Understanding the Setting of a MOOC: A Journey into Coursera

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ABSTRACT

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) are becoming increasingly difficult to ignore in online education. Recent developments in MOOC have heightened the need for understanding the MOOC. The issue of an in-depth understanding of the MOOC setting has been a key subject within the field of qualitative research. However, far too little attention has been paid to the MOOC setting. This paper seeks to put the Netnography methodology into context by presenting a description of the Coursera community to better understand this community. It contributes by providing details about Coursera community through our engagement in this community.

KEYWORDS
Community, Coursera, Massive Open Online Courses, MOOC, Netnography

1. INTRODUCTION

In the development of online education, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) have been thought as a current development in distance education. MOOCs are an important component in the current education system and play a key role in the future of education. Concerns have been raised about the poor understanding of the setting of a MOOC. Most studies in MOOC need to take an understanding step toward MOOC. In our Netnography research on MOOC, we followed Kozinets (Kozinets, 2010a) guidelines to choose an appropriate site. We chose Coursera which is one of the most significant current discussions on MOOC. This paper puts the Netnography methodology into context by presenting a description of the Coursera community to better understand this community. It contributes by providing details about Coursera community through our engagement in this community.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. MOOC

The advent of course delivery via the web was in 1994 which was followed by a new category of course management system (Graziadei, 1997). Online education grew slowly from the fall of 2010 to 2012 when it began to be known as “MOOC” (Hill, 2012). One of the most significant current discussions in education context is “MOOC” (Massive Open Online Courses) (Hill, 2012). The problems of scale and access resulted in duplication of course sections but as noted, these issues began to be solved with the new concept of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (Hill, 2012). MOOC is a recent online learning phenomenon which has gained attention from media, higher education institutions and investors (Powell and Yuan, 2013).

Since 2008, a growing number of universities especially in North America run MOOCs (Liyanagunawardena et al., 2013). In the past two years there has been an increasing amount of literature on MOOCs (Brown, 2013; Bruff et al., 2013; Daniel, 2012; Hill, 2012; Little, 2013; Rodriguez, 2012; Thompson, 2011).

2.2. The Coursera Community

Coursera is a new form of education through the internet. The internet enables worldwide access to education opportunity. Koller said” Our dream is that anyone around the world who has an Internet connection, perhaps via a mobile device, will be able to learn the things they care about” (Severance, 2012). Coursera technology enables the best lecturers to educate tens or hundreds of thousands of students. Coursera is a public and online community set up to provide education to anyone around the world. It provides video lectures, resources, discussion forum, exercises, Wiki and meet ups. It is an education platform with top lecturers from high ranking universities which provide free education for anyone. It has more than 400 courses in different categories. Learners can learn at their own pace and finally after completing the course they receive a certificate.

There are many people in the world who do not have access to education. Africa is one of countries that suffer from low quality education. MOOCs such as Coursera are very worthwhile for these people. The UNESCO statistics show the increasing rate of number of out-of-school children in South Africa (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of out of school children in South Africa (UNESCO)
Computer Technology: An Essential Component for Teaching a Fashion Production Management Course
Shu-Hwa Lin (2013). *Learning Tools and Teaching Approaches through ICT Advancements* (pp. 82-90).
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/computer-technology-essential-component-teaching/68577?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/computer-technology-essential-component-teaching/68577?camid=4v1a)

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