



Post-Corona Starts Now MOOC

Assessment and insights for the future

September 2020

The course was developed and rolled out at the height of the pandemic when urgent and major questions about the failure of health and social protection systems across the world as well as production systems, such as global supply chains, which left millions of workers without income throwing them in deeper poverty and suffering. It is in this context that this online course was conceptualized and developed to support the labour movement and other progressive organisations with solid analysis of the fundamental problems as well as strong arguments for policy proposals to address and overcome such problems. The course was conceptualised, developed and rolled out in the period end of April until early July 2020. The information about the course was shared widely via the GLU alumni, the Global Labour Column, posts on YouTube and various social media platforms (FB, LinkedIn and Twitter). It also received visibility to the [iversity newsletter](#) reaching more than 800,000 people and [University of Kassel](#). The development of the course was funded by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES).

As of October 2020, the course has recorded well over 1,600 participants, of whom: 58 (3%) have received a certificate; 126 (7.7%) participants have complete more than 80% of the course. This is already above the iversity average of 7.4% (2018) and can be considered a very good completion rate considering that the course has been online only since July. Open online courses as a rule are reaching a broad and diverse audience from those glancing at a course to those that very actively engage in course discussion, webinars and workshops.

Conceptualisation and the course format

This course was comprised of 21 video lectures of an average 4-6 minutes each, organised in 5 chapter, and made available to course participants over the period May-June 2020 (each week a new chapter). The concept of the course as well as the development of the content was made in close collaboration with the international trade unions (PSI, ITF, IndustriALL and ITUC/GUFs Washington office), worker advocacy organisations (WIEGO), academics from the GLU partner universities and other academic institutions (University of Manchester, University of Salento), FES as well as other social movements (People's Health Movement). All the scripts were shared with a group of GLU alumni from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Hong-Kong, Italy, the Philippines, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States for their comments and suggestions, which were reflected in the final scripts. The GLU alumni also contributed with photos from the solidarity actions taken by their own trade unions. Several of these photos were included in the video lecture about solidarity within and across nations.

In addition to the video lectures, the course offered four webinars for each main theme (course chapter), which featured key speakers from academia, Global Union Federations, the German government and the United Nations. The course also provided the participants with the possibility to



engage directly with the course experts asking questions regarding their respective video lecture and sharing experiences from their own country through a zoom workshop format. 13 such workshops took place in the period June-July.

All the course materials, video lectures, reading materials and webinars and zoom workshops, are downloadable and may be used for educational purposes even outside of the course platform.

Profile of the course participants

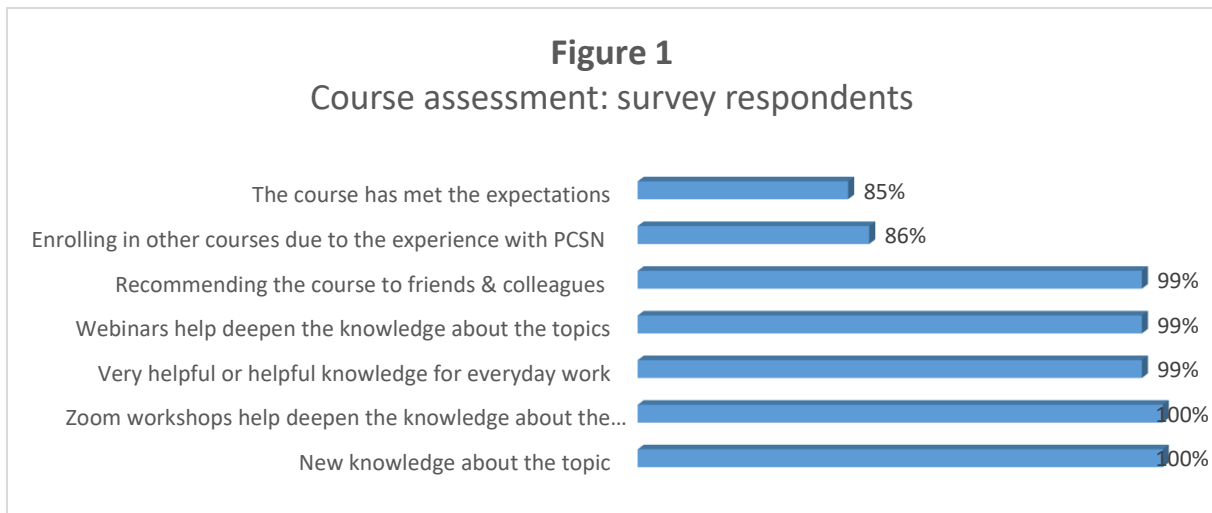
There are no precise data on the profile of the respondents, but the introduction section of the course as well as the course survey provide some indications. The statistics provided by the course platform offer only an indication of the age range: 51% of the course participants are 40 and below; 16% are under 30. Of the 157 students who have introduced themselves in the course platform, more than half (54%) are women. One in three participants comes from the labour sector (trade unionists, worker educators, worker advocacy organisations and labour practitioners). The rest of the participants who introduced themselves come from academic institutions (22%; of which 16% were academics/researchers and 6% were students), governments (16%), private sector (6%), NGO sector (10%), UN organisations (3%) and media (2%). Meanwhile, the course survey, which recorded 71 respondents, puts the share of the labour sector to 44%, of which 35% from trade unions. The rest are academics (25%), students (6%) and government employees (10%).

