of living is paramount. Young adults, who have matured beyond schooling age, and with a greater desire for work have, as will be shown in the next section, given positive impetus for programs utilizing education from alternate avenues. With this in mind, the next section outlines the lengthy debacle of job search and the strategies used by unemployed youths.

### **2.8. Youth Unemployment and Job Search Strategies in South Africa**

In an environment characterized by one of the largest globally recorded slack labour economies, South Africa is a major point of study for labour economists both locally and internationally. Youth unemployment stands particularly high relative to the rest of the population, with African youths representing a majority of this figure (Statistics South Africa QLFS Report: 2017: 9-11). The World Bank estimates the youth unemployment figure stood at 50 per cent for the second quarter of 2015 in the 15-24 age bracket.

The remarkably high number of unemployed youth is explained by a myriad of factors, chief among these being levels of educational attainment. Encased in this is the problem of language, whereas speakers of South African indigenous languages are thought half as likely as [fluent] English speakers to secure work (Burns *et al*: 2010). This comes as language is viewed in South Africa as a proxy for accessing formal/direct channels (employment agencies) or informal channels like social networks (Burns *et al*: 2010, Schóer *et al*: 2014).

The term 'social networks' in South African job search literature has been a buzzword for some time, as labour economists and researchers have tried to compound its salience in securing work for most South Africans. Although beneficial for those who have access to influential networks, research suggests that networks and social ties may end up perpetuating gender and racial bias. Kinship as the foundation for most social ties and exclusive networking means these foundations are built on bias through exclusivity by group affiliation. This is as true in the United States as it is in South Africa, where language and race are still a large contingent of everyday life (Trimble & Kimec: 2011). Black South Africans in particular, are a case in point, as material bases from which they can leverage upward social mobility are not on par with other groups - owing to the country's racially segregated and divisive past. Upward mobility depends instead, on household formation. Employed wage earners in a household are more likely to influence, encourage and support unemployed youths to seek work (Schóer *et al*: 2014, Hinks: 2008, Schóer & Leibbrandt: 2006).

One of the positive effects of household formation is that it acts as a buffer for the extremely poor and economically marginalized against further impoverishment. Pensioners receiving their monthly grant can offer reprieve in lesser income households, offering extra monetary support for travel expenses and other costs for struggling job seekers. Costs of search, however, mean most youths who come from households with limited resources often do not maintain their search activity for long. Thus the household formation, as concluded by other researchers, becomes not a tool for social mobility, but rather a buffer against further instability wrought by structural injustices of the past which currently persist (Dinkleman: 2004, Adato *et al*: 2006, Klaasen & Woolard 2008). This once again may be a factor of limited household formation, as established careers for most South Africans often takes place for most in their thirties. This makes entering the labour market even more difficult for younger people as they try to compete for limited space with more experienced and older workers (Burns *et al*: 2010: 340).

Many households which are youth headed or with elderly members reliant on pensions especially, remain the primary wardens averting further poverty. Data from the 2008 leg of the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS) lends credence to this observation, indicating a substantial proportion of African males at risk of unemployment, with an alarmingly minimal percentage only having worked for sustenance pay (Lam *et al*: 2008). Figure. 3 shows how most job seekers have resorted to social networks as a form of job search. This perhaps highlights the prospects the potential work yields through this channel. This form of job search is still tempered by extraneous factors based on race and gender, through which resource sharing – in the form of information and early access opportunities – takes place. This is to say that certain groups, predominantly (white and male) are more likely to secure employment than others. Some of the recent repeats of university students having to stand at street intersections with placards stating their qualifications may hint at the lack of social capital they possess compared to other race groups in the country. Research in the United States attests to this while survey data in South Africa corroborates this statement (McDonald: 2011, Mngoma: 2014, Statistics South Africa Household income Survey: 2016, Statistics South Africa: QLFS Report Q1: 2017).

The frequency with which social networks (referrals and information gathering through friends and family) are utilized, coupled with the number of people accessing this form of job search, make it highly attractive as a potential form of successfully securing work (Schóer *et al*: 2008). This should be considered more advantageous over orthodox search methods, but if utilized optimally, a sound complement to them. Such ties may coalesce under certain groups with greater access to social capital than others (Wanberg *et al*: 2000, White: 2002, Van Hoyer *et al*: 2009). South Africa in this instance may be no exception, especially since it ranks above all other countries on inequality indexes. Stronger vs. weaker network ties – those that are direct and personal versus those which are predicated on a sense of community and fellowship – should be looked at more closely when examining networking as a job search strategy.

It is also important to remember how backgrounds and educational attainment prove pivotal in outcomes for certain groups compared to others. This can influence how they navigate their life paths and to what importance formal education plays in their survival strategies. Looking at social networks in South Africa, survey data by Mcwango (2016, pp. 21) reveals Whites to

believe much less than Indian, Coloureds, and Blacks that education is necessary to move ahead in life.

This possibly supports the assertion that social networks may serve some groups better than others (based on material wealth and security afforded thereof). Conversely, recent trends of black graduates at street corners displaying their qualifications in hopes of getting work from automotive passers-by, shows a lack of social capital (Mngoma: 2016). All this said though, one thing remains clear, that social networking as a job search strategy is highly desirable and deployed by most job seekers when looking for work, and may play an even greater role in securing formal work than is realized. South Africa is a country currently undergoing dialogue around this issue, where disillusioned youths – through ‘fallist campaigns’ - on social media and in esteemed learning institutions are beginning to question the [social] status quo. It has been stipulated by some researchers in the South African context that social networks have to potential increase employment possibilities by 3-12% while reducing worker discouragement by 1-2% (Burns *et al*: 2010).

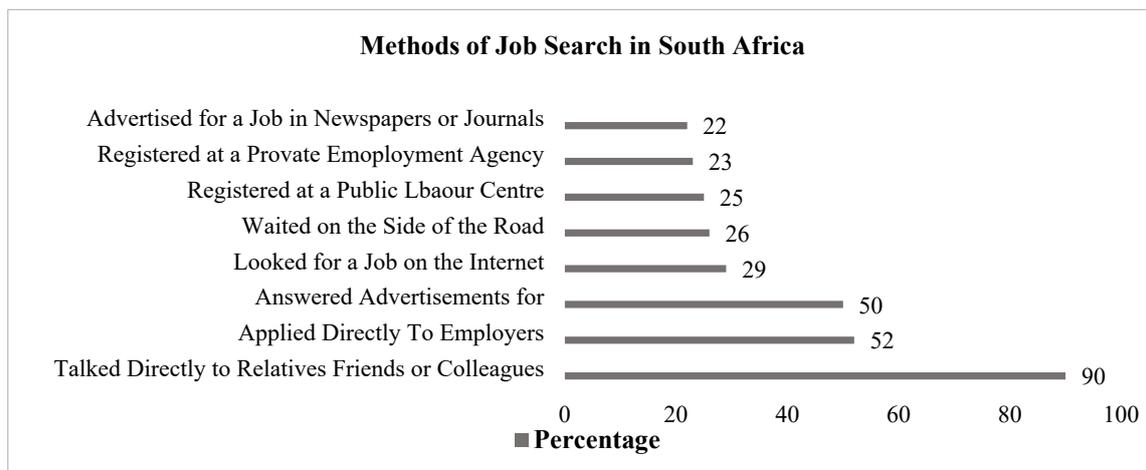


Figure 3. Source: Mwango. B, 2016, Public Attitudes to Work in South Africa. pp. 39

Such a low percentages margin, despite the multitudes accessing social networks, is owed to intricacies like quality, location, and language of networks utilized (Burns *et al*: 2010). This leads to another pivotal factor influencing job search, that of education. Studies looking at factors influencing job search in South Africa pointed out these aspects. The importance of education is also confirmed through quantitative reports by various researchers in the CAPS study. Strong correlations between ‘schooling and ability’ and labour market outcomes have

been found in concluding analyses (Lam *et al*: 2008, Burns *et al*: 2009, Diagne: 2010, Magruder: 2010, Schöer & Roberts: 2014).

The majority of South African youths admittedly do not receive basic education standards facilitating confident job placement in the market. This is especially true in service and skilled work sectors. Wittenberg (2001) indicated employer perceptions as sceptical about the quality of the education system in South Africa to send out ‘reliable signals’ from [potential] job seekers – that is the ability of job seekers to convert educational attainment into verifiable and useful skillsets (Wittenberg: 2001, Schöer & Leibbrandt: 2006). Such apprehension may also stem from placing qualifications above experience, thus leading to job mismatching (Mcwango: 2016, Schöer, & Roberts: 2014). These skillsets or knowledge gaps could be addressed by MOOCs if factored into a coherent and long term national development plan. Indeed the World Bank’s 2015 report on South Africa’s Economic outlook expressed one suggestion in particular as a suggestive measure.

*“It may also be necessary to provide services that support both job searching and training so that inexperienced new entrants and the unemployed become more mobile across occupations and attractive to hire.”* (World Bank: 2015: 33)

The potential for such a program to be administered through the prism of social services is strong if one considers the employment statistics for the second quarter of 2015, where community and social services were atop all sectors displaying employment increases, jumping up by 98 000 in the second quarter (World Bank: 2015). Additionally, the courses which are administered by MOOCs may cater to the prestige and precedence both employers and unemployed job seekers attach to qualifications (Kingdon & Knight: 2001, Hinks: 2008, Diagne: 2010, Schöer *et al*: 2014, Mcwango: 2016). This could in fact hurdle unemployed youths into active search since the costs for certificates and diplomas attached to prestigious universities and colleges through MOOCs are far more economical for households from lower-middle-income brackets. This sentiment is echoed by Bayeck (2016) when she concludes in her study that:

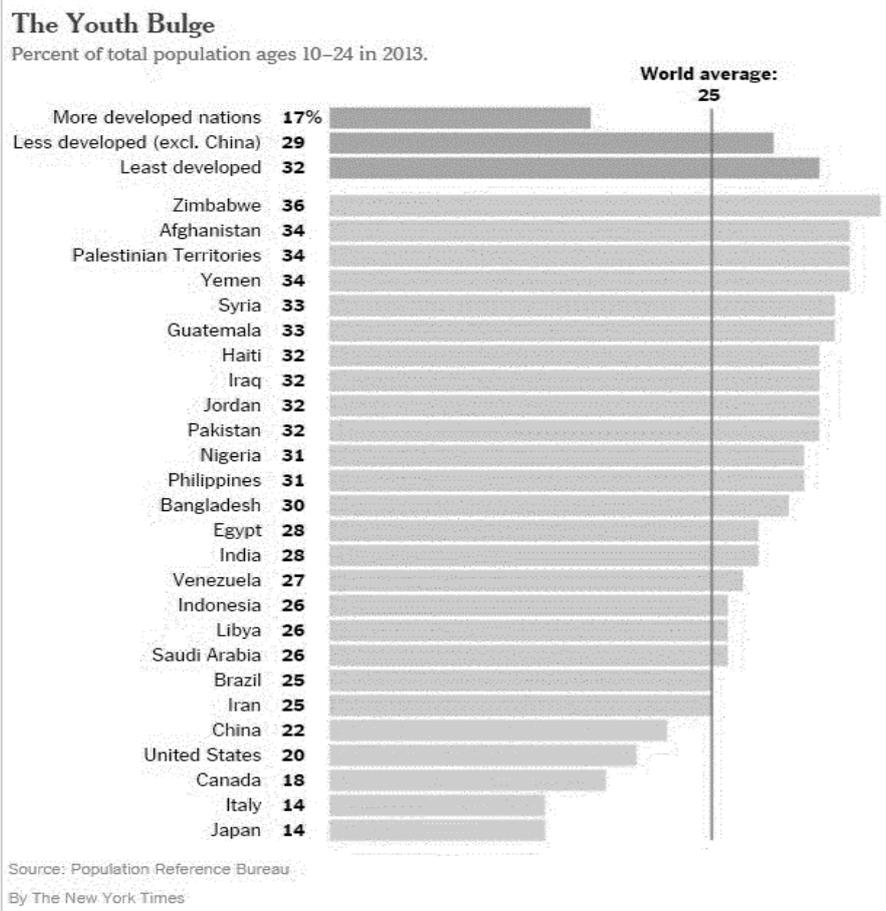
*“Partnering with organizations (e.g., non-governmental organization, or community centres) that work with individuals in financial need might be an excellent approach to reach and attract low-income individuals. MOOC providers may use those organizations as centres individuals can visit to enrol*

*into MOOCs.....since this population does not always have access to the internet. The aforementioned strategy might make MOOCs more accessible to economically disadvantaged or non-college holder individuals.” (Bayeck: 2016: 231)*

Such policies - using MOOCs as the socio-economic aid they are so often trumpeted as by their loudest exponents, could well benefit unemployed job-searching youths in urgent situations. Some have stated that unemployed populations in states of financial hardship are more likely to secure work simply because their situations place more urgency than others in more fortunate circumstances (Wanberg *et al*: 1999). Online learning as a catalyst for personal growth and community development is an engine which could yield great potential if done right. For this to happen though, an understanding of the psycho-social makeup of South Africa is required, as well as what course content should strategically be used at various levels of learning.

