Abstract

The emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has captured the attention of higher education academics and managers. Ongoing debates about MOOCs, however, demonstrate the need to critically evaluate the phenomenon. One of the key ideas associated with MOOCs is openness and while MOOCs are emergent and of the moment, ideas about openness and its relationship to learning at university have a history that can be evaluated through the lens of learner engagement. The concurrent emergence of social media provides a useful way of understanding openness, innovative learning environments and potentially transformative pedagogies. In conclusion it is suggested that effective emergent open learning environments are not massive, nor necessarily online or course-based. Instead it is more useful to think of them as being learner-centred, social spaces for open learning.

1 Corresponding author email address: a.j.middleton@shu.ac.uk

Middleton, A. (2014). Learning in the open: considering MOOCs, openness and social media for learning, Student Engagement and Experience Journal, 3 (1), http://dx.doi.org/10.7190/seej.v3i1.84
Introduction

In higher education it seems natural to welcome ideas of openness. Openness is fundamental to academic scholarship and innovation and is characteristic of academic discourse. Openness epitomises the intellectual fluency that describes graduateness and is at the heart of academic professionalism.

Openness is also fundamental to academic innovation. To stay vital and relevant, higher education teaching needs to continuously develop in a scholarly way, being agile in how it reinvents itself and welcomes transformation. Openness, for example, is manifest in the sharing and review of academic practice that takes place amongst academic peers locally, at academic conferences, in journal articles, and more recently through the use of personalised social media.

Openness, therefore, is fundamental to learning and to teaching.

Through an examination of recent literature on openness in higher education and through a consideration of learner engagement, this paper challenges current interests in the phenomenon of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). It sets out the hypothesis that academic interest in MOOCs is misplaced and instead argues that teaching and learning environments can be developed more usefully if academics better understand the relationship between openness and social media.

Engaging learners

Before considering openness and the effectiveness of MOOCs as learning environments, it is important to understand the value and principles of learner engagement. Literature on learner engagement is extensive and diverse (Kahu, 2013; Trowler, 2010), though it is also mostly uncontentious: based upon an extensive literature review Trowler and Trowler (2010) confidently assert that student engagement with their learning improves outcomes.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) produced Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education and these continue to provide a useful framework for understanding effective, engaging teaching. Drawing upon their extensive analysis of research about the undergraduate experience over several decades, the seven principles
set out good, engaging practice in the formal and informal interaction between academics and students. They highlight the importance of contact, reciprocity and co-operation among students, the use of active learning techniques, the giving of prompt feedback, the importance of time on task, the setting of high expectations, and the respect needed for diverse talents and ways of learning.

Chickering and Ehrmann (1996, 3), looking at the potential of emerging learning technologies, argue that “if the power of the new technologies is to be fully realized, they should be employed in ways consistent with the Seven Principles.” For example they discuss how good use of technologies can strengthen communication between staff and students and bolster co-operation amongst students. Technology can make giving feedback on student work immediate and rich, and it can facilitate the management of monitoring student progress. The access that technology provides to using digital media creates new opportunities for engaging students in diverse ways.

Mann (2001) addresses engagement by considering the alienation of learners. She argues that academics should critically analyse the way they teach and support learning by paying attention to the nature of discourse, staff-student relationships, possibilities for play, and tacit and explicit power that academics wield. She advises that academics consider five factors to mitigate learner alienation:

1. Solidarity - dissolving the separation between students and academics;
2. Hospitality - being welcoming and fostering belonging;
3. Safety - creating safe spaces in which to nurture creativity, the desire to learn and active learner presence;
4. Redistributed power - fostering learner autonomy;
5. Criticality – developing opportunities and learner capacity to critically question, examine and interpret knowledge.

Mann cites Barnett (1997, 171–172) who argues, 'it is "critical energy" — the will on the part of students to invest themselves in their engagement with thinking, self and action — that we need to inspire.'

Leach and Zepke (2012) describe the complex factors affecting student engagement. In particular they offer a view of engagement that takes account of the
actions of students, their peers, tutors and institution, as well as non-institutional factors including the support of family and friends. The purpose of this paper, however, is to evaluate conceptualisations of openness through the lens of learner engagement. Without disregarding the significance of other influences on a student’s engagement with university, the focus here is on the learning space, be it physical, virtual or psychological, and its suitability for effectively engaging students as learners.

