Chapter 2

Reflections on Instructional Design Guidelines From the MOOCification of Distance Education: A Case Study of a Course on Design for All

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ABSTRACT

There are some similarities in developing distance education online courses and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) using the basis of eLearning instructional design. However, the task of converting an online course into a MOOC is not as simple as direct migration of eLearning materials and assessment resources into a MOOC platform. In online learning, learners should be continually influenced by information, social interaction, and learning experiences, providing them with the knowledge to come up with new ideas to develop within an engaging course. In this chapter, the process of MOOCification a distance education online course on “Design for All for an Inclusive and Accessible Society” is explained and contextualized. The re-factorization process has been based upon the quality model used for MOOCs at UNED Abierta and the instructional design based on Gagné’s events of instruction. The eLearning activities were completely refactored, along with the content itself, the interaction events, and the online assessment following the Gardner’s multiple intelligences product grid.

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INTRODUCTION

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been a turning point in online learning delivery, in some cases being positioned as an alternative to traditional higher education (HE) courses (Yuan & Powell, 2013). It offers teachers, researchers and practitioners the opportunity to experiment with different pedagogies, trying different possibilities using their materials in either face to face or online campus settings, such as in flipped classroom or blended learning approaches (Hoyos et al., 2019; Hill, 2012). The pedagogical and visual design of MOOCs, their information architecture, usability and interaction design, is having a variable impact on learner engagement, retention and completion rates, as previously analyzed in adult learning (Montgomery & Mallette, 2018; Jordan, 2015; Yang et al., 2013; Liyanawadana et al., 2014). For instance, Jordan (2015) confirms that completion rates vary significantly, from 0.7% to 52.1%, with an average value of 12.6%, according to course length (longer courses having lower completion rates), start date (recent courses having higher percentage completion) and assessment type (courses using auto-grading having higher completion rates).

Recent innovations in MOOCs include the creation of new educational approaches (both from the pedagogical and technological point of view) that can be used to rethink education, also renewing calls for inclusive education to reach all citizens. Social inclusion can only be obtained by embedding inclusive strategies, leading to targeting and including vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, being emphasized (de Waard et al., 2014), although there has been limited progress to date in either producing accessible MOOCs, or tailoring MOOCs to meet individual learners’ needs (Iniesto et al., 2016).

MOOCs are usually developed and delivered as independent online courses, but some pedagogical experiments have been reported by teachers and researchers on how to integrate MOOC into HE (Sandeen, 2013). From being video courseware repositories to dynamically adaptive eLearning models, the MOOC ecosystem has matured significantly leading to a wider taxonomy of MOOCs (as explained originally in the taxonomy of 8 types of MOOC developed by Clark (2013). Transfer MOOCs are created with recordings of existing classroom video lectures and engage learners by different motivating factors (Sooryanarayan & Gupta, 2015). Other researchers wrap formal university courses around existing MOOCs (Koller, 2012; Bruff, 2012; Bruff et al., 2013; Caufield et al., 2013; Holotescu, 2014), while some have attempted a different approach, where the participation of learners in different MOOCs was integrated into a blended course run on a social mobile Learning Management System (LMS) (Conole, 2008). More recently, Defawex et al. (2019) combined a MOOC with a face-to-face course using blended pedagogical patterns.

Integration of MOOCs into HE appears to be converging on content licensing to support hybrid or flipped classes, an incremental change from current practice rather than a fundamental transformation (Sandeen, 2013; Rodrigo et al., 2016). As revealed by Gasevic et al. (2014), the design of MOOCs and their integration into formal curricula was one of the main research themes within the framework of future MOOC research. Gasevic also stated the need to increase efforts towards enhancing multi-disciplinarily. According to Desarathy et al. (2014), MOOCs could enhance crowd-sourcing multi-institutional degrees and competence-based education by improving the quality and personalization of the learner experience.

MOOC design can be addressed from the perspective of eLearning design (Conole, 2014), a research field that provides tools and methods for both articulating and representing the design process of learning experiences, making them more explicit and shareable while assisting educators in planning and organizing pedagogically educational actions (Conole, 2010). The focus is placed on the educational aspects of new technologies and, particularly, what might be the most appropriate “schema” for describ-
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