## **2.9. Summary**

This chapter, in detailing MOOC literature, as well as that of the job search (locally and internationally), attempted to paint for the reader, a picture of the South African social makeup. The social and economic situations in South Africa have become more untenable as time has progressed, necessitating interventions borne from ingenuity and creativity, operating slightly outside the ambit of South African public service. Educational systems, as well as how they are run, have failed South African youths, leaving them ill-equipped for workspaces demanding dynamically skilled and qualified individuals. Developing country challenges along with adoptions of online course content by those in lesser-income brackets have painted an interesting picture, giving impetus for MOOC programs to train unskilled and unemployed youths. This is especially true in South Africa, where inequality levels sit atop all other countries. Frustrations experienced by youths who have come realize their limited resource bases and social capital in the democratic dispensation, are now turned toward racial divides underlying these inequalities. South Africa’s bubbling youth disquiet (in spaces of higher education and in the streets) means the country’s leadership now faces the prospect of unrest across the length and breadth of its borders should opportunities not manifest quickly enough (Sengupta: 2016).



**Figure 4. Developing Country youth bulges compared to some developed countries. Source: Sengupta, S, from the Population Reference Bureau, *New York Times*, 2016**

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

### 3.1. Introduction

The following chapter deals with the theoretical framework chosen for this study. Aspects of motivation are strongly centred here, with details on self-realization and emotional control unpacked. Reasons as to why this framework was chosen will also be stated, in the end providing justification and clarity of structure for this choice.

### 3.2. Theoretical framework: Self-Determination Theory

Popular with a number of educational, and in recent times, MOOC studies, this theory looks at the role of motivation and the factors which drive it. Applied across a number of fields, this psychological theory has been utilized to great effect in other disciplines. These include sports-psychology as well as health and well-being. Psychological needs in the form of *autonomy*, *competence* and *relatedness* act as the pillars of self-determination, allowing for a multi variable analysis in participant capacity and development (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan: 1991, Deci & Ryan: 2000, Ryan & Deci: 2000, Gagné & Deci: 2005, Deci & Ryan: 2008).

#### 3.2.1. Types of Motivation

Some differentiations do form the core of this theory, but not between societies. Motivational types have become an important tool for theorists and researchers in this theoretical field, allowing behavioural measurements and predictions to be made. Differentiations in types of motivation form the foundations of this theory, where internal and external motivators measure the application of a participant to given tasks. This is done through analysing behavioural regulation to predict the likely performance level of an individual.

1. **Intrinsic motivation:** where psychological needs and benefits are reasoned by the individual for his/her own benefit. This has been called by theorists, *autonomous motivation*. It is associated with higher performance and longer lasting behavioural adoptions as compared to the next type.

**2. Extrinsic motivation.** This is usually referred to by theorists as *controlled motivation*, where external factors, based on societal norms and psychological reactions related to these norms, (reward/punishment or monetary gain) often drive an individual's behaviour. This adherence, it is believed, can only last so long, since intrinsic motivation is found lacking. The same definition is offered here from pioneering scholars Edward Deci and Richard Ryan when they state:

*“When a behaviour is self-determined, the regulatory process is choice, but when it is controlled, the regulatory process is compliance (or in some cases defiance).”* (Deci. E *et al*: 1991: 327)

In this establishment of autonomous over controlled motivation, some researchers have gone further in detailing how to foster autonomous motivation[s] and behaviours. As mentioned before, many fields, including education, have used Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a praxis for identifying and enhancing human experiences and behaviours. The *internalization* of certain behaviours deemed valuable to an individual, even if only extrinsically motivated (via social pressures & norms) – are still precipitated by close persons of significance who facilitate and encourage autonomy in loving and supportive environments. In the case of youths, this is most often parents and teachers (Ryan & Deci: 2000, Gagné & Deci: 2005). This, of course, revolves around valuing certain behaviours and adopting them to the point they become part of the self. This valuing stems from identifying activities as beneficial to the self, even if intrinsic motivation – i.e. the pursuit of activity for the pure enjoyment by an individual – is lacking. Those who are able to see the value in a behavioural change or adoption, despite this personal lack of *intrinsic motivation* can overcome apathy and disinterest, eventually internalizing these behaviours until they become part of the self. Three main conditions, if met, can facilitate this. These include preconditions of

- a) An understanding of the utility of an exercise/activity
- b) The provision of free choices surrounding the activity with little or no pressure
- c) That their outlooks and perspectives are acknowledged

When the value of an activity is internalized, people do not necessarily become more interested or joyed with an activity, but become willing to do it because of its perceived value. Adults - depending on the behaviours learned and integrated in formative years – will have marked

differences in performance levels depending on their surrounds and support systems. This does not, however, set or cap levels of *internalization* to any degree, as one of the pillars of human existence is the ability to adapt. Other parts of SDT mentioned earlier also play a part in fulfilling individual potential. If played out in tandem, these ‘psychological needs’ can facilitate a more rounded individual in his/her performance.

### **3.2.2. The three psychological needs in SDT**

Three foundations of SDT will be discussed as they relate to the study and the questions being asked in the motivation section of this dissertation.

***Autonomy*** is often conflated with individualism/isolation and less socially healthy behaviours, but in SDT is far removed from this general understanding. Decision making and directives associated with these decisions made without external influence (for self-benefit) are the core of this pillar. These inclinations affirm self-worth and allow for healthier integration and interaction with others. Comparatively, this assertion was found to be as true in non-western (more communal) as much as western individualist societies around the globe (Deci & Ryan: 2000; 2008, Gagne & Ryan: 2005).

***Competence*** in SDT relates not simply to being effective at given tasks or requirements of an individual but to feeling accomplished through sets of challenges which stretch him/her to reach new levels of performance. Flowing from autonomy - underlined by choices affecting self-determination - competence can lead to higher levels of self-confidence and self-esteem (Ryan & Deci: 2000).

***Relatedness*** is where human connection, compassion and ultimately validation occurs. In essence, it is the ‘need to be feel cared for and to care for someone’ close to a subject. This emotional connection is pointed out as essential for intrinsic motivation to occur, resulting in higher levels of performance by individuals (Deci & Ryan: 2000, Ryan & Deci: 2000).

These aspects of SDT form the psychological foundation for the theory for application and examination in field settings.

*Causality orientations* – as defined by Deci & Ryan (2000, 2008) outline how individuals navigate social surrounds by adopting or discarding behaviours in order to adjust to their surrounds. How optimally they do this is measured by their performance and satisfaction levels. How well they orient themselves to environments using information related to behavioural regulation is important. Levels of self-determination are measured here as individuals show their intent and drive by adjusting to situations across different domains (social and institutional).

This may also be seen, in the context of MOOC participation, as a balance of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan: 2008: 52, Loizzo: 2015: 57). Studies have also shown how autonomy supporting environments in areas like Information technology (IT) based learning can also improve adaptation and uptake of new technologies or learning material. In a recent study, the uptake of IT-based learning platforms, and of computer navigation in general, was dependent on how ‘competent’ and ‘autonomous’ users felt in a program where subjects were exposed to technologies and methods of learning unfamiliar to them. The same sentiment echoed in an excerpt from earlier literature corroborates when it is stated:

*“Research on SDT has shown that positive outcomes are more associated with autonomy-supportive motivating style than with a controlling style, such as better learning, performance, and well-being outcomes” (Roca & Gangé: 2007: 1597)*

In the case of the proposed program using MOOCs, this autonomy-supportive motivation would come from a course instructor who is readily available and demonstrates a visible passion for the subject matter contained in the course. Although in MOOCs this communication with instructors is digital, having regular live video sessions still proves an instructor is readily available and willing to engage meaningfully with students in order to achieve greater course completion numbers. Along with course design, this influences student engagement leading to greater motivation for course completion (Hew: 2014, Hew & Cheung: 2014).

This autonomous learning and motivation, however, is still derived from personal motivation, stemming from the three psychological pillars. How these pillars are formed, is through life experiences and a need for “personal development & generativity” (Deci & Ryan: 2008: 183). These are underpinned by long term goals an individual sets for him/herself.

These long term goals manifest according to the extent these basic needs have been satisfied, leading an individual to strive for higher levels of achievement in their endeavours. Once these basic needs are thwarted however, extrinsic factors relating to external indicators of worth (usually in the form of wealth or some other asset) are adopted. This ‘substitution’ of motivation may lead to less than optimal results for the individual over time. Well-being as an endpoint for SDT measurement is less likely to be attained, leading to an even lesser likelihood for social integration (Deci & Ryan: 2008: 182-183). It will suffice to say that, once personal requirements and objectives are met, social duty and communal ‘giving back’ are the natural progressions for most people. It is this conclusion that some have reached in a similar vein when reviewing brief introductions of SDT for both personal and collective/communal well-being (Deci & Ryan: 2008).

### **3.3. Methodological research using SDT.**

Various studies have employed Self-Determination theory in recent years as both a theoretical and analytical tool in determining factors of student engagement, levels of satisfaction and reasons for taking MOOC courses. Khan *et al* (2018) employed amalgamations of task-technology fit model with SDT to give a rounded analysis of learner motivation, with social recognition and social influence as additional mediating tools in their analysis. Zhou *et al* (2016) hypothesized 5 constructs to explain MOOC use in Chinese subjects, using the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), along with SDT, using autonomous motivation as an antecedent for all three constructs of TPB.

Conversely, MOOC research in developed regions also shows a strong preference for SDT in studies looking into learner engagement and motivation (Hew: 2014, Joo: 2018). Literature review of MOOC studies suggests, however, that few studies employ observation and interview techniques for data gathering. Hakami *et al* (2017) showed only one study in their review 42 papers which employed this technique, with almost 62% of these employing surveys for empirical approaches. Additionally, all the papers mentioned looked only at university students, a demographic already linked to high levels of MOOC access and completion. Such literature, although interesting, does little to compare situations in developing countries, the majority of which are constituted by unemployed youth.

### 3.4. Summary

This chapter, in explaining Self-Determination theory, outlines different types of motivation and which types are more sustainable for long term well-being (that being autonomous). In dealing with intrinsic motivation, adoption of certain behaviours as well as [emotional] regulation allowing for behavioural change. Causality orientations (as mentioned above), correspond well to the daily experience most young South Africans go through as they navigate through different social and institutional environments, attempting to further their prospects in life. Using this aspect of the framework will prove useful in the latter, post-study review sections of this dissertation. Aspects of personal development and generativity speak well to youth aspirations, as well as measures of hope and optimism (features to be questioned both before and after the pilot study). In mentioning all these correlations and how they speak to the aims and objectives of the study, it is hoped the reader will gain insight into the purpose of this study as a means of testing possible connections between job search behaviour and qualification, attainment and MOOC use as a medium for this.