Teachers, ultimately, are the arbiters of learning and it is understandable that academic thinking gravitates towards more behavioural approaches to engagement because teachers want to know what they can actually do to involve students more. Most teachers hold this view of learner engagement (Kahu, 2013). However, a psychological perspective of engagement echoes constructivist views of learning, recognising the importance of the student's perception of knowledge and their capability to learn. This view leads the academic to establishing the conditions for learning and being sensitive to the student's emotional state as affected by their course and by external factors. Making learning fun or interesting or developing motivational strategies are also outcomes of this way of thinking about engagement (Furlong et al., 2003). A socio-cultural perspective of engagement furthers this student-centred view by noting the importance of peers and of fostering a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Kahu (2013) accommodates these views of learner engagement by constructing a holistic conceptualisation. This positions learner engagement in terms of what students are involved in doing whilst considering their emotional engagement. This rounded view is more likely to result in cognitive engagement according to Gibbs and Poskitt (2010). A holistic appreciation of learner engagement is evident in ideas about inspirational teaching too: Bradley et al. (2014) found that inspirational teaching is characterised by engaging students through good teaching style, encouragement, passion for the subject, motivation, reliability, and being challenging. As Kahu (2013, 763) says, ‘Engagement is fundamentally situational – it arises from the interplay of context and individual.’ Bryson and Hand (2007) refer to this as the teacher’s disposition to foster a sense of belonging.

In assessing open learning and MOOCs it is useful to understand the significance of fostering belonging among part-time students. Kember et al. (2001)
found that promoting a sense of belonging, or affiliation, among part-time students contributed to improved learning outcomes and completion rates. They concluded that interpersonal contact was key to engagement and noted the importance of seven factors: encouraging class discussion; keeping students as a cohort; encouraging teaching staff to interact with students; providing good quality teaching; valuing initial contact; departmental association and identity; and ensuring access to high quality resources.

While the teacher is not solely responsible for the learner's engagement, their role and presence in influencing learning is clearly important. Solomonides and Martin (2008) suggest that, in general, a tutor's perception of engagement is more about teaching and learning, whereas students think about engagement more in terms of feeling part of a learning community (see also Lear, Ansorge and Steckelberg, 2010; Zhao and Kuh, 2004). If teachers perceive their role as being mostly about supplying content then it is likely they will not pay much attention to establishing these conditions for learning. Social development involving the teacher as the More Knowledgeable Other (Vygotsky, 1978), and the learner’s own responsibility to their peers as members of a learning Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998), are widely accepted dimensions of an effective learning environment. Ideas of socially constructed knowledge challenge simple transactional understandings of learning and highlight a flaw in some views of MOOCs. It is useful therefore to consider ideas about social presence when thinking about what constitutes an effective learning environment. Presence can be understood variously. For example:

- Being here, 'present and correct', conforming;
- Proximate, or co-located, close by, close enough;
- Experiencing, or affected or influenced by, affecting, mediated by;
- Present, or socially involved or responsible;
- Being and belonging, affiliated, having a shared identity, currency, relevance and authenticity.

Sung and Mayer (2012, 1738) describe social presence in learning as meaning 'the degree to which a learner feels personally connected with other students and the instructor in an online learning community.' That connection is fundamental to a student's sense of belonging in any effective learning environment and Sung and Mayer
propose five facets of social presence: respect and being noticed; sharing of information and beliefs; interaction; identity; and intimacy. Kehrwald (2010) argues that presence creates the illusion of reality or "direct experience" in the perceptions of mediated situations experienced by online participant (cited in Slagter van Tryona and Bishop, 2009, 292).

If evaluating open and online learning environments, as with other learning environments, fostering a strong social and critical presence is essential to ensuring the learning community is energised and productive. A functioning community is one that is active, interactive and supportive. It is flexible and can have high expectations. Most of all it is working: valuing time on task.

**Openness**

With this understanding of effective and engaging learning environments it is possible to critically review ideas about openness. Openness, like learner engagement, is multi-faceted and complex (Anderson, 2013) and this makes it difficult for academic communities and their managers to be both appreciative and discerning when assessing it.

