Chapter 11
Designing Culturally Sensitive Massive Open Online Courses: Learning Culture and MOOCs in Turkey

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ABSTRACT
Since cultural characteristics of the learners is among the factors that affect the quality of learning experiences, designing the online learning environment sensitive to the cultural characteristics of learners is a must for ensuring an effective and engaging learning experience. The MOOCs movement has helped administrators, designers, educators, learners and all the other stakeholders re-consider our current instructional, assessment and administrative processes, especially in higher education. The goal of this manuscript has three folds: first, it briefs development of the philosophy of openness in higher education globally; then, based-on available literature it draws a picture about the effects of culture on open and distance learning; later, the manuscript provides an insight about the general cultural characteristics of Turkish society and the learning culture shaped by the past and present implementations; finally, it lists a number of recommendations for those who are designing MOOCs for Turkish audience.

INTRODUCTION
As it is with other terms in social sciences, it is difficult to find a consensus on the definition of culture. According to Mole (1995) “culture is a woolly, flaky, pretentious, unbusiness-like, mildly derisive work like intellectual or bureaucratic” and his definition of culture is “the way we do things around here”. The way of doing things is guided by the set of attitudes, norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors of people. Matsumoto (1996) considers this set, shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next, as culture. Chen and Starosta (1999) have indicated that
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cultures are defined by values and norms. These may vary according to national, organizational, regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic affiliation, gender, generation, social class, and family levels.

The goal of this manuscript has three folds: first, it briefs development of the philosophy of openness in higher education globally and nationally; then, based-on available literature it draws a picture about the effects of culture on open and distance learning; later, the manuscript provides an insight about the general cultural characteristics of Turkish society and the learning culture shaped by the past and present implementations; finally, it lists a number of recommendations for those who are designing Massive Open Online Courses for Turkish audiences.

Openness in Higher Education

Openness is one of the popular concepts we have been hearing lately, but what does it mean, especially in the field of education? Baker (2017) provides a nice array of definitions and states that there are three major approaches to define the concept of openness in education. According to Baker, the first approach uses the historical origins of some implementations regarding opening up education. Peters (2008), for example, claims that origin of the openness lay in the “core Enlightenment concepts of freedom, equality, democracy and creativity” (p. 7). Wiley (2006) also see open source software (OSS) as the origin of open education movement in academic settings. The second approach includes the context based definitions. For instance, according to The Digital Connections Council of the Committee for Economic Development (2009), openness is about right to access and change a work. Similarly, Peters and Roberts (2012) considers openness as a moral consequence of technological advancements that fostered opening up scientific and education processes, artifacts, and communities. The third approach has a more concrete base and tries “to negotiate openness in a given context” (Baker, 2017, p. 131). Creative Commons License is a good example of this approach. These licenses help creators of the resources allow other to use them while securing their right to be known as well as help others to access, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute copy-rights cleared works. There are many more definitions and classifications of the concept of openness but for us the major points we should be taken into consideration regarding openness is sharing of experiences, and freely use of these experiences along with recognition of the creators.

Although Wiley (2012) claimed that all education is by default open, the origin of openness in higher education context should easily be traced back to open universities. The foundation of open universities as Ozkul (2013) indicated can be considered as one of the most influential milestones of the history of openness in higher education. Although there had been some initiatives before, the Open University of United Kingdom (OUoUK) was the first sustainable open university, established in 1969 as a political move by the Labor Party to offer quality higher education opportunity to those who were not able to attend traditional HE institutions. This initiative triggered and became a model to many other open universities globally. These universities adapted the concept of openness as a metaphor to provide open access to degree programs (without almost any prior qualifications) and to be able to study without time and place constraints. Pakistan Allama Iqbal Open University, Indira Gandhi National Open University of India, Open University of Netherland, German Fern University, Italian International Telematic University (UNINETTUNO), and Anadolu University Open Eduction System were among those institutions established after the OUoUK during 1970s and 1980s. They, one way or another, adapted the OUoUK’s administration, instruction and assessment strategies and materials to their implementations (Bates, 2005).

For quite a long time, openness in higher education is associated only with open universities but trends in higher education, such as advancements in information and communication technologies, need for
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