Paradoxes between Personalisation and Massification

Kumiko Aoki
The Open University of Japan (Japan)
kaoki@ouj.ac.jp

Abstract

New initiatives such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) have been attracting tremendous media attention in the last couple of years. MOOCs are those online courses in which thousands of learners regardless of their geographical locations and institutional affiliations register without any fees (so far) and complete the courses within a pre-determined period of time with a possibility of certification. It is not a completely new idea, but it has attracted lots of attention recently because many so-called elite universities in the U.S. have started offering them. It is well known that MOOCs have two forms: cMOOCs and xMOOCs. The first MOOC was offered by George Siemens and Stephen Downes in Canada and it was cMOOCs. cMOOCs are those that base their pedagogy on the philosophy of connectivism while xMOOCs are more behaviouristic (Daniel, 2012). In a sense, original cMOOCs are very innovative in their practices and implementation of the new pedagogy while xMOOCs are the replica of outdated computer-assisted instruction. Those MOOCs that are hyped in media up to now are mostly xMOOCs that rely primarily on "information transmission, computer-marked assignments and peer assessment" (Bates, 2012). It is interesting to recognize that pedagogical paradigms have shifted from behaviourist to cognitivist, and then to constructivist throughout the history of e-learning, the pendulum has now been swinging back to the early days of behaviourism. Despite the promise of personalisation and customisation of learning with the use of new technologies, the technologies have actually been started to be utilized for massification of learning. In this paper, the apparently paradoxical promises new technologies seem to offer; namely personalisation and massification, are discussed and the possibilities of their interplay are explored.