Critically assessing openness is immediately problematic. Almost by definition openness defies objectifying. Its essence is of being unfettered and this boundless conceptualisation of possibilities and alternatives is part of its appeal to academia.

**Openness and MOOCs**

Before continuing to explore ways of thinking about openness it is useful to understand openness in relation to MOOCs and to highlight the two contrasting ways in which the idea of MOOC is used. In the context of openness, this difference immediately demonstrates how ‘openness’ is problematic. In the case of xMOOCs openness describes the free entry to participate (Daniel, 2012). In cMOOCs openness describes a loose association of networked learners.

In the xMOOC content-centred model learner responsibilities focus on consuming the course content and completing evaluations to assess understanding of
that content' (Ahn et al., 2013, 162). Clarà and Barberà (2013, 129) explain that, 'xMOOCs are not pedagogically driven, and the consequence is that they assume pedagogies mainly based on behaviorist psychology.'

In the other model (cMOOCs) the learner is expected to 'help their peers through the learning process they are also undertaking. In a cMOOC, the content of the course is user-generated and emergent, arising from the persistent contributions of the learners themselves' (Ahn et al., 2013, 162).

Ahn and colleagues note other stark differences between the two emergent understandings of MOOCs, but these can be summarised as being platforms delivering content-driven courses (xMOOCs) or promoting learner-centred socially connected course networks (cMOOCs). Clarà and Barberà (2013, 129) challenge the simple dichotomy that sets xMOOCs and cMOOCs pedagogically apart arguing that the connectivist theory (Siemens, 2005) underpinning cMOOCs is unable to explain how learning occurs. Citing Kop (2011) and Mackness et al. (2010), they say Many learners, especially those who do not have high self-regulation skills, feel lost and without any direction and support in cMOOCs.' They also highlight the importance of interaction being a process and not a state, which in terms of MOOCs discounts the value of being “massive”: it is not enough to be amongst others, it is the quality of the engagement that affects learning. While they do not argue for the abandonment of MOOCs, they do conclude that, to be effective, they must enable 'dialogic and sustained joint activity' (135). The concept of MOOCs is emerging. Conole (2013) and Clarke (2013), for example, have proposed further types of MOOC.

If effective learning spaces foster a strong social and critical presence and are active, interactive, supportive, flexible and set high expectations, then the value of being big or even scalable (as in Massive) does not appear helpful. In terms of retention, and perhaps alienation, MOOCs are notoriously poor (Breakwell and Cassidy, 2013). Koller et al. (2013) argue that the intent of MOOC students is different to traditional students. This argument, however, highlights how some MOOC advocates obviate the role of the educator as one who is responsible for developing learner expectations, their sense of belonging, and identity. Koller et al. (2013) may be right to say that MOOCs per se should not be judged in terms of retention because they are not primarily concerned with retaining students; however, while completion rates are not a measure of the extent
to which learners engaged with specific content, managers and academics involved in 
considering what they can learn about education from MOOCs are primarily concerned 
with engaging the students in their care through to completion of their course and so 
need to be cautious.

**The value of openness to education**

Weller (2011, 97) introduces some of the ways that openness has been associated with 
education. He lists: the open source software movement; Open Educational Resources 
(OERs); open courses (various models of MOOCs); open research methods and 
dissemination approaches; the open data movement; open APIs (the protocols that 
underpin Web 2.0 and social media); open access publishing. He also describes open 
scholarship as being socially mediated. Scholars typically have: a distributed online 
identity; an online network of peers; a personal learning environment formed of a 
number of tools; engagement with open publishing; informal outputs; a predisposition 
to automatically generate and share research outputs.

