



## A Low-Visibility, High-Potential Resource for Teachers' Lifelong Learning: MOOCS

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### Abstract

It is of great importance that teachers, who are at the forefront of society's learning journey, continuously update their knowledge and skills to maintain their professional competence and provide a quality learning environment for students, thus continuing lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is an important concept that is increasingly being incorporated into our country's policies. In this regard, distance education offers a wide range of opportunities for lifelong learning, particularly for individuals who are unable to participate in face-to-face training due to its independence from time and space. MOOCs can be considered the most up-to-date and appropriate opportunity distance education offers for lifelong learning. MOOCs are platforms open to everyone's participation over the internet, can include courses on almost any subject, and can reach millions of students. The most important feature that differentiates them from other internet resources is that they are in a course format. Thanks to MOOCs, obtaining certificates from universities recognized worldwide is possible. However, when the Turkish literature was analysed, it was seen that there was not enough emphasis on the potential of MOOCs for teachers. Therefore, in this study, the opportunities offered by MOOCs to teachers, who have an important role in shaping and transforming society, in the context of lifelong learning, were examined. The opportunities were discussed under eight headings: learning regardless of time and place, professional development, personal development, foreign language learning, networking and collaboration, technology use and digital literacy, learning motivation, and job opportunities.

**Keywords:** Lifelong learning, MOOCs, distance education, teacher education

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## Öğretmenlerin Hayat Boyu Öğrenimi için Görünürlüğü Düşük, Potansiyeli Yüksek

### Bir Kaynak: KAÇD

#### Özet

Toplumlara öğrenme yolculuğunda rehber olan öğretmenlerin, mesleki yeterliliklerini sürdürebilmeleri ve öğrencilere nitelikli bir öğrenme ortamı sağlayabilmeleri için bilgi ve becerilerini sürekli güncellemeleri dolayısıyla hayat boyu öğrenmeye devam etmeleri büyük önem taşımaktadır. Hayat boyu öğrenme ülkemiz politikalarında da kendine gittikçe daha çok yer bulan önemli bir kavramdır. Uzaktan eğitim ise zaman ve mekândan bağımsız olması nedeniyle özellikle yüz yüze, planlı eğitimlere katılma olanağı olmayan bireyler için hayat boyu öğrenme için geniş fırsatlar sunmaktadır. Kitlese Açık Çevrimiçi Dersler (KAÇD), uzaktan eğitimin hayat boyu öğrenme için sunduğu en güncel ve uygun fırsat olarak değerlendirilebilir. KAÇD'lar internet üzerinden herkesin katılımına açık, hemen her konuda ders içerebilen ve milyonlarca öğrenciye ulaşabilen platformlardır. Onları diğer internet kaynaklarından ayıran en önemli özellik ise bir kurs formatında olmalarıdır. KAÇD'lar sayesinde dünya çapında tanınan üniversitelerden sertifika almak da mümkündür. Ancak Türkçe literatür incelendiğinde KAÇD'ların öğretmenler için taşıdığı potansiyele yeterince vurgu yapılmadığı görülmüştür. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada, toplumun şekillenmesinde ve dönüşümünde önemli bir role sahip olan öğretmenlere KAÇD'ların hayat boyu öğrenme bağlamında sunduğu fırsatlar incelenmiştir. Bu fırsatlar, zaman ve mekandan bağımsız öğrenme, mesleki gelişim, kişisel gelişim, yabancı dil öğrenme, ağ kurma ve işbirliği, teknoloji kullanımı ve dijital okuryazarlık, öğrenme motivasyonu ve iş fırsatları olmak üzere sekiz başlık altında ele alınmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hayat boyu öğrenme, KAÇD, uzaktan eğitim, öğretmen eğitimi

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## **1. Introduction**

In today's world, where knowledge and technology are constantly changing and developing, it has become necessary for individuals to be open to learning not only in a particular educational process but also throughout their lives. Lifelong learning is critical for individuals to maintain their personal development, adapt to social changes, and keep their professional competencies current. Teachers are an important group that cannot be excluded from lifelong learning. It is of great importance that teachers, who guide societies in their learning journey, continuously update their knowledge and skills to maintain their professional competencies and provide a qualified learning environment for students. Changes in educational programs, new teaching approaches, and the rapid development of digital technologies mean teachers must be open to continuous learning.

In our country, various initiatives have been carried out to support teachers in maintaining their lifelong learning. Although these studies are mainly carried out through face-to-face courses/trainings, it is seen that the twelfth five-year development plan of our country includes the statement 'Distance education opportunities in lifelong learning will be increased and digital content development studies will be carried out' in article 675.1 (Development Plans, 2025). Distance education has the potential to provide individuals with broad and flexible opportunities in lifelong learning by offering learning opportunities independent of time and space (Bozkurt, 2015; Kır & Bozkurt, 2020; Oh et al., 2019). One of the most concrete steps taken in our country to ensure lifelong learning of individuals through distance education is the 'Distance Education Gateway' platform prepared by the Presidency of Human Resources Office (2025). Individuals can access this platform, which includes many free trainings, with their government username (e-devlet) and password. Although there is various content on this platform that teachers can benefit from, it should not be forgotten that the lifelong learning opportunities offered by distance education to teachers are much broader.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), one of the distance education platforms that can contribute to teachers' lifelong learning, offer free and flexible learning opportunities to millions of people around the world. MOOCs are an innovative learning environment that enables individuals to learn anytime and anywhere through information and communication

technologies. In the constantly renewed information structure of the digital age, MOOCs offer an important opportunity for individuals to keep themselves up-to-date and meet their learning needs (Bozkurt, 2015).

