Winners and Losers in On-line Open Education: Who is it good for?

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Summary

In this presentation I will bring together strands of research in The Open University around open education, and Open Educational Resources. I will examine ways in which the recent explosion of interest in MOOCs is impacting on students' perceptions of learning, and the role of the academy in teaching.
How disruptive is ‘open’?
John Daniel quotes Illich:

- ‘...to follow Ivan Illich’s injunction that an educational system should ‘provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives; empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them; and, finally furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known’ (Illich, 1971). ‘Daniel, 2012
What is the Open University (UK)?

Distance teaching university providing supported open learning for 40 years

• Scale (250,000 students)
• Open (no requirements for entry)
• Quality …
Quality

2008 Research Assessment Exercise

2008 National Student Survey

Other
Million+ Group
University Alliance
1994 Group
Russell Group

Quality
...to guide media use, development and integration
The Open University

- Operates in the public domain
- Engages the public in learning
- Extends reach to make Higher Education open to all
Understanding progression to student

Aware → Engage → Convert → Retain

Understanding media

Presence → Audience → Ephemeral vs Permanent → Free to share

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Presence → Audience → Ephemeral vs Permanent → Free to share
GOING MULTI-CHANNEL/DEVICE
Open Media

Introducing Textbooks
The Next Chapter in Learning

Moon Rocks
An introduction to the geology of the Moon

Andrew G. Tindle & Simon P. Kelley

The Open University
For the OU ...

• Online and open is not disruptive

For other institutions ...

• It may well be ... FutureLearn

For learners...

• It may be very confusing
Daniel (2012)

xMOOCs
- Behaviourist/transmissive pedagogy
- Directive, sometimes closed discussion
- Led by ‘star’ academics

cMOOCs
- Connectivist/social pedagogy
- Distributed across platforms/channels/applications
- Learner driven: learners set own goals
Siemens (2012)

xMOOCs
• Focus on knowledge duplication

cMOOCs
• Focus on knowledge creation and generation
That’s the MOOCs - What types of learners?

3 types identified by Boursinou, Falconer, Littlejohn (Glasgow Caledonian University)
Traditional Lurkers

- the majority of those who sign up
- diverse range of motivations
- the majority are never going to take part
- a minority would like to participate but lack the confidence to do
Active Participants

- Expect to be 'taught' and directed
- Want to know what to learn
- More keen on assessment/grading
Active Learners

• setting their own goals
  creating new connections
  with other learners

• incorporating these
  connections into their
  existing personal learning
  network

• highly confident learners

• xMOOCs have little to offer
  them at present (they would
  rather read a book)
Multimedia, Education and Narrative Organisation

- Diana Laurillard, Lydia Plowman, Rose Luckin, Matthew Stratford, Josie Taylor

ESRC funded collaborative project in the Cognitive Engineering Programme

1999 - 2002
Narrative Guidance

• Narrative guidance provided by teacher, or learning resources

• it is the ‘story’ of the course/component

• normally has hierarchical structure
  – overall narrative formed by series of sub-narratives
  – need to ensure students understand relationship of sub-narratives to main strand

http://iet.open.ac.uk/mino/
Narrative Construction

• The activity engaged in by the learner to draw together an understanding of the materials provided by teacher
  – narrative construction needs be supported
  – narrative guidance alone can only work for experienced learners (poss. not even then..)
  – Expecting it to happen spontaneously is unrealistic
  – Good support for narrative construction enables active learning
Process of emancipation for new learners as confidence builds

- Informal to formal
- Passive to active
- Solitary to sharing
- From learner to teacher?

Lots of other stops along the way...
Ecological approach

• Interrelationship among all the different communication technologies and
  – the cultural communities that grow up around them
  – the activities they support.

• ‘Interactivity is a property of the technology, while participation is a property of culture.’

  Jenkins (2004)
Ecological Space in which learning happens

Contribute when you want

Low barriers to entry

Informal mentorship from expert to novice

Strong support for creating and sharing

Members believe their contribution matters

Members care about each other

Adapted from Participatory Culture: Jenkins (2006)
Affinity Spaces

...sustained by common endeavors that bridge difference

... deploy peer-to-peer teaching model, and participation

...allow each participant to feel like an expert whilst tapping the expertise of others

 Adapted from Gee (2009)
Winners and losers: xMOOCs

• Can be very goal directed and straightforward for learners – good for novice learners?

• Pedagogy as a means of establishing control
  – Transmissive, teacher-led, directive pedagogy enables very large numbers to participate
  – Support is minimal
  – Participants may be left behind if they don’t understand

• Biggest winners are the organisations
  – Assessment can be auto-generated/auto-marked
  – A few key people employed to tutor many learners
  – ‘Standards’ kept up through survival of the fittest
Winners and losers: cMOOCs

- Power of the peer group
  - Peers working together, leaders emerging
  - Learners can set their own goals
  - Can be very collaborative
- Some participants may self-appoint themselves to roles so moderation is important
- Learners need to be more sophisticated and skilled
- Organisations have less overt control over participation
- Badging emerging as a viable form of credit
- Skills for learners may be more broad based and flexible
What is it for?

• Are we duplicating the existing educational system (nationally/internationally/globally) with all its inequities?
• Where is the quality assurance and quality enhancement that protects the rights of learners to be treated equitably and fairly, and get a ‘fair deal’?
• What are the ethics of driving these developments for profit? (current UK topic of interest)
• What is the benefit for the developing world?
Acknowledgements

- Isobel Falconer, Glasgow Caledonian University, personal communication, 2013.