



The effect of introducing interactive and collaborative social learning into online learning on participation and completion

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Introduction

South African Bill of Rights states that everyone has a right to basic education, including basic adult education and to further their education (South African Government, 1996). This right must be made progressively available and accessible by the state. The socio-economic dynamics of South Africa make it difficult for some who cannot afford fees for post matric education.

Massive open online courses (MOOC's) offer an opportunity to anyone who wishes to improve their knowledge due to its scalability. South Africa has high level of unemployment and the youth is the most affected. Some of the challenges arise from structural unemployment, in particular those who dropped out of school due to various reasons.

The challenge though in MOOCs is the high attrition rate. In a study by Berniéme and Steffens (2015) less than six percent of student participating in MOOCs complete their course. This finding is also supported by another study (Africa, Garrido, Koepcke, Andersen, & Garrido, 2016) which reported a high dropout rate among MOOC's participants, reporting a below 13% completion rate. One of the most interesting findings of the study undertaken by Africa et al. (2016) is that more than 80% of those enrolled are from low to middle class backgrounds, with basic to intermediate ICT literacy.

Research question

Two questions drive this study

1. What is the impact of interactive and collaborative social learning environment on online learning?
2. How effective is the introduction of interactive and collaborative social learning environment on participation and completion rate?

Research method

My research study aims to explore the effects of introducing interactive and collaborative social learning into an online learning environment on participation and completion rate. Social constructivism is the theory of people constantly learning and include interaction with others (Vygotky, 1978). Figure 1 below demonstrates the use of social networks enabled with LMS.

As part of the learning goal setting, as theory of motivation, it will be used to encourage collaborative and social learning. Edwin Locke's theory as illustrated on Figure 2, states that specific and challenging goals lead to better performance. On line learning, which is mostly by individual's choice is driven by a certain goal and that serves as a motivation to achieve it. Figure 3 displays prospected upward improvement in both participation and completion rate of students with a blended approach of goal driven interactive and collaborative social learning.

Research methodology and study design includes both controlled and uncontrolled groups, before and after the intervention. Use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) for data collection, monitoring, intervention, analysis and interpretation.

Figure #1



1. Student Registration
2. course Completion/Assignment
3. Facilitator Engagement
4. Information sharing by students

Figure #2



Figure #3



Participation Rate Completion Rate

Results

On line learning students who are goal driven and receive the necessary support, through interactive and collaborative social learning are more likely to complete their courses. The predictive results are the increase in participation and completion rate on MOOC's participants. The positive feedback can serve as a motivation to others who may also want to upskill themselves.

Conclusions

Massive open online courses offer a great challenge to those who need to prepare themselves for the skills required for the economic challenges of the current generation, especially technology. Academics need to continue to develop interventions to help improve and promote lifelong learning, more particular in the informal education. This study aims to contribute to a body of work that has already been pioneered by scholars.

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