

Preface: Actions Leading to “MOOCs and Open Education Around the World”

Curtis J. Bonk, Indiana University, USA

Mimi Miyoung Lee, University of Houston, USA

Thomas C. Reeves, The University of Georgia, USA

Thomas H. Reynolds, National University, USA

A Half Century of Opening up Education

Many readers of this volume may regard Open Education as a relatively new term, but anyone who studied to be a teacher in the early 1970s will recall being assigned to read books with the simple title *Open Education* (cf. Hassett & Weisberg, 1972; Nyquist & Hawes, 1971). Many of the ideas promoted in these books were not unlike some of the concepts and goals associated with contemporary conceptions of “open education.” Terms like student-centered, interdisciplinary, project-oriented, individualized development, and the like were pervasive in these earlier books.

One major difference between the idea of “open education” fifty years ago and the current conceptions of “open education” reflected in the two forewords and 29 chapters found in the eight different parts of this volume is that the former focused primarily on early childhood education. In contrast, today’s conception of “open education” is most often, albeit not exclusively, promoted in the context of postsecondary or higher education, or any form of adult learning in general. Another obvious difference is that fifty years ago Web-based technologies did not exist to provide revolutionary ways of opening up educational opportunities for young as well as older learners spanning the globe.

The open education movement in schools of a half-century ago failed miserably; in fact, the classroom walls that were torn down to implement it were soon put back up. A primary reason for this failure was that opponents were able to focus attention on superficial aspects of the movement and distract potential adopters from open education's substantive qualities. As Altwerger, Edelsky, and Flores (1987) explained, "open space was substituted for openness of ideas, [and] learning centers for learning-centeredness. The final irony is that [open education] was judged a failure even though (because of the distortions) it was never implemented on any broad scale" (pp. 9-10).

One of the main reasons behind our endeavor for this book is that we hope to see today's open education movement escape the fate of so many previous attempts to enhance learning and teaching through innovative educational practices (cf. Haas & Fischman, 2010; Mettler, 2014; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). Massive open online courses (MOOCs), for instance, are presently experiencing more than a little criticism, and though much of it is quite thoughtful, some is the result of MOOCs simply being the most widely publicized component of the open education movement during the past few years (cf. White, 2014; Wildavsky, 2014). While posing questions and concerns about the MOOC movement can be useful, hasty denouncements need to be replaced with extended analyses, global discussions, and thoughtful reports.

In any case, the MOOC phenomenon, once lavishly praised in publications such as the *New York Times* and *The Economist*, has more recently become the subject of critical stories across the popular press. Gais (2014) quotes Ben Wildavsky, director of higher education studies at the Rockefeller Institute of Government in New York, as saying, "If 2012 was the year of the MOOC, it wasn't too long until what some call 'MOOC hype' gave way to 'MOOC hate.'"

Similarly, Audrey Watters noted in her highly quoted Hack Education blog that while 2012 was the year of the MOOC (Pappano, 2012), 2013 was the year of the anti-MOOC (Watters, 2013). To address such concerns, we decided to bring together in this book a representative and rigorously edited sample of the ideas and experiences of the scholars and practitioners working on the frontlines of the open education movement.

Anyone conducting a Google Scholar search using the terms “MOOC and education” or “Open Educational Resources” (OERs) will encounter a nearly endless listing of documents, blog posts, and news stories. Clearly, the proliferation of MOOC- and OER-related material argues convincingly for a book length resource to synthesize the myriad, and still emerging and evolving, perspectives of MOOCs and open education around the world. As part of these efforts, it is vital to document how such new forms of educational delivery provide hope for a brighter future for the disadvantaged and those too often trapped on the less privileged side of the digital divide. At the same time, it is also critical to discuss where they fall short. We trust that this book fulfills such needs, but we recognize that these are volatile topics and additional perspectives will come forth quickly.

