Chapter 2
The [Un]Democratisation of Education and Learning

Abstract MOOCs have engendered excitement around their potential to democratise education. They appear to act as a leveller and offer equal opportunity to millions of learners worldwide. Yet, this alluring promise is not wholly achieved by MOOCs. The courses are designed to be used by people who are already able to learn, thereby excluding learners who are unable to learn without direct tutor support. The solutions to this problem tend to focus on the course, as 'learning design' or 'learning analytics'. We argue that effort needs to be focused on the learner directly, supporting him or her to become an autonomous learner. Supporting millions of people to become autonomous learners is complex and costly. This is a problem where education is shaped principally by economic and neoliberal forces, rather than social factors. However, 'automated' solutions may result in attempts to quantify learners' behaviours to fit an 'ideal'. There is a danger that overly simplified solutions aggravate and intensify inequalities of participation.

2.1 The Hype, De-hype and Re-hype of MOOCs

In the past, MOOCs were positioned by governments, universities and other organisations as potential disruptors to the educational status quo. At their most innovative, MOOCs are challenging traditional educational and learning paradigms, where learning typically is teacher-directed and structured within a formal institute. They break down divisions between those who can access prestigious educational institutions and those who cannot, opening up high-quality content to anyone who has an internet connection and device, and providing continued learning opportunities to ever greater numbers. New technological infrastructure and digital technologies are not

© The Author(s) 2018

A. Littlejohn and N. Hood, *Reconceptualising Learning in the Digital Age*,
SpringerBriefs in Open and Distance Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-8893-3_2

only providing access but also enabling new approaches to learning and the repositioning—if not in practice then theoretically—of learners, educators and institutions. As Selwyn observes:

> the ever-expanding connectivity of digital technology is recasting social arrangements and relations in a more open, democratic, and ultimately empowering manner. (Selwyn 2012, p. 2)

The early promise of MOOCs democratising education and providing future-focused, relevant, high-quality learning for all through improved access and radically new forms of learning may have subsided in recent years, particularly in the Western world. However, the potential of MOOCs and online learning to revolutionise education still dominates the rhetoric, particularly in the developing world where governments are trying to expand higher education rapidly. India alone has expanded its system to accommodate 8 million more students through opening up 20,000 universities and colleges over the period 2001–2011. Corporations and technology companies also recognise the potential of MOOCs to scale up professional training. Private and public organisations seeking to provide much needed continual professional development to upskill their workforce have generated renewed enthusiasm for MOOCs. This excitement was captured The Economist in January 2017, heralding 'The Return of the MOOC' and championing the role that alternative providers must play in solving the problems of cost and credentialing in education ('Equipping people to stay' 2017).

However, the current reality of learning in MOOCs remains somewhat distant from this alluring promise. There continues to be considerable variation both in the nature of learning that MOOCs offer and the ways in which individuals choose to engage with them. As the authors have previously noted:

> The specific nature and composition of individual MOOCs are profoundly shaped and ultimately the product of their designers and instructors, the platform and platform provider, and the participants, all of whom bring their own frames of reference and contextual frameworks. (Hood and Littlejohn 2016, p. 5)

While MOOCs may be pushing boundaries and challenging existing models and paradigms, they also, in many ways, are reinforcing traditional patterns and behaviours in both learning and learners, as well as in institutional structures, ideas that will be returned to throughout the book.

The focus of this chapter is to provide a research-informed exploration of the potential, promise and pitfalls of MOOCs and investigates online and open learning more generally.

2.2 The Learnification of Education; the Wider Context of MOOCs

> We shouldn't underestimate the ways in which language structures possible ways of thinking, doing and reasoning to the detriment of other ways of thinking, doing and reasoning. (Biesta 2009)

Language plays an important role in shaping how we understand and position ourselves in relation to different opportunities and ideas. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the language being used to discuss education and learning. To understand MOOCs, it is necessary to understand, or at least be aware of, the broader educational contexts in which they are being developed. MOOCs not only are responding to technological advances, particularly the social web which has made possible their massive scale and global reach, but also changing political contexts and economic imperatives that call for the expansion of higher education on an exponential scale by using qualitatively new approaches to learning (Liyanagunawardena et al. 2013; Kennedy 2014).

Higher education has been linked to national economic growth, with the most developed economies having the highest proportion of graduates in their population (Hanushek et al. 2008). This link means that populous countries, such as China and India, need to rapidly expand their university sector to ensure capital growth (*ICEF Monitor* 2012). In parallel, the emergence of work practices that are continuously changing and the need to solve bespoke, ill-structured problems under various levels of uncertainty, results in a growing demand for new and adaptive forms of personalised learning that focus on learners and their specific learning needs (Daniel et al. 2015). Many MOOCs, designed as a collection of texts and videos, do not promote this sort of adaptive and personalised learning (Margaryan et al. 2015). Nevertheless, it is understood that these types of courses can have a formative role in higher education, particularly to expand higher education in less economically developed countries, professional learning and training and lifelong learning (Daniel et al. 2015).