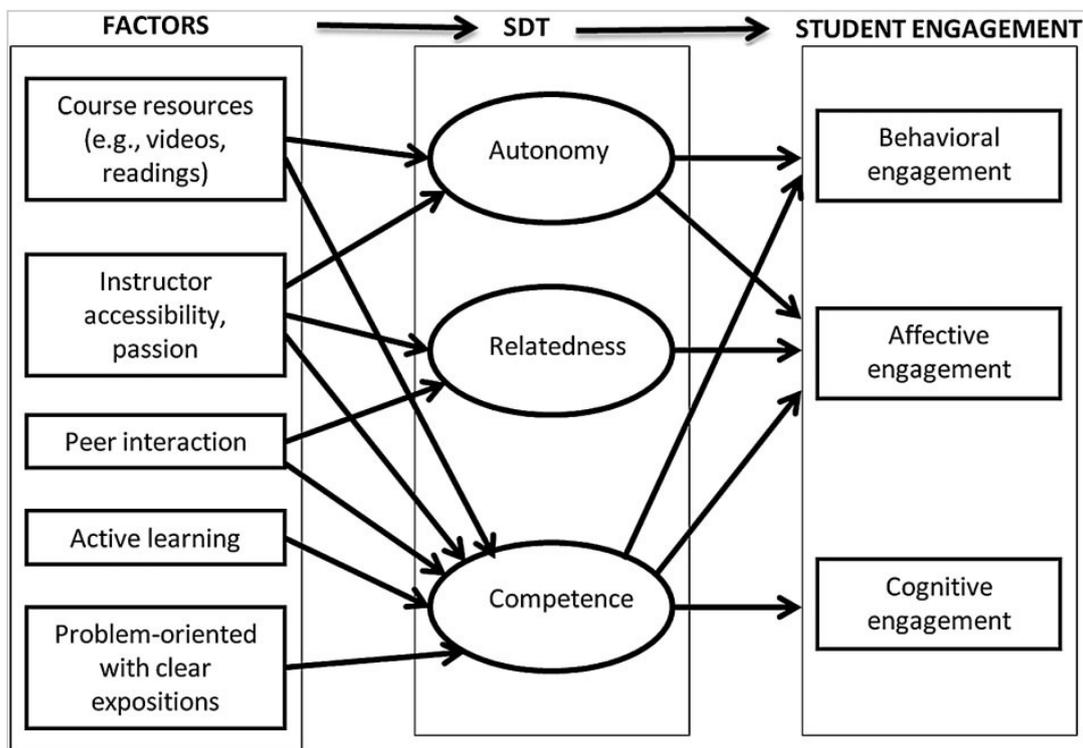
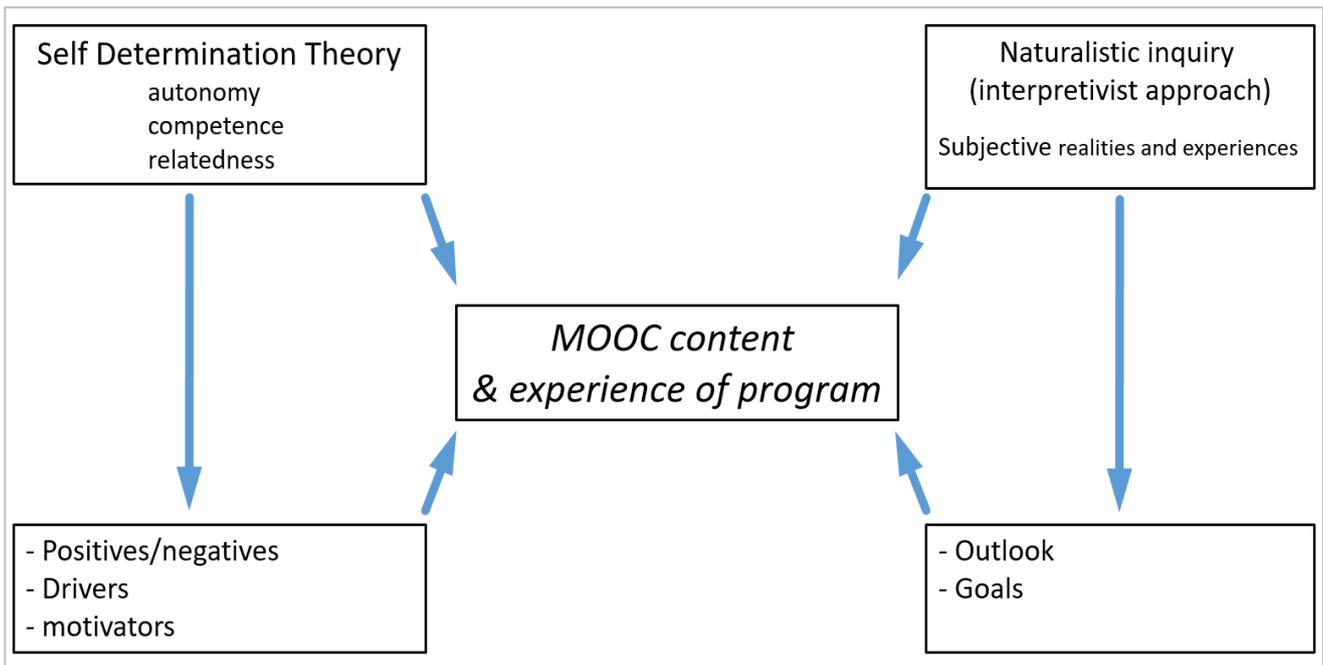


Figure 5. Factors determining student engagement in a MOOC, using Self-Determination Theory as a guide. Source: Hew: 2014, pp. 18



**Figure 6. Program design illustrating theoretical hypothesis in program and outlooks deployed**

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter details the methods taken to enact the field research. General program design is discussed, including the study setting, locating and recruiting participants, mapping out their characteristics (age and gender demographics as well as their geographic location[s]) and reasoning for a group study setting. Data obtained through Naturalistic Inquiry question design is then analysed through theoretical application, using SDT as an analytical tool in determining responses to content and ultimately how genuine job search activity may have emanated from the study program. Within all of these, reasons, as well as challenges and shortcomings are detailed to the reader, giving scope to limitations as well as study design choices.

### **4.2. Naturalistic Inquiry under the Interpretivist Paradigm**

Using both internal and extrinsic motivations in Self Determination Theory, questions will be structured around both aspects to form a rounded set of responses from participants. Under naturalist inquiry (an interpretivist paradigm), non-obtrusive examining of participants through interviews will be deployed. This approach is chosen as it avoids possible bias in similar approaches like participant action research. The experiences and understanding[s] of each participant, based on their social interactions, expectations, beliefs, and perceptions come from different interpretations and meanings ascribed to them (Gray: 2010, Perry & Perry: 2017). These ultimately render different results and responses in the study, which can be analysed from individual and collective standpoints. It is for this reason, along with the qualitative approach this study employs, that this approach was chosen.

Using the framework of NI in conjunction with SDT, perceptions around motivations, based on individual experiences and meanings ascribed to them, can be garnered along with motivations particular to each participant. Much of the literature dealing with MOOC engagement among students tends to focus on technical aspects like course design, average time spent (per day, per week, etc.) engaging in coursework (Hakami *et al*: 2017). Although valuable, these demographics offer only data-driven results and analysis without much insight into student psychology, motivation overall social outcomes or nuances associated with MOOC engagement.

The methodological design here may offer alternative approaches to MOOC literature as well as youth program design. The combination of SDT with naturalistic inquiry facilitates detail into participant motivations on both personal (intrinsic) and surrounding (extrinsic) contexts while gaining deeper insights into the reasoning behind their motivations.

### **4.3. Sampling**

The sample aimed for in this study are youths varying from the ages of 18-35 years old. Respondents were expected to be unemployed and/or not looking for work at the time of enrolling for the program. Basic English Literacy levels and competent computer navigation were also factors used to filter applicants for the program. A total of 15 enrollees were ultimately chosen, with an expectation for attrition, given strong congruencies in the literature of learner drop-out. The sampling method used was Convenience sampling. Respondents who were attendant to presentations and briefs about the program were offered the chance to participate. Although at risk of volunteer bias, this sampling method also allowed for discernment about respondent characteristics, such as gender, social or economic background, median age and history of participation with the host facility (YMCA). Perhaps because of this, more females signed up for the program than males, this is perhaps owed to more frequent reading habits by girls than boys, thus lending them to being more receptive to education and opportunities thereof. This was indicated in the Progress in International Reading Literacy [PIRLS] Study (Mullis *et al*: 2017).

The following section outlines the method and detailing of the group study setting. All participants' social background was of the lower to lower-middle-income bracket, with 12 out of the 15 respondents coming from households with a single parent income. The median age was 25, with just under half the number of respondents being of this age. Of the five respondents aged 25, one of them was found to possess a matric certificate whilst two were in the process of studying towards tertiary qualifications. In addition, three of the participants in the program (all female), were employees at the centre. Their participation was not influenced nor encouraged by the researcher. Their decision to join the program was of their own volition and was in no way through any external suggestion or influence. Their participation did provide for richer data analysis, as perceptions and experiences by the staff could be contrasted with

those of ordinary participants in the program. This made for a more layered analysis (presented in the discussion chapter).

#### **4.4. Recruitment**

Located in Central Durban, the chosen location for the study was the Diakonia Avenue branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), an international Christian founded and run, non-governmental organization. Despite having the word 'men' in its title, the centre runs numerous programs for youths across the gender divide, with a strong focus on programs aimed at developing female agency and self-confidence. Additionally, its programs emphasize nurturing for disaffected youths and those seeking avenues for self-betterment. It was in this vein that the MOOC program was agreed upon by local convenors and senior staff members at the centre. Terms and conditions were set between the researcher and the head of the centre before publicizing and commencement of the program. The centre's computer room was made available for the researcher to use, with conditions and terms of use - including safety and transparency according to the centre's set stipulations.

Many learners made use of public transport to get to the venue since most of them stayed in surrounding areas from Central Durban. Areas like Inanda, Umlazi, Kwa-Mashu, and Tongaat were commonly mentioned geographic locations, with only four of the participants staying close to, or in Central Durban. Through conversations with administrators and facilitators at the centre, word of mouth, as well as leaflets and pamphlets, were used to publicize the program. The researcher was invited to present at one of the capacity building workshops as a guest speaker. Places were offered, detailing the purpose of the study, which was well received by staff and youth convenors. This was done with permission from the centre's director and senior staff. This also gave a chance for the researcher to introduce himself and develop a rapport with potential participants. Above all else, it was hoped this method would entice youths to participate in the program.

#### **4.5. Program Setting**

The venue area consisted of a compact, closed-off space, with roughly 20 computers in the room. Limited support by the researcher to participants was offered. Rather, basic observation

acting as a facilitator, allowing only for technical assistance with setting up computers and digital accounts was the extent of the facilitator involvement by the researcher.

The centre agreed to a 5 day weekly use of their venue, with 3 hours a day scheduled for the program (hours being 1-4pm each day). Being that most respondents/enrollees were required to be present during these hours, only unemployed persons (in the strictest definition) were expected to participate consistently throughout the duration of the program. This allowed for greater transparency and control in the study. The impact of group learning in such an environment is one aspect the researcher wished to evaluate in terms of learner motivation, rate and speed of completion. The decision for group study comes as the MOOC platform is one demanding strong self-motivation and time management, thus necessitating a supportive learning environment. This support came in the form of the researcher being on hand each day of the week to assist with any technical difficulties participants may have experienced in conducting their studies, but never with the course material itself. Examples of this support included:

- helping participants register for chosen courses
- helping them set up email accounts for registering on the course website
- Ensuring internet connections and background processes in the Windows operating system were consistent throughout the day.

It must be stressed that this role played by the researcher was not in any way, aiding participants unfairly with their course work. No breach of ethics was committed in this program, and only technical aspects pertaining to hardware and operational software issues were of concern to the researcher. As mentioned by Perry & Perry III (2017: 8-9), the extent of the researcher's involvement was, acting as both facilitator and researcher, observing participants throughout the duration of the program (while helping them in technical aspects of computer literacy and operation).

Situating participants in a group was also a good reason to test one of the other aspects mentioned in SDT literature – that of proximity to others in the same pursuit as one's self having some degree of influence over a respondent in their own pursuit of goals. This is mentioned in Deci and Ryan's summary of group behaviour and assimilation where they state:

*Our organismic-dialectical perspective further proposes that these natural organismic activities and the integrative propensities that coordinate them require fundamental nutriments—namely, ambient supports for experiencing competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan: 2000: 226)*

In addition, it was hoped, as espoused by some in previous studies on MOOCs, that group settings precipitate conversation and mutual support among learners in a given program, either during breaks or before commencing each learning session. The connectedness has been identified by other researchers as essential to MOOC engagement as it promotes both autonomous learning while facilitating discussion among peers. This can range from course content and subject matter to personal challenges they may face during the course (Li *et al.*: 2014, Hew: 2014, Hew & Cheung: 2014).

Participant	Age	Gender	Course	Developer	Completed
** 1) (D.O)	26	F	Health Studies	XSIQ	-
2)	34	F	Health Studies	XSIQ	5 <sup>th</sup>
3) (D.O)	25	F	Children’s Studies	OpenLearn	-
* 4) (D.O)	25	F	Human Resource Management	Saylor Foundation	-
5)	24	F	Health Studies	Saylor Foundation	7 <sup>th</sup>
6)	21	F	Food Safety	Connexions	9 <sup>th</sup>
7)	25	F	Social Work	XSIQ	3 <sup>rd</sup>
* 8)	22	M	Elect. Engineering	USAID	10 <sup>th</sup>
* 9)	21	M	Elect. Engineering	USAID	1 <sup>st</sup>
** 10)	30	F	Accounting (Theory & Practice)	Global Text Project	2 <sup>nd</sup>
11)	26	F	Children’s Studies		8 <sup>th</sup>
** 12)	25	F	Psychology	OpenLearn	6 <sup>th</sup>
* 13)	25	F	Business Communication Skills	NPTEL	4 <sup>th</sup>

**Table 1: Learner Catalogue and Course Details**

D.O – denotes a participant who dropped out of the course upon commencement

\* Denotes a participant who possesses a matric certificate/has completed secondary schooling

\*\*denotes a participant who either possesses, partially completed or is completing a tertiary qualification

In conjunction with a facilitator, this was thought beneficial to students who in other settings may take longer to complete a chosen course or not complete it at all (Li *et al.*, 2014, Damevska: 2015). High rates of attrition are common, with many students unable to maximize the benefits

of online courses. Group study settings - it was hoped - would help learners ignore peer groups in online chats and discussion rooms more easily. These can be seen as debilitating for learners who come from less digitally inclined backgrounds or have very limited bandwidth access.

