Chapter 1

MOOC and OER: Identity Management

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ABSTRACT

Open educational resources (OER) and massive open online courses (MOOC) are new and emerging issues in the international higher education context. Under the exponential growth of the supply of courses and related publications, the purpose of this chapter is to foster scientific discussion on the socio-cultural and economic impacts, as well as its technological and pedagogical implications. Supported by the methodological typology of bibliographical studies, systematized interpretative-critical analysis based on review of the concepts, and principles guiding OER and MOOC, the authors’ reflections show that the enlargement terminologies without epistemological delimitation have provoked theoretical and practical mistakes. In the final considerations, the authors systematize broader problematizations around the open educational practices in universities aimed to five dimensions: spatio-time-content, theoretical models, principles of pedagogical innovation, economic aspects, and fundamentals of collaborative culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) are rooted in the ideals of open education and Open Educational Resources (OER), respond to the needs and desire to learn from all people, without demographic, economic and geographical constraints (Yuan & Powell, 2013). The open education movement is empowered by the Internet and combines the sharing of ideas, resources and practices among all people. In this context, MOOCs and new trends can contribute to increasing access to knowledge through lifelong learning and training courses.

A MOOC is an open, free, massive online course, offered through virtual learning environments, Web 2.0 tools and social networking connectivity (McAuley, A., Stewart, B., Siemens, G. & Cormier, D., 2010). Connectivism, presented as a new learning theory, was the theme of the first MOOC, organised by George Siemens and Stephen Downes in 2008, named “Connectivism and Connective Knowledge”. The course was designed for 25 students from the University of Manitoba, Canada, who paid to participate and was made available, with open access, to anyone who had an interest. More than 2,300 people participated in the course without paying fees and without getting credit for it, and this expressive participation originated the MOOC designation, coined by Dave Cormier and Bryan Alexander (Siemens, 2012). The pedagogical conception of the course originated the designation cMOOC, that means connectivist MOOC.

In 2011, Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvige, from Stanford University, organised a MOOC on the topic “Introduction to Artificial Intelligence” which attracted 160,000 students (Bates, 2015). These were followed by MIT and Harvard, which also began offering massive courses, based on knowledge transmission mainly through videos of short duration and high quality. The Coursera, Udacity and EDX platforms have attracted thousands of students. These courses were named xMOOC by Stephen Downes in 2012, being the most popular type of MOOC currently offered (Bates, 2015).

The differences created the cMOOC (connectivist) and xMOOC (traditional format) names and Downes (2012) stated that, regardless of type, MOOCs will cause changes in the way universities offer courses.

A hybrid version originated from the cMOOC and xMOOC models, combining components of xMOOC and cMOOC (Chauhan, 2014). Other names and conceptions continue to emerge, as the sMOOC - social MOOC, that provides social learning experiences, marked by interactions and participation, accessible from different platforms and integrating participants’ real life experiences (Morgado, L., Mota, J, Quintas-Mendes, A., Fano, S., Fueyo, A., Tomasini, A,..., Brouns, F., 2014).

With the increase of the MOOC offer, there are considerable differences in their conception and they reflect different objectives and philosophies (Bates, 2015).
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