FACULTY EXPERIENCES

Bozena Mierzejewska
Assistant Professor
Fordham University

Dr. Mierzejewska is an Assistant Professor of communications and media management at the Fordham School of Business. Bozena also teaches collaboratively a Stanford Textbook-free Online MOOC: *The Power of Open Knowledge*.

Fordham University was founded in 1841 based upon the Jesuit, Catholic principles. Fordham is a private non-profit research institution with 15,100 students. The university has four undergraduate colleges and six graduate schools. The university has campuses throughout New York City.

NOTE: Links to sources referred to in this text can be found at the bottom of this page

CONTENT

TEACHING ONLINE
LEARNING OUTCOMES (5:52)
FACULTY COLLABORATION (6:42)
LEARNING OUTCOMES (8:14)
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT (10:08)

TEACHING ONLINE

In my presentation I was talking about my experiences of teaching the MOOC online while at the same time teaching the MOOC in the traditional classroom (flipped). That experience was actually very inspiring and very eye-opening with regards to what students can learn online only and how you can enrich those experiences with classes that are flipped. For this MOOC project (Stanford Online: *The Power of Open Knowledge*) we basically flipped or blended the learning within Fordham.

What have I learned that is most interesting? First of all; we often assume that digital natives are very fluent with all the digital tools along with various platforms such as; Twitter, Facebook and Digg. Furthermore, we assume those are the gadgets young people use all the time and we (the faculty) are the old people in the room who don't know how to use those tools. However, that's absolutely not an issue for a number of reasons; many students do not know how to use those tools effectively and are not even familiar with their functionalities. Furthermore, some students are actually very negative about being on Twitter because they are creating a digital identity and they're very aware of what that can mean for their potential employment, what they are free to share and what kind of opinions they can be express. Therefore, that was one important learning experience.

Another important learning experience was with regards to student engagement with videos – students really like watching videos rather than reading text (this we already know from cognitive research). Therefore, multimedia appeals to students much more than small text on a screen or on paper. Furthermore, we didn't need a large research study to prove this because our experience in the course was very encouraging, after we had identified good videos that were not too long and which triggered good discussions. By employing good quality videos students feel engaged and they also experience a personal relationship with the speaker in the videos. So those are maybe the two major lessons-learned.

Our MOOC was 13 weeks long and in parallel I ran a 13 week in-class group, just like in a regular semester. However, a semester online feels much longer. To illustrate this point, how many websites do you visit every day or every second day for 13 weeks in a row? Not many I would imagine. That would be equivalent to developing a relationship with the platform. Therefore, what I would prefer to do is have fewer modules (one module every two weeks) and to meet in a class every two weeks. That would allow students to do more on their own, because in the end MOOCs enable students to do more on their own. This change (less modules) would also enable the instructor to have more in-depth discussions, because running from week to week into a new topic (I'm not the only class students attend) does not allow for depth and thoughtfulness of preparation. Lacking depth and thoughtfulness of preparation is the same as if students came only to the classroom hoping that I would tell them everything. The flipped classroom concept is all about telling students to be prepared in advance; however we must give them the required time in advance in order to properly prepare.

The time element of this course was very consuming. Eventually I was running two classes at the same time; being on the MOOC and Twitter, checking emails, observing all the discussions going on and trying also to get a grip of things in the traditional classroom (which was running in parallel to the MOOC). Furthermore, I was teaching a very different kind of student population during my traditional-classroom sessions. Although I got credit for only one course, in reality I was running two different classes. With regards to managing time, I would recommend to not multitask. For me, multitasking is a time-killer. So the way I work is; I devote time to the MOOC and teaching a particular topic only during a specified time-slot. Regarding the other commitments, I cluster them into one big time-slots. In the old days, when you had regular mail coming you would have various trays and drop items into those trays and then go from tray to tray in order to complete all the tasks. Today I tag my emails, color-code them and work on one color for a specified period of time. First I do my red emails (red indicating a particular thing or task), then I go to the blue emails, etc. etc.

Other lessons learned included; most students didn't know about MOOCs. Secondly, the concept of open access and open knowledge (the MOOC used only open-content) is not popular in a business school environment because it's not taught in any class and therefore is not part of any bigger management concept. That's why, when you have it in a class where you talk about publishing, it fits nicely. However, very rarely do students in business school learn about the business of publishing. So that was a big difference. Furthermore, students would rather say 'but of course you have to pay for books' and paying for books was not something that they would have contested or resisted. It comes with the system (buying textbooks)

because being involved in business themselves they think "Okay, I have to and I know that at some point there has to be a business model behind that." For business students that business model normally means a revenue stream. The other important lesson I learned was that I will probably not go back to lecture-only style teaching in the future. Right now, I'm recording all of my videos for the upcoming semester and I'm going to flip even more the classroom, not necessarily to just a MOOC environment, but also in my regular teaching. Additionally, I will use much more open educational resources (OER).