In Coursera, one of the most well-known MOOC platforms, more than 10,000 courses are offered by more than 300 universities and companies. In Coursera's survey of more than 55 thousand students in 2023, 95% of the students stated that the platform contributed to them; 43% stated that the courses they took on this platform increased their performance at work (Coursera, 2023). MOOCs provide an inclusive learning environment, especially for individuals who cannot access traditional education due to time and space constraints. However, despite this high potential, MOOCs are not visible enough at the level of institutions, individuals, and researchers, especially in our country.

There are very few publications on MOOCs in the Turkish literature. According to the results of the study conducted by Haymana and Dağhan (2020), authors in Turkey do not pay enough attention to MOOCs. Until 2018, only four of the 123 articles published on MOOCs in the Web of Science database were by Turkish authors. As of April 2025, only 34 of the 1162 publications in the Web of Science database between 2019 and 2025 with MOOC or Massive Open Online Courses in the title belonged to authors from Turkey.

According to Kesim and Altınpulluk (2014), massive open online courses contribute to individuals' lifelong learning processes in various ways. In addition to supporting both professional and personal development of individuals, these courses offer significant savings in terms of time and cost. At the same time, they allow individuals to renew themselves without leaving their working life. One of the important advantages of this system is that it provides access to accurate and reliable information. In addition, the fact that there is no limit to the number of participants and that it offers a structure that is open to interaction are among the positive aspects of massive open online courses.

The fact that MOOCs are a lifelong learning opportunity was also emphasized by Bozkurt (2015) in the Turkish literature; in the related study, the characteristics of MOOCs were mainly focused on. An important study linking lifelong learning and MOOCs was conducted by Bayır (2021). Bayır described MOOCs as the most up-to-date form of digital technologies

used for lifelong learning. Similarly, Tonbuloğlu (2020) also mentioned MOOCs as a potential distance education format for lifelong learning.

In the existing studies that associate lifelong learning with teachers, teachers' lifelong learning competencies (Akçay, 2021), attitudes towards lifelong learning (Tenekeci & Uzunboylu, 2020), digital literacy skills (Gökbulut, 2021), 21st century skills (Yalçın İncik, 2020), various demographic characteristics (Yıldız Durak & Tekin, 2020), etc., variables and their relationship with lifelong learning were investigated. Öztürk (2022), on the other hand, questioned the effects of having used MOOCs on teachers' communication skills, learning styles, etc., variables.

MOOCs are one of the most effective tools that come to mind when it comes to teachers' lifelong learning. These platforms have many advantages for teachers, such as collaboration with colleagues, learning in accordance with their own programs, acquiring new knowledge, and professional development (Bakogianni et al., 2020). In the words of Manning et al. (2014), MOOCs not only contribute to the professional development of teachers but also have the potential to collaborate and interact with international colleagues. Curriculum developers, leading teachers, and educational administrators should examine the growing impact of MOOCs in today's world, where distance professional development opportunities are evolving.

In the international literature, there are many studies on teachers' interaction with MOOCs (Bakogianni et al., 2020; Koukis & Jimoyiannis, 2018; Koutsodionmu & Jimoyiannis, 2015; Manning et al., 2014; Misra, 2018; Stutchbury et al., 2023). In our country, there are a few studies on teachers' use of MOOCs. Among these studies, 972 teachers were included in the doctoral thesis conducted by Öztürk (2022), and it was determined that 6.2% of these teachers had previously participated in MOOCs. However, no information was provided on how teachers benefit from these platforms. Vezne (2020) associated MOOCs with adult education and included eight teachers as adults in his study. As a result, it was determined that MOOCs contribute to the personal and professional development of teachers. However, the point to be noted here is that the teachers in the study group were asked to register and complete one MOOC within the scope of the Lifelong Learning course at master's level. The study did not provide information about the previous MOOC experiences of these teachers.

The research conducted by Uslu and Öztürk (2019) is evidence that teachers' awareness of this issue should be increased in our country. In the aforementioned study, when teachers interested in language teaching were asked whether they had information about MOOCs, it was determined that they confused MOOCs with platforms such as YouTube and Moodle and were extremely unfamiliar with this concept. It is a fact that teachers' awareness and use of MOOCs in our country should be increased. In addition, it is thought that a specific study on how teachers can benefit from MOOCs can be guiding for teachers and policymakers. In this context, this study aims to address the opportunities offered by MOOCs, especially for teachers in the context of lifelong learning, and to raise awareness for more widespread and effective use of these digital learning tools.

