The Scholarship of Teaching MOOC-Based Degree Programs: Opportunities and Challenges

Coursera Partners Conference 2017

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Overview

- Rationale: Why Research MOOC Teaching?
- Research Questions
- Methods
- Preliminary Observations
- Q&A
Rationale: Why Research MOOC Teaching? 1 of 3

Emerging trends in the Digital Age: scholarship and social media use (Greenhow & Gleason, 2014):

• Open and social practice
• Professional development
• Credibility

Instructors are adding MOOC teaching to their portfolio
## Rationale: Why Research MOOC Teaching?

Table 1: Scholarship and new technology (Pearce et al., 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boyer’s scholarship framework (1990)</th>
<th>Trend towards openness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Open data</td>
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<td>Integration</td>
<td>Open publishing</td>
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<td>Application</td>
<td>Open boundary between academia and the public</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Open education</td>
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**Focus**
Rationale: Why Research MOOC Teaching? 3 of 3

Impact of MOOC teaching on learners and in stand-alone courses (Ebben & Murphy, 2014; Robinson et al., 2015):

- Wider engagement; affordable education
- Light instructor-learner interaction; less effective for deeper conceptual development

Lens refocusing on the impact on:

- Instructors
- MOOC-based degree programs (with credit-bearing component)
Research Questions (RQs)

1. How did designing and delivering a MOOC component of a degree program contribute to the instructors’ professional development as teachers and scholars?

2. What challenges did the instructors encounter while designing and teaching the MOOC alongside the credit-bearing online course?
Methods 1 of 2

Participants

• 12-15 participants: instructors on a MOOC-based MBA program (iMBA)

Procedure

• Estimated time frame: November 2016 - January 2018
• Data collection and analysis: three-step process
### Methods 2 of 2

#### Table 2: Data collection and analysis techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection</th>
<th>Data analysis</th>
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<td>Pre-interview questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>➔ Via email</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unstructured interview</td>
<td>Descriptive phenomenology</td>
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<tr>
<td>➔ Open-ended question via email</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
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<td>➔ In person or via phone/web call</td>
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The Open-Ended Question

Please tell me about your experience designing and teaching MOOCs: how do you feel this experience influences you as a scholar in your field?
Preliminary Observations: Opportunities
Professional Development

I’m planning to use the [Coursera] lectures in my face-to-face class.

Coursera improved my teaching (...) in my [on campus] class, I now have a story for every lecture.

Instructors learned and created more **engaging** ways of delivering content, which they are **reusing** to **improve on-campus teaching**.
Teaching a MOOC helped the instructors reach a much **wider audience**: learners otherwise unreachable in traditional online environments.

Instructors taught a **different learner audience**; adapted their teaching style.

I was amazed to see the number of countries the learners came from.

There is a broader distribution of skills [than in class]. You have learners who are experts, others who are not (...) some participate more than others.
Preliminary Observations: Challenges
Time and Workload Management

Some instructors felt challenged by the time required. A collaborative environment helped ease that challenge.

[Designing the course] was very **time-consuming** (...) it can be challenging for an instructor teaching a MOOC for the first time.

It took me an insane number of hours (...) requires more work than a traditional course.

I appreciated the help of the TAs and your team [design].
Platform Considerations

Juggling two platforms: Blackboard for credit, Coursera for non-credit*. Instructors could not get creative; grading accountability issues.

*Single Coursera platform expected Fall 2017.

There was some confusion over flexible vs. hard deadlines [between the two platforms].

[Coursera should] introduce a mechanism that acknowledges fair vs. unfair peer graders.

I could not design self-assessed or adaptive learning activities [in Coursera]; there is more flexibility now but more work is needed.
Instructors recommend **forward planning, collaboration, be adaptive** in presenting content to learners with a **wide range of abilities**.
Methodological Limitations

- Research still ongoing
- Inter-rater reliability
- Short-term impact examined (< 2 years)
- Looking to include instructors from other:
  - MOOC-based programs (in and outside Illinois)
  - subject disciplines
  - academic ranks
  - more heterogeneous samples
References


Thank you!

Questions?

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