Perhaps the most important reason that we collaborated on this edited book is that each of us is committed to the principles of the open education movement. We also share an optimistic perspective about the realization of these ideals. Although the aforementioned open education movement in K-12 schools largely failed shortly after its introduction in the early 1970s, another form of open education, the “open university,” was introduced around the same time and has thrived. James (1971) described The Open University of the United Kingdom as a “new phenomenon,” but also acknowledged the inspiration of the open university idea “by

developments in the United States, South Africa, Australia, Russia, and other countries” (p. 32). Today, nearly 60 open universities around the world enroll more than 17 million students (Guri-Rosenblit, 2012; Lockwood, 2013; Wikieducator, 2014); in fact, a few of them, Indira Gandhi National Open University in India, Anadolu University in Turkey, and Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan, alone have enrollments that reach into the millions.

As scholars and activists we believe that education provides the essential foundation for enabling everyone on the planet, regardless of their gender, age, beliefs, wealth, or social status, to make the best use of their core human rights to personal happiness and fulfillment as well as the liberty to choose their own learning paths. We concur with Johnstone (2005) who wrote, “Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization.” We believe that the vast majority of likely readers of this book already share these ideals.

Purpose and Goals

Even though the e-learning opportunities provided by MOOCs and OERs continues to proliferate globally, little attention has been placed on how individual regions and countries are taking advantage of such technology-enabled learning. The possibilities for significant educational change, and perhaps even transformation, in developing and underdeveloped countries has been

widely discussed and promoted. Also widely endorsed is the notion that e-learning is providing new educational opportunities for adolescent youth and young adults in the workplace as well as fostering professional development among more established older learners around the planet. The emergence of new forms of blended learning as well as the arrival of MOOCs and other forms of OERs has made e-learning front page news across all continents and societies (Bonk, 2009; Bonk & Graham, 2006).

As new digital forms of informal and formal learning proliferate, however, there is an increasing need to better understand how people in different regions of the world are implementing educational delivery innovations such as MOOCs and OERs. Even more importantly, educators, researchers, politicians, and countless others want to grasp what the outcomes of these initiatives are and how they can be improved. And, when combined with the current tidal wave of e-learning announcements and changes, those fostered by MOOCs and open education have caused institutions and organizations to grapple with issues of accreditation, credentialing, quality standards, innovative assessment, and learner motivation and attrition, among numerous other areas of concern. Each passing week, it seems that there is a major report or announcement concerning one or more of these topics.

In response to these issues, this book project explores, probes, and documents an array of unique implementations of MOOCs and open education in particular institutions and organizations as well as across regions and nations. We have invited contributions from thoughtful leaders and innovators whose research and practice have helped establish the movement toward opening up education using MOOCs and OERs. Fortunately, the vast majority of these scholars not only quickly agreed, but met our challenging timeline.

Many of the book contributors have been long standing proponents of the open education movement. Most of them have been experimenting at the outer edges of traditional learning technology. They may have designed and taught a MOOC or perhaps crafted and disseminated one or more highly valuable open educational resources. Others have tested a unique MOOC platform or system, written strategic plans for their institution or organization on MOOCs and open education, or conducted research and evaluation of MOOCs and open education contents. Their stories and insights capture the present state of open education around the world. Hopefully, their ideas will inspire untold others to engage in this movement.

The contributors to this book focus on the various opportunities as well as the dilemmas presented in this new age of technology-enabled learning. What are the different delivery formats, interaction possibilities, assessment schemes, and business models? And what are the key controversies or issues that need to be discussed and addressed. In response, the various chapter authors explain an assortment of specific MOOC and open education trends and issues in their respective locales, share key research directions and findings, and provide suggestions and recommendations for the near future. They also detail their personal experiences and stories related to MOOC offerings and open education developments.