## **2. Lifelong Learning**

The European Commission (2002) defines lifelong learning as 'a set of activities aimed at improving the individual's knowledge, skills and competences in various fields from birth to death'. The Ministry of National Education (2018), on the other hand, addresses this concept in a similar framework to the European Commission with the definition of 'All kinds of learning activities that the individual participates in throughout his/her life outside formal education in order to develop his/her knowledge, skills and competences with an individual, social and employment-related approach'.

According to the Eurostat dictionary (2025), lifelong learning covers all learning activities in which individuals participate throughout their lives with the aim of developing their knowledge, skills, and competences in personal, social, civic, or professional fields. The main factor that distinguishes these activities from non-learning activities, such as cultural or sportive activities, is the learning intention of the individual. Aksoy (2013), on the other hand, examined many definitions in the literature and considered lifelong learning as 'formal, non-formal, lifelong learning activities in which individuals participate throughout their lives in order to improve their knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors and competencies by identifying their interests with an approach related to individual, social, cultural, economic and especially employment, and the certification of the results of these activities'.

The concept of lifelong learning is based on the idea of building a knowledge-based and continuously developing society that will enable individuals to meet their learning needs

through various learning tools and meaningful learning experiences (UNESCO, 2016). Lifelong learning differs from other concepts related to education in terms of its individual-centered approach, the importance it attaches to forms of learning other than formal education, its transformation of the traditional function of the school, its encouragement of the participation of social stakeholders in education, and the fact that it does not see education as a process limited to certain ages or periods. In addition, the lifelong learning approach increases individuals' investment in knowledge and in themselves and supports them in acquiring the basic competences necessary to sustain their lives (Güleç et al., 2012).

The European Commission emphasizes that it is necessary to develop skills in eight basic areas within the scope of lifelong learning: (a) communication in the mother tongue, (b) communication in a foreign language, (c) basic competences in mathematics, science and technology, (d) digital competences, (e) learning to learn, (f) social and civic competences, (g) initiative and entrepreneurship competence and (h) cultural awareness and expression competence (European Commission, 2007). When we consider all these, it becomes clear that an individual with lifelong learning skills should have the qualities of taking responsibility for learning, being open to change, thinking critically, using ways of accessing information effectively, integrating digital technologies in a purposeful way, interacting with different cultural structures, developing sensitivity to social problems, having an entrepreneurial mindset and transferring what they have learnt to different areas of life. These individuals not only maintain their individual development but also actively contribute to social and economic transformation processes. In this context, lifelong learning can be considered as a dynamic process that enables the individual to constantly renew himself/herself and to be an active subject in all areas of social life.

The concept of lifelong learning has found a place in the policies of our country for about 25 years and maintains its importance. It is seen that lifelong learning is given great importance in all development plans of our country from the eighth five-year development plan covering the years 2001-2005, including the twelfth five-year development plan covering the years 2024-2028 (Development Plans, 2025). In the twelfth five-year development plan, lifelong learning is included in the main purpose of education as follows:



‘The main objective is to ensure that all individuals have equal access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities on the basis of the principle of inclusiveness, to develop their academic, social and professional skills in accordance with international standards, to ensure that they have competence in analytical thinking, financial literacy, collaborative work and leadership, to internalize national, spiritual, moral, humanitarian and social values, and to grow up as responsible to the family and society to which they belong.’

The provision, improvement, and monitoring of lifelong learning processes of individuals in our country have been carried out by the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning (GDLL) under the Ministry of National Education since 2011. GDLL (2025) explains its mission as ‘Providing guidance services from cradle to grave in the process of transformation into a learning society; supporting the individual to take responsibility in the development of humanity by developing knowledge, consciousness, and competencies; providing quality training that can be documented and monitored.’

Lifelong learning is an approach that contributes to the individual and professional development of various professional groups. However, from the perspective of shaping the effects of this process on society, teachers are in a key position. As individuals who encourage, guide, and model learning, teachers' adoption and maintenance of a lifelong learning approach has a strategic importance that can indirectly support the development of other professional groups.

### **3. Teachers and Lifelong Learning**

With the transition to the information society, individuals becoming lifelong learners has come to the fore not only as an individual but also as a social necessity. In a constantly developing and changing world, individuals are expected to update their knowledge, acquire new skills, and produce creative solutions to the problems they face. In this framework, lifelong learning has become an indispensable process not only for students but also for teachers who prepare them for the future. According to the Turkish Ministry of National Education (2006), teachers are expected to continuously improve their professional competences in areas such as teaching processes, planning, evaluation, and human relations in line with lifelong learning and to be individuals who are open to innovations, flexible, and willing to learn.



Since teachers are expected to develop lifelong learning skills of their students, they should be in a continuous learning endeavor throughout their own lives and actively seek new learning opportunities (Selvi, 2011). In Turkey, lifelong learning activities of teachers are officially carried out by the General Directorate of Teacher Training and Development (GDTD). GDTD undertakes various tasks such as developing policies, collaborating with relevant institutions, and organizing pre-professional and in-service training in order to determine and improve the professional competencies of teachers. It also conducts research on teacher education and carries out joint studies with public institutions, universities, and non-governmental organizations (GDTD, 2018).