Group interaction and [positive] peer-based influences in course choices fitted well into group study models, especially where community settings can expand the awareness and attraction of MOOCs to those outside of formal or tertiary education backgrounds. It is often stated that degreed students are the ones most often accessing and completing MOOC courses both in developed and developing countries (Christensen *et al*: 2013). Additionally, this social aspect within the learning environment may also attract a greater number of females – who are more inclined to enjoy social settings than are males (Schulze: 2014, Barack *et al*: 2016: 50, Bayeck: 2016, PIRLS: 2017).

**Table 2: Weekly Schedule - Learner Times (13:00 – 16:00)**

<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thurs</b>	<b>Fri</b>
Class (3 hrs)	Class (3 hrs)	Class (3 hrs)	Class (3 hrs)	No class

#### **4.6. Interviews**

Interviews conducted were focus group interviews prior to the commencement of the program, followed by another focus group at the end of the program, and another set of individual interviews at the end. This method of data gathering was chosen based on its personal and group-oriented approach, making it more useful for analysis of individual and collective responses in analysis, where either congruencies or contradictions could be drawn based on participant perceptions.

##### **4.6.1. Focus group**

This part of data collection saw a collective focus group with all respondents taking part in a simultaneous interview. The reasoning for this interview style is both for respondents to share ideas while being comfortable with both the researcher and each other. Resource saving (time and money), were also factors taken into account.

Participants, through this shared perspective it was hoped, would feel more comfortable once others shared their own opinions and experiences pertaining to some of the questions asked. Since the program will also necessitate participants being in close quarters, this interview style also allowed an initial level of socializing which may have become useful should they find difficulties upon commencement of the program. Interview style was conducted in an open-ended format. A circular seating arrangement, as are most common in group settings, was chosen for helping facilitate a drive conversation, where all participants were visible to one another.

#### **4.6.2. Interpersonal (one on one) interviews**

This being a longitudinal study, (based on observations over a number of months) enrollees into the program were interviewed one-on-one in the post-program setting. Enrolees were asked a number of broad questions at first, pertaining to their awareness about MOOCs, their hopes and desires upon completing the course, and what their expectations were. Although a target of 15 enrollees was aimed at as the official number, accounting for attrition foreseeably lessened this number. Audio recordings were transcribed and coded to determine behavioural responses, expectations and other discernible patterns exhibited by participants (whether consciously or not). The number left in the study who completed their chosen course (10) still proved enough to supply rich data while saving time on the researcher's part. Following the collation of interviews (pre and post-study), transcribed data was combed over to identify common themes, worldviews, expectations and outlooks from participants in the program.

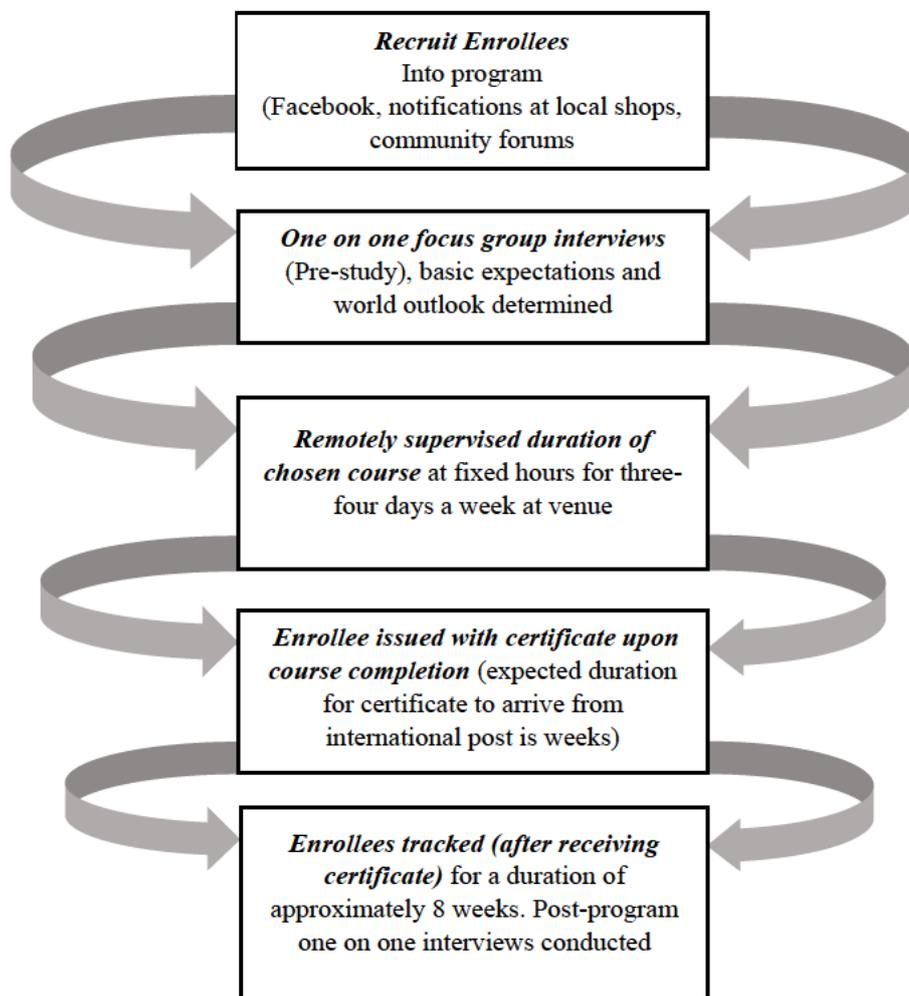
Reference to studies on youth 'hope levels' such as those by Boyce (2010, 2013) offer slight glimpses into youth psychology and what underpins optimism and success. Previous data collected can either be compared or contrasted depending on the findings in this study (Goldman: 1995, Boyce: 2010, Boyce & Harris: 2013). The codified data will then be used to draw a basic idea of youth responses to MOOCs and whether these online courses actually did influence positive changes in outlooks, worldviews and hopefully, job search behaviour in program participants. Goldman's rumination over the importance of hope as a predictor of successful behaviours highlighted those who possess the trait more than others as more 'hopeful', possessing positive outlooks and constructive habits. This study aims to assess whether MOOCs have any impact on this upon completion of the program.

#### **4.7. Study Limitations and Concerns**

Although many positives were mentioned in earlier parts of this dissertation it must be made clear there were a number of limitations to the program forming part of this study. Enrollee recruitment would be mostly of a particular socio-demographic, with most students fitting the requirements, from particular households and of only one racial demographic. This does not facilitate a holistic view of job search being influenced by MOOCs and whether additional psychological benefits pertain from them. Time constraints also mean participants in the study did not have the luxury of choosing more comprehensive courses which may have improved their chances of impressing potential employers and possibly securing work. This may have led to lesser inclined active job search by participants once the program was complete. Many of these participants in the study came from financially challenged households, meaning they had difficulties providing the money to purchase certificates from the ALISON platform. Additionally, the participation of the youths in this course is neither a fair representation of the KwaZulu-Natal or the South African youth cohort as a whole. When looking at motivations for participation in this course as well, self-selection by the participants is another aspect which may obfuscate deeper inquiry from the reader.

Self-reporting results from respondents – pertaining to job search activity - is another possible limitation. The need to appear successful to either the facilitator or other respondents as part of the study was another possibility. This could be owing to fear - or the need for competence and self-autonomy – especially in a program involving peers. The inability of some applicants to complete their course is also another limitation. Some participants reported concerns with public travel safety – meaning their attendance could also be jeopardized. Some program participants were victims of theft while others were involved in unfortunate accidents where cell-phones (in most cases their only form of telephonic and digital communication) were lost, breaking lines of contact between themselves and the researcher. Although in some cases this impediment was overcome, the time lapse could still have interfered with results, where lapses in job search intensity could have taken place or no job search activity could have been undertaken at all. Although the ratio of female enrolment was four times greater than male, most of the dropouts and non-completers were female. Responsibilities at home, or perhaps even expectations and tasks aligned with gender norms could have influenced this. It must also be stressed this research is of an interpretive paradigm and is not based on participative action research.

It is necessary to make mention of this since the design of the program may be misleading to the reader. The close proximity of the researcher to participants during, as well as interviews both before and after commencement of the course, can be mistaken for participatory action research (PAR). Unlike aspects of PAR, the interpretive approach merely examines outlooks and responses from respondents, rather than builds new paradigms using their reflections. Using Self-Determination Theory as a reflective analytical tool, inferences about participant drive, self-reflection, and hope for the future can be made, with future study suggestions being given based on these.



**Figure 7. Methodology: Working model**

#### **4.8. Program Funding**

Funding was sourced from the Scarce Skills Scholarship awarded to the researcher by the National Research Foundation (NRF). This proved more than adequate for funding each participant with their diploma certificate upon completion of their chosen course. Diploma certificate costing on the ALISON website (including shipping costs) was €82.00, or R1228.36). With a total number of 12 enrolled participants, the requisite amount for total purchase of R15, 000.00 (R14, 740.32) was well within budget. Agreements were reached, where transport costs and other miscellaneous expenses would be the responsibility of program participants, while diploma certificates would be purchased by the researcher. Any difficulties arising with regards to everyday expenses had been agreed to be handled by the YMCA as a convener of participants for the program. Consent forms and memorandums of understanding (between the researcher and participants as well as the centre) detailing all these agreements are included for administrative and legal purposes.

As an unexpected yet welcomed suggestion, learners who completed their course requested a graduation ceremony, where formal certificate bestowment was done, along with slight decoration and refreshments funded by the researcher. The setting allowed learners to discuss their experiences and intended avenues forward. As insignificant as these social interactions may be to any reader, these allowed for stronger social ties to be built. It could also be speculated this request stemmed from a need for a sense of accomplishment by learners to galvanize them to even greater achievements. Photographs were taken by the researcher and distributed via WhatsApp for posterity. This could attest to the desire for recognition of an accomplishment which future programs – should they be replicated – could do well to include.

#### **4.9. Summary**

In detailing methodologies and experiences, the reader gains a sense of the real world applications of Self-Determination theory and how both the environment and questions tried to extrapolate the experience of autonomy (for assessment purposes) from program participants. Challenges such as travel distance and study limitations – potentially affecting validity were also outlined, giving context to limitations in resources such as time and money. These are important to get a sense of the real world feel for the program and how the program design was carried out. This detail gives a sense of structure and order to the study which allowed easier deductions to be made by the researcher during data gathering (interviews). The following chapter deals with interviews and the perceptions gleaned from them.

## Chapter 5: Data Analysis

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter includes details gathered from participants during interviews and what insights they shared when asked personal questions relating to self-awareness and development. By way of *thematic coding*, analysis is subdivided into themes identified by the researcher for easier synthesis and reading. Themes were identified by finding similarities in participant responses to focus group and interview sessions, where their interests, hopes and desires were targeted through questions designed along lines of naturalistic inquiry. These were all asked in an attempt to glean how far along they had come in these areas. Some of the themes deal with typical preconceptions about youth and work, while others deal with altruism and giving back, something which, given the ubiquitous response from participants, was interesting and worthy of inclusion (by way of thematic coding) in this chapter. The first section deals with the former.

### 5.2. Stereotypes: Perceptions by Participants during Interviews

Analysis of interview data reveals responses from facilitators working in the centre which would perhaps be associated with older cohorts working with youth. Whether or not this is rooted in conservatism or any other bias cannot be determined through this study. Rather, the first-hand accounts of these facilitators are borne from consistent experience and practice in working with youth. These accounts, although subjective, still provide valuable insights into youth mindsets and opportunity-cost evaluations. These may change according to what type of program or opportunity they're presented with. Attitudes and behaviours to job search and opportunities for self-betterment may leave a lot to be desired if the accounts of facilitators (and to some extent, a small number of respondents themselves) are to be believed. Beginning with respondents who doubled as facilitators and workers at the centre, levels of mild frustration with youth were formed from their past experiences.