While we are aware that two book forewords and 29 chapters cannot offer a full accounting of all the MOOC and open education initiatives currently underway around the planet, we believe that many important goals for this volume were met. Listed below are ten of

the key goals that we had in compiling this particular book on *MOOCs and Open Education Around the World*:

Ten Goals:

1. Help the reader better understand the range of MOOC initiatives and open education projects currently underway around the planet.
2. Understand how MOOCs and open educational resources are impacting learners in different ways around the world. This goal includes obtaining a better grasp of the potential global impact of MOOCs and open education.
3. Highlight pressing issues and controversies where there presently is passionate debate.
4. Reflect on and plan for near term possibilities, obstacles, and trends related to MOOCs and open education.
5. Gain insights into emerging trends in e-learning as well as future plans and visions; especially, as they relate to MOOCs and informal or self-directed learning.
6. Learn how culture interacts with e-learning and open education across regions of the world.

7. Emotionally connect to the stories, experiences, pilot testing situations, etc., of those who have attempted a MOOC or developed significant open educational resources.
8. Grasp the challenges and barriers facing different organizations and institutions as well as entire countries in implementing MOOCs and other forms of e-learning and open education.
9. Learn from some of the key instructors, trainers, researchers, administrators, government officials, instructional designers, entrepreneurs, consultants, and others involved in the MOOCs and open education movement. We intend for the reader to get a sense of who some of the key players currently are in this space as well as what issues they are attempting to address.
10. Realize that many of the questions, criticisms, possibilities, and opportunities related to MOOCs and open education are global issues. While the contributors to this book represent diverse regions of the world, they have much in common in terms of their concerns, goals, initiatives, challenges, problems, and successes.

We hope that the readers of this book will attain many, if not most, of these goals as well as those that they carry with them. If any seem unfulfilled upon completion, we encourage the reader to contact one of us or one of the other book contributors with his or her questions and concerns as well as his or her own personal stories and insights.

Audiences and Stakeholders

As you will quickly discover upon turning the pages of this book, MOOCs mean different things to different people. You will also read assorted connotations about the meaning and value of open education. In terms of MOOCs, some view them as a vital way to diversify one's student base. For others, the emphasis is on the creation of global learning communities that share ideas, resources, and best practices. Still others view MOOCs as a tool for expanding access to education. Importantly, several of the contributors to this volume insightfully critique aspects of MOOCs such as the use of the term "open" by MOOC vendors who restrict access to their course content to a set time period and platform and further limit it to those who actually enroll. You will also discover quite disparate views and problems related to assessment and accreditation of MOOCs and open educational contents.

In the midst of the wide array of MOOC and open education arguments and debates, new acronyms are proliferating in this wondrous world of MOOCs. For instance, you might have already read about cMOOCs (testing the theoretical and practical viability of connectivist-styled learning), xMOOCs (highlighting massive quantity of throughput with thousands of students in some cases), pMOOCs (experimenting with problem or project-based learning), BOOCs (big open online courses), MOOD (massive open online discussion) (Watters, 2013), SPOCs (small private online courses), and most recently, PD-MOOCs (related to professional development for teachers and other professionals) (Davis, 2014). In this book, the reader will also learn about distributed open collaborative courses or DOCCs. Still other forms of MOOCs and MOOC derivatives are now targeting remedial education, advanced placement, and many other crucial niche areas.

Suffice to say, we hope that this book starts a dialogue about how MOOCs and open education might accelerate access to education by those living in poverty or without adequate access to traditional educational resources as well as for those coveting a move up in their careers or starting a new one. The time is ripe for such a conversation since the open education movement will only gain in significance with each passing year. This book might also shift common discussions about MOOCs and open education from technology and information access issues toward learning-related ones. Educators and learning professionals as well as politicians, information technology (IT) managers, and other educational stakeholders need to grasp that, from an educational standpoint, the Web has become a hub for testing, demonstrating, and evaluating new learning tools, formats, and ideas. MOOCs are just the latest instantiation of the trend toward Web-based teaching and learning.

This book can provide fresh ideas and information to university and college instructors, K-12 educators, corporate executives, administrators and IT managers, researchers, trainers, instructional designers, graduate students, and anyone interested in emerging trends in education; especially those related to open education and learning technology. In particular, this book can be valuable to higher education administrators and instructors as well as corporate, government, and military trainers who are interested in making sense of the recent research on MOOCs and open education as well as enhancing their understanding of key issues related to the design of open educational contents and courses. Instructors and instructional designers in higher education settings might find this book handy in special topic courses and seminars. At the same time, university deans and those in provost offices might use one or more chapters, or perhaps even the entire book, for faculty retreats and strategic planning sessions.

