

SHORT TERM MOBILITY - FINAL REPORT

INVESTIGATING INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR DESIGNING MOOCs (MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES)

by Francesca Pozzi

The main activities carried out during my visit at ILI (Institute of Learning Innovation) – University of Leicester, include:

→ Exchange of experiences, ideas and projects between myself and researchers at the ILI.

In particular, at the beginning of the visit (September 4th, 2013) a *face to face session* was organized, where I introduced my institute and my personal research interests (recordings are available at: <https://connect.le.ac.uk/p1japi9827e/>).

This allowed the researchers to get an idea of possible common topics. Then *individual meetings* were scheduled (with all the permanent staff and PhD students), during which we discussed our points of view and main research results and we shared information, etc.

People with whom interactions were more frequent and fruitful are listed below:

Name	Position
Prof. Gráinne Conole	Director of Beyond Distance Research Alliance
Terese Bird	Learning Technologist and SCORE Research Fellow
Dr. Palitha Edirisingha	Lecturer in E-learning
Dr. Paul Rudman	Research Associate in E-learning
Gabi Witthaus	Teaching Fellow in Distance Learning with Technologies and SCORE Fellow
Prof. David Hawkrige	Visiting Professor of E-learning
Brenda Padilla	PhD student
Bernard Nkuyubwatsi	PhD student
Tony Ratcliffe	PhD student
Meng Jie Jiang	PhD student

Among the others, Prof. Grainne Conole and Bernard Nkuyubwatsi presented me their work and their main outcomes in the research thread of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).

→ *In depth study* of the 7Cs model and the 12 dimensions to classify MOOCs conceived by Prof. Conole. This has been done through *several informal*

interactions, and individual reading of literature suggested by my hosts; besides, I *attended a workshop* organized by ILI on the 7C model (September, 23th-24th).

→ *Shared discussion* of the Italian situation and application of the 12 dimensions to the Italian context as far as MOOCs are concerned.

Main conclusions drawn from this discussion can be summarized as it follows:

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have emerged challenging traditional educational offerings by providing alternative informal learning solutions for free.

Arguably, they are an example of a disruptive technology, which have the potential to change the educational landscape. Presently, the interest in MOOC is multi-faceted, practitioners are interested in the ways in which MOOCs might harness the potential of social media and provide a mechanism for social inclusion, widening participation ten-fold. For learners, they offer free courses in a myriad of disciplines, often offered by prestigious institutions. Senior managers are watching the phenomenon with interest to see what the longer-term impact will be on traditional formal institutions, where students pay for support and accreditation.

During my visit, I had the chance to study the phenomenon and to define the concept of MOOC, by looking at the experience developed at the ILI and also by considering the numerous variants that have emerged so far in the literature.

During the visit, I also studied the existing classifications and taxonomies, as they have been proposed in the literature, with a special attention to the new classification of MOOCs based on 12 dimensions recently proposed by Prof. Conole. Such classification includes: the degree of openness, the scale of participation (massification), the amount of use of multimedia, the amount of communication, the extent to which collaboration is included, the type of learner pathway, the level of quality assurance, the extent to which reflection is encouraged, the level of assessment, how informal or formal it is, autonomy, and diversity.

So far, Italy has not remained uninterested in this phenomenon: indeed MOOCs have started attracting a certain interest at both the academic and decision maker's levels; besides, in this country some MOOC offerings have already been launched. For this reason, during my visit I have focused on the Italian university system, and have considered its level of maturity to Open Educational Resources (OER) and MOOCs.

This has been done with the support of Prof. Conole, by trying to apply her new MOOC classification to analyse the potential uptake of MOOCs in Italy; this has led to interesting reflections on the kind of impact MOOCs could have on the Italian universities, by pointing out the main existing barriers, as well as the enablers, which may respectively prevent or encourage an immediate uptake of MOOCs in the country.

→ Investigation of possible future collaborations; in particular up to now this has led to:

- The elaboration of a joint paper on MOOCs, which has been submitted to the Networked Learning Conference 2014 (authors: Pozzi, Conole; title: "Taking up the challenge of MOOCs in Italy: the beginning of the story").
- At the moment, we are also planning to submit another joint paper (authors: Pozzi, Conole) to TD, an Italian journal in the field of Educational Technology.