LEARNING OUTCOMES (5:52)

Teachers – when working online I think it's important that you think about your expectations and learning objectives. We tend to be very optimistic about what technology can do for us, but in a lot of things technology can actually take a lot of time. So answering emails is becoming even more than less. Being something on an e-platform doesn't mean that you have less work to do on your own. The other thing is that this experience (MOOC) has opened up many other opportunities and many other doors. For example, I've really learned myself a lot about what it means to be a good speaker, a good presenter, a good teacher and how to speak shorter. Videos also have to be short.

FACULTY COLLABORATION (6:42)

One challenge in this MOOC project was the working time differences between faculty and students. There was always a time-lapse between the emails or it was challenging to find a Skype time that would be a free for other people (this project was done outside of our main employment). Because this project was a part of our other activities, we tended to schedule faculty communication activities around lunch time (before or just after). However, there were times when it was just not compatible. In this setting some other collaboration challenges (between faculties) didn't play a big role, because we often also met in person and we were clear on expectations and communication styles. Therefore we got to know each other pretty well. However, in other cases of international collaboration I have found that the biggest challenge is making sure that expectations are explicit. If expectations are not made explicit some cultures interpret those expectations differently. For example, when people hear that they have to write a report, for some people good quality means a 20 page report but for other that might mean "I need to deliver some pointers or bullet points on three pages and that is what is called a report." So 'implicitness' is probably the bigger problem that I have experienced in international collaboration.

LEARNING OUTCOMES (8:14)

We are still collecting data about learning outcomes. This class was for me a new class, so I could not tell you for example, if I ran the course in-class only vs. MOOC, how might that impact or influence students' learning. That would be something incredible to do, because I would then have comparative data. However, I don't have it. But I have found through interviews with students and asking them "Do you think that you learned more than if I would only come and talk to you or deliver a lecture"? They were all very positive and they said "I would really like to see more of this kind of class" because it gave them flexibility, which many students

appreciated. Furthermore, they had a lot of freedom and although we overwhelmed them with material we didn't tell them "You have to read all of this material". Rather, we allowed them to make their own educated guesses as to what they should focus on. Therefore, we allowed them to choose whatever fitted their interests and career objectives. However, all of the material (open-content) included in the course was relevant and that further enriched the conversation. However, I had bankers in my traditional classroom, people who worked for publishers, regular students coming just from their bachelor's level along with international students. Therefore, we had very different student objectives in terms of what they wanted to get out of this class. However, they all confirmed that this online experience opened up a different world for them. They all said, "We want to do more." Therefore, if during this process we have turned them into life-long learners and self-directed learners, I hope (to a small extent at least) that I have contributed to that and that I have also spread the idea of openness. I think this was a learning outcome that in many classes I could not demonstrate and practice.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT (10:08)

Institutions could do more in providing technical support and resources. We've been very lucky in this project in that Stanford University invested so much technical support. Therefore, I didn't have to call Fordham people, who wouldn't for example have a clue about the Open edX learning platform, because that's a very Stanford thing. However, if I would have a wish-list regarding what institutions should do I think that wish-list would include; giving faculty not only support but also freedom. Very often I think the administrators, by giving you an additional administrative layer, actually impede motivation. I've been credited for this MOOC effort in my regular teaching load so I didn't get anything extra for that (stipend etc.). However, giving recognition for what you've done is also appreciated and part of your being a good faculty that is already enough. Furthermore, not over burdening faculty is also important "Because you did these innovative things, what about if we fill out these five other reports and also what about if additionally you have to go through a different approval process because it's so different?" These kinds of actions will actually stop people from experimenting and innovating, because they know that they will have to do 'extra work' and the administrative burden can double that extra work. Therefore, if I would be speaking to my administrator I would say 'give freedom to faculty or think of other incentives/motivators and that's not always money'.

Regarding production facilities, to a degree – we have facilities on our campus, meaning that we have cameras etc. however; I did most of this on my own. I do get support in my institution, but there is nothing that I would ask someone to do 'just for me'. Therefore; I didn't have the possibility for a cameraman to come and shoot, I had to do the recording on my own, set up the camera and ask one of my students help me and the same with editing. These things are sort of self-driven, but I believe in the long-term that these pay-off for me as a teacher. Therefore, I am not only thinking about the benefits to my school, I am also thinking about how I can benefit from these efforts while at the same time giving some benefit to the school.

LINKS

Stanford Online MOOC - *The Power of Open Knowledge*:
https://class.stanford.edu/courses/Education/OpenKnowledge/Fall2014/about

Fordham University:
http://www.fordham.edu/

7 Things About MOOCs II:

https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7097.pdf

7 Things About MOOCs:

https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7078.pdf

7 Things You Should Know About OER:

https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7061.pdf

7 Things About Flipped Classroom:
https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7081.pdf

Open edX:
http://code.edx.org/

7 Things You About LMS Alternatives:
https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7062.pdf

Open Educational Resources In U.S. Higher Education:
http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/openingthecurriculum2014.pdf

2015 Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States
http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/gradelevel.pdf

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Dr. Gerard L. Danford

gerard.danford@haaga-helia.fi

www.onlineedureport.org