

User perceptions and experiences of massive online open courses
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(OER14)

<https://oer14.oerconf.org/archive/14/oer14/72/view/index.html>

28-29 April 2014

Open education is transforming academia by empowering communities to share learning materials, and is opening up teaching practices beyond the classroom (1). In the last few years, massive online open courses (MOOCs) have emerged and become the focus of attention. These free courses are evolving in two distinct pedagogic forms: the connectivist (cMOOC) that has grown out of an informal networked approach to learning, and the structured, content-based MOOC delivered on large-scale platforms (xMOOC), often with significant amounts of commercial backing (2).

It is interesting to note that for traditional learning that is campus or computer based, where students are enrolled and affiliated to an institution, policies exist to ensure that students have a good experience, from admissions through to graduation. Great onus is placed on achieving high standards of academic quality; on retaining students; and curriculum design and delivery addresses accessibility, inclusivity and learner diversity. In a 2013 review of education literature, I explored these areas in relation to MOOCs (3). What are the ethical and social stances of institutions offering free online learning, and what are the academic frameworks in place to support learners of massive open courses, if any?

The review demonstrated that there was very little research relating to MOOCs and student experience. The majority of research studies identified focused on learner analytics and the development of methodology to understand digital learner behaviour. Themes relating to social inclusion, accessibility and diversity, intellectual property and privacy, quality assurance and pedagogy emerged in the narrative of published literature reviews, but not empirical studies (3). This concurred with a previous review of MOOC literature by Liyanagunawardena et al (4), in which only a few articles retrieved related to the learner experience, so it is clearly an under examined area within this new educational paradigm.

Methods

The aim of the present paper is to explore people's perceptions of the social, ethical and academic stances relating to MOOCs. MOOC users will be selected from online networks and invited to participate in the research. Semi-structured interviews will take place with questions based around the themes identified in the review. Interviews will be transcribed and analysed.

Results and Discussion

The outcomes will build an understanding of the learner expectations of open online courses, highlight any differences between c and xMOOCs, and provide insight relevant to institutions offering courses regarding the social, ethical and academic

frameworks that might be useful build learner engagement and success.

References

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