We are hopeful that this book appeals to higher education administrators struggling with issues of where to place valued resources. In fact, IT managers in various educational sectors might use it for long-range planning and forecasting meetings and reports. Training managers in corporations or government agencies might also take advantage of the stories, ideas, and examples from the book to help justify their open education initiatives and strategic plans. All of these individuals will likely want to take advantage of these trends in a fiscally responsible, efficient, and strategically beneficial way.

A unique synthesis on MOOCs and open education will help administrators and staff from learning and teaching centers on college campuses to train relevant personnel for a wealth of online and open teaching delivery methods and approaches now possible. There are many hesitant, wary, reluctant, and resistant instructors, tutors, and staff on college campuses today as well as in schools and corporate and military environments. This book can provide a starting point from which to design training materials and supports related to MOOCs and open education. The many stories and experiences detailed in this book might also serve to inspire others to engage in a MOOC, either as an instructor or as a learner. Finally, politicians reading or accessing this book will discover that there are countless new possibilities for enhancing the learning of individuals across the lifespan in their respective communities and regions of the world. Many free and open access resources are now available for their citizens (Bonk, 2009). It is time to take advantage of them.

What Happens in Vegas Sometimes Becomes a Book

It is important to point out that the impetus for this book came from a one-day pre-conference symposium titled “*MOOCs and Open Education Around the World*” that the four of us editors organized before the commencement of E-Learn 2013. For those not familiar with the event or organization, E-Learn is an international conference that occurs each year in October or November and is run by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). The 2013 pre-conference symposium took place in Las Vegas and attracted over 100 participants as well as two excellent keynote speakers, Paul Kim and George Siemens. Encouraged by the enthusiasm generated at the E-Learn symposium, we decided to undertake editing this volume, which not only includes chapters from both symposium keynote speakers, but also from more than 60 other scholars working at the cutting edge of MOOCs and open education around the world.

The book starts with chapters that look back at the history of open and distance education and offer unique insights and critiques into current trends and events. Some of these opening contributors also discuss the opportunities provided by MOOCs and open education as well as current implementation efforts. Other chapters and sections address teaching issues, instructional design and quality standards, and administrator opportunities as well as dilemmas. Near the end of this volume, several authors pose questions and highlight unique possibilities on the horizon for MOOCs, open education, and related educational innovations. We recommend that you reflect, both individually as well as with your students, colleagues, and work teams, on the pressing questions and concerns offered in each section of the book. You will also discover a plethora of advice, lessons learned, and interesting future trends illuminated in every chapter.

Across the 29 chapters and eight parts of this book you will find deliberations on credentialing policies, instructional design practices, learner-related issues, administration and management decisions, quality assurance standards, mobile and ubiquitous learning delivery, emerging technology tools for MOOCs (and their viability), and much more. Some chapters and sections will appeal to different audiences. Instructors will likely identify with the contributors who discuss instructional design ideas and offer guidelines related to them. Administrators will find value in the decision making that went into developing particular courses, programs, or special learning content for this more open or free educational world. They will undoubtedly be interested in the results as well.

Proponents of educational trends such as MOOCs and open education continue to face a series of roadblocks and extended criticism, much of it rightfully so, from established as well as newly formed educational institutions and organizations. Many corporate and higher education administrators are ignoring these learning delivery innovations, while others simply want more information. To help clarify such issues, the reader of this book is offered a diverse array of viewpoints--some chapters being authored by academic scholars in the field of educational and instructional technology, whereas others are from founders of companies or non-profit organizations. Still other chapters were written by administrators and managers who have helped lead the way toward innovative program designs and delivery options.