“Apart from your side, I would say the commitment from people is a downfall. Then it was like I'm just doing it for the sake of doing it. It was not that initiative that I need to go so I can study and sometimes they would come late and apologize they were complaining that I didn't have transport money. That is kind of understandable, but it's your future. You can't be begging for the rest

of your life you know. You need to find some means of getting to the venue because at the end of the day Jonathan is not gonna receive a certificate but you're gonna receive a certificate.” - (Participant no. 9 (6<sup>th</sup> post-program interview) when asked what could have been better about the program) <sup>8</sup>

This sentiment was equally matched by her [junior] partner in the centre who shared similar concerns about the self-start capacity for youths (in South Africa). Despite knowing many of them have come from hardship and impoverished backgrounds, her opinion was offered without pause or consideration. This owed to her own background being quite similar.

“Outside the Y....I would say that like the people that are around in the area you know people are like “there are no jobs in that’s that for them”. “I don't have money to go to university”..... like they're not eager to go out and look for something... if your parents do not have money that doesn't mean that's the end of the world.” <sup>9</sup>

Her own experience was one where her mother passed away earlier and was incapable of sending her daughter to tertiary education. Her subsequent decision to volunteer, beyond what was required of her, eventually earned her a permanent position in the facility, where she now works to this day. Perhaps one piece of commentary, shared by one of the respondents, is also relevant in this section. A senior nurse, with whom she was interviewing for a job, told her about a son she had at home who:

“Finished matric, and isn’t sure what he wants to get into. It seems like one of those clueless and spoilt kids. You know the type – they don’t want to get out and seek information – the kind who want everything on a silver platter. They don’t want to fight for themselves. She wanted to use this information [about online courses] for him since she told me he has access to the internet at home. Perhaps if he liked the content he could study and get as many certificates as he liked.” <sup>10</sup>

Although she was quoting the nurse verbatim, the bias did seem to reverberate from the respondent herself when offering description[s] of the youth. This may corroborate conclusions

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<sup>8</sup> Comments from a YMCA employee (participant no. 10), a 30 year old female in response to question 1 of the stakeholder interviews

<sup>9</sup> Comments from YMCA employee (participant no. 12), 26 year old female in response to question 1 of the stakeholder interviews.

<sup>10</sup> Remarks by participant no. 11, a 25 year old female, detailing youth in typically condescending fashion

of other respondents who worked as facilitators at the centre, who see youth as failing to seize opportunities. The discussion around this particular aspect when another program participant said:

“When they say 5 years’ experience, like in Kenya. Say like someone he’s doing law. In the first year, he’s doing law, at the same time, he’s practising law..... Yes, you can be a coach clerk, you can.....you can be/do anything, you see. So long as you have the experience. So long as you’re competent with the experience. Like I was working in a law firm. But I was studying social work. But at the same time, I was working as a course clerk....So.....you have the opportunity. So I think, even if the opportunities are limited here in South Africa. But I think with the youth[s] also are supposed to be like.....they’re supposed to be.....Is it, can I say they have to explore themselves...their communities”.<sup>11</sup>

This elicited defensive responses from most other respondents in the room, prompting the researcher to intervene in order to quell simmering antagonism[s]. This exchange highlighted tensions still existent between South Africans and foreign African nationals seeking work here in the country. Structural injustices of the past are still firmly placed on livelihoods and spaces for opportunity among black South Africans (Kingdon & Knight 2004, Hinks: 2007).

### **5.3. Perceptions of Online Course Content**

Feedback to course content by various persons (including participants to the study) revealed some expected and, in some cases, surprising responses. In the case of participants, two consistent points surfaced. These being:

- a) Positive mentality/outlook upon completion of a chosen course (based on the fact certification of some sort has now been attained).
- b) The positive reception of the program, and suggestions to have it expand into townships and rural areas

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<sup>11</sup> Response from participant no. 6, a 26 year old respondent from Kenya and a transfer patron from the YMCA branch in that region. This response was added to the comments given by the two YMCA volunteer workers who were of the opinion youths are not motivated enough to seize opportunities or work hard. Responses from South African participants could well stem from everyday pains of structural injustices they have to navigate day to day. Tensions from this session were noted down and taken into account.

Following completion of the program and subsequent searching for employment, responses from employers were not forthcoming for all participants, but many of them attained jobs, not of their chosen certificate/field of study in the program. The inclusion of three participant descriptions are not conclusive about general employer perceptions to online course content, but are still encouraging if one looks at the [positive] responses, and in other cases, job attainment. This is where jobs secured pertained to fields of study. The first response, coming from the first post-program interview, revealed an employer who was, if not more excited than the participant interviewed.

“I went with my certificate to the last interview there at Vusithemba (iThemba Labantu), and the social workers’ manager there she was so happy. She even advised me to study an online marketing course. This was because I told her I wasn’t doing anything besides staying at home.....I asked her why is it written on the certificate & website – ‘free what-what’. It makes it seem like it’s not legitimate. She responded no, just keep studying online courses and you’ll persevere. She even advised me to do other courses related to business..... Marketing related courses”<sup>12</sup>

This employer response could reveal something interesting about online course perceptions and how they give self-esteem to those who know about and enrol for them. This means autonomy and a sense of internal regulation or control is also present. The second response came from the last respondent in the interview process, one of only two males who participated in the program. The completion of his course, in electrical engineering, led to his being called up for a learnership trial. Although daunting, with many technical aspects to the job, this description did yield positive insights to the researcher, necessitating this description to be deservedly included.

“Ja, After I got the certificate but.... my friend told me to go (to a particular site)... it was based on surveying.....sites. I liked it because I gain[ed] some experience, but it's not my favourite job. Because it's hard....(laughs). Ay, Ja.... it was my first time doing that job”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Participant no 11, 25 year old female who completed her certificate in psychology: Post programme interview

<sup>13</sup> Participant No. 7: 22 year old male who completed his MOOC course in electrical engineering: Post programme interview

Despite not lasting long in the job, speculation as to the reasons for this participant's call up to the learnership abounds. No mention was made of the employer's response to his certificate, but one may say the possession of this qualification was enough for the program/site manager to allow for this program participant to start working on site. Another response given by a different participant affirmed her choice of study, when the following was revealed to the researcher:

“Do you remember the certificate that I was busy with [Early Childhood Development]? Last week I was here. They [YMCA] asked me to help children with their homework. They wanted me to start on Monday and Tuesday for training but the problem was I was going to start my practicals next week so I wouldn't be able to go and do the training here. That was the problem. But I'll come back next year.....to do the interview because they only do it once a year”<sup>14</sup>

Although the centre may have shown some preference for a program participant who already frequented the premises, this decision could also have been influenced by merit, where stringent procedures were applied before approaching suitable candidates for this position. Previous experience in this position may also have warranted merit for their choosing a candidate, along with other variables. Suffice it to say, the caretaking of children is something perceived as requiring the highest competency. This description also merits inclusion into the study.

Other less positive responses only came from one other program participant, who mentioned she did not want to show her certificate to her prospective (and eventual) employer (during the December holidays), as she felt it was not in line with the job she was interviewing for. It is easy to sense conformity to behavioural norms for job interviewing if one reviews these comments. Strict adherence to job specification seems to be prevalent, with only those who met with success, willing to share their positive experiences of employment. This was referred to earlier in the limitations segment of the methodology chapter and could possibly have played out during interviews. This may further corroborate the contributions of the foreign respondent, whose remarks stirred some uncomfortable responses from the rest of the group during the focus group session.

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<sup>14</sup> Participant No. 10: 26 year old female who completed a MOOC certificate in children's studies: Post programme interview at the YMCA

## **5.4. Benefits of Online Coursework:**

### **5.4.1. In tertiary studies**

Many respondents expressed value in the course content beyond just allowing them the chance to attain a qualification. As a supplement, to some who were already enrolled in tertiary courses, the content proved valuable in assisting with studies already embarked on. This may also assist in validating the course content as legitimate, and could perhaps assist in providing further motivation for self-advancement and job searching (Ryan & Deci: 2000, Deci & Ryan: 2008). Some of the participants included one, who stated

“Yes, it has helped me a lot....because some of the answers I've learned there, they're also in this course I'm doing right now.... Cause I was writing.... what's the name of this course?....PRS?...I forgot the full abbreviation 101Y....I was writing that last semester. And to be honest with you I didn't study at all. Cause I just got home at about 10 o'clock. Yes, something like that (laughs). So I was late, then I was writing on the following day at 8:30 am. So I didn't study at all and I was so stressed. I got 67%. And I did not study at all. My mum thought I was going to fail. She was so shocked when she saw the results.”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, another female student, enrolled for tertiary business studies at a private college expressed her surprise at the content. Her descriptions, although negligible of the course content at first, later alludes to the same value recognition made by the previous participant. This recognition is made in light of most students' need for course material while being unable to afford it. Some of the material in MOOCs can be a valuable supplement whether or not a student has access to tertiary course material.

“It helps.....because what I did - to be honest - when I started the course I just went to the questions and answered....you know the tests. Because I was doing business communication as a module so I used it as a revision and then afterwards I realised there are notes that you need to go through and videos you need to watch. And that also helps me because some of the stuff that was there it wasn't in the MANCOSA module”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Participant no. 10, 26 year old female who completed her certificate in children's studies (Post-programme Interview)

<sup>16</sup> Participant no. 12: 25 year old female and YMCA employee who completed her certificate in business communication studies (Post-program interview)

Whereas there was familiarity with most of the content, some of it does present valuable additions to work in tertiary studies. Both of these participants it must also be mentioned, come from backgrounds where their resource bases do not allow them prescribed material for their courses (in the form of textbooks). This again highlights the importance and value of online content, whether it be in the form of PDFs or online course multimedia.

#### **5.4.2. In Literacy, Learning & Communication**

Perhaps most intriguing is the value of online course content with soft skills. Many youths, coming from a populace whose first language is not English, often struggle with the English medium of instruction and thus perform poorly. This usually starts from an early foundation phase, with young learners seldom able to master the task of deep reading and comprehension of learning material. The latest *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* [PIRLS], showed that of all learners in grade 4, 80% could not understand what they were reading (basic comprehension). The report also indicated that good readers attended “well resourced, academically oriented schools”. This will highlight disparities in educational achievement and resource distribution in the sector. Something most South Africans are well acquainted with.

This disparity may also hide further bias and discrimination of learners whose first language is not English. The following participant revealed the unease which stems from the class environment, where teachers may belittle students for not having the [subjectively] requisite command of English. This may present concerns for a youth populous, struggling under a further declining economic climate. This comment may further cement the case for online course content as a learning tool for both professional and personal development.

“No, you know....sorry to say this.....you can judge me if you want. I prefer listening than to read...because I learn how to speak, cause it’s difficult to speak sometimes. So when you listen....especially that lady - she was fast....fast, fast, fast! So I learned how to listen to someone who is fast...like who can’t repeat it again like you can’t say “No...can you please repeat it.”<sup>17</sup>

Conversely, the presence of digital devices in the home was cited as one of a few aspects which prompted youths to take up reading, along with parents who are educated professionals and

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<sup>17</sup> (Participant no. 4 - 24 year old female who completed her MOOC in health studies (Post-program interview at North Beach, Durban)

frequently read (PIRLS Report: 2017). If one considers both the demographic and economic dynamics of KwaZulu-Natal – where educational attainment and child-headed households paint a worrisome picture – the need for interventions becomes glaringly apparent.<sup>18</sup> Another participant’s comments suggested the same recognition of value where learner confidence and freedom are better afforded in a digital space.

“It was very good for me because, you know sometimes when you’re gonna read through, it helps, but listening..... It's easier to remember the words when you do your exams”<sup>19</sup>

Aspects like pronunciation, listening and memory retention – considered important building blocks for reading skills – could mushroom among a populace whose reliance on a public education system is at best misplaced, and at worst unwarranted. The validity of programs like the one conducted in this study - where knowledgeable and patient facilitation is meted to youths seeking education by alternate means – is cemented if one considers the admissions made by participants in this section. Other aspects of learner behaviours and tendencies revealed mindsets which were not necessarily inclined to seeking work but rather working towards something of their own. This is unpacked in the next section.

## **5.5. Career Pathways**

Although participants did express the immediate desire to work, most of them expressed long term desires to situate themselves in self-employment or running a business. This was the most common theme identified among participants who were interviewed and took part in the program. Reasons for these assertions abounded, but some cursory suggestions could allude to both the economic and work environment. In addition to a stagnating economy, South Africa’s work environment could well be locked, with social networks facilitating a gatekeeper environment, allowing only those who are ‘connected’. Some of the responses, particularly one from a female participant, in materially driven logic, still showed the ambition most of the participants shared. Although not a representative sample for youth in KwaZulu-Natal, and certainly not South Africa, this may represent disillusionment with orthodox work avenues in

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<sup>18</sup> <https://wazimap.co.za/profiles/province-KZN-kwazulu-natal/#education> (webpage showing KZN demographic and economic data)

<sup>19</sup> Participant no. 12 – 25 year old female who completed her MOOC in business communication studies (Post-program interview)

the country. Perhaps role models who have managed to skirt between business and political circles may also fill the role model space for some youths. The first participant perhaps alluded to this when she said:

“I want to be a business lady. I see myself driving a Range Rover. And a house at Umhlanga Rocks... Any business as long as it will give me money. Maybe owning a particular [business].....selling clothes...maybe some shoes, makeup[s]”<sup>20</sup>

Other responses were more thought out and planned with tactical logic.

