The CCK08 MOOC

Connectivism Course, 1/4 Way

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To the best of my knowledge, the term "MOOC" comes out of a skype chat conversation I had with [George Siemens](#) about what exactly he would call this thing he and [Stephen Downes](#) were doing so I could call it something for the ETT show were were planning on the subject. We threw a bunch of possibilities around, and I [dropped MOOC into the connectivism wiki](#), and, yesterday, someone asked me to do a presentation on the topic. 3 months. crazy. I'm not going to dial down into specifics of how the course is structured, so if you don't know what I'm talking about… [check out the wiki](#) first.

We had two discussion on edtechtalk about the course before things actually kicked off… We had George, Stephen, Alec Couros and Leigh Blackall come out and share their opinions on the topic. Stephen and George as the course leaders and Alec and Leigh as two of the best thinkers on open courses that I know. The upshot of it was that it really was going to be an open course, and the instructors were going to allow the students to form whatever groups they might be interested in and they would provide the communication stream but not the organizational scaffolding.

Communications – What there is

There are a variety of ways in which learners in the connectivism course are being distributed to the world, and I'll break down each one and try to establish how i feel they're working at this point. Overall the communications weight on George and Stephen is huge, they're involved in a large number of conversations, and have been trying to follow the vast weight of the content that has been produced… not sure this is a sustainable model, nor would it necessarily work as well for a different teacher who didn't already spend a large amount of time working on the web. (note – i hate googlegroups and am therefore not able to speak to them. haven't participated, have heard that they exist)

[Moodle](#)
Moodle is a Virtual Learning environment and is being used for one primary (forums) and one collateral purpose (aggregation). The aggregation purpose serves the same goal as the [multitude of pageflake, netvibes etc… aggregation page…](#) it helps people see what's going on. Good so far as it goes. The moodle discussions have taken on that nice tone

that I like to see. They are polite, (mostly) and there is an acceptance that it is a public space. There are several exploratory threads that I think have been very useful to the learners… i've always really liked discussion forums for co-creation of knowledge. I think this is working… for those who are using it.

[The Daily](#) and [the blog](#).
This is the master aggregated list of all the posts related to the course as well as a few plucked out by Stephen as of particular interest to him, and the blog serves as a central stream of discussions (i particularly like Stephen's round up… agree or disagree Stephen always leaves you with something to think about) I've used the Daily as my main way of following along with the course.

The wiki and the readings
I think that the syllabus can be very helpful, but the work there has not really been worked on by anyone other than Stephen and George… not much sense having a wiki when only the administrators end up working in it. Wikis almost always end up this way… This is the main syllabus for the course, and a good way to catch up with the core course material. I've not done most of the readings, but they are available here, and I've been sampling them occasionally…

The live stuff – eluminate and ustream
I'm not a big fan of eluminate, i think it's a little clunky, it's never really liked my microphones and i think it's far too 'display' centric. It replicates the f2f presentation and I think, doesn't really represent the most realistic way that people participate in front of their computers. I'm biased, i like the ustream format we're doing… it's more user focused and I get to talk more :) That being said, these are the most effective parts of the course for me, I really have to commend both Stephen and George for their lucidity and their willingness to be in the firing line every day. I'm loving moderating the ustream and have really enjoyed the questions from the chatroom… still wondering if it makes sense to bring people into the live discussion… so far the format seems to be working with me as the rep. of the folks in the chatroom… would like feedback on this.

Early lessons

I remember George saying something in one our our Edtechtalk discussions like "just getting the course off the ground is what I'm going to consider a success" and I think I agree with him. It's a huge undertaking, with lots of little bits and pieces and a collosal amount of data. That being said, here'r some of the things that I've taken out of the first quarter of the course

Prerequisite Literacies
I think this kind of course needs a very specific description of what people are goign to need to know in order to be able to participate effectively. This might also include go forward models in terms of how people might go about doing that. For those of us who participate in online communities all the time it wasn't terribly difficult, but i get the sense that more online participation would have resulted from added scaffolding.

Community building
I'm a bit of a community freak. I'm in the online stuff for the community as much as the learning… I like to hear about people's lives as much as their professional accomplishments, I learn from their mores as much as their knowledge. I would have liked a bit more sanctioned community building directed from the top, to help scaffold the organicness of the groups that are out there… but that's just me.

Course standards
I'm not sure if this is a lesson or not, because i think it's been handled pretty well. There are some folks who've taken a more combative approach to the course which others have felt restricts the conversation. I HATE 'what you can do' standards on the internet generally, but i think the grace with which S and D have accepted critiques speaks well for them and open courses generally.

Rhizomatics

My own goals going in were to get a better sense of where my own work fits in with Connectivism. I've said several times that I've felt that rhizomatic community stuff seems like a subset of connectivism, even though I personally don't go in for the 'neural networks' stuff… a science i consider too shadowy at this point to use as a premise for solid philosophical discussion (let alone practical application) I believe i'm seriously at odds with S & D on this and, as they have clearly done way more research on this than I have, I would probably consider taking their opinion over mine. I just can't help but think that we are at the Bohr Atom stage of our understandings of our brains at this point… we have some models, they are a verifiable narrative, but not something I'm looking to use to guide my policy.

The debate around my article has been interesting (and not least in the way that people were WAY more polite about the theory during the live discussions) … particularly in the ways that I haven't been clear. I don't, for instance, think that rhizomatic education is a particularly fantastic way of memorizing things that are useful. I do realize that there are many different 'real world' issues out there that make it difficult. That theory did, at least partially, come out of real experience in the classroom and after the paper was released, I actually ran a course by its priciples… that was fairly well received. There are gaps, and many have been very nicely elucidated in the discussions.

Very cool so far. much more to say, but babyland has left me with other gardens that need tending.