Anderson (2013) has also set out some useful ways of thinking about open 
education in an analysis of MOOCs. Using his framework it is clear to see why 
openness is important to post-compulsory education. However, Table 1. *The Paradox of 
Openness* establishes a tension between ideas of openness and ideas of effective learner 
engagement. This informs the hypothesis that interest in MOOCs by academics in 
higher education is misplaced and the argument that follows that academics interested 
in openness should value socially networked media, rather than ‘massive’ media, when 
evaluating innovative learning spaces: it is how people co-operate that is important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1: The Paradox of Openness – considering conceptualisations of openness in the context of offering a higher education</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anderson’s explanation of openness (2013)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong> - ‘a primary driver of MOOCs is to expand access to students beyond those who could inhabit a particular geographic local’ (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom</strong> - academic freedom, both ideological and political (2).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
knowledge. A university graduate is a creative, critical and reflective thinker; one who is literate and capable of finding, assessing and developing information. Attention must be given to how the learner learns higher order learning and thinking skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Content</strong> - 'in the sense of learning content having no restrictions on revision, re-use, sale and enhancement as the term is used in open source software and most open educational resources' (2).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open content, as in Open Educational Resources (OERs). There is value in the making and the giving away of content as both a dimension of scholarship and of quality assurance through peer validation. This is irrespective of whether the content is high quality, large-scale “big” content or more personal and individually produced, low cost content (Weller, 2011). The context, reliability and providence of content and the knowledge it represents must be explicit to the scholar. This requires a transparent commitment to the custody and curation of knowledge. Attention must be given to what form the content is given and how it is optimised to suit the particular learning context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Inclusivity</strong> - 'all may enrol without regard to prerequisite knowledge or other demographic data such as gender or religion' (2).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The idea of the open door raises questions about the importance of commitment to both learning and teaching and to the role and value of peers in an effective learning environment. The unintended consequence of being open for all, therefore, is that an open course can be equally open to people who have had, or do not plan to have, any commitment to the knowledge domain or to the course. The intent of the 'participant’ is significant to all; the presence of non-committed or less committed participants will determine the dynamics of the course and the communal nature of the learner's construction of knowledge. While non-committed participants are present they have as many rights as those who are more socially committed. This imbalance in commitment is not unique to courses in the open, however the ambiguity of commitment, or expectation for commitment, is unhelpful and this view of openness can negate opportunities for peer learning. Social interaction is central in some approaches to open learning. Weller (2011), for example, explains the importance of reciprocity and how this 'is essential in maintaining a network of peers' (102). In the running of connectivist cMOOCs, modes of learning develop around ideas of community, social interaction and the sharing of experience. Openness in cMOOCs can epitomise a vision of widening participation while accommodating a range of active, lurking and passive learners (Milligan et al., 2013). Factors enabling participation in the study by Milligan et al. (2013) include learner confidence, prior experience, and clear motivation. They conclude that, 'It seems clear that learners must learn how to learn in a cMOOC’ (156).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student control</strong> - 'freedom to start and to determine the pace of a course' (2).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The concept of Roll On Roll Off (RoRo) has long been associated with open and distance learning in which students join a course and complete it when it suits them. Race (2001, 188-9) outlines other characteristics of some open learning courses as being: when and where learning happens, the pace at which an individual learns, no requirement for prior qualification, the degree of support available (if any), and the learner’s control over selecting content and assessment. The implication of more student control is the relinquishing of control by the teacher or course leader. In traditional formal ‘closed’ paradigms the teacher’s role is complex, even though it is often portrayed simply in operational terms as a conveyor and assessor of knowledge; this simple conceptualisation is epitomised by an understanding of the lecturer as someone who lectures. The teacher’s role is much more than this in reality, embodying responsibilities for supporting and challenging learners, creating effective pedagogical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Engagement and Experience Journal

frameworks, organising the human resources and facilities to deliver them, and designing an engaging curriculum. Underpinning this, the teacher maintains their knowledge through scholarship and the continuous development of their skills as a teacher. Learner autonomy, it can be seen, sits within a learning context managed by the teacher.

**Gratis** – being 'free of charges to the participants' (2).

Is anything really free? Several questions emerge if there is no direct charge to the student: what does this mean for the reliability of the course and its 'teachers'? If the 'free' open course is offered as a 'taster' or 'loss leader' for other courses, how does the business model affect the quality of paid provision? And will that other provision meet the expectations set up by a free course? Gratis cannot be understood simply as a pecuniary matter. It is also important to look at what students and others invest in a course: time and hope, for example. These commitments are based on expectations which may be assumed, implied or made explicit. A student's participation is ultimately an act of faith in any course, and ethically this faith needs to be repaid.

**Open market** - Anderson notes the open market notion of openness and the challenge of 'for-profit' open courseware organisations (xMOOCs) set established providers as one which threatens to disrupt academia's long-established educational values replacing them with simple market values (2).