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) offers face-to-face in-service training to teachers within the scope of lifelong learning. However, only a limited number of teachers and administrators can attend these trainings. Due to this situation, the Distance Education Module has been added to the EBA (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı/ Education Informatics Network) infrastructure. Thanks to this module, in-service training can be provided to hundreds of teachers at the same time through remote access. In addition, teachers' professional development is supported through live broadcasts over the EBA infrastructure (Ergün, 2022).

The Teacher Information Network (Öğretmen Bilişim Ağı/ÖBA), which was established by the MoNE to support the personal and professional development of teachers in a multidimensional way, also includes more than a hundred trainings (MoNE, 2022). However, lifelong learning is a phenomenon that cannot be expected to be organized only by institutions due to the fact that it takes place at any time. As Collins (2004) states, self-initiated learning is the most common and effective form of lifelong learning. Therefore, teachers should adopt lifelong learning not as a duty but as a natural way of life.

It has been revealed in various studies (Akın et al., 2023; Bakogianni et al., 2020; Doğan, 2024; Kabal, 2019; Kılıç, 2015; Sevinç & Çelebi, 2020) that teachers have high lifelong learning tendencies, and there are many studies in the literature addressing the phenomenon of lifelong learning with teachers. However, as will be detailed below, the issues of how teachers perform lifelong learning and how they benefit from digital opportunities have been ignored or not sufficiently researched in the literature.

In the literature, teachers' lifelong learning tendencies are addressed from different perspectives, and their relationship with various variables is questioned. For example, Sevinç and Çelebi (2020) investigated the relationship between lifelong learning disposition and professional satisfaction based on the data obtained from 250 teachers from various branches and found that there was no significant relationship between the related variables. On the contrary, Topdemir et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between lifelong learning disposition and professional satisfaction of master trainers and teachers working in public education centers and determined that lifelong learning disposition predicted professional satisfaction by 76%. In addition, lifelong learning has a positive moderate relationship with teachers' happiness (Kabal, 2019).

Lifelong learning is also examined according to demographic variables. Sevinç and Çelebi (2020) found that there is no variation in lifelong learning tendency according to branch, experience, gender, and graduation degree (associate, undergraduate, graduate). Similarly, Akyol et al. (2018) determined that there is no significant effect on lifelong learning disposition according to variables such as monthly income, gender, marital status, and employment status. The results of Yıldız Durak and Tekin's (2020) study revealed that gender, daily internet usage level, branch, professional seniority, weekly course load, and in-service trainings received in the field of information technologies did not change the lifelong learning tendency. In the study conducted by Kaan (2023) focusing on academic staff, it was determined that women had higher lifelong learning tendencies. On the other hand, Doğan (2024) found that teachers with an associate's degree were more open to lifelong learning than teachers with a bachelor's degree.

Researches reveal that it is extremely important for teachers to make effective use of technology in lifelong learning processes. In the studies conducted by Doğan (2024) and Yücel (2024), it is seen that teachers' information literacy and digital competence levels directly or indirectly positively affect their tendency towards lifelong learning and their professional satisfaction. In a study conducted with counsellor teachers (Doğan, 2024), a strong and significant relationship was found between lifelong learning competence and basic competencies in the use of technology. These findings suggest that digital skills play a supportive role in teachers' lifelong learning process. As a matter of fact, skills in information, media, and technology use are among the skills that individuals who want to be successful in

the 21st century should have. 21st-century individuals are expected to use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information; access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and generate new knowledge by using digital technologies appropriately (P21, 2019).

Today, distance education is the first method that comes to mind when it comes to learning from digital communication tools. Distance education is a flexible learning opportunity that individuals who want to learn can access from anywhere and at any time. While distance education in our country is carried out mainly through open education faculties or distance education centers of universities before the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become a phenomenon that almost all individuals interact with and become familiar with after the COVID-19 pandemic. Although educational institutions have returned to predominantly face-to-face education with the end of the pandemic, society has continued to benefit from the advantages of distance education. In particular, there are 'learning and teaching/awareness-raising' oriented accounts with hundreds of thousands of followers on social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. There are numerous accounts on these platforms from which teachers can benefit. One of the platforms that the society, and therefore teachers, are not yet sufficiently aware of, but whose potential is extremely high, is Massive Open Online Courses.

#### **4. Massive Open Online Courses**

MOOC refers to online learning environments where anyone with internet access can access course content and interact with other participants (Fini, 2009). These programs, which are usually led by universities, appeal to large masses and do not require any prerequisites for participation. While MOOCs, which use video lectures, live sessions, social platforms and various educational materials, exhibit an informal structure in terms of freedom of participation, they also have formal features in terms of being carried out within the framework of a specific education plan and offering accredited certificates (Çebi & Aydın, 2023).

MOOCs are generally defined as open-ended education programs offered to thousands of learners over the internet (Misra, 2018). MOOCs have the potential to support lifelong

learning, eliminate barriers in the learning process, provide equal opportunities in education, and most importantly, secure the liberation of knowledge (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2018).

