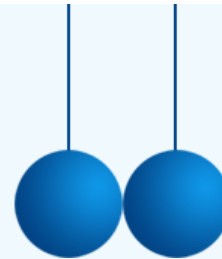


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OERs and MOOCs: untangling “open”

Blog post by Laura Czerniewicz
17 March 2014

During [Open Education Week](#), we at UCT were not the **only ones** taking the opportunity to discuss the differences and overlaps between MOOCs and OERs. [Using a matrix I have previously showed the open content, online learning and MOOCs](#) in terms of a range of dimensions including access, licensing etc. In [our talk](#) on OERs and MOOCs my colleague Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams and I focused on bringing together the idea of degrees of openness as well as the continuum of formal-informal along which MOOCs lie as a type of online learning.

The discussion hinges on what is understood by openness. In the MOOC world, **open means free access to join a course without any required educational or competence requirements**. In a paper under review, we (colleagues Andrew Deacon, Janet Small, Sukaina Walji) have described the course provision landscape in terms of curriculum integration, and have suggested that MOOCs are in the online semi-formal to non-formal space, as illustrated here.

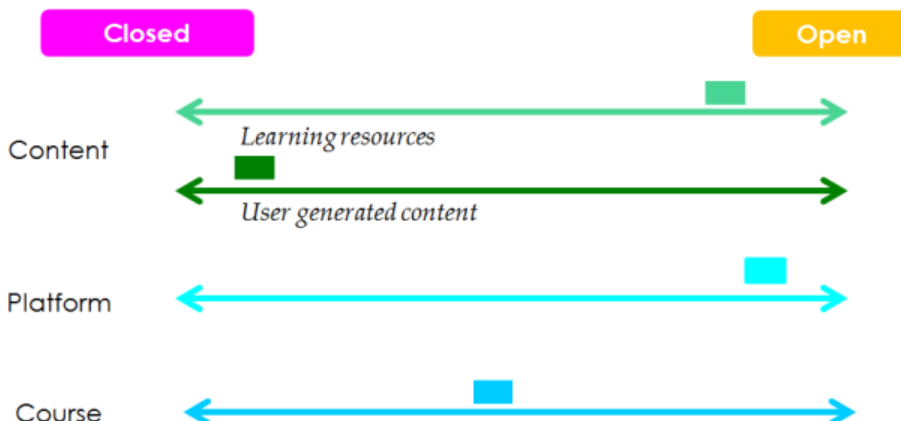
The course provision landscape

	Conventional ↔ Flexible			
Curriculum integration	Formal			
	Credit, towards a formal degree, tightly curricular	Lectures	May or may not be online	Block release Or online
	Semi-formal			
Stand alone, often not part of a degree may or may not be credit bearing	Short courses		Online	
	Non-formal			
No credit, not formal curriculum alignment	Summer school		Online	

MOOCs are in this space

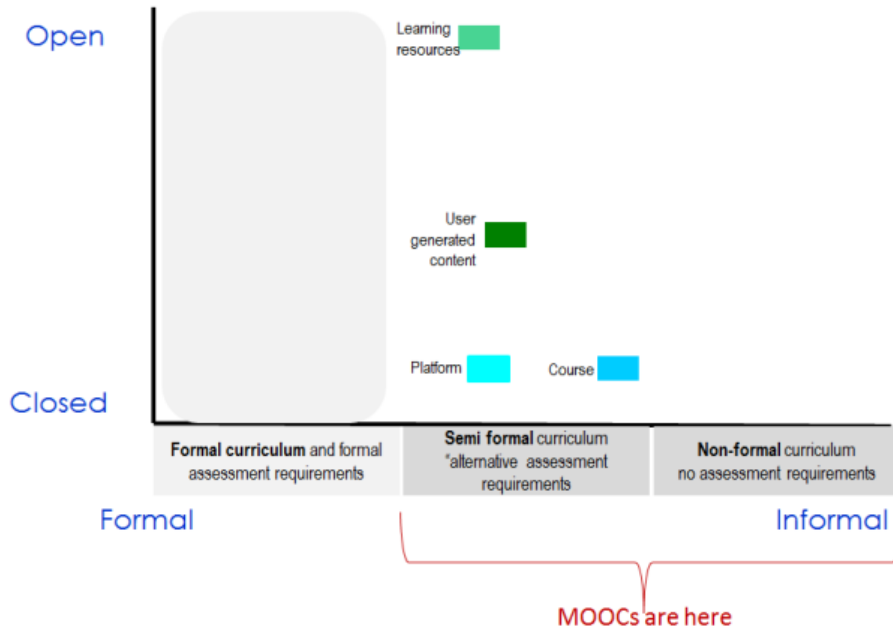
In the OER world, openness is more tightly aligned with **legal openness** and the permissions to use which have been assigned through various kinds of licenses.

