Generating Lifelong-Learning Communities and Branding with Massive Open Online Courses

Rosana Montes, Virtual Learning Center, University of Granada, Granada, Spain
Miguel Gea, Virtual Learning Center, University of Granada, Granada, Spain
Roberto Bergaz, Virtual Learning Center, University of Granada, Granada, Spain
Belén Rojas, Virtual Learning Center, University of Granada, Granada, Spain

ABSTRACT

The arrival of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has stimulated teachers and universities to change in some ways the teaching methodologies. The success of these massive courses is based on involving students to acquire knowledge and skills in a wider community by learning from others and using active learning practices. MOOC providers also help universities to support the mission of transferring knowledge to society in any kind of area, supporting lifelong learning and adopting some kind of internationalization strategy. This is an ongoing trend where 17 of top 30 universities in the world’s adopted MOOC courses. Open learning is a strategic and valuable trend in knowledge society. Opportunities appear in the Anglo and Latin American market, while problems associated with the high drop-out rate, the sustainability, and the feasibility of skill certification should be addressed. In this paper we analyze the properties of a MOOC as a learning community by taking data from a pilot of three MOOC courses performed at AbiertaUGR, the MOOC platform of the University of Granada.

Keywords: Brand Communities, Learning Platforms, Massive Open Online Courses, Open Educational Resources, Virtual Learning Communities

INTRODUCTION

Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) is gaining popularity in Higher Education due to the ability to create online contents for wider student communities. This is a new way to adapt informal learning in universities using nontraditional models, engaging people in OER (Open Educational Resources), applying gamification models and participatory game-driven mechanism (badges, peer review, community reputation, etc.). In this way, MOOCs are both social and informal learning environments. This model has been conducted through inter-institutional platform of courses such as Coursera (2011), EdX (2012) and Udacity (2012) for

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English speakers, and also for Spanish speakers communities in MiriadaX (2013), UNEDComa (Read, T, 2013) and AbiertaUGR (2013).

The engagement of HEIs (High Educational Institution) on creating MOOC course means additional added values such as creating a true open learning community. At a first glance, the platform is a good opportunity for institutions to organize courses and related contents and tools to create a wider open online community. There are two different alternatives for creating massive courses: (a) as xMOOC that focuses on content or (b) cMOOC which are connectionist courses more oriented to social and user-centric knowledge experiences. Although both approaches are different alternatives for course management, they have a underlying online community within. This proposal as stated (Gea, M., 2013) arises from educational institutions to find new opportunities through online training and learning as a mission of knowledge transfer to society (Gea, M., 2011). This role to be played in fact, translated into reality through two very different ways: creating its own platform and carry on administrative processes, or joining in a consortium of institutions that relay in the use of a private managed or external platform (Montes, R., 2013b).

MOOCs have been a trending topic in education during 2012 (the year of the MOOCs) (Unesco, 2012) as Figure 1 explains. Currently, as the novelty start to fade and MOOCs exit the peak of the hype cycle, we start to see where they are really going. According to different points of view we can distinguish different trends inside the MOOCs movement itself:

![Figure 1. The MOOC hype cycle](http://www.moocologist.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MOOC_HypeCycle_12111.png)
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