Both the iversity platform and the course survey provide some insights on where the course participants come from. The iversity platform provides some indication of where the participants come from¹. Nearly one in three (30.9%) come from the global South, namely India, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Kenya, Romania and China. The rest, 28.7% come from developed countries, namely Germany, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Italy. Meanwhile, the analysis of the information provided in the introduction page of the course show that of 111 participants that have introduced themselves, nearly 70% are from the global South. Here, too, the leading countries are in a similar order to that in the iversity platform: India, Philippines, Nigeria, Brazil, and South Africa. The analysis of this information shows that the course has reached even to small iceland countries such as St. Vincent & the Grenadine and Sint Marteen, countries in the Americas (Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico and Peru) and countries in the Eastern Europe (Albania, North Macedonia, Romania and Russia).

Assessment of the course by the participants

The course is considered very helpful for the course participants. This is a conclusion drawn from both the interactions during the course with the various course participants, but also from the analysis of the course survey, which had 71 respondents.

¹ Country information is provided only for 60.6% of enrolees.



As Figure 1 shows, the various components of the course have received a very positive assessment: 100% of the respondents reported that they have acquired new knowledge about the topic; nearly 99% think that the knowledge acquired through course has been very helpful (78%) or helpful (21%) for their everyday work; the webinars and the zoom workshops are a helpful way of deepening participants’ knowledge (99% and 100% respectively); for 85% of course participants the course has met their expectations; nearly 99% the respondents would recommend this course to their friends and colleagues; and more than four in five (86%) said that based on the experience with the “Post-Corona Starts Now” course, they would enroll also in other MOOCs of the GLU.

The content of the course is deemed highly relevant and there is appreciation for the “out of the box” perspectives anchored on social justice. In particular, the survey respondents emphasized topics such as, solidarity among people and organisations and the ideological emphasis on collectivism, the critique of economics of neoliberalism and its link with the public health and social crisis, what countries are doing in the post-corona period, rethinking alternatives public services, revolutionizing green infrastructure, and lessons for global North and South. The emphasis on the concrete policy proposals is another important aspect for the survey respondents. According to few survey respondents, there is, however, a need for more examples from the global South.

Course instructors: there is a great appreciation for the selection of the course instructors, especially with regard to their distinguished, non-mainstream expertise. The respondents also liked the interdisciplinary aspect of the course with experts from different fields of study, such as political sciences, economics and social sciences. The lecturers were able to provide an outstanding level of explanation, which made it easier to understand and digest the content. Theoretical concepts were explained in a clear language and there was a good way of incorporating historical perspective and practical examples. Another important aspect pertaining the lecturers is their ability to discuss passionately and assertively their topics while communicating a sense of urgency. The survey respondents also appreciated the using of simple English. Some survey respondent, however, pointed to problems with some instructors who spoke too fast and/or had a difficult accent to understand. One survey respondent noted that the course was not gender balanced (12 male and 6 females) and another one that there were no speakers from Latin America.

The format of the video lectures, the majority of respondents seem to like the fact that the videos were short, concise, clear and simple, sufficient to hold participants’ attention. A few

(2) respondents, however, found the videos to be too short, which limited the ability of the instructors to provide more comprehensive discussion of their topics. The animation was helpful to address issues with some of the speakers who spoke fast and had heavy accent or where the audio quality was not good, a point made by some survey respondents.