MOOCs may be open in terms of access and lack of fees, but that does not mean they are legally open in other ways. Within MOOCs there are degrees and types of openness in terms of content – learning resources and user-generated content being different, platforms, and the course itself as a whole.



One could of course add other axes of openness- pedagogical openness for example.

With these two heuristics, we can map types and degrees of openness on the MOOC landscape, as per the following hypothetical example:



Mapping MOOCs' openness

"Open" is deceptively simple, and, as in the case of OERs and MOOCs, it might mean quite different things. Worth untangling.

This blog post was reposted from: <http://lauraczerniewicz.co.za/2014/03/oers-moocs-untangling-open/>



Comments

Laura, thank you for an

Submitted by Anonymous on Wed, 03/19/2014 - 20:07

Laura, thank you for an insightful blog post, which I found via UCT news. You're looking at a wonderfully exciting direction.

Having been in debates at another South African institution around ten years ago about how much "intellectual capital" should be accessible to non-fee-paying students, I'm afraid that Prof Don Ross' quote "our response is defensive" leaves me worried. Ten years ago the general feeling was "none", which proved to be very short sighted. I'll state two reasons why MOOCs should rather be embraced by UCT:

1. The entire landscape of MOOCs is changing. To classify MOOCs outside the scope of formal assessment is true at present, but will not be the case in a few years. The first of these courses originated with Stanford Machine Learning (ML) folk, and some of their current ventures include using ML for assessment and optimizing peer-marking schemes. Although this is mainly focussed on Andrew Ng's courses at the moment (that is, ML and computer science), it is foreseeable that it can be extended to other sciences. In other words, whilst the "formal curriculum" falls outside MOOCs reach in your map, it is likely to shift drastically to the left.

2. MOOCs provide an invaluable data log of student's progress, which allowed courses to be optimized based on different (independent) groups of students' progress. Different groups of students actually got different versions of the Stanford ML course, allowing lots of retrospective (A/B or causal) analysis. The statements here are partly true about DuoLingo (language learning) too, even though the domain is slightly different.

UCT should show some entrepreneurial spirit, take the lead, and be the first African university to host a course on Coursera. Why not embrace it as a tool to liberalize quality education, and accessible to many more South Africans? Now there's an opportunity for you.

MOOC possibilities at UCT

Submitted by Laura on Thu, 03/20/2014 - 11:12

Thanks for your thoughtful comments. I assume you are responding to the piece "March of the MOOCs: UCT in the digital era" at <http://www.uct.ac.za/dailynews/?id=8647?> Your observation about the opportunities of learning analytics and their potential to customise the student experience experience is of course one where technology might serve the interests of learning and diversity, if it can be made to work well. Really important points you make.

As for UCT, yes, we are in the process of identifying possible courses and will indeed be creating MOOCs and other experimental forms of online learning. Please do keep in conversation with us.

Add comment

Your name

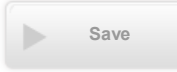
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