

## Participant Experience in an Inquiry-Based Massive Open Online Course, authored by Nathaniel Ostashewski and Martha Cleveland-Innes (Commonwealth of Learning, 2022)

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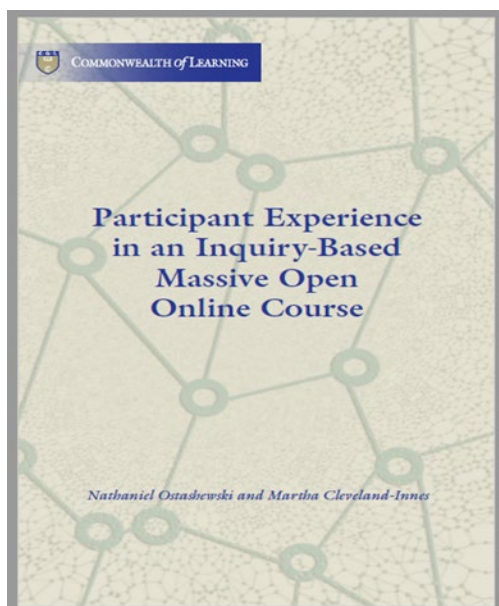
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## Book Review: Participant Experience in an Inquiry-Based Massive Open Online Course



**Authors:** Nathaniel Ostaszewski and Martha Cleveland-Innes (Commonwealth of Learning, 2022, viii + 111 pages). ISBN: 978-1-7772648-9-5. <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4132>

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Participant Experience in an Inquiry-Based Massive Open Online Course, published by the Commonwealth of Learning, is a unique and original work that provides valuable insights into the design, development, and delivery of massive open online courses (MOOCs). The book provides a comprehensive overview of 10 iterations of the Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning MOOC (TELMOOC) offered between 2017 and 2021 by the Commonwealth of Learning and Athabasca University. Based on data collected from participants during

the MOOC offering, this book provides substantial insights about designing and delivering successful MOOCs for professional development. The book is designed in eight chapters along with a reference section.

### Brief Summary of the Chapters

Chapter 1 introduced TELMOOC and explains the specific model of MOOC used, which the authors call interactive MOOC or iMOOC, and its instructional design, a review of the literature, the methodology used for conducting the study, and analyses of participants' responses. This chapter explains the results of one of the important research questions: How did participants respond to the design and delivery of TELMOOC? Overall, it is noted, 87% of respondents were satisfied.

Chapter 2 presents a brief historical development of the concept of the MOOC. Interestingly, this chapter also provides readers with space to imagine the future of MOOCs in regard to content, language, learners' diversity, and teaching–learning design that would result in quality delivery. This chapter also further explains outcomes of MOOCs for ensuring lifelong learning by establishing a healthy educational ecosystem. The contribution of MOOCs in the Global South and how TELMOOC fits into strengthening teachers' capacities to integrate technology-enabled learning are also discussed.

Chapter 3 compares general MOOC participation with the TELMOOC participants' data. This chapter clearly explains the difference in experiences of general MOOC delivery and TELMOOC delivery in view of

demographics, learning patterns, provision of supports to globally diversify participants, group work, and collaboration.

Chapter 4 emphasizes the ways learners engage in the TELMOOC. In any course, learners' engagement and learning discourses are key to the course's success. In view of this, the present chapter critically analyses distance education modes of interaction such as learner–content, learner–learner, and learner–teacher used in the TELMOOC. Learner–content interaction is highlighted by ensuring learners' engagement in course-based continuous activities and feedback; learner–teacher interaction is shown through the inspirational and facilitating role of the teachers; and learner–learner interaction is shown to be supported by peer and group discussions on many issues relating to course content. The interactive and participatory design of TELMOOC tells the success story of learners' engagement in active learning processes.

