Elements of a Successful MOOC from Participant Perspectives

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Abstract: There has been a recent proliferation and publicity surrounding Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs), which are aimed at large-scale participation and open access via the web. This paper will discuss selected participants’ self-described motives for taking a MOOC offered through Coursera and offer their general insights about the elements that made this online learning experience more effective than other online learning courses. By offering a participants’ perspective on this innovative distance learning platform, this paper will seek to offer the best practices that other distance education instructors can apply when effectively designing their own future courses.

There has been a recent proliferation and publicity surrounding Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs), which are aimed at large-scale participation and open access via the web. They typically do not grant participants college course credit but can result in personal certificates of completion. In fall 2012, I and approximately 30,000 other individuals, worldwide, participated in a Modern American Poetry MOOC via the Coursera platform. This paper will discuss selected participants’ self-described motives for taking the course and offer their general insights about the elements that made this online learning experience more effective than other online learning courses. By exploring both the participants’ motivation for enrolling in a MOOC and the participant-identified course setup and instructional elements that facilitated their content understanding and encouraged their completion of the online course, this paper will offer the best practices that other distance education instructors can apply when designing their own successful courses. By offering a participants’ perspective on this innovative distance learning platform, this paper hopes to allow future instructors an opportunity to better analyze those elements they may wish to consider when designing, developing, and implementing their own online instruction.