The reading materials were considered to be well-selected, very informative and abundant. A few (2) respondents, however, noted there was a need for more additional materials. The survey respondents also appreciated the **discussion questions**, which helped understand what is happening in other countries. Meanwhile the **quiz question** were relevant and helped deepen the learning process.

Interaction with the course instructors and participants is also a critical to facilitate and deepen the learning process as well as to network. In this course, the Online Academy experimented first with new formats to enhance the interaction with the course participants and support the learning process. Many of the respondents received the webinars and the zoom workshops very well. According to them, the selection of two experts per webinar provided sufficient time for the participants to make questions. Also, the zoom workshops format with around 10 participants allowed for proper interaction with the course instructors. Efforts have been made to hold these online activities the afternoon (CEST) to enable users from Asia and Americas to participate. For those, who could not make those time spots, the recordings of the webinars and zoom workshops are made available in the course platform. In terms of networking, more than two in three participants (66.19%) reported to have made helpful contacts with fellow course participants for their work.

Local activities: The context of the pandemic did not allow for local activities, used often to deepen the learning process by contextualizing the knowledge and strengthen the more practical aspects of the course. Interestingly, more than half of the participants reported that would be interested to set up a study group in their own local context around the issues of this course. 31 survey respondents provided their contact details for such activities.

Main insights for the way forward

The assessment received by the course participants as well as the continuous engagement with participants through emails point to some important insights which help inform the way forward.

Maintaining a diverse conceptualization team for the development of the courses: as the survey showed, there is a strong support for the concept of the course, which combines both “out of the box” debates and concrete policy proposal. This was made possible through the active involvement in the course conceptualization and development of the global trade union federations, which brought a strong national and international perspective on the most relevant debates for workers, engaged academics working closely with the labour movement at various levels, other social movements, and labour-support organizations such as FES. The team was able to put together a broad list of topics in a coherent concept, which as the course survey showed, fully met the expectations of the course participants. Another important element, which needs to be strengthened for future MOOCs, is the involvement of the GLU alumni in the process of scripts’ revision. This helps to sharpen the national and regional focus



because the selected alumni are embedded in the national and regional trade unions organisations as well as in academic institutions running labour studies.

Enhancing enrollment and completion rates: the GLU online courses support worker education at a time when more formal trade union education formats are less likely to reach trade union members. Even before the pandemic, the open access nature of the online courses, which is unlimited in terms of numbers of people who could attend the courses, provided an educational opportunity without the constraints and restrictions that come from the more formal trade union education (limited number of people attending training; selecting who gets to receive training etc.). In this way, the GLU online courses strengthen access to worker education, especially given that the course is permanently accessible online and can be completed on self-pace mode. This is all the more important for countries in the global South, where most participants seem to be coming from, and where access to education is hindered also by the financial possibilities of trade unions.

The labour sector is by far the largest group represented among the course participants. This is not only because they are the main target of the online courses of the GLU, but also the main target of the communication strategy with emails sent to the GLU alumni and the GLC, which has an extensive list of trade unions and labour-oriented organisations. There is, however, scope to improve further. The experience with this course shows that trade unions can really play a very important role in persuading union members to take the course. One example stands out in this course, that of Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW). Several members of CUPW enrolled in the course indicating their union had encouraged them to follow the course.

At the same time, the GLU courses are reaching a very wide audience and are helping to mainstream labour issues in academia, governments, NGOs, media and even the private sector. A number of academic institutions contacted the Online Academy requiring more information about the course and indicating they intend to use the course content in their teaching.

In terms of future actions for enhancing enrollment and completion rates, it will be important to anchor the online courses in institutions, such as educational institutions of trade unions and other labour organisations and academic institutions. The FES local offices, which may have a more comprehensive information on such institutions on the ground, can help establishing contacts with the aim of achieving formal partnerships between these institutions and the GLU Online Academy.

Anchoring MOOCs on academic institutions would require the development of a credits scheme for MOOCs. Such scheme could be developed by involving professors within the GLU network who are already using MOOCs as part of their teaching (e.g. HWR Berlin and Penn State University).

