Approaches to the Use of Massive Open Online Courses

Aproximaciones al uso de los cursos en línea masivos y abiertos

Aproximacions a l'ús dels cursos en línia massius i oberts

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ABSTRACT: Since their emergence in 2008, massive open online courses (MOOCs) have become an international source of interest. The current issue of *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives* (REALIA) focuses on different approaches to the use of this type of courses. Topics encompass students' perspectives, learning design and participants' performance during delivery. Each paper included leaves us with lessons learned and recommendations for future studies. Thus, this issue of *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives* adds to the existing knowledge in the field and sets the way for the next steps.

KEYWORDS: massive open online courses; MOOCs; editorial; course design; performance; students

RESUMEN: Desde su aparición en 2008, los cursos en línea masivos y abiertos (MOOCs, por sus siglas en inglés) han despertado interés a nivel internacional. El presente número de la revista *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives* (REALIA) se enfoca en distintas aproximaciones que se han dado al uso de este tipo de cursos. Sus temas abarcan las perspectivas de estudiantes, algunas cuestiones de diseño pedagógico y el desenvolvimiento de los participantes durante la implementación. Cada artículo incluido deja lecciones aprendidas y recomendaciones para futuros estudios. Así, este número de *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives* suma al conocimiento existente y marca la pauta para los siguientes pasos de investigación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: cursos en línea masivos abiertos; MOOCs; editorial; diseño pedagógico; participación; estudiantes

RESUM: Des de la seua aparició en 2008, els cursos en línia massius i oberts (MOOCs, per les seues sigles en anglés) han despertat interés a nivell internacional. El present número de la revista *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives* (REALIA) s'enfoca en diferents aproximacions que s'han donat a l'ús d'aquesta mena de cursos. Els seus temes abasten les perspectives d'estudiants, algunes qüestions de disseny pedagògic i el desenvolupament dels participants durant la implementació. Cada article inclòs deixa lliçons apreses i recomanacions per a futurs estudis. Així, aquest número de *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives* suma al coneixement existent i marca la pauta per als següents passos d'investigació.

1. EDITORIAL

Since their emergence in 2008, massive open online courses (MOOCs) have become an international source of interest (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2015;

Padilla Rodriguez, Bird, & Conole, 2015; Sharples et al., 2014). As they are usually free of charge, they are an attractive formative alternative for students with varied profiles, who want to explore online education environments (e.g., Padilla Rodriguez et al., 2015), learn about a particular topic (e.g., Alario-Hoyos, Estévez-Ayres, Pérez-Sanagustín, Kloos, and Fernández-Panadero, 2017), or improve their performance in the workplace (e.g., Milligan and Littlejohn, 2014). Worldwide, more than 100 million people have enrolled in at least one MOOC (Shah & Pickard, 2019).

From an institutional point of view, MOOCs can represent marketing or management strategies, and have objectives such as increasing visibility, recruiting potential students and reducing costs. They can also serve an educational purpose. Since they have such a large audience, they are the ideal scenario for experimenting with new pedagogies, and putting didactic methods and materials to test (Hollands & Tirthali, 2014; Sharples et al., 2014). More than 900 academic and professional institutions have developed and delivered this type of courses in specialised platforms such as *Coursera, edX* y *MiriadaX* (Shah & Pickard, 2019).

The current number of *Research in Education And Learning Innovation Archives* (REALIA) focuses on different approaches to the use of MOOCs. Ballesteros-Ibarra, Mercado-Varela, and García-Vázquez (2019) describe the perspectives of teachers from Sonora, Mexico, who participated in MOOCs to learn about the new national educational model. This paper highlights the value of online training, but it also identifies ongoing challenges such as the fear of technologies. The authors recommend that educational authorities, learning designers and MOOC facilitators collaborate to develop strategies that address these issues.

García, Barberà, and Maina (2019) studies the processes of learning social regulation in MOOCs. She analyses the use of orientative, reflective and feedback prompts as scaffolding tools. The first invite participants to act; the second foster metacognitive strategies; and the third consist of automatically forwarding the answers to the reflective prompts. Findings are encouraging and have implications for practice related to MOOC design.

Mercado-Del-Collado, Jácome-Avila, Ortega-Guerrero, Casillas-Alvarado, and Ramírez-Martinell (2019) review participation and achievement patterns in a MOOC on digital knowledge. They find that older students with a higher educational level show a better performance. They also emphasise the tendency in MOOCs to follow a funnel model, where participation decreases as the lessons progress, and they reflect on the need to use other metrics to assess effectiveness.

These works are just a small sample of the research that is being generated in relation to MOOCs. They encompass students' perspectives, learning design and participants' performance during delivery. Each paper leaves us with lessons learned and recommendations for future studies. Thus, this issue of *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives* adds to the existing knowledge in the field and sets the way for the next steps. I thank all the authors and hope that our readers enjoy it.

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