

Chapter 9

Integrating Motivational Strategies Into Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): The Application and Administration of the Motivation Design Model

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ABSTRACT

Massive Open Online Courses, aka MOOCs, have become an indispensable part of the online education routine. Many universities and organizations put a lot of effort into designing, developing, and running such courses. However, it still remains to be an under-researched area. One of the most important issues associated with success in MOOCs is the learner motivation. High dropout and low retention rates have been attributed to learners' low motivation. A recipe for these motivational challenges in MOOCs is provided by the ARCS-V motivational theory. This motivation design model provides a frame for analyzing the MOOCs learners, learning environment, and the resources. Based on this analysis, the model provides suggestions for assigning motivational tactics and strategies. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce Keller's ARCS-V motivational design model and discuss it as a potential remedy to motivational issues in MOOCs by administering and delivering motivational strategies based on the model in MOOCs environments.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Massive Open Online Courses (AKA: MOOCs) attracted a lot of attention of many stakeholders in education. As implied in its abbreviation, MOOCs are courses provided to large masses over the Internet, free of charge, and without any requirements. The first MOOC was carried out in 2008 by George Siemens and Stephen Downes of University of Manitoba in Canada, and in a couple of years, started a completely new era in education (Daniel, 2012). These courses, which can be taken by a lot more learners than students registered in conventional courses, are open to anyone connected to the Internet, and have, over time, become a huge market, advertising space, and most important of all, a great learning opportunity. The New York Times journalist Laura Pappano described 2012 as ‘The year of the MOOC’, providing another indicator of the wide-ranging effects of the MOOCs.

Although many different types of MOOCs have emerged in recent years, MOOCs are divided into two basic categories: cMOOCs and xMOOCs. These two types of MOOCs employ different instructional pedagogies. The concept of cMOOC refers to ‘Connectivist MOOCs’, and the first ever MOOC to be offered, Connectivism and Connective Knowledge (CCK08) designed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes in 2008, was a cMOOC. In cMOOCs, learning occurs through interaction among learners and course elements (Daniel, 2012; Siemens, 2005). The popular second generation of MOOCs, the xMOOC refers to ‘extended MOOCs’, and is based on the behavioral approach to learning (Daniel, 2012). Of these two types of MOOCs, xMOOCs have gained more prominence because they are content-based and closer to the conventional learning model (Haggard, 2013; Rodriguez, 2012). In most of the MOOCs, learners can acquire a certificate for a small fee or free after fulfilling the requirements of the course. What is more, many colleges and organizations have started to recognize these certificates in recent years (Soffer & Cohen, 2015). In many contexts, including the present study, the expression MOOC refers to xMOOCs.

Many organizations, partnering and collaborating with leading universities in the world, offer MOOCs that provide an opportunity for open learning on a global scale. The largest MOOC providers in the world include Coursera, edX, Udacity, Udemy, Khan Academy, PSPU (Peer to Peer University), FutureLearn and Open Learning, among others. As of December 2016, the US-based Coursera, one of the largest MOOC provider, partners with more than 145 colleges, offers 1600 courses, and has 22 million students (Coursera, 2016). These numbers demonstrate just how wide-ranging MOOCs are in terms of scope, and how important they have become. The number of organizations and colleges offering MOOCs is also increasing in countries other than the US, especially in Europe.

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