The dominant paradigms and approaches surrounding the world of MOOCs are rooted in the contemporary political discourse around education. It is what Biesta (2009) has referred to as the 'learnification of education', or the 'new language of learning'. This new language is framed by the notion that, with the advent of the knowledge society and the exponential development of digital technologies, a new educational paradigm is required; society requires a shift in mindset to focus on notions of lifelong learning, and learner-centric educational models.

As the Commission of European Communities advocated in 1998:

> Placing learners and learning at the centre of education and training methods and processes is by no means a new idea, but in practice, the established framing of pedagogic practices in most formal contexts has privileged teaching rather than learning. (…) In a high-technology knowledge society, this kind of teaching-learning loses efficacy: learners must become proactive and more autonomous, prepared to renew their knowledge continuously and to respond constructively to changing constellations of problems and contexts. The teacher's role becomes one of accompaniment, facilitation, mentoring, support and guid-

> ance in the service of learners' own efforts to access, use and ultimately create knowledge. (Commission of the European Communities 1998, p. 9, quoted in Field 2000, p. 136)

Biesta (2009) argues that a new language of learning currently dominates education:

> The 'new language of learning' is manifest, for example, in the redefinition of teaching as the facilitation of learning and of education as the provision of learning opportunities or learning experiences; it can be seen in the use of the word 'learner' instead of 'student' or 'pupil'; it is manifest in the transformation of adult education into adult learning, and in the replacement of 'permanent education' by 'lifelong learning'. (pp. 37–38)

This shift towards the learnification of education extends across the domains of research, policy and practice (Illeris 2009, 2014). The language of learning denotes a new positioning of the role that learning (as opposed to education) plays within society and the economy, and the presumed or desired changing roles and power relations of key players in the traditional education.

MOOCs are at the heart for this changing power structure, promoting a reconceptualisation of the intersection and interplay among the learner, the instructor, the institutional provider and the outcomes of the combined activity and learning provisions. MOOCs, in many ways, are the ultimate encapsulation of this shift towards learning. The earliest discussions of MOOCs focused on the new roles and responsibilities of learners in a networked learning environment where all participants were responsible for contributing to the discourse and knowledge that was shared (Downes 2012). These courses were highly experimental and were considered groundbreaking in the way they enabled learners, rather than teachers and experts, to determine how learning should take place. Their design was based on a network approach to learning, sometimes described as a 'connectivist' (or cMOOC) approach—see Chap. 1 for a typology of MOOCs.

There is currently little evidence to support connectivism as a theory, but it can be considered as an approach to learning conceptualised as participation in a network (Siemens 2014; Downes 2012). It views people as nodes in a digital network, with the connections between nodes as learning. The learner assembles and constructs knowledge within the network, for example, by creating blogposts, microblogposts or other forms of media. These media are shared with other learners and with experts, who can edit or comment. In this way, the connectivist approach has parallels with theories of constructivism, where learners construct knowledge and are guided by a more expert 'teacher'.

A new wave of MOOCs that emerged in 2011 and 2012 were designed around a different, instructivist approach. In instructivist pedagogical practices, the teacher sources and assembles knowledge in the form of artefacts for the student to use. These instructivist MOOCs have been termed xMOOCS. They aimed to allow anyone, anywhere to have access to the same (or similar) sorts of formal education that students experience on campus in universities. Therefore, they were designed around online versions of lectures, readings and discussions that characterise traditional university learning. In reality, the use of these artefacts online is qualitatively different from an on-campus experience. Also many universities have evolved their teaching from courses where students work through a set of materials predefined by the teacher

to approaches to learning where the learner constructs knowledge, for example, or ‘peer-based learning’ where students learn from one another through creating a product or ‘studio based teaching’ where students build portfolios of work.

This instructivist approach contrasts with the connectivist perspective described earlier. It could be argued that the connectivist approach is more democratic than traditional approaches to online learning, typified by xMOOCS, since it emphasises the importance of the learner, rather than the teacher, assembling and sharing knowledge. However, as we will explore further in this book, cMOOCs may not allow for democratic participation, since the course design presupposes learners are willing to engage in their own learning in specific ways.

Another problem with the cMOOC approach is that some learners do not have the cognitive, behavioural or affective characteristics necessary to actively determine their own learning pathways. Research has provided evidence that learners do not always have the inclination, digital capability or the degree of confidence and self-efficacy required to actively participate (Littlejohn et al. 2016). Thus, the emphasis on the individual as active agent in their learning journey is privileging those who can learn.

