

Delivery of OERu open online course integrated with postgraduate university course

Institution & Institutional Context

The University of Canterbury is a research university based in Christchurch New Zealand. The OER universitas is an international consortium of universities, colleges and polytechnics collaborating on the development of OER courses with pathways to formal academic credit.

Keywords and OEP themes

Keywords: micro Open Online Course (mOOC); OER; OERu.

Theme: OER course.

What is the case study about?

This case study explores the integration of an open online course based entirely on OER within a postgraduate course where registered university students study in parallel with free OERu learners in a connectivist style course.

Scenario planning for educators (SP4Ed) was designed as a micro Open Online Course (mOOC) by the e-Learning Research Lab at the University of Canterbury in collaboration with the OER Foundation for the OERu. A key feature of this case study is the fact that a small course prototype was offered to free learners to test technology refinements for open delivery of a connectivist style course prior to integrating a 2nd offering of the course at the University of Canterbury where registered students studied in parallel with free OERu learners. This has enabled a comparison of interaction behaviours between an open course on the web compared to integrating an open course with students studying for university credit in parallel with free OERu learners.

What is the issue or need you are addressing?

- The technology requirements for integrating a mOOC within a local institutional Learning Management System (LMS) to enable parallel delivery with free OERu learners.

- The impact on interaction behaviours when registered university students are directed to study a mOOCs in a parallel with free OERu learners on the Internet

How was the initiative implemented?

The project offered two SP4Ed courses:

- SP4Ed 13.05 (22 May to 5 June 2013) was presented as a small pilot to test the design of the course, related technologies for a blog aggregator and syndicated interactions using microblog posts.
- SP4Ed 13.07 (29 July - 9 August 2013) was offered in parallel mode for students registered for the Change with Digital Technologies in Education course (EDEM630) in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (e-Learning and Digital Technologies) at the University of Canterbury in parallel with free OERu learners. This was the first OERu prototype mOOC to be offered in parallel mode. SP4Ed 13.07 did not provide assessment services towards formal credit for the free OERu learners, however, participation in this mOOC was a requirement for the EDEM630 students.

The project tracked web statistics and administered an optional course survey. More detailed findings of the study have been published openly on WikiEducator under an open license.

Outcomes

Summary of key outcomes:

- Integrating a mOOC within a formal university course in parallel with the free international OERu learners increases interaction and reduces attrition rates when compared to the commercial MOOC

offerings measured by the analysis of page views of the course materials for the duration of the course.

- The critical mass achieved by the scale of the mOOC achieves benefits for both registered university students who can interact with an international community of OERu learners who themselves benefit from increased peer-learning support from students participating for formal academic credit.
- The qualitative responses from students report that the mOOC delivery model was a positive online experience contributing to the quality of their formal learning within the context of a post-graduate course.
- The majority of respondents (76%) in the final course evaluation for SP4Ed 13.09 recommend that a micro-credential should be considered for future offerings.

Issues & challenges

The project identified two key challenges:

- The lack of experience and capability of learners with reference to digital skills to support learning using distributed social media technologies.
- Lack of institutional knowledge and experience in open design for open online courses.

Insights and Recommendations for National and/or Institutional Development

The following recommendations are provided based on the experiences of this case study:

- Institutional: Opening selected local courses by integrating mOOCs based on

OER as part of formal academic study provides opportunities for an international and inter-cultural learning experiences which are not easy to achieve at regional university campuses.

- Institutional: The mOOC model provides opportunities for universities to acquire digital skills required for the 21st century for university graduates in authentic open learning contexts.
- National: The national funding model should explore options for government support for national students studying open courses for formal academic credit using OER for an assessment only option to widen access to university study for learners who cannot afford the traditional full package model.

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