Chapter 5 emphasizes data relating to MOOC completion and their critical analyses based on research findings on completion rates of MOOCs over the years. The chapter discussion leads to one of the important research questions of TELMOOC participants' survey: Are there other metrics that can better articulate the completion of MOOC objectives? Research literature on MOOCs shows that MOOC completion rates are lower than those of conventional classroom learning courses. While it is understood that learners in open learning join courses and programmes with different intentions, the low completion rates are a concern among teachers and policymakers. The authors analyse the completion data for the 10 TELMOOCs offered and find that, on average, it is 20.32%. However, they go further to present an alternative model of analysis, completion and recommend that completion rate may be analysed on the basis of "fully active learners" (those who complete the first week of the course). Accordingly, the average completion rate in TELMOOC is 70.3%. This is an incredible piece of data supporting the effectiveness of the MOOC.

Chapter 6 of the book discusses a framework of a MOOC's success. Discussion centres on the research question: What instructional approaches and strategies result in increased levels of TELMOOC learner certification? The authors present the PAGE MOOC success framework (Pedagogy, Attributes of the learners, Goals, and Engagement) as four pillars of successful MOOC design. The first pillar, Pedagogy, emphasizes integration of a variety of activities and systematic content delivery participatory–interactive mechanism adopted in different types of MOOCs [Extended Massive Open Online Courses (xMOOC), Institutional Massive Open Online Courses (iMOOC), and Connective Massive Open Online Courses (cMOOC)]. The second pillar, Attributes of the learners, includes motivation and grit, as well as reasons for taking a course. The third pillar, Goals, emphasizes the goals of the MOOC and the fourth pillar, Engagement, encompasses learners' engagement while taking a MOOC in terms of content, activities, assessment, and so on.

Chapter 7 addresses the professional development aspect of the TELMOOC design. Discussions exemplify the course components that directly empowered the teachers' professional development at different levels of their engagement in schools, colleges, and universities. Teachers' professional development components such as opportunities for the teachers to rethink their own practices and construct new classroom roles, as well as expectations about student outcomes and teaching in innovative ways, are covered in the TELMOOC. The TELMOOC professional development design also follows a networked teacher professional development approach that includes relevant teacher professional practice, easy access and support, pedagogically sound activities, learner support at varied experience levels, opportunities for networked

learning skill development, sharing and discourse among learners, and learning connections within the broader networked community. Design and development of TELMOOC primarily addressed the professional development needs of teachers that also support creating a professional community in which students can learn innovatively by using technology with new methods and techniques.

Chapter 8 provides a brief summary and recommendations based on research done in TELMOOC. While analysing completion rates, the recommendations of TELMOOC highlight three categories of learners to consider: registrants, active learners, and fully active learners. For MOOCs with an online or a blended course design, TELMOOC recommends the iMOOC model, which focuses on peer interactions, pacing instruction weekly to sustain the learner community, providing flexible assessment strategies, and practising the PAGE success framework for MOOCs.

### Significance of the Book

The research conducted on the participants of 10 successful iterations of TELMOOC emphasizes its effectiveness and popularity among global learners. TELMOOC provides different experiences to learners; they can acquire a quality knowledge base by actively engaging with content, instructors, peers and groups, learning environments, course-based activities, and assessments. Provision of rigorous learner support and addressing of teachers' professional development have been integral parts of TELMOOC.

This book fills the gap on research about MOOCs using a longitudinal approach and data from different iterations of one MOOC. It provides guidelines and research-based support to faculty members who want to develop and successfully deliver a quality MOOC. This book is equally helpful for researchers, as it provides an authentic review of conducting research on different aspects of online and blended programme development, as well as designing and conducting an online programme evaluation study.

### Overall Assessment

*Participant Experience in an Inquiry-Based Massive Open Online Course* is a significant contribution to research on MOOCs and online learning. Currently, teachers and educators in all levels of education across the globe are engaged with conceptualizing, designing, and delivering online and blended courses in the form of MOOCs. This book will be a ready reference example for understanding issues around designing and delivering any professional development MOOC. This short book is a must read for researchers, academics, and administrators, as well as policymakers in the field of education, in both developed and developing countries.