#### **4.1. Features of MOOCs**

MOOCs have four main features: mass, openness, online, and course format (Kop, 2011).

Being online: MOOCs are carried out with an internet connection using information communication technologies. These platforms are registered with the help of an email address. Generally, asynchronous distance education method is used, but in the blended MOOC types that have emerged in recent years, courses can be supported by face-to-face education (Anders, 2015).

Massiveness: According to Rodriguez (2011), ‘massive’ refers to the ability of thousands of students to participate in the course at the same time. Unlike small-scale online learning environments, MOOCs can provide education to a large number of participants simultaneously (Haymana & Dağhan, 2020). The current number of students of Coursera, one of the most well-known MOOC platforms worldwide, is more than 125 million (Coursera, 2025a), which reveals the extent of massiveness.

Openness: The concept of “openness” encompasses multiple dimensions: the use of open-source software, an open registration process accessible to all, an open curriculum structure (allowing flexibility and adaptability during the course), open access to learning resources, transparent assessment procedures where applicable, and the learners’ ability to adapt to various learning environments (Rodriguez, 2011). Thanks to this openness, individuals participating in MOOC platforms can withdraw from the learning process at any time, interact with other participants, use learning resources freely, and contribute to knowledge production. Furthermore, those who wish may earn a certificate by completing the course and fulfilling the requirements (Çebi & Aydın, 2023).

Course format: MOOCs are distinguished from other online learning resources (such as websites or social media platforms) by their structured course format. For example, below is the content of a course titled “Analysis of Children’s Drawings” offered on Udemy, one of the widely used MOOC platforms (Udemy, 2025). As can be seen, details are provided regarding the number of weeks, the topics covered each week, and the duration of each module. This structure resembles the syllabus typically used in face-to-face education. Additionally, upon

closer examination of the course page, it becomes evident that the course is organized around specific learning objectives, which are elaborated in detail. This enables learners to access more structured and high-quality educational content than random online materials (Çebi & Aydın, 2023).

**Figure 1.**

*Course Content of the “Analysis of Children’s Drawings” Course (Udemy, 2025)*

Kurs içeriği		
4 bölüm • 20 ders • 1 sa 35 dak toplam uzunluk		
Tüm bölümleri genişlet		
^	<b>Resim Analizi ve Çocuklarda Çizimlerin Gelişim Dönemleri.</b>	5 ders • 20 dak
▶	<a href="#">Çocukların Sanatsal Gelişim Evreleri 1</a>	<a href="#">Önizleme</a> 03:56
▶	<a href="#">Çocukların Sanatsal Gelişim Evreleri 2</a>	<a href="#">Önizleme</a> 04:24
▶	<a href="#">Resim Analizi Nedir ve Resim Analizine Neden Gerek Duyarız?</a>	<a href="#">Önizleme</a> 02:02
▶	Çocukların Sanatsal Gelişim Evreleri 3	05:12
▶	Örnek Resim Analizi	04:40
💡	Resim Analizi ve Çocuklarda Çizimlerin Gelişim Dönemleri. ▾	3 soru
▽	<b>Resim Analizi Temel İlkeleri ve Renklerin Yorumları.</b>	3 ders • 22 dak
▽	<b>Psikolojik Resim Testleri ve Uygulama Yöntemleri.</b>	11 ders • 51 dak
▽	<b>Kapanış</b>	1 ders • 2 dak

#### 4.2. Widely Used MOOCs

Among the most widely used MOOCs worldwide are Coursera, edX, XuetangX, Udacity, Khan Academy, Udemy, and FutureLearn (Atik & Ata, 2018; Çebi & Aydın, 2023). Notably, an agreement has been established among these platforms between Khan Academy and the Turkish Ministry of National Education, allowing access to its content in Turkish via the EBA platform (Çebi & Aydın, 2023). Udemy is also a MOOC platform that offers relatively more Turkish-language content and instructors than other platforms. However, the language barrier has largely been eliminated thanks to the availability of Turkish subtitles on many MOOC platforms. This study will not delve into the detailed features of these platforms. Instead, the main point to be emphasized here is that these widely used platforms also offer a wealth of content for teachers. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of the learners' views on the course named “Improving Classroom Management with Class Dojo” on Coursera.

## Figure 2.

*Comments on the Course “Improving Classroom Management with Class Dojo” (Coursera, 2025c).*

★★★★★ By Ma M B • Oct 3, 2020

Extremely helpful for someone new to Class Dojo.

★★★★★ By Deleted A • Sep 1, 2023

This was satisfactory course to me. Free and easily usable tool to manage classroom is explained and taught in a very efficient and vivid way.

★★★★★ By Karyn P M • Sep 25, 2020

It is effective and the explanation is clear. It will help the teacher how to manage the classroom activities.

★★★★★ By MUHAMAD S B R K • Jul 7, 2024

Help me a lot in introducing all the available features in apps.

★★★★★ By Doha A • Jan 8, 2021

It's an excellent project for teachers

★★★★★ By patrizia • May 23, 2022

easy to follow and informative

Examining the reviews in Figure 2 shows that teachers have benefited from the course and expressed satisfaction with it. Of course, it is unrealistic to expect all learners to benefit equally from all courses. However, it can be suggested that when teachers identify appropriate and useful courses for their needs, they are likely to be satisfied with MOOCs.