Furthermore, the idea of creating knowledge publically and behaving visibly as an expert may lead towards a western cultural approach (Knox 2016), yet MOOC stakeholders claim MOOCs take a ‘global’ perspective (Godwin-Jones 2014). Thus, the assurance that everyone has the ability to democratically engage in learning in a MOOC is not evident.

In summary, the rhetoric around both cMOOCs and xMOOCs is centred on their ability to democratise learning by enabling anyone, anywhere to access learning opportunities. Yet, MOOC providers and designers repeatedly have downplayed or ignored the critical need for active agency and self-regulation from the learners, and have assumed all learners were equipped to learn independently. Attempts to resolve this problem have focused around designing solutions into the MOOC, rather than focusing on enabling the learner (Guàrdia et al. 2013).

The MOOC represented a new approach, if not to replace, at least to supplement and compliment the old establishments of education. Their conception and promotion is bound in the understanding of the need for new opportunities and new approaches to learning and accreditation that breaks free from the rigid constraints of traditional educational institutions, especially universities. They were seen as taking power away from universities and placing it into the hands of individuals who were able to actively shape their own learning journeys.

Biesta (2009) suggests that there are four trends playing into this new language of learning: (1) new theories of learning and more particularly [neo]constructivist theories that position active student engagement at the heart of learning; (2) postmodern critiques of the notion that education can and should be controlled by teachers; (3) themes of lifelong learning and the need for everyone to continue to learn throughout their life; and (4) the rise of neoliberalism and the prioritisation of the individual, which positions the student as consumer and shifts education from being a right to being a duty. MOOCs appear to respond to all four of the trends Biesta identifies, although perhaps most strongly with the latter two.

MOOCs were built on the emancipatory properties of the new language of learning, suggesting that individuals have the potential and ability to take hold of their own learning. Biesta (2005) suggests that 'Teaching has, for example, become redefined as supporting or facilitating learning, just as education is now often described as the provision of learning opportunities or learning experiences' (p. 55). In this conception, one favoured by policymakers around the world, the learner has agency to determine and shape their own engagement, with the teacher acting as facilitator and the provider a mediator of the learning experience.

This new conception of what it means to learn, how learning should be structured, and the position and role of the individual learner within this is championed by a growing number of organisations. Dua (2013), a Senior Partner at McKinsey & Company, claims:

> What most people—including university leaders—don't yet realize is that this new way of teaching and learning, together with employers' growing frustration with the skills of graduates, is poised to usher in a new credentialing system that may compete with college degrees within a decade. This emerging delivery regime is more than just a distribution mechanism; done right, it promises students faster, more consistent engagement with high-quality content, as well as measurable results. This innovation therefore has the potential to create enormous opportunities for students, employers, and star teachers even as it upends the cost structure and practices of traditional campuses. Capturing the promise of this new world without losing the best of the old will require fresh ways to square radically expanded access to world-class instruction with incentives to create intellectual property and scholarly communities, plus university leaders savvy enough to shape these evolving business models while they still can. (p. 1)

The Economist ("Equipping people to stay" 2017) similarly presents the new possibilities offered by MOOCs and how these are challenging traditional paradigms and institutions:

> The market is innovating to enable workers to learn and earn in new ways. Providers from General Assembly to Pluralsight are building businesses on the promise of boosting and rebooting careers. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) have veered away from lectures on Plato or black holes in favour of courses that make their students more employable. At Udacity and Coursera self-improvers pay for cheap, short programmes that bestow "microcredentials" and "nanodegrees" in, say, self-driving cars or the Android operating system. By offering degrees online, universities are making it easier for professionals to burnish their skills. A single master's programme from Georgia Tech could expand the annual output of computer-science master's degrees in America by close to 10%. (p. 3)

This quote illustrates Biesta's (2009) fourth trend about the neoliberal influence on direction, governance and design of education, as well as how MOOCs are becoming an agent of this societal shift.

Learning, learners and learning outcomes are being reshaped following economic imperatives. The focus is, therefore, on financial benefit, rather than on social growth. They play on notions of the mismanagement of education, as Selwyn (2016) describes:

> …. sense of the mismanagement of education by monolithic institutions that are profoundly undemocratic and archaic. These are lumbering organisations where ownership, control and power are concentrated unfairly in the hands of elites – be they vice chancellors and university professors, or school district superintendents, tenured teachers and their unions. Like many large administrations and bureaucracies, these institutions that are believed to be unresponsive, incompetent, untrustworthy, ungrateful, self-serving and greedy. (p. 11)

For the past decades, education increasingly has been dictated principally by economic rather than social or learning imperatives and outcomes (Olssen and Peters 2005), themes that will be explored in the coming chapters at length.

