

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on MOOCs: The Challenge of the Future

Anabela Mesquita, Politécnico do Porto, Porto, Portugal

Paula Peres, Politécnico do Porto, Porto, Portugal

ELearning is witnessing great changes and challenges in the past few months. One of the challenges is related with the emerging of the massive open online courses – MOOC's. Several solutions are starting to appear in the market, together with new business and instructional models and approaches. What are these MOOC's in concrete? How are they different from traditional online distance learning initiatives? Who are the players? What do MOOCs offer to learners? How are they financed? What might be the future of online learning? What are the technologies that are being used? How do these technologies cope with the needs of learners? The articles presented in this special issue intend to give answers to this and other questions. To do this, the first papers presents a general point of view of the MOOCs environment, it intends to reflect on how they stimulated teachers and universities to change, in some ways, the teaching methodologies. In this first paper "*Generating lifelong-learning communities and branding with Massive Open Online Courses*" the readers are invited to reflect on the perspective of students and how they acquire knowledge and skills in a wider community.

How MOOCs can help universities to support the mission of transferring knowledge to society in any kind of area, supporting lifelong learning and adopting some kind of internationalization strategy. Nevertheless, all these challenges, media reports concerning massive open online courses have vacillated between the speech of an educational revolution and disillusionment with an over-hyped instructional technology. The second paper "*Got MOOC? Labor Costs for the Development and Delivery of an Open Online Course*" presents a reflection on this issue, including an interpretation of the significance of MOOCs in the context of higher education. The implementation of a MOOC platform may depend on the field of its application. This is the reflection proposed in the paper "*Realising The Potential Of MOOCs In Developing Capacity For Tertiary Education Managers*" that considers one application of open online courseware, as a platform for professional development within the tertiary sector, with an agreed pathway into award programs in tertiary education management. The pedagogical, resourcing and practical issues of designing and supporting this program are

examined as a means of exploring the conceptual underpinnings of online technologies and pedagogies. The particular case presented on the paper “*Exploring the relevancy of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)*”. *A Caribbean university approach* intends to give a concrete example that can work as a guide and supporting different applications in different contexts. This paper examines MOOCs as a new digital content frontier, their relevance to Caribbean higher education institutions and the challenges that universities face as they become more prevalent. It will also provide insights into the potential strategies for adoption of MOOCs within the Caribbean university system. The last paper of this special issue “*Automated assessment of free text questions for MOOC using regular expressions*”: presents a reflexion on the evaluation process that can be implemented on a MOOC courses. This paper seeks to research and clarify a type of assessment tool in which

the use of technologies is quite low, namely, the essay question type and within them, the short answer question type or free text question type, using regular expressions. The large number of students who would be in MOOC prevents a teacher from assessing responses of thousands of students in a finite time without the aid of technology. This research analyzes the results of an MOOC from hundreds of students to verify that the use of regular expressions in an MOOC platform is not only recommended but also necessary.

Finally, we, co-editors, wish that readers enjoy their reading as much as we have enjoyed selecting these pieces of work for them.

Anabela Mesquita
Paula Peres
Guest Editors
IRMJ