## 5. Opportunities Offered by Massive Open Online Courses for Teachers

MOOCs are platforms designed for the benefit of all individuals. As outlined in the introduction section, various studies have emphasized that these platforms offer lifelong learning opportunities. There is no requirement to belong to any particular profession to enroll in and complete a MOOC. For instance, the course mentioned in the previous section, “Analysis of Children’s Drawings,” can be taken by a parent curious about the messages conveyed through their child’s drawings, an academic seeking to develop expertise in this area, or a preschool teacher. This section discusses the advantages that the features of MOOCs offer for teachers in terms of lifelong learning.

### 5.1. Learning Independent of Time and Space

MOOC technology has the potential to enable large-scale learning that is flexible enough to meet the needs of diverse groups of participants (Bozkurt, 2015; Kennedy et al., 2019). Thanks to their flexibility in terms of time and location, MOOCs provide an important opportunity

for teachers who, due to numerous responsibilities, may otherwise have limited access to professional development opportunities (Wei et al., 2009). MOOCs are also preferred because they allow learners to progress at their own pace (Vezne, 2020). In a study conducted with Greek teachers, Bakogianni et al. (2020) found that teachers emphasized the ability to participate in courses at times that suited their schedules as a key advantage of MOOCs. The fact that MOOCs offer time- and space-independent learning has also been evaluated by distance education experts as a valuable lifelong learning opportunity (Kesim & Altınpulluk, 2014).

In Turkey, especially among subject teachers, there are often several-hour gaps between classes in their schedules. During these periods, teachers may face difficulties attending face-to-face courses outside of school, which can be a discouraging barrier to their lifelong learning. However, through MOOCs, teachers can seize lifelong learning opportunities in personal and professional development whenever available.

## **5.2. Professional Development**

MOOCs offer significant benefits for working professionals, particularly teachers, and as a result, many courses on these platforms are specifically designed for them (Ji & Chao, 2016). These platforms have become an important resource for teachers seeking to continue their professional development after completing their undergraduate education. Offering a low-cost yet effective learning experience, MOOCs stand out as a powerful and innovative solution for meeting teachers' ongoing professional development needs (Mahmood & Bibi, 2017). Through MOOCs, individuals can renew and upskill themselves without interrupting their professional lives, thus supporting their lifelong learning (Kesim & Altınpulluk, 2014).

In the study by Bakogianni et al. (2020), teachers reported that MOOCs allowed them to improve their knowledge and skills, and they stated that they would recommend MOOCs to their colleagues for professional development. Similarly, in another study in which teachers experienced a MOOC platform (Stutchbury et al., 2023), 89% of teachers reported that MOOCs positively impacted their professional development. According to teachers' perspectives, MOOCs contribute positively to their professional confidence (Koukis & Jimoyiannis, 2018). Teachers who have previously participated in a MOOC report better



communication with their students and stronger subject matter knowledge than those who have not (Öztürk, 2022).

The literature contains a substantial number of studies addressing the contributions of MOOCs to teachers' professional development. Indeed, it can be said that MOOCs are most frequently associated with professional development for teachers; however, it is important to note that these platforms offer benefits in many other areas.

### **5.3. Personal Development**

Teachers may also wish to pursue lifelong learning for personal reasons, and in today's world, this has become not only a choice but also a necessity. It has been found that teachers who participate in MOOCs devote more time to their personal development compared to those who do not (Öztürk, 2022). This can be interpreted in two ways: individuals may use MOOCs specifically to enhance their personal development, or become aware of the need for personal development through their MOOC participation. In either case, this represents a positive step toward lifelong learning.

Learners join MOOCs to acquire new knowledge or enhance their existing competencies. Some learners enroll in MOOCs without expecting credits or credentials (Hew & Cheung, 2014), indicating that their participation is driven by intrinsic motivation. In Vezne's study (2020), teachers who had experienced MOOCs reported that they learned new things, gained new perspectives, and developed greater self-confidence, positively contributing to their personal development.

Personal development can encompass many areas, including hobbies, sports techniques, language learning, time management, and health—its scope is essentially limitless. Significantly, progress in personal development can also positively impact professional development. For example, a teacher who takes a time management or stress management course to organize their home life better is highly likely to apply these skills professionally. Moreover, the fact that these courses stand apart from general internet resources is noteworthy. For instance, the course titled *Managing Emotions in Times of Uncertainty and Stress* (Coursera, 2025b), offered on the Coursera platform, is delivered by Yale University. Learning from instructors at some of the world's leading universities represents a significant opportunity for lifelong learning.