University degree awarding powers are based upon reputations, formed in many cases over several hundred years, and are assured by the standards they apply through their quality processes. The quality assurance of university courses establishes a rigour that sets university courses apart from ad hoc suppliers of courses and therefore establishes their credibility and a high value for students, employers and society. However, universities are well aware that they must remain critical of their provision and must innovate to stay relevant.

**Open-ended** – 'for all of us, there is a great deal left to learn, and systems that open access to learning are both necessary and should be welcomed' (3).

Open-endedness has been identified as a defining quality of authentic learning (Rule, 2006) and, as such, provides a strong indication of why academics are attracted to ideas of openness.

*Other facets of openness*

Downes (2009) discusses openness in the context of knowledge-generating networks. He identifies the qualities as being the free flow of communication within and without the network and the ability of community members to easily participate in activities. However, he also says that knowledge-generating networks do not distinguish between different types of participation. He says, 'If a community is open, then it sustains a sufficient flow of information to generate new knowledge, but if it is closed, this flow stagnates, and no new information is generated.' This idea of communal knowledge-generation is a dimension of scholarship.
Scholarship and innovation

Scholarship straddles teaching and research and in many ways defines academic practice. Boyer (1990) created a classification of scholarship following an analysis of activities carried out by over 5,000 academics. Briefly, this is structured around the four components of Discovery (creating new knowledge), Integration (making connections, especially across disciplines), Application (the authentic use of knowledge), and Teaching. In this way scholarship can be seen to underpin teaching and learning in higher education. It ensures teaching is current and reliable. It involves discourse, which is scrutinised by peers and, in this sense, openness ensures academic integrity.

The concept of scholarship continues to develop. According to Unsworth (2000), it is found in seven basic functions or principles — the acts of: discovering, annotating, comparing, referencing or acknowledging, sampling, elucidating or illustrating, and publishing or communicating. The advent of digital technologies changes the nature of scholarship (Borgman, 2007) and Weller (2011) discusses how, especially with the move towards open data, scholarship is entering a new, open and creative era. He describes open scholarship in terms of sharing data, digital provision and connectivity and the resultant benefits of data analysis, unexpected applications, data visualisation and the wider integration or combination of data. Perhaps the most important point here, because the principle is demonstrably transferable to other understandings of open practice, is his reference to Burton’s (2009) comment:

the Open Scholar is someone who makes their intellectual projects and processes digitally visible and who invites and encourages ongoing criticism of their work and secondary uses of any or all parts of it — at any stage of its development.

Openness in this view precipitates the development of knowledge exponentially and assures its quality by being not only transparent, but by being continuously accessible.

Academic innovation and invention are outcomes of open scholarship therefore. Scholarship and innovation are not only core to the academic teaching role, but ultimately define graduates as being of value to society: immersion in a rich academic experience affects and empowers people to think and act imaginatively, keenly and wisely.
It is axiomatic that openness and academia are closely related.

**Social media and openness**

Conole (2013), looking at the experience of students in MOOCs, says the characteristics of good learning are that it: encourages reflection; enables dialogue; fosters collaboration; applies theory learnt to practice; creates a community of peers; enables creativity; motivates the learners. These characteristics signal a role for social media in open learning.

While the concept of MOOCs has caught the attention of academics, it seems clear that massiveness in terms of learning, as has been noted, is not a significant dimension of the emerging phenomenon. Returning to the acronym, the value of Online is that it affords openness (access to learning spatially and temporally) and so is redundant. The word Course is also weak, suggesting the running of something and perhaps something that is delimited or closed, and it can be argued, therefore, that the idea of course and openness in the MOOC concept is oxymoronic.

The attractive and important idea here for academia is openness. A critical review of openness shows that learner engagement can be both enhanced and transformed by open pedagogy and that it is timely for academics to review their practice to embrace open methods of engagement. Coupled with the emergence of social media, openness promises to change the nature of engagement in learning. The phenomenon of social media should not be confused with delivery Online: it is about engagement that exploits ubiquitous connections to social networks, is socially inclusive, lifewide and lifelong, media independent, learner-centred, co-operative, open and accessible, and authentically situated involving real world events, problems and opportunities (Middleton and Beckingham, 2014).