“Well for me I’d like to be an electrical engineer, simply because.....if nobody employs me, I can run my own business. If it’s not electrical engineering, I want to be a dentist or a teacher.”<sup>21</sup>

Another - although less inclined to any sort of strategic approach - expressed a similar desire for a self-perpetuated income.

“Ay, I’m not sure about that but I would like to manage something, probably my own business. I’d like to have something that I’d manage.....Just something of your own.... Ja I would like to. But maybe another course.....something in management.”<sup>22</sup>

This was followed by reasoning from a respondent in another interview who expressed both a desire to contribute to her family home, namely to her mother, and to allow for greater recreation.

“Obviously I’ll be a qualified teacher helping children. And not only helping them with their school work but with their situations and all that. And I also want to open a business but I’m not too sure whether I want to bake, or cook, or something. Coz I don’t think the money from the government will be enough for me. Because I like to travel. So I don’t think it will be enough.....You know Durban Station.....I’ll go there and sell clothes. Because I just want to make

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<sup>20</sup> Participant No. 3 – 25 year old female who enrolled for a MOOC in human resource management (comments shared in the pre-program focus group discussion)

<sup>21</sup> Participant No. 8 – a 21 year old male who enrolled for and completed a MOOC in electrical engineering during the pre-program focus group discussion

<sup>22</sup> (Participant No. 7: 22 year old male who enrolled for and completed a certificate in electrical engineering)

money and save it. I'll only start this weekend. But I've already bought stuff at home.”<sup>23</sup>

This was followed by another female participant who was perhaps better positioned than any others. Her assertion of utilizing land for revenue generation purposes can only highlight the importance of land as a strategic resource (something which of late has become a contentious issue when spoken of even mildly). The points made in this section could allude to mind sets which are spread across many different outcomes and challenges faced by African youths in KZN.

“I want to have a daycare centre. So now if I feel like I can have like all the stuff that I need. The capital, I've got the land.... no...uhhm, my mum had a plot. Yeah, it's a house....so when she passed away. I have two things in mind. The daycare centre, and the rentals.”<sup>24</sup>

The program, through its utilization of online course content, may not necessarily provide the end goal of employment, but rather “open your mind”, as spoken by one participant in the second one on one interview. Such has been the experience of most participants in the program that entrepreneurship seems to have ignited wills and desires beyond mere employment. Course programs detailing this subject are readily available on many different MOOC platforms and could benefit young aspiring business inclined minds. This may facilitate the energies and desires of those who sprouted the next common theme.

## **5.6. Socially Conscious? Desires and aspirations for Community-based work/jobs**

This next section details the aspirations of those whose choice of MOOC (and intended work following their choice of course) situates them in positions of community development. This section is also gender differentiated, with all participants being female. This does not draw any conclusions about female participants and their expressed desires, as the ratio of females to males is 4:1. That being said, responses by participants revealed a desire to situate their professional lives in positions where developing or serving others was the goal.

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<sup>23</sup> Participant No. 10 – a 26 year old female who enrolled for and completed a MOOC in children's studies during the post program interview

<sup>24</sup> Participant No. 12 – a 25 year old female and YMCA employee who enrolled for and completed a MOOC in business communication studies (Post-program interview)

Potentially this provided mutual benefaction to both parties. All responses were gathered in the initial focus group interview, where desires as to future prospects were given in response to interview questions.

“Well, I didn’t know at the time....that if you wanted to pursue the accounting path that you had to go straight to university, not the University of Technology. Because then if you go back to the university then you need to write some courses....And then so I thought, I’m done with that...let me just focus on becoming a teacher, teaching accounting. Since you know I did the accounting part. And I want to go to the rural areas where there’s less opportunity for people.....My dream is to help them....also with career guidance, cause also in Durban, it’s not lax...they have a lot of access to CAO’s....to universities. Whereas in the rural areas once you reach grade 12 you just relax...that’s the end of the road, you go get married, or have babies, that’s their mindset”<sup>25</sup>

This assertion matches the earlier comments laid by this participant, who is also an employed facilitator at the centre. Her reasoning for addressing it, more than the cited problem itself, shows concern for young people in and around the outskirts of the larger Durban area. Another participant mentioned similar desires to teach but at fundamental levels. This also again, is rooted in deep concern for both states of individual learners and that of larger structures (educational institutions).

“Cause there’s no foundation phase. That’s why I need to be a foundation teacher. Ja cause I’m currently doing ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training). I’m doing my last module and next semester I’ll start teaching at the foundation phase. Ja because I believe that foundation is more important than the other grades. Cause if it’s built well, it’s gonna be sharp”<sup>26</sup>

Given the crisis state South Africa is in with reading and comprehension capacity, such intentions are not just welcomed but needed. Like the participant also mentioned previously, her care extends beyond education and into psychology. Abuse in the home, compounded by surrounding poverty and inequality often breeds adults who are unable to integrate properly into daily life beyond their immediate surrounds. Such comments could have had these aspects in mind when she addressed the group.

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<sup>25</sup> Participant no. 9: A 30-year-old female and YMCA employee offering her reply to self-directed goals during focus group discussions

<sup>26</sup> Participant no. 10: a 26 year old female who enrolled for an completed as certificate in children’s studies

“No mina I like, don’t have a dream to be employed in any way. I have a dream to just have a day care centre, where I’ll provide a ‘safe’ space for them....Ja once. And teach them at an early stage how to protect other people so we won’t have these issues of abuse and that kind of stuff so Ja” <sup>27</sup>

Psychological nuance and know-how also informed the next participant’s choice. With a background in social work, her intentions to address South African offender psychology using comparisons of other country approaches (namely Australia/New Zealand) was laudable. Even if it was an approach deployed previously with much gusto by other initiatives, the intent seemed genuine and shows an intuitive mind when looking at the country’s problems

“My hope is to make it work in 2 years’ time, maybe to work in Australia or New Zealand. At the Department of Humanities.....because I need to learn the way they live that side, the social issues and come back....I just wanna learn how people behave there, how they sort their problems....The department of social development/related South African Departments, how they operate. And come back and apply that to South Africans. Secondly, I’d want to come back to African countries within the continent, not because I like travelling [but] because I want to explore...something different from what is happening here in South Africa” <sup>28</sup>

Similarly, the last female participant to reveal her desired destination – working as a nurse or counsellor in a local clinic – showed intent rooted in the same desire, to help shift youth mind sets. Recreation for many youths often flirts with dangerous and self-sabotaging behaviour, the repercussions of which are far-reaching, damaging more than just young people but sometimes entire families. Her choice of online certificate (Diploma in Health), once commencing the program, stayed true to her comment below:

“As for me....I like, working with people. I’ve always liked working with people, in the health sector, so...it helps me so much, you know, like when you look at these youngsters, the ones that are going to school. They’re taught about.....for instance, you know cancer or TB, due to smoking. But still, you see them continuing to go and smoke during their break times and what. So if I could maybe get a chance to work with those in the wellness clinics, and maybe HIV as well. And focus more on the girl child because, you know it’s

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<sup>27</sup> Participant no 12 – a 26 year old female who enrolled for and completed an online certificate in childcare - responding to questions as to what their goals/aspirations are during the initial focus group interview

<sup>28</sup> Participant no. 11 – 25 year old female who enrolled for and completed her MOOC in psychology during initial focus group interviews

like maybe, because of this social grant or what...I don't know...don't get me wrong. Maybe if they can have 2 kids, then maybe you would have access to that. But you need to be somebody who can.....you know, [help you] better yourself' <sup>29</sup>

## 5.7. Summary

This chapter, in its various themes, attempted to paint and unpack perceptions around aspirations of work, education and future pathways (as imagined by participants). Themes circling perceptions, desires, and visions of intended future positions. Some admissions, noble as they were, could not be fully verified given the initial reasons for enrolment by participants. Most who enrolled wanted to further their skills and qualifications for purposes of job attainment, so altruist responses as to where they see themselves in 5 years could be informed by role models and other in their community who are performing charity work. Without discounting these responses, the sheer number of them left a lot to question when comparing them with [self-motivated] autonomous motivations for enrolment. Conclusively, the details outlined in this chapter point to motivations, reservations and future hopes of participants. All of this touches on aspects mentioned in SDT theory, where autonomy and motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) drive persons in their quests to achieve and determine their futures.

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<sup>29</sup> Participant no. 1 – 34 year old female who enrolled for and completed a MOOC in Health Studies (pre-program focus group discussion). Both above quotes in response offered in reply to question pertaining to where individuals see themselves 5 years from now)

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Analysis

Respondents in the previous chapter gave admissions and testimonies which were congruent with a number of aspects in Self-Determination Theory. The themes listed in the previous chapter are matched with aspects identified in SDT for congruence and unpacked further in this chapter. Matching aspects of SDT, using naturalistic inquiry, common themes upon using MOOC programs

<b>Autonomy</b>	
<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>	<b>Extrinsic motivation</b>
<p>Excerpts from the post-program interview with participant no. 24 revealed a strong desire for learning in a discrimination and ridicule free environment</p> <p>(See pp. 26 &amp; 49).</p> <p>Ability to go over multimedia content (either video or audio) proved useful for her self-paced learning, allowing for better absorption of course material.</p> <p><u>This lines up with autonomy requiring a supportive and enabling environment</u>, where mentors (in the case of youth, parents and teachers) encourage learning and mistakes without fear of ridicule or reprimand</p> <hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/> <p>Another strong aspect of autonomy was the <u>desire for entrepreneurial ventures</u>. Half the participants who completed the program expressed this desire in the initial focus group. This could be influenced by widespread small upstart businesses in townships, which has been brought to the spotlight by authors</p> <p>Some, like participant no. 10, already embarked on such ventures with her admission of having bought goods to sell at the local bus station in Durban Central.</p> <p>(See pp. 51-52)</p>	<p>Participants all stressed desire and need to provide support back home. Usually to single parent homes (headed by their mothers). Responses of this nature were given in pre-program focus group discussions when participants were asked what their hopes and dreams were.</p> <p>This could correlate with desires for community based work providing services of value are pursued to help alleviate similar social ineptitudes.</p> <p>(information shared during pre-program [initial] focus group session)</p> <hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/> <p>Peer group reinforcement. Being surrounded by peers intending to engage in job search could potentially influence participants to search for work themselves.</p>

Competency	Relatedness
<p>Three of those who finished the program managed to secure work related to their choice of study, with one <u>expressing value in his work despite it being – by his admission – difficult.</u></p> <p>(See pp. 46).</p> <p>Course completion for all participants seen as a great achievement, with requests following to have graduation ceremony. This Could indicate possible affirmation of achievement.</p>	<p>Strong desire expressed by participants during both pre and post-focus-group sessions to pursue professions which are of service to others. Ranged from teaching to social work, childcare, health counselling and prison reform. <u>Indicates desire to care for others</u></p> <p>(See pp. 29)</p> <p>Approximately half the participants provided these responses when asked what they would like to pursue in 5 years' time. This lines up with literature expressed in SDT, where self-achievement is usually followed by a sense of social duty. Helping others less fortunate becomes a new way of ensuring self-well-being</p>
<p>Learning about computers and navigating systems like Windows, along with online platforms, although difficult, was another area of the program participants felt was useful for their own growth.</p> <p>Included in notes of one on one interviews</p>	<p>Many participants stated their single parent homes, with mothers usually heading them, proved essential for encouragement of their goals and dreams. Participant no. 10, was especially emotional in her response when asked who her influence/hero was, answering with her mother</p> <p>Included in recordings/ notes of pre-program focus group session</p>

<p><b>Causality Orientation</b></p> <p>Attending the centre through advice from friends and family meant all participants had been attending the centre for a considerable period, completing programs in other soft skill areas. This was before the researcher had approached the YMCA with the proposal of this program.</p> <p>Many participants admitted they come from areas which are not conducive for positive influences, with many pervasive social ills. That said,</p>	<p><b><i>Possible causality influences</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive peer influence</li> <li>- Prolonged centre involvement (programs and other forms of training)</li> <li>- Encouragement of family and friends to keep pursuing opportunities and activities at the YMCA</li> <li>- Belief in qualification attainment to motivate job search</li> </ul>
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<p>attempting to participant in programs run by the YMCA, and associating with like-minded peers in such programs is proof of positive causality orientation.</p> <p>Additionally all participants searched for work with 8 out of the ten who completed their chosen MOOC course securing work. Of these eight, three secured work directly related to their choice of study (suggesting positive reception of MOOC certification by employers).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three of the ten participants secured work through information shared by a close friend (<i>social networking</i>)</li> </ul>
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### 6.1. Reception to online course content

Responses from participants who encountered employees in interviews revealed dynamics which were positive to the researcher. South African employers in the corporate sector have been reluctant to fully endorse online learning content out of concerns for verification of certificates, preferring certifications from reputable [orthodox] institutions which utilize contact based learning. This view was also enforced in the focus group interview when participants responded with tertiary education as indispensable to a successful interview when asked whether contact based learning was still necessary (Garrido *et al*: 2016: 64).