#### **5.4. Foreign Language Learning**

MOOCs can also contribute to teachers' lifelong learning in terms of language acquisition. Teachers can achieve this in two ways. The first is enrolling in courses related to language instruction offered on MOOC platforms. For instance, Udemy, which frequently features Turkish instructors, offers 1,680 courses dedicated to English language learning (Udemy, 2025a). The second way is through incidental language learning that occurs while participating in any course delivered via MOOCs. Until recently, the fact that MOOC platforms generally offered courses in foreign languages—primarily English—posed a barrier for many learners. However, with recent advancements in artificial intelligence technologies, many MOOC platforms now support various languages. Today, learners can follow course content presented in various languages in their native language. This, in turn, can help learners become more familiar with a foreign language while engaging with the course material. The literature notes that language barriers have posed challenges for teachers participating in e-Twinning projects, which encourage collaboration with teachers from other countries (Bozpolat & Bolsu, 2022; Küçüktaşçı, 2022). Language learning facilitated by MOOCs, free from temporal and spatial constraints, may help overcome such issues.

#### **5.5. Networking and Collaboration**

MOOCs enable learners to collaborate around topics of interest and support each other through knowledge sharing during the learning process (Xiong, 2018). The knowledge teachers gain through MOOCs is not limited to course content; peer support, discussions, and interactive networks often inspire new classroom activities and teaching strategies that can be integrated into curricula (Manning et al., 2014). In a study conducted by Koukis and Jimoyiannis (2018) involving 326 teachers, nearly all participants stated that MOOCs constituted a learning community that fostered interaction and collaboration with fellow educators. Similarly, in a study by Stutchbury et al. (2023), 40% of teachers who had participated in MOOCs reported resolving their problems through collaboration with peers. One participant in the same study even mentioned placing a kettle and tea bags in his/her office after completing a MOOC to foster a more collaborative environment with colleagues.

These examples illustrate that MOOCs can be platforms encouraging teachers to collaborate with their peers. However, it is important to note that such opportunities for interaction may

not be available on all platforms. While some MOOC platforms include discussion or forum modules facilitating communication among participants, others may lack such features. Therefore, teachers who aim to engage in collaborative learning should opt for platforms that explicitly support interaction.

### **5.6. Technology Use and Digital Literacy**

As is well known, individuals in the 21st century are expected to effectively use digital technologies to access, analyze, and produce information. Teachers are consistently encouraged to integrate technology into teaching practices. Of course, the benefits of technology use and digital literacy extend beyond professional contexts, offering significant advantages in everyday life. MOOCs not only provide content on how teachers can effectively use technology in the classroom, but it can also be expected that completing any MOOC course will positively influence teachers' overall technological proficiency. Indeed, teachers have described MOOCs as experiences that enhanced their technological knowledge, particularly in integrating web-based tools into educational practices (Koutsodionmu & Jimoyiannis, 2015; Koukis & Jimoyiannis, 2018). Some teachers further reported that, after engaging with MOOCs, they felt more competent in using computers and ICT (Stutchbury et al., 2023).

### **5.7. Motivation and Lifelong Learning**

An individual's desire to learn often begins with a lack of knowledge or skills, and if the learning experience proves satisfying, it is likely to be sustained. MOOCs can be viewed from this perspective. A learner who engages with MOOCs out of a desire to learn and finds the experience fulfilling will likely seek further learning opportunities. Indeed, in a study conducted by Vezne (2020), teachers who had experienced MOOCs expressed a willingness to participate in more courses, citing their accessibility, alignment with personal learning pace, affordability, simplicity, and support for lifelong learning. According to the findings of Stutchbury et al. (2023), participation in MOOCs not only impacts teachers' motivation but also positively influences their students' motivation. Some teachers reported becoming more creative in their classrooms after completing a MOOC, which led to increased participation and engagement among their students.

### **5.8. Employability and Certification**

Today, holding a diploma from a degree program may no longer be sufficient for securing employment, leading graduates to seek alternative pathways to enhance their employability. Most MOOC platforms offer certificates—some free, others paid—upon completion of specific courses. Due to their alignment with industry needs, up-to-date content, and relatively low cost, MOOCs provide micro-credentials and degrees that help individuals adapt to the evolving demands of the labor market (Özbek, 2019). One of the key challenges in MOOC environments is the lack of accreditation, which limits the practical use of the certificates earned (Çebi & Aydın, 2023). While there is no guarantee that all employers will recognize these certificates, it is believed that having certifications from globally recognized universities in their portfolios could benefit teachers applying to private institutions.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

Lifelong learning is an individual necessity in our society and an educational goal supported by government policies. The most recent five-year development plan highlights that lifelong learning cannot be limited to face-to-face education alone and that the opportunities offered by distance education should be utilized effectively (Development Plans, 2025). In this context, one of the most significant contributions of distance education to lifelong learning is the potential of MOOC platforms, which provide access to large population due to their massive and open structures. While MOOCs are accessible to all individuals, this study focuses on teachers, who play a crucial role in shaping and transforming society. It examines the opportunities MOOCs offer them in the context of lifelong learning.