Geographically speaking, the countries represented in this volume include Australia, Canada, Germany, Kenya, India, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For those who question whether fifteen countries adequately represent what is happening in the MOOCs

and open education space around the planet, we need to point out that the chapter authors discuss innovative projects, unique partnerships, ground breaking policies, and other collaborative initiatives taking place in dozens of other countries. For instance, there are 18 charter member governments in Africa taking part in the African Virtual University (AVU) and 53 partner institutions across 27 countries. Suffice to say, when combined, the geographic impact of the various chapter contributors to this book is quite immense.

In response to those who are concerned with the impact of MOOCs and open education on underrepresented populations or with diverse learners, we have specifically targeted several prominent contributors who provide data and accounts of what is occurring with less privileged populations or in less developed parts of the world. For instance, in addition to the AVU, mentioned above, readers of this volume will learn about unique mobile learning projects sponsored by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) as well as a couple of strategically designed MOOCs from the World Bank Institute. Many other chapter contributors have made concerted efforts to offer educational services and resources to those who would not ordinarily benefit from courses or programs offered by their institution or organization.

Of course, as free and open Web resources and tools for learning become accessible by larger portions of the global population, the locations and affiliations of the authors, organizations, or institutions are increasingly less indicative of where the impact is taking place. As you will soon discover, in fact, those enrolled in or taking advantage of the MOOC, OER, and OpenCourseWare (OCW) offerings that volume authors have taught, designed, or evaluated undoubtedly come from all parts of the globe.

Before we close, we feel compelled to mention that this book is actually our second such collaborative effort. Three of the editors of this book (Bonk, Lee, and Reynolds) organized a similar symposium at the E-Learn conference in 2008, also held in Las Vegas. That symposium was focused on the state of e-learning in Asia, and yielded a special issue of the *International Journal on E-Learning* (Bonk, Lee, & Reynolds, 2009) as well as a print-on-demand book. Reeves (2009), also an editor of this book, served as a discussant at the 2008 symposium and contributed the concluding article of that special issue. Additionally, several authors of that first volume, including Melinda Bandalaria from the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), Sanjaya Mishra now with the COL, and Zoraini Wati Abas, formerly of the Open University of Malaysia (OUM), and now with the Universitas Siswa Bangsa Internasional – The Sampoerna University in Jakarta, Indonesia, also contributed to that earlier symposium and book project. In the coming years, we hope to reconvene the participants of the two symposia we have coordinated, and, in the process, meet many of you at the next such a special conference event whether in Las Vegas or some other location on this planet.

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There are many people to thank for helping to bring a comprehensive book project such as this one to fruition. First, we gladly acknowledge the trust that Gary Marks, Founder and Executive Director of AACE, had in the four of us to allow us to organize the E-Learn 2013 preconference symposium on “*MOOCs and Open Education Around the World*” that led to this particular book. Gary, one of the most humble and innovative people in the domain of educational technology,

has had an enormously positive impact on the field for more than three decades. Thanks to him and all the staff at AACE who are always helpful in making these kinds of events successful.

We also appreciate the varied, genuine, and thoughtful contributions and ideas of the more than 100 scholars from around the planet who assembled in Las Vegas that October for the symposium. We massively learned from interacting with each of you. Several of these participants have since separately authored papers on MOOCs and open education, which will appear in a special issue of the *International Journal on E-Learning* in early 2015 (Lee, Bonk, Reynolds, & Reeves, in press). Thanks again to Gary Marks and AACE for the opportunity to coordinate that special issue. We have been working on both of these “MOOCs and Open Education” projects—this edited book and the special journal issue—simultaneously, with different material appearing in each one.

Second, we wish to thank the authors of this book. The 29 chapters and 2 book forewords in this distinctive volume have been penned by some of the foremost scholars and practitioners involved open education today. Given the more than 60 chapter authors or contributors, however, there are too many highly talented individuals to single out here. With each chapter going through several rounds of extended peer review, we got to know all of these people quite well. During the peer review process, it was vital that the communication channels between the four book editors and the respective chapter authors be highly responsive, collaborative, and flexible in order for the *MOOCs and Open Education Around the World* book to be completed in a timely fashion. We feel quite fortunate, indeed, that each and every one of the authors has been open to our suggested edits, modifying their contributions when it seemed the right thing to do, and sticking to their metaphorical guns when they believed it was warranted. We have enjoyed

working with each of them and learning about their MOOC and open education projects, desires, and experiences. They all are fantastic new friends.

