The Learning Ideas Conference 2026

Driving Engagement in Large-Scale Digital Learning

Evidence from the Espírito Santo Formação Avançada Case.

Silvone Assis · Chief Commercial Officer, DOT

Co-authored with **Bruno Lamas** · State Secretary for Science, Technology and Innovation

Government of Espírito Santo

TODAY'S ROADMAP

Three movements over 22 minutes.

01

The problem

Why MOOC engagement remains the field's most stubborn problem after 15+ years of research.

~5 min

02

The case & framework

Formação Avançada and a proposition: the operational engagement framework.

~8 min

03

Evidence & implications

What 42 months of data reveal — and what they don't.

~9 min

*Followed by **8 minutes of Q&A**.*

THE MOOC COMPLETION PROBLEM

5–15%

typical completion rate for open-enrollment MOOCs

After **15+ years of MOOC research**, learner engagement remains the field's most stubborn problem. **It is not a content problem** — it is an engagement problem.

THE RESEARCH GAP

Few studies have investigated how **operational engagement structures** implemented by public institutions influence participation in large-scale digital learning programs.

15+

years of MOOC research

focused on platform design, learner behavior, completion predictors

Few

studies on the operational layer

particularly for government-led MOOCs at scale in emerging economies

Meet Formação Avançada

A large-scale digital learning initiative by the Government of Espírito Santo, Brazil.

LAUNCHED

Jul 2022

After 18 months of program design

DURATION

42 months

Continuous operation through Dec 2025

PARTNERS

3-party model

SECTI · Coursera · DOT Digital Group

AUDIENCE

Statewide

Citizens, students, educators, public servants

A three-party model

Three institutional roles, one program.