Responses by participant no. 11 in her interactions with a head nurse at Vusithemba clinic may reveal not how this is changing, but perhaps how these biases may be maintained. Certain online institutions, in a bid to increase their validity and prestige, now partner with elite institutions to design courses, with certifications embossed with the logo of these beacons of learning. The interviewee’s enthusiasm does indeed indicate knowledge about online course content, but perhaps knowledge about these MOOCs now partnering with elite tertiary institutions for course design could also have contributed to her enthused response during the interview. This view is echoed by others in more developed countries, which could suggest the trend is slowly taking shape in more middle-income countries in developing regions. One submission, exploring the efficacy of MOOCs for employability states that

“Over time, these concerns have decreased, as online learning has become more common. While attitudes are not entirely positive, these programs are gaining ground in acceptance. Employers tend to be pragmatic, and as past

hires from online programs prove to be good employees, more doors for recent graduates may open up” (Outland: 2014: 32)

Although the context of this research is situated in the United States, South Africa’s middle-income status, coupled with its tendency to follow international standards mean MOOC acceptance may be higher than previously thought. There are, however, disparities all too common in the republic. It is noted that in South Africa, employers note the importance of location, as some provinces are “more progressive in terms of studying and online presence than others. Employers too, pointed to connectivity and cost of connection as a problem” (Garrido *et al*: 2016: 66). This statement again raises concerns about internet access, something which has been an ire for social commentators and activists alike in recent years (Mkhwanazi: 2017). This may detriment educational (and potentially employment) opportunities for youths who may not have the resources required to pursue tertiary education in an orthodox manner.

Other mentions, like the one made by the 26-year-old female who noted her call up by the YMCA to interview for a position for the centre’s childcare program, could have been owed to her gaining the certificate as much as her previous experience. A confluence of these factors could also be a possibility since most South African employers look for a mix of attributes in both qualifications and experience. The other 22 year old male participant’s submission of his time on a surveying site was owed to networking, where a friend provided him with information pertaining to the job. His recruitment into that particular job may have suited the employer, who could have relied on existing employees to source additional candidates, as described in some of the literature previously mentioned. This also works for most semi-skilled and unskilled workers who rely on social networks for employment opportunities in the form of information and existing friends or family who are already employed (Schoër & Leibbrandt, 2006: 704, Hinks: 2008: 128, Burns *et al*: 2010: 337). These results present interesting findings worthy of further investigation, where job attainment through qualification attainment and social positioning should be looked at in relation to one another, specifically in the context of South Africa. The securing of jobs aside however, personal benefits for the individual also abound from taking online course content. This will be discussed below.

## **6.2. Online Coursework as an aide**

Data obtained in these interviews do suggest MOOCs as valuable allies in higher educational pursuits or self-development in general. Comments about online coursework as an aide for higher educational rigours – like learning for exams or assignments – suggests content relevancy and affordability for those in lesser economic positions (those unable to afford books and other study material). Students who used the content in their [early] tertiary studies found it to be helpful in either class learning, assignments or exams. The use of language in online content yields enormous benefits for students who have problems with reading, memory retention and expression as English language second speakers (Wu *et al*: 2014). This application of online content as an aid for language proficiency has implications far beyond simple communication and course completion. The ability for greater fluency in English has the ability to increase sociability and potentially enhance confidence in communicating, therefore increasing ‘networking’ possibilities described by others (Burns *et al*: 2010).

For further reasoning, group learning in a programmed setting, may also provide safer, more confidence inducing environments. This improves the ability to interact with students dealing with similar difficulties in communication, means there is a greater potential for generating comfort amongst all learners in a group setting. This ultimately improves learning capacity while retaining their engagement in course content (Li *et al*: 2014: 218, Bayeck *et al*: 2016: 225). The admission of a female participant, who cited the MOOC content as a valuable resource for learning English pronunciations and phrases suggests that young people who do engage course content may intuitively see the value online content can have in enhancing linguistic capacity. This bolsters research suggesting online content as only valuable for content specific lexicon inquiry. Her intuition in using the content for her own benefit does also suggest ‘autonomy’ (Deci & Ryan: 2000). Application for [basic] English learning for second language speakers, as a personal development tool, can also be suggested by the admission of this one participant and her reasons for stating such (Wu *et al*: 2014).

## **6.3. Career Paths**

The admission of many participants of their desire to eventually start working for themselves denotes their concern with conditions of both formal employment, as well as the labour market as a whole. South Africa’s economy has been notorious for divergences between workers and

employers, where most unemployed persons cite institutional (social, economic, racial) factors as reasons for their still being unemployed. This owes to historical injustices – now often decried on social media by young, learned yet frustrated South African youths. Other more institutional aspects which arise are employer tactics used to circumvent labour laws seen by businesses and cumbersome to profitable operation. The majority of unemployed respondents in an HSRC study cited their reasons for no longer being employed to contracts expiring. Suspicions could be laid at the door of cumbersome labour laws which - once an employee is taken on in full confidence of an organization – hinder a firm’s ability to replace an employee as seamlessly as it would like (Steyn: 2010: 238, Mcwango: 2016). Other reasons for participants being as adamant with self-employment could be its proliferation in recent years among friends and family. The rise of entrepreneurship among the black populace of South Africa in recent years has grown to include greater numbers of people. This, despite tainted incentives for gaining proximity to government contracts and tenders for politically esteemed friends or family, still motivates some youths to enter the world of start-ups. This is something the South African government has incessantly stated is required for the economy to grow. Calls for entrepreneurship to be included in South Africa’s school syllabus has been gaining traction since the deputy – and now newly elected state president Cyril Ramaphosa announced this at a recent summit last year. The possibility of digital content like MOOCs being complementary added to formal post-school syllabi (as suggested by some) could yet be realized with such a development (Welsh & Dragusin: 2013, Ventkess: 2017, Gaotlhobogwe & Du Toit: 2018).

#### **6.4. The desire for philanthropic/community-based work**

This section showed the majority of female participants expressing their desire for work (whether self-employed or employed under another entity) which involved a profession oriented around education, counselling or other type of community service. Most expressed desires when responding to questions asked in the pre- program focus group, centred around educational and health sectors. This was shown throughout the course of one-on-one interviews when 4 female participants expressed desires to become teachers or work and run daycare centres working with young children. One female participant – the eldest of all participants – expressed a desire to work in some capacity as a counsellor in the health field. Despite massive amounts of public spending in these areas, health and education at the basic level are still bemoaned as inefficient for the majority of poor South Africa’s low-income populous to utilize

optimally. These responses seem to suggest a need for social duty, something mentioned earlier in this dissertation. It is perhaps through this online learning that, competency through MOOC course completion is achieved, a need for sharing knowledge or experience is the next phase for participants who have gone through this study. This supposition, even if slightly true, may hold weight for the self-determination theory as a self-regulating tool for completion of self-directed goals and the overall well-being (Deci & Ryan: 2008). 8 out of the 10 participants who completed the course were female, leaving an even ratio for asserting this assumption as impossible.

This aspect, although noteworthy, cannot be totally neglected, but would warrant further investigation if to be properly tested and verified. Learner engagement and success in particular courses may not be determined by gender so much as what kind of activities they use to engage course material with, suggesting more interactive platforms have the advantage over traditionally layered written content in a contact based setting.

Reviewing commentary and responses to interview data in relation to the objectives and theoretical framework highlights a number of positives in this study. In having a course that required individual engagement, but with the individual situated in a group setting under limited supervision, relatedness and autonomy were simultaneously enacted for participants who completed their courses. This facilitated greater levels of confidence, regulation self-worth. Eight out of the ten participants who came out of the study, actively searched for employment, securing temporary work<sup>30</sup>.

## **6.5. Stereotypes: Unpacking Misconceptions around Motivation**

Perceptions here were offered by the YMCA employees during the one on one interviews, offering subjective opinions on commonly encountered problems by South African youth today. They maintained that, many persons in secured work positions are:

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<sup>30</sup> One female participant prepared culmination of her pregnancy – yet still completed her MOOC course), while the other returned home to her native country (Kenya) where she continues to work at a local centre for abused women.

- Older than unemployed youths, often displaying this perception through their behaviour and CV attachments
- Supposedly more enterprising and dedicated in their pursuits than today's youth.

Research shows a large portion of the South African populace believe one of the main reasons for unemployment is laziness (Mcwango: 2016). Such perceptions, if one looks closely aren't necessarily true if one looks at circumstances facing youths from the majority populace who are from poor black families. Constraints to job search including household formation, informational and social networks, all compounded by a sorely lacking material base play vital roles rather than 'supposed' lazy behaviour.

Social networking as a means of job search is often seen as the most useful form, as it is cost effective and a preferred method by employer. It is believed less screening of referred candidates is required, since they are referred by those already employed. Potentially this can be less productive if the quality of networks - dependent on language and calibre of people in a given network – are of lesser status (Friedkin: 1982, Hinks: 2008, Burns *et al*: 2010, Castilla *et al*: 2013: 999, Bögenhold *et al*, 2013).

Costs associated with travel and other expenses for job search or even training opportunities are weighed against what resources and commitments will have to be foregone. In the context of KwaZulu-Natal, such decisions are often times made by single-parent or child-headed households (2011 Stats SA census data shows 8.5% of households in KZN are child headed, while 47% are female-headed)<sup>31</sup>. These statistics may withhold even more information about the role of juvenile females as child-rearing persons, as they may have to head households as females and children themselves<sup>32</sup>.

This 'laziness' might be perceived as – missing particular dates or engagements (whether for training purposes or otherwise). Many of the indicators around hope, which itself feeds motivation, show proximities to geographic and socio-economic positioning can be facilitators of either social mobility or marginalization. Constraints associated with these socio-economic and geographic factors should lend to more cautious and measured decisions when searching

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<sup>31</sup> <https://wazimap.co.za/profiles/province-KZN-kwazulu>

<sup>32</sup> One of the participants revealed she had raised her two siblings from the time she was 13 years old, the reason for mentioning this is to highlight the plight of child-headed households as very real.

for work or engaging in a search-related activity (attending seminars or training workshops). Such opportunities can depend on the supportive abilities of other persons in the home, where material basis and information networks can either form positive or stagnant job search experiences (Dinkleman: 2004, Boyce: 2010, Diagne: 2010). Earlier research suggested the type of work gained, as well as what value and acceptable wage job seekers are knowledgeable of may also discourage them to seek work. This resulted from poor knowledge of labour law as well as what wage value labourers should insist on. This is in relation to what type of work was being done, as well as the size of a firm (Kingdon & Knight: 2004).

The experiences of those who participated in this study would suggest a more forthcoming attitude to opportunities if they are presented in a manner which facilitates potential growth and positive outcomes in the way of job search motivation. Given the urgency of those in impoverished situations, the likelihood of finding work is greater than those more fortunate since their circumstance necessitates urgent and immediate agency (Wanberg *et al*: 2000). It must be iterated that this does not, however, mean the work is dignified or commensurate. Many employers often use the situations against the majority of job seekers who they know to be desperate. The number of participants in this program who have engaged in job search since receiving their online certificates would suggest this notion may have a grain of truth. Although not conclusive, the results of this applied research (and suggestions made to support it) do warrant further replication and investigation for the sake of researching the topic as well as reshaping youth outlooks through MOOC content (whether in South Africa or abroad).

