Foreword

Socio-economic changes, as well as the technological evolution, have had a significant impact in educational practices all over the world. Many international organizations have, over the last decade, emphasized the need for technological integration so as to foment a more flexible, comprehensive and efficient education, capable of meeting current and unforeseen societal demands.

The rate of change seems to be increasing and, not seldom, the extraordinary becomes the everyday. Indeed, societal changes have pushed the long-established boundaries of Higher Education. As the turmoil gradually gave way to the needed changes, many new and creative ideas and proposals have sprung. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) appeared within this context.

MOOCs created fully open spaces where technology and media merge with education in a continuous complex social process with human consequences and effects, thus creating a need to understand and interpret the phenomenon’s evolution and constant redesign which is leading to unchartered, yet necessary paths.

The fast-paced and widespread development of MOOCs requires the traditional concepts of learning to be reshaped given that the learning process and environment have singular characteristics.

Higher Education Institutions (HEI), given their role, have to consider societal demands for development and education and foster student development in today’s fragmented reality. As such, the advent of MOOCs had obvious repercussions, not only in HEI educational contexts, but also in their business models, in an evident and unbreakable connection. Many questions remain unanswered. Among them, those concerned with the quality of education, the assessment methods or the shifting role of the teacher and the students.

*Furthering Higher Education Possibilities through Massive Open Online Courses* is a book that aims to spark the discussion on MOOCs, the challenges they pose, the changes they are originating in HE settings, the new educational and training business logics they promote. Finally, the book supports and shares best practices with those willing to take their first steps in this thriving online reality.

As editors both Anabela Mesquita and Paula Peres have brought together a book that is able to combine their multiple and multifaceted perspectives, in what I perceive as an invaluable resource for education in general and HEI in particular and for all those involved.

The two researchers and MOOC developers are currently full professors at School of Accounting and Administration of the Polytechnic of Porto (IPP), the largest and most prestigious Portuguese polytechnic institute.

Anabela Mesquita is the Director of the recently created Research Centre for Communication and Education (CICE) and she is also a member of the Agoritmi Research Center at Minho University. Her research interests include knowledge and innovation management and Life Long Learning in HE. She
has been involved and coordinated several European and national projects. She is also a Member of the Editorial Board and referee for IGI Global and as Associate Editor of the Information Resources Management Journal and is the Editor in Chief of the International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction (IJTHI). She is the author and co-author of many books and numerous valuable papers in international journals and conference proceedings.

Paula Peres has been dedicating her attention and developing her work in the area of education technologies, where she got a post-PhD and a PhD. She coordinates both the Unit for Innovation in Education of CICE and the e-Learning Unit of the Polytechnic of Porto. She is also the Director of the post-graduation b-learning course in Communication Technologies and Business Innovation. Finally, she coordinates the Education Corporate Centre at ISCAP - IPP. In her research, she is mainly concerned with the integration of the Information Technologies and Communication in HE contexts. She has published several books in the information system and e-learning area and coordinated research projects in the same areas.

This book Furthering Higher Education Possibilities through Massive Open Online Courses is a definite asset for anyone interested in MOOCs, particularly educators, professionals and researchers working in the field or for those who are about to engage in the adventure of developing and managing a MOOC.

With the range of knowledge, experience, creativity and innovation shared here, readers will have a better insight into this thriving area and a strong guide to support and develop their own approach to innovation and creativity.

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