POLICY

SECTI

Government of Espírito Santo

Strategic direction
Public investment
Program governance

PLATFORM

Coursera

Global learning ecosystem

Course catalog
Learning infrastructure
Certification

OPERATIONS

DOT Digital Group

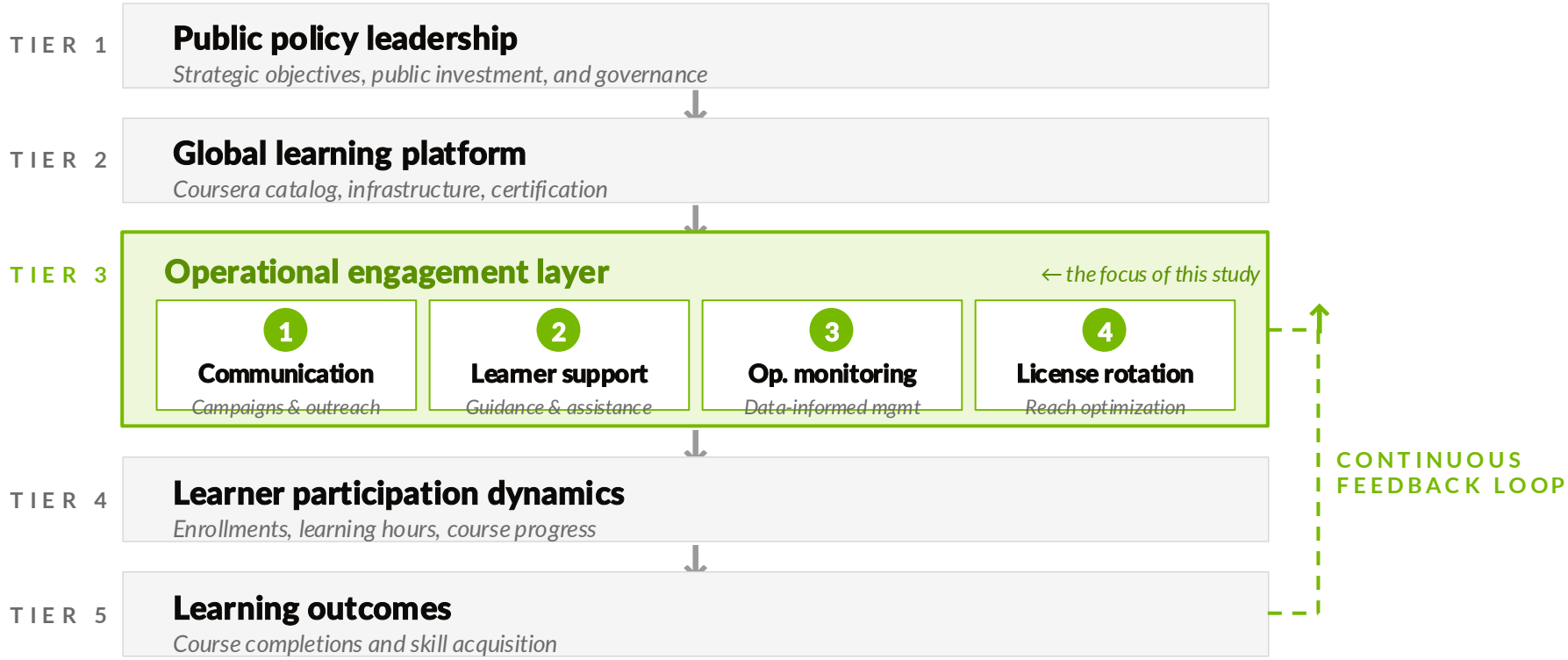
Operational engagement layer

Communication & outreach
Learner support
Monitoring & license rotation

Formação Avançada · Operating since Jul 2022

THE OPERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Five tiers connecting public policy to learning outcomes — derived from this case.



Four operational mechanisms

Inside the operational engagement layer.

01

Communication ecosystem

Sustained outreach campaigns — not just course catalog availability.

02

Learner support

Guidance on enrollment, navigation, and certification pathways.

03

Operational monitoring

Monthly reports tracking participation indicators and trends.

04

License rotation

Reassigning inactive licenses to new learners, expanding reach.

42 months of data

Headline indicators from the Coursera administrative dashboard.

77,146
Course enrollments

134,479
Learning hours

14,886
Course completions

25,943
Distinct learners

COMPLETION RATES — TWO WAYS TO READ THEM

19.3%

per enrollment

14,886 ÷ 77,146 · comparable with MOOC benchmarks (5–15%)

57.4%

per active learner

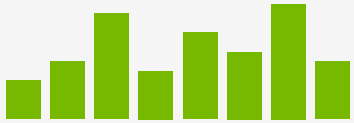
14,886 ÷ 25,943 · among learners who effectively engaged

Patterns over time

What unfolded across 42 months of continuous operation.

Continuous enrollment

New learners entered weekly throughout the 42 months — not a launch surge that decayed.



Completion peaks

Course completions occurred continuously, with engagement-driven peaks tied to operational campaigns.

License rotation

Inactive licenses cycled back into the pool, maintaining active participation across the program.

Jul 2022
Program launch

42 MONTHS · CONTINUOUS OPERATION

Dec 2025
Study cutoff

This continuity is itself an outcome — a signal that operational mechanisms work over time, not just at launch.

LESSONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Treat the operational layer as a first-class component.

WHAT THIS MEANS

Sustained engagement in large-scale digital learning programs depends on organizational mechanisms that activate, support, and monitor learners — not on platform features alone.

WHAT THIS IS NOT

Communication, learner support, operational monitoring, and license rotation are constitutive of program outcomes — not implementation details, not nice-to-haves, not afterthoughts.

A hybrid digital learning ecosystem.

Our findings reframe large-scale digital learning as a coordination problem between global platforms and locally implemented engagement structures — not as a content delivery problem alone.

What we cannot yet conclude

Four boundaries on the inferences this case study can support.

DESIGN

Single-case study

Findings cannot be directly generalized to other contexts or programs.

METHOD

No counterfactual

We cannot isolate the causal contribution of specific mechanisms.

DATA

Course catalog not disaggregated

We do not separate completion rates by course type or difficulty.

SCOPE

Outcomes beyond completion

Skill acquisition and labor market effects are not measured here.

The framework is a proposition awaiting validation across additional contexts.

EXTERNAL VALIDATION

Coursera Engagement Award 2025

Presented at Coursera Connect Mexico

Recognition from the platform partner — independent of this study's findings. Awarded among Coursera's global institutional partner network for the program's engagement outcomes.

Thank you.

Questions, ideas, or future collaborations — I'd love to hear from you.

SCAN TO CONNECT ON LINKEDIN

CONTACT

Silvone Assis

CCO

DOT Digital Group

silvone.assis@dotgroup.com.br