Diversifying the instructors to address both regional and gender representation can be achieved fully if the courses are conceptualized and developed over a longer period. For this particular course, efforts were made to involve colleagues from University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa and University of Campinas, but they were not able to contribute

with video lectures as the development of the course coincided with an intense period of online teaching in their respective programmes. The University of the Witwatersrand provided proposals for readings for the course, which are incorporated under “Additional readings” of the relevant video lectures. The University of Campinas contributed with a brief on the situation in Brazil.

In addition, including course instructors from other social movements has been an important achievement in this course, which has helped to reach new groups of participants and bring together people from various movements thus contributing to the long-term agenda of creating broad coalitions for change on the ground at this critical historical and political juncture.

For the future, it will be important to ensure the participation of all GLU campuses in all the courses, while also expanding to other academic institutions and worker advocacy organisations and social movements.

Enhance the quality of the video lectures: it is clear that short videos are the preferred format for most participants. It is also clear that concise lectures which contain both analytical elements, but also concrete policy proposals backed by arguments is widely appreciated. One element which helped in achieving such an outcome was the reviewing process which sought to avoid duplications and strengthen the arguments. These elements and processes should be maintained and strengthened for other courses. In terms of the technical quality of video lectures, many of the video lectures were recorded in improvised home conditions under lockdown.

Improved style of lecturing: rehearsing more before recording the video may be helpful to improve the styling lecture. To address concerns regarding the difficulty to understand some speakers, the Online Academy will start inserting subtitles to the videos so the course participants can make use of them should they need to do so.

The suggestion for **more additional readings** may be addressed more appropriately with strategies to find more visible ways for additional readings. For the future, we may consider asking all the course contributors to prepare a 3,000 words paper about the topic, which could serve as a basis for a more condensed script for the video lecture. The longer papers can be compiled into a publication to accompany the course, but also as another strategy of drawing people to the course. This would be a way of addressing the demand for more additional readings, but also for more elaboration on the theoretical/more difficult arguments made in the short video lectures as well as more representation of examples from both the global North and South.

Strengthening the interactive elements of the course: in supporting the interactive elements of the course, the Online Academy is **incorporating webinars and workshops in the online courses**, which have received very positive feedback by the course participants. These activities are critical to ensuring the horizontal participation of the course participants. The experience with this course indicates the need for good preparations both in terms of selecting the speakers, but also in terms of setting the context for the discussion. Mixing speakers with different points of view seem to create a more dynamic discussion. It is helpful



to prepare a few good questions to start the debate and dedicate all the time to questions from the floor to have a more interesting and lively debate.

Strengthen the communication strategy: there is a need to provide more time for designing and implementing the communication strategy prior to the course launching. The fact that the course was developed and rolled out in a very short time may have had an impact on the effectiveness of the communication strategy. Another constrain came from the fact that both the FB and YouTube limited any boosting of posts with Covid-19 reference. What turned out to be very helpful was when unions themselves took a more active role in disseminating the information they receive through the mailing lists and encouraging their members to participate, as the example from CUPW shows.

Extend the rolling out time for the courses: we have been exploring different ways of putting across the message that the courses can be completed at own pace even outside the tutored phase. It may also be good to consider launching a new chapter every 10 days and use this longer time to organize more webinars and zoom workshops, address in this way also suggestions from survey respondents to have more such activities, which enhance the interactive aspect of the courses and deepen the learning process.

Translation of the course content and of the webinars: the iversity provides an option for inserting subtitles in the videos, we may think of providing translation of the courses in some other languages. The Global Trade Union Assembly experience of providing translation for webinars may also be something to explore for future webinars. These actions may help increase the number of participants in the courses and improve the enrollment rates.

Promote local activities: as noted earlier, a significant number of course participants have expressed their willingness to organize local activities and have provided their contact details. The Online Academy will get in touch with them in discussing such activities in collaboration with other actors on the grounds such as the local FES offices.

Organize related events on the topics of the course, such as webinars, and use these events to continue the conversation opened by the course, especially regarding policy proposals, but also to encourage people to enroll and complete the course.

Creating synergies with other ongoing activities: at the same time that the Online Academy was developing and producing this course, the Global Trade Union Assembly was also conducting global conversations with national and international trade unions on similar topics. Such conversations featured 376 local, national, regional and international trade unions with a strong representation from the global South, especially from Latin America. Efforts were made to create some synergies, but mainly in terms of cross dissemination of information as well as some learnings from the webinars. For the future, it will be important to identify similar activities and strategise on strengthening synergies.