

Chapter 5

Challenges for Using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) in Latin America

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ABSTRACT

Open educational resources (OERs), including massive open online courses (MOOCs), have emerged as an alternative to increase the access and quality of education, reducing educational costs and inequality, particularly in developing countries. Despite their potential to improve and provide free access to quality educational resources, developing countries are making little use of these resources due to language barriers, contextualization, the technological infrastructure, and the requirement that users have basic skills. Therefore, the objective of this study is to verify the impact of language, the technological infrastructure, and users' skills in the use of MOOCs in Latin American countries through a descriptive analysis of the data obtained through a survey conducted in Brazil, Chile, and Colombia for the research project developed by the Center for the Development of Technology and Educational Environments (NPT). From the data analysis, it is possible to verify that the level of digital literacy and language are relevant factors to be considered to increase the use of MOOCs in the countries that compose the sample.

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INTRODUCTION

In the knowledge society, higher education institutions (HEIs) are of unprecedented importance; however, many challenges have been faced by these institutions, such as doubts about their role in society and the fragmentation of their functions, in addition to concerns about long-term costs and the sustainability of the system. In this context, through experiences such as open access, open educational resources (OERs), and, more recently, massive open online courses (MOOCs), the open education movement is a central concept for thinking about the near future of higher education (Aires, 2016) as a means to increase access to and the quality of education, reducing educational costs and inequality, particularly in developing countries (Cobo, 2013).

However, despite their potential to improve and provide free access to quality educational resources, developing countries are making little use of these resources (Cobo, 2013). Some authors note that this situation arises from the fact that there are barriers related to language, contextualization, the technological infrastructure, and the requirement that users have basic skills (Cobo, 2013).

Thus, the objective of this study is to verify the impact of language, the technological infrastructure, and users' skills in the use of MOOCs in Latin American countries. Additionally, as a specific objective, it is intended to identify the profile of the audience that elaborates, modifies, and shares MOOCs in Latin America.

Some reasons justify the choice of objectives and unit of analysis. First, the literature points out that one of the major impacts of MOOCs is access to quality education for developing countries (Daniel, Vazquez Cano & Gisbert Cervera, 2015, Jacoby, 2014), however, in the period from 2013 to 2015, More than 80% of the literature on the subject is published in North America and Europe (Veletsianos & Shepherdson, 2016). Second, despite the potential of the REA for developing countries, these resources are being underused by these nations (Cobo, 2013). Third, MOOCs are a recent phenomenon that has generated expectations both in pedagogical issues and in the strategic and economic issues of higher education (Sancho-Vinuesa, Oliver & Gisbert, 2015). Fourth, there is little literature on the use of REAs from the perspective of university students in developing countries, often regarded as the largest recipients and beneficiaries of REAs (Hu, Li, Li & Huang, 2015). Finally, a number of problems have been reported in the use of OERs in developing countries (Johnstone, 2005), and despite similarities among these countries, there is also considerable diversity and the challenges are different (Wright, Dhanarajan, & Reju, 2009; Mtebe & Raisamo, 2014). It is therefore important to consider the context of each country.

OPEN ONLINE EDUCATION: CONTEXTUALIZING OERS AND MOOCS

From the convergence and evolution of OERs, free software, open access, MOOCs, open science, and a set of social and economic changes, open education can be considered one of the most important educational movements of the 21st century and can now be considered an open online education, mediated by digital artifacts, networks of relationships, and cultures on the Internet (Aires, 2016).

Generically covering any type of educational material in the public domain or associated with an open license, the expression "open educational resources" was proposed by UNESCO (Aires, 2016), and it is possible to identify in the literature three key positions that characterize them: 1) intellectual property licenses are open; (2) the permission to adapt and replicate content is free; and (3) rights are

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