Like any educational technology and instructional model, MOOCs come with a range of advantages and disadvantages. Frequently highlighted challenges include high dropout rates (Aharony & Bar-Ilan, 2016; Voudoukis and Pagiatakis, 2022; Vázquez-Cano et al., 2021), limited interaction with instructors and peers (Aharony & Bar-Ilan, 2016; Dolan, 2014; Manning et al., 2014), and language barriers (Liyanagunawardena et al., 2013). Nevertheless, rather than focusing solely on these limitations, it is more constructive to highlight the potential of MOOCs to support teachers' lifelong learning. The benefits of MOOCs for educators can be categorized into eight main categories: learning independent of time and place, professional development, personal development, foreign language acquisition,

networking and collaboration, technology use and digital literacy, learning motivation, and employment opportunities.

Today, a teaching diploma alone is insufficient to be a competent teacher, just as a degree is insufficient in many other professions. Teachers are expected to update their subject-related knowledge continuously. Although the MoNE in Turkey offers online content and training through the EBA and ÖBA platforms (Ergün, 2022; MoNE, 2022) and provides in-service training throughout the year, teachers are not limited to institutionally planned professional development programs. MOOC platforms host numerous courses that teachers can integrate into their instructional practices. Various studies have shown that these courses, which teachers can access anytime and anywhere, contribute significantly to their professional development.

When the general competencies of the teaching profession are considered (MoNE, 2017), teachers are expected to grow professionally and personally. MOOCs provide excellent opportunities for personal development as well. Considering that lifelong learning also has a positive impact on individuals' happiness (Kabal, 2019), it is likely that such happiness would be reflected in their professional lives. Furthermore, MOOCs also enhance teachers' self-confidence (Vezne, 2020). Developing oneself in areas of personal interest and need can lead to positive outcomes that permeate all aspects of a teacher's life.

In today's globalized world, knowing only a single language is no longer sufficient; multilingual communication skills play a critical role, especially in collaborative international projects such as e-Twinning. This situation encourages teachers to learn a second language not only for their professional development but also for their personal growth. MOOC platforms stand out as economical and accessible learning environments that offer direct foreign language education and support implicit language acquisition through content in various disciplines. Additionally, although it is difficult to ensure meaningful interaction between students in MOOCs (Dolan, 2014), teachers can develop collaboration with colleagues they meet on these platforms (Manning et al., 2014).

The ability to integrate technology with pedagogy is already among the competencies expected of teachers (MoNE, 2017). Although teachers in Turkey receive training in this area throughout their undergraduate education, the continuous and rapid advancement of

technology requires them to keep updating their knowledge and skills. Like other individuals, teachers can also benefit from the many opportunities that technology offers in their personal lives. In this context, MOOCs represent accessible and practical platforms that can directly and indirectly contribute to teachers.

MOOCs may increase teachers' desire to engage in more learning. The ability to access learning opportunities anytime and anywhere often leads to continued use of MOOCs after the initial experience (Vezne, 2020). This is also important for teachers who serve as role models for their students and communities. Students who observe their teachers actively engaging in lifelong learning will likely internalize this value for themselves. Finally, MOOCs may also present new employment opportunities for teachers. Teachers may serve as instructors on MOOC platforms or use the certificates they earn as learners to support their job applications.

## **7. Suggestions**

While it is not possible to limit the lifelong learning opportunities MOOCs offer to teachers solely to those outlined in this study, it is evident that these platforms are valuable resources for both personal and professional development. However, the literature suggests that teachers are not sufficiently aware of the potential of these platforms. Inspired by the study conducted by Sezgin (2020), pre-service teachers should be introduced to the potential of MOOCs and encouraged to use them during their undergraduate education. Similarly, in-service training programs can include the introduction of MOOC platforms and encourage their usage among current teachers.

Despite the numerous advantages offered by MOOCs, teachers may still be reluctant to utilize these platforms for professional development. This situation indicates the need for teachers and policymakers to become aware of how MOOCs can be effectively used for teacher professional development and to develop supportive policies and practices accordingly (Misra, 2018). In this regard, it is recommended that MOOCs be included in planning lifelong learning strategies, especially concerning distance education, as emphasized in the latest five-year development plan. In addition, MoNE could collaborate with global platforms such as Coursera or edX to develop Turkish MOOC's content or to provide access to internationally recognized certifications through the ÖBA platform.

Another suggestion for practitioners is to incorporate MOOC awareness into pre-service teacher education. At this point, the role of academics becomes important. Academics can encourage students to follow one or more MOOCs relevant to the course's subject matter. However, it should be remembered that MOOCs are based on voluntary participation; enforcing participation may lead to adverse outcomes. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to integrate MOOC content into course activities and to prefer short, concise, and free MOOCs.

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can also be made for future researchers. In Turkey, there appears to be a research gap regarding the extent to which teachers are aware of MOOCs, their purposes for using them, the barriers they face, and the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement of these platforms. Initially, it would be beneficial to identify the reasons behind the low awareness levels among teachers. After creating awareness, a study could be designed in which teachers are encouraged to use MOOC platforms for a certain period, and the outcomes can be monitored quantitatively (e.g., changes in lifelong learning experiences) and qualitatively.

In Turkey, platforms such as EBA, ÖBA, and the Presidential Distance Education Gateway offer similar features to MOOCs, such as short, concise video lectures and certification following short assessments. Research can be conducted to explore how and to what extent teachers benefit from these platforms, as well as their opinions and expectations regarding the content provided.

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