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?

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

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

Boyer's scholarship framework (1990)	Trend towards openness
Discovery	Open data
Integration	Open publishing
Application	Open boundary between academia and the public
Teaching	Open education

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)

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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

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

Table 2: Data collection and analysis techniques

Data collection	Data analysis
Pre-interview questionnaire ➔ Via email	Descriptive statistics
Unstructured interview ➔ Open-ended question via email	Descriptive phenomenology
Semi-structured interview ➔ In person or via phone/web call	Thematic analysis

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**.
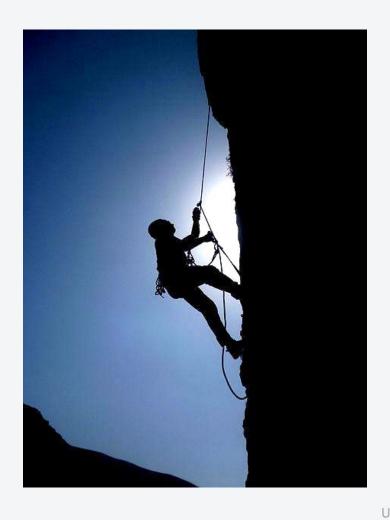
Wider Outreach / Public Engagement

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

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.

Preliminary Observations: Challenges

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Time and Workload Management

[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]

Some instructors felt challenged by the **time** required.

A **collaborative** environment helped ease that challenge.

Platform Considerations

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

Juggling **two platforms**: Blackboard for credit, Coursera for non-credit*.

Instructors could **not get creative**; grading **accountability** issues.

*Single Coursera platform expected Fall 2017.

Advice to New MOOC Instructors

Seek support from the design team

Be aware of [the broader distribution of skills among Coursera learners]

Plan and begin early! The ideal time [to design] is when you are not teaching [other courses]

Use animations to make complex content more understandable (...) make case studies engaging

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

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Thank you!

Questions?

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