Chapter 11
Impacts of MOOCs on Online Learning and Campus-Based Course Design

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ABSTRACT

There are two lines of expert debates on whether MOOCs could improve the overall quality of college and university education in America. Experts like Fiona Hollands believe MOOCs have made positive influence in campus-based classrooms by making the instructors reconsider how they approached their teaching. Yet, others doubted if there would be a broad impact of lessons learned from MOOCs on conventional classroom to be seen anytime soon. This book chapter reports the findings on the pedagogical transformation process between MOOCs and campus-based courses done by faculty who taught the courses in both formats. The degree of employment of MOOC instructional strategies to campus-based teaching practices varied by the instructors and is determined by their on-campus classroom settings, and their willingness to consider adopting their MOOC instructional strategies to their established campus-based teaching styles. Implications for faculty, instructional designers in higher education and professionals in training industry in regards to embracing diversity are presented.

BACKGROUND

What Is a MOOC?

The term “Massive Open Online Course” (MOOC) was first used to describe a twelve-week online course, Connectivism and Connected Knowledge, designed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes and offered at the University of Manitoba, Canada, in the fall semester of 2008 (Cormier & Siemens, 2010). “Massive” refers to the capacity for courses to enroll large numbers of students, as well as to track vast quantities of participant activity and performance data. “Open” refers to no or low-cost participation. “Open” also refers to produced materials for the course that are accessible to all learners with an adequate Internet connection. As online courses, MOOCs are available via the Internet on a variety of devices and thus expand access beyond the traditional campus. Labeled as a “course,” a MOOC is framed in a time period with a beginning and an ending point, provides a coherent set of resources, and follows a sequence of activities organized by an instructor in order to address specific learning objectives (Hollands & Tirthali, 2014).

In terms of scale, a MOOC can be seen as a global virtual classroom because of its body of learners. MOOCs are a type of online courses offered to learners all over the world with little restriction on their language and cultural background, age, prior knowledge, and intellectual capacity. Being involved in design and developing such a massive course, instructors are encouraged to strive for pedagogical innovations and teaching practices that maintain an instructional standard that reaches global learners with diverse background and learning needs, and who demonstrate dynamic patterns of learning behaviors. Thus, such teaching experiences these instructors have from MOOCs have become valuable resources when they are transferred to campus-based classrooms and play a vital part in innovating on-campus teaching.

As an example, Duke university, a pioneer institution that has offered 31 MOOCs on Coursera from 28 departments since 2012, began to transfer MOOC experience to promote innovation in teaching and learning in Duke classrooms. These instructors used MOOC materials to flip on-campus classes by having the students watch MOOC videos, respond to quizzes before class, select the subjects to review in class based on the quiz results, and have teaching assistants working with small groups of students for concept explanation. Increasing access to online learning materials is another example of teaching approach change that allows students to reinforce what learned in class and review difficult materials. On-campus courses also benefit from the revision of MOOC design of instruction based on various feedback from the learners.
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