## **6.6. Summary**

Results from this study, although favourable and positive in terms of outcome, are to be taken with caution. Possible sampling bias where some of those with experience in higher education, as well as those possibly more motivated than others, were found to have enrolled in the study. Replication of this study – should the researcher so choose – is possible but greater support mechanisms are needed, along with more substantial resources, administration, and monitoring and evaluation tools. Larger scale replication is needed to test the applicability of theories and assertions made in this study, for academic purposes. Motivations for youth job search behaviour, those emanating from pressures and expectations in the home, mixed with a sense of accomplishment (holding a MOOC qualification) require further investigation both in terms

of their efficacy or detriment to youth motivations in general. Other aspects like disparities in enrolment by gender may also need investigation, as MOOC content may facilitate encouraging reading habits and educational attainment among boys. Other recommendations will be forthcoming in further publication attempts based on this study.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This exercise, in exploring the potential for MOOCs as a catalyst for shifting youth mind sets and behaviours attempted to see what efficacy such courses had in developing unemployed youths personally. Stimulating job search behaviour is one of the main objectives of this study, conclusions can be drawn that results are indeed positive. Such results at this stage cannot be inferred for the entire youth population of Durban, nor that of KwaZulu-Natal. What these results do show is that youths are open to opportunities if given the chance, but impediments to their participation in such programs will always be determined from factors in the home. Interestingly, many of the applicants described the imbued confidence having a qualification gave them. The Sheepskin effect - as it is commonly known - can be attributed to much of the confidence youths may display in job search behaviour, especially since the local job market absorbs more accredited workers (Bernstein: 2018). Being part of this program not only allowed for greater confidence levels in searching for work but also facilitated personal growth for many participants. Seeing alternate forms of education while forging new social connections (with fellow participants, and in the workspaces some have secured work during the gap in this study).

The extrinsic motivation – driven by pressures from family and society at large – to attain employment were just as strong (if not more) as internal motivations for self-sufficiency and competency, something which all youths seek to prove to others and themselves (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The expressed desire to return to online learning when asked, also shows that learning in a group setting with [limited] oversight can, in fact, facilitate autonomous learning and therefore, greater senses of achievement. Such responses were assumed genuine since they came quite promptly. All are factors which highly influence self-projection, confidence levels and the possibility of appealing to potential employers. Enhancements in literacy, social relations, confidence and general mental health - all a part of Ryan and Deci's summation of 'well-being' (2000, 2008) - are all indicative in this study when looking at the results. These could be tested further if one is to assess their impact on larger samples, for purposes of both research and youth development across larger geographical spaces (provincial or perhaps national).

Regarding the questions this study set out to answer, the following has been deduced:

1. Through various aspects of learning, self-confidence and sense of achievement, MOOCs have proven to be a positive learning experience for participants involved in the program
2. Youth participants in this study were motivated to search for work, although it is unclear whether being a part of this program played a part in that. Extrinsic motivations to support family members as well as desires for self-fulfilment also played a role in job search.
3. Drivers motivating youth to search for work included aspects of achievement. This is possibly influenced by the sheepskin effect (wanting to prove a recently obtained qualification by testing it in applying for jobs).
4. Positive experiences mentioned were a renewed sense and ease of learning (ease of platform use through multimedia). Another aspect participants mentioned was the necessitated computer literacy they gained in having to complete the program (new techniques were learned in accessing and navigating the windows operating system).
5. Satisfaction levels were of a mid to high level. Participants expressed desires to repeat the program should another one be rolled out. Feelings of achievement once certificates were handed out contributed to increased feelings of optimism and confidence in job search behaviour (this while the program's objectives were not made explicit to them).

All the above said recommendations for further study are indeed worth pursuing, simply based on the merit and cogency of this area of study. Given the limitations mentioned earlier, such recommendations would be:

- An expanded sample with greater scrutiny on the validity of participant responses
- Increased funding and support from external bodies and actors. This would allow for
  - a) A wider selection of courses for participants and also more focused facilitator assistance
  - b) Greater publicizing of potential programs for unemployed youth[s] and wider marketing potential for partners/donors to get involved
  - c) Attainment of more prestigious certificates from more reputable online MOOC providers

- Greater attention given to the unseen benefits – perhaps through a controlled study – of MOOCs. These include (but are not limited to) effects of online content on learning comprehension and speech improvement, as well as the potential benefits on social well-being in a group learning space.
- Other areas being the purpose of self-improvement in these courses – whether for self-advancement or to ultimately give back to society - as many have mentioned during the focus group interview session

All of these aspects are, given the salience of this study in the South African state of affairs both economically and socially, worthwhile, given the drastic need for labour force absorption and increased youth participation in the market. Using the data available from both primary and secondary sources, I believe this study can be used to guide policymakers and actors shaping the country's socio-economic landscape toward greater strides in assisting youths out of poverty, indecision and anxiety and into more productive citizenry this country needs them to be.

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## Appendices

### 1. Memorandum of Understanding



Tel: +27 (0)31 305 4496 Fax: +27 (0)31 305 4499  
Website: [www.dbnymca.org.za](http://www.dbnymca.org.za)  
Anchor House, 82 Diakonia Avenue, Durban, South Africa  
PO Box 2181, Durban, South Africa, 4000  
Email: [ian.booth@dbnymca.org.za](mailto:ian.booth@dbnymca.org.za)  
NPO 002-206 PBO 18/11/13/4001

12 April 2018

Jonathan Brady  
MA Candidate – Population Studies

Dear Jonathan

Further to our discussion yesterday, I am pleased to confirm that the Greater Durban YMCA will make our Computer Centre available to you for the purposes of your study for a period of 3 weeks. As per your request, this will entail 3 hours/day 4 days/week, possibly starting the week of 12 June (to be confirmed by you).

The terms of our MOU are as follows:

1. The YMCA will provide you access to the Computer Centre from 13.00 – 16.00 Monday to Thursday for a period of 3 weeks
2. You will be present in the Computer Centre throughout the period.
3. You will ensure that the computers are responsibly used, and carefully maintained
4. The YMCA will assist you in recruiting participants from our Job-skills training database.
5. The participants will have completed our Job-skills training, including 2 days of basic computer training.
6. The participants will be those on our list who have not obtained their matric.
7. We understand that the certificates awarded to the participants will not guarantee employment, which fact you will communicate to the participants at the commencement of the exercise

Yours Sincerely

  
Ian Booth  
General Secretary/CEO

I/we agree to the terms of this MOU:

  
Jonathan Brady

  
Dr Gerard Boyce

## 2. Ethics Approval



1 February 2018

Mr Jonathan Gabriel Brady 207501752  
School of Built Environment and Development Studies  
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Brady

Protocol reference number: HSS/2299/017M

Project Title The influence of massive open online courses on youth job search behaviour: An exploration study of Durban youths

**Full Approval – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received 11 December 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Gerard Boyce  
cc. Academic Leader Research: Professor Oliver Mtapuri  
cc. School Administrator: Ms Nolundi Mzolo

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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### 3. Participant Consent forms (English & isiZulu)

#### Dear Participant

My name is Jonathan Brady (207501752). I am a Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus in Population Studies. The title of my research is: “The influence of massive open online courses on youth job search behaviour: a Case study of the Durban youths”.

This form is to inform you of the conditions attached to taking part in this study for my MA thesis in population studies. Please note that upon agreeing to take part in this study, you will be asked to select an online course of your choosing on one of the platform [www.alison.com](http://www.alison.com). Various subject areas are for your discreet selection, and I will be on hand to assist/advise you in making your choice. Upon completion, I will forward the funds to purchase the certificate of your chosen course, following which the final interview will be scheduled 8 weeks later for further group questioning.

You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion both before and after the completion of your course, where you will be asked a number of open-ended questions with your fellow participants. No fees or penalties will be incurred to you should you choose to decline in this part of the study.

#### CONSENT (Edit as required)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have been informed about the study entitled (provide details) by Jonathan Brady. I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction. I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at [brady.jonathan92@yahoo.com](mailto:brady.jonathan92@yahoo.com) or [207501752@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:207501752@stu.ukzn.ac.za).  
081 489 2588 (cell), 031 208 5044 (home)

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

_____	_____
<b>Signature of Participant</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____
<b>Signature of Witness (where applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	_____
<b>Signature of Translator (where applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>

Umbambiqhaza othandekayo

### INCWADI YEGUNYA LOKWAZISWA

Igama lami nginguNksz Madireng Jane Monyela, ngingumfundi weziqu zeMasters eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natali, e-Howard College, eNingizimu Afrika.

Ngiqhuba ucwaningo ukuze ngithole ukuthi lokhu okuqukethwe olwazini lakwi-*internet* kunomthelela yini ezindleleni zokuziphatha ekufuneni umsebenzi kwentsha engasebenzi. Lolucwaningo luzoqhutshwa ngenzindleko zami futhi ngaphezu kwalokho, izingxoxo - ngaphansi kokuqoshwa komsindo – zizoqhutshwa ngemuva kanye nangesikhathi sokuphela kwesifundo esikhethiwe ku ([www.alison.com](http://www.alison.com)).

- Ukufihleka kwakho kuzobe kuqinisekisiwe njengoba okufakwayo kwakho ngeke kuxhunyaniswe nawe njengomuntu.
- Ingxoxo ingathatha cishe imizuzu engu-30 kuya kwihora elilodwa.
- Noma yiluphi ulwazi olutholakele ngeke lusetshenziswe ngokuphambene nawe, kanti futhi nolwazi oluqoqiwe luzosetshenziselwa izinhloso zalolucwaningo kuphela.
- Idatha izogcinwa kwisitoreji esiphaphile futhi ibhujiswe ngemuva kweminyaka emihlanu.
- Unelungelo lokubamba iqhaza, ungahlanganyeli noma uyeke ukuhlanganyela ekucwaningweni. Ngeke ujeziswe ngokuthatha isenzo esinjalo.
- Ucwaningo luhlose ukuhlola noma iyiphi imithelela okunethuba lokuthi ulwazi olukwi-*internet* lungase lube nayo ekuziphatheni nasekufuneni imsebenzi kwentsha engasebenzi.
- Ukubandakanyeka kwakho kungenxa yezifundo kuphela, futhi azikho izinzuzo zezimali ezihleliwe.
- Uma uzimisele ukubuzwa kwingxoxo, sicela ubonise (ngokufaka uphawu endaweni efanelekile) ukuthi ngabe uzimisele noma awuzimisele ukuvumela ingxoxo iqoshwe ngokusebenzisa lemishini elandelayo

	Ngizimisele	Angizimisele
Imishini yomsindo		
Imishini yezithombe		

Imishini yevidiyo		
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Kungaxhunywana nami ku:  
 Imeyili:brady.jonathan92@yahoo.com  
 Iseli: 081 420 5008

Umpathi wami nguDkt. Gerard. D Boyce otholakala eSikoleni se-*Built Environment and Development Studies, Howard College Campus* yaseYunivesithi yaKwaZulu-Natali.

Imininingwane Yokuxhumana:  
 imeyili: boyce@ukzn.ac.za  
 Inombolo yocingo: 031 260 1473

Ungaxhumana neHhovisi lokucwaninga:  
 P. Mohun  
 Ihhovisile-HSSREC Research,  
 Inombolo yocingo: 031 260 4557  
 Imeyili: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Siyabonga ngokuzinikela kwakho kulolucwaningo.

### ISIQINISEKISO

Mina ..... (amagama agcwele ombambiqhaza) ngalokhu ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngiyaqonda okuqukethwe yi-dokhumenti kanye nobunjalo bocwaningo futhi ngiyavuma ukuthi ngibambe iqhaza kulolucwaningo.

Ngiyaqonda ukuthi nginenkululeko yokuphuma kulolucwaningo noma ngasiphi isikhathi engifisa ngaso.

**SAYINA**

**USUKU**

.....

.....

#### **4. Interview Schedules**

##### **4.1. Focus Group**

- i) What are your hopes and dreams?
- ii) How do you feel about the opportunities in South Africa right now?
- iii) Who are your role models?
- iv) Which colleges/tertiary schools do you believe best equip you to get a job?  
- Explain/substantiate your answer why
- v) Have any of you in this room gone for an interview before?
- vi) What qualities do you think employers look for when interviewing people?

##### **4.2. One on one Interviews**

- i) What activities have you been engaged in since you were last here?
- ii) Have you applied for jobs more or less often?
- iii) [If you haven't found a job] Have you tried any other activities besides looking or work? (anything besides sitting at home)
- iv) What have your families thought about you studying these online courses?
- v) Have any of you been for interviews since you we last met?
- vi) Have your friends picked up on what course you've done or have you shared what you've done with your friends?

##### **4.3. Stakeholder (YMCA-employee) Interviews**

- i) Have you noticed any changes in the participants who have been a part of the program once it started
- ii) If yes, then what kind of changes?
- iii) In your time working with young people, what do you think are some of the strong qualities they possess?
- iv) Are there any negative qualities? If so, then what are they?
- v) Do you believe in the power of Online Education?
- vi) Would you want to repeat this program again in the near future?