We encourage readers to peruse the bio sketches for all the contributors to this volume found at the end of each chapter. We hope that the addition of a picture for each contributor along with their brief bios will help you discover many personal connections both now as you read parts or all of this volume as well as when you might encounter one or more of these contributors at a conference, summit, meeting, or some other situation. As you read the chapters, you will discover that this is a quite impressive group.

Third, we thank Alex Masulis, Daniel Schwartz, and the highly professional team at Routledge. They have provided invaluable guidance and held us to our deadlines firmly, yet kindly.

Lastly, we thank our friends and colleagues from around the world for their informational supports and encouraging comments related to this huge MOOCs and open education project as well as our families (including our animal companions) for sacrificing time with us while we worked on this book.

As we close, the four of us feel quite humbled and immensely fortunate that, through the preconference symposium, special journal issue now in press, and, most importantly, this particular book, we have had a chance to contribute in a small way to what some may eventually call the most significant movement of the twenty-first century; that is, the genuine opening up of education in its many unique and exciting formats and disguises.

Curtis J. Bonk is Professor of Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University and President of CourseShare. Drawing on his background as a corporate controller, CPA, educational psychologist, and instructional technologist, Bonk offers unique insights into the intersection of business, education, psychology, and technology. A well-known authority on emerging technologies for learning, Bonk reflects on his speaking experiences around the world in his popular blog, *TravelinEdMan*. In 2014, he also was named the recipient of the Mildred B. and Charles A. Wedemeyer Award for Outstanding Practitioner in Distance Education. He has authored several widely used technology books, including *The World Is Open*, *Empowering Online Learning*, *The Handbook of Blended Learning*, *Electronic Collaborators*, and, most recently, *Adding Some TEC-VARIETY* which is free as an eBook (<http://tec-variety.com/>). His homepage contains much free and open material (<http://php.indiana.edu/~cjbbonk/>) and he can be contacted at cjbbonk@indiana.edu.

Mimi Miyoung Lee is Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Houston. She received her Ph.D. in Instructional Systems Technology from Indiana University at Bloomington in 2004. Her research interests include global and multicultural education, theories of identity formation, sociological examination of online communities, issues of representation, and critical ethnography. Mimi has published research on STEM related online teacher education, cross-cultural training research, interactive videoconferencing, opencourseware, and qualitative research. She may be contacted at mlee7@uh.edu.

Thomas C. Reeves is Professor Emeritus of Learning, Design, and Technology at The University of Georgia. Professor Reeves has designed and evaluated numerous interactive learning programs and projects. In recognition of these efforts, in 2003 he received the AACE Fellowship Award, in 2010 he was made an ASCILITE Fellow, and in 2013 he received the AECT David H. Jonassen Excellence in Research Award. His books include *Interactive Learning Systems Evaluation* (with John Hedberg), a *Guide to Authentic E-Learning* (with Jan Herrington and Ron Oliver), and *Conducting Educational Design Research* (with Susan McKenney). His research interests include evaluation, authentic tasks for learning, educational design research, and educational technology in developing countries. He can be reached at treeves@uga.edu and his homepage can be found at <http://www.evaluateitnow.com/>.

Thomas H. Reynolds is currently a professor of Teacher Education at National University in La Jolla, California where he researches design of online learning environments, standards-based online assessment, and innovations in e-learning. Before coming to National University, he served on faculty at Texas A&M University after earning earned his Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Professor Reynolds has twice served as a Fulbright Scholar—2010 in Colombia where he researched open education resources and 1998 in Peru where he lectured on Web-based learning and technology-enhanced instruction. His present activities and responsibilities include projects in Colombia, coordination of an e-teaching and learning master's degree specialization, and leadership in online quality assurance and online course review and development for National University. He can be contacted at treynold@nu.edu.

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