Looking at the ideas outlined by Conole (2013), for example, it is possible to see how an open and blended learning environment can offer more alternative ways for the learner to work co-operatively with peers, communicating synchronously and asynchronously, collaborating on research or producing coursework, or continuously testing what they have learnt by applying their knowledge. Whether face to face or online, it is easy to see how in this digital age individuals and groups of students can
move more freely from one space to another, building individual and collective identities and relying upon each other as communities of inquiry (Garrison, et al., 2000). It is possible to see how motivation can be enhanced by engaging with, or being engaged by, people beyond the formal, traditional learning environment including professionals, clients, peers, friends, families and publics, and how such engagement can enhance reflection and the develop identity.

Social media and ideas of openness, when put together in the context of the digital ‘social age of learning’ (Stodd, 2014) suggest a transformed or, at least, enhanced learning environment. It is one that is ill defined, adaptable, personalised and social. It promises to connect the learning identity of the student to their lifewide and lifelong identities (Jackson, 2014).

**Conclusion: effective open learning environments**

This paper has set out key ideas about learner engagement and openness. It has hypothesised that interest in MOOCs by academics may be misplaced if ideas of scale, being online, and even course delimitations are assumed to be significant factors for teaching and learning design.

The principles of good, effective teaching persist across, and are irrespective of, learning environments and therefore warrant the attention of those designing open courses. Chickering and Gamson's seven principles (1987) should continue to validate the effective design of curricula. Mann's work on alienation (2001) clarifies why retention rates are so poor in massive learning environments where students are left to sink or swim according to their own guile and resilience.

Designers of open learning environments must pay attention to activity and interactivity amongst and tutors, student, and their peers. Regular opportunities for formative and reflective feedback, peer co-operation and collaboration continue to be important. Many MOOCs have ignored these facets of engagement and, in traditional formal higher education, this failure would be tantamount to academic indifference or neglect, and could be perceived as a cynical commercial exploitation of students.

Participants in learning environments, whether these are open or not, need to challenge and support each other. If MOOCs developers persist in valuing massiveness
they will struggle to address the needs for support and diversity evident in university-level teaching and epitomised in the professional academic values represented in the UK Professional Standards Framework (Higher Education Academy, 2012). Open learning environments, like other learning environments, provide powerful and productive learning experiences when they are properly designed and resourced around the principles of learner engagement. Rich learning is often the result of struggle and it is hard to see how some massive courses are able to provide the responsive environment that active learners need. Mann’s (2001) framework for designing engaging learning environments sets a challenge for the design of effective open learning environments. They should foster solidarity, hospitality, safety, learner autonomy and criticality. From this a strong sense of learner freedom, supportive space and autonomy emerges.

An effective, confident community of practice is one that is open, collegial and trustful and one that has the potential to self-organise and self-govern (Jameson et al., 2006). The construction of a supportive online learning environment must be constructed with care to support multi directional activity and, at university level, the learning environment must promote critical thinking.

It is important to consider and learn from the MOOC phenomenon; particularly from the cMOOCs that seek to establish a realistic model for online networked learning. As Stewart (2013, 236) has said, '[MOOCs] have the potential to expose large sectors of society to new literacies and meta level processing around the idea of learning as a communicative practice.'

There is scope for far reaching academic innovation by considering ‘learner engagement in the open’. Massiveness, online delivery, and even the notion of Course (as a product) are unhelpful distractors. Openness, however, can provide a useful direction for higher education as we learn to unravel the hype around MOOCs. As Anderson (2013) proposes, ideas about openness should, nevertheless, inspire new and engaging pedagogy too.

What becomes clear from this analysis is that effective learning environments (wherever or however they are situated) are student-centred and characterised by being socially rich spaces for open learning. The idea of Social Spaces for Open Learning
appears to capture the attractive qualities of MOOCs while dispelling the inappropriate distractors that ignore education’s real interest in engaging the learner.

References


Clarà, M., and Barberà, E. (2013). Learning online: massive open online courses (MOOCs), connectivism, and cultural psychology, *Distance Education*, 34 (1), 129-136. [CrossRef]


http://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/lear_0310.htm

http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/organisations/netlc/past/nlc2010/abstracts/Mackness.html