The economic pressures within education are linked to the expansion of higher education. Put simply, educating more students requires more funding. Arguably, the countries that are finding this most difficult are those where university education has been subsidised significantly by the government but this funding has recently been reduced. For example, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and also Finland, where Finland which recently introduced fees for non-EU students. Funding regimes have changed, and fees have been introduced or dramatically increased, requiring societal changes if the population does not have a culture of paying for or taking out loans to finance educational opportunities. MOOCs are believed to be a solution; however, without clear business models, the economy driving MOOCs has been ambiguous and unsound.

Both Dua (2013) at McKinsey and *The Economist* ('Equipping people to stay' 2017) warn that while a combination of new models and technological infrastructure is facilitating a dramatic shift in the ways in which learning is financed, offered and engaged with, the current reality remains somewhat distant from the promise. However, these now common conceptions of emancipatory learning opportunities and the learner-centred, learner-directed nature of learning opportunities are influencing how learning is structured and how individual learners or students are described and positioned within the MOOC.

However, while the emancipatory aspects of a MOOC are possible, Biesta (2009) warns that:

> The absence of explicit attention for the aims and ends of education is the effect of often implicit reliance on a particular 'common sense' view of what education is for. We have to bear in mind, however that what appears as 'common sense' often serves the interests of some groups (much) better than those of others. (p. 36)

In the case of MOOCs, there is a seductive notion of the idea that they are for everyone, making learning and education readily accessible. But the reality is more nuanced than this.

The extent to which MOOCs have actually achieved their democratising mission remains somewhat contentious. MOOCs hold an uncertain space, appearing simultaneously to challenge traditional approaches and paradigms, while continuing to draw on and replicate existing educational and learning models.

The largest providers of MOOCs are still the elite universities and large multinational corporations. And while the language of MOOCs represents the shift to learnification, MOOCs still largely are utilising traditional educational metrics to

measure success. What it means to learn has not shifted dramatically from traditional notions or conceptions. Completion and certification of learners still remain the most frequently used metrics for denoting success and quality in a MOOC. A focus undermines the inherent flexibility in the MOOC, which enables individuals to determine and chart their own journey in a MOOC and to self-determine what it means to be successful.

The hint of diversity and self-constructed learning is subsumed within preordained goals and an overarching agenda established by the MOOC creator. This perhaps is particularly apparent in the shift away from openness in MOOCs towards a user-pays model. MOOCs are being subjected to the same pressures and forms of operating that shape traditional institutions. They become a new form of education, with credentialing—an essential element of educational systems—becoming the driving factor.

2.3 Towards Democracy

This chapter has outlined that the democratisation of education can be conceived in several ways:

First, it can be imagined as the expansion of education, facilitating equal access to learning opportunities for everyone. However, as this chapter argued, this form of democracy requires not simply an expansion in the numbers of learners, but also the assurance that everyone has the ability to actively engage in learning. Equality of access does not necessarily equate to equality of participation. Alternatively, democratic learning could be viewed as a shift from teachers and experts deciding what is to be learned and how learning should take place, to learning goals, outcomes and behaviours being at the will of the learners themselves. This section examines each of these perspectives in turn.

At first glance, the expansion of university courses as MOOCs appears to allow everyone (or at least those with access to the web) equal access to learning opportunities. Chapter 1 illustrated that sometimes MOOCs try to replicate conventional higher education in elite institutions (in other words, access to renowned faculties). However, MOOCs cannot offer the grandeur of the physical space of the privileged and influential universities (Knox 2016). The distinction between face-to-face and 'distance' education can serve to downgrade the status of MOOCs, having the impact of making sure MOOC learners are kept 'in their place', and privileging those who are able to be 'present', rather than emphasising equality (ibid). This phenomenon is particularly significant where the university offering a MOOC has unrivaled campus facilities.

Some MOOC platform providers measure learning by identifying whether the learner follows course pathways as directed by the tutors, and whether he or she completes the course. These assumptions about what behaviours indicate whether a student is learning provide little scope for the individual to decide the forms of

engagement that are best suited to his or her motivations and needs. Rather than freeing the learner, these measures appear to tie the learner to a specific, predefined learning pathway.

Research tells us that there are many ways learners participate in MOOCs and that they do not always follow course pathways (Milligan et al. 2013). These different forms of participation, detailed in Chap. 4, are manifest in different forms of engagement, ranging from 'active' engagement to 'invisible' involvement, where the course facilitators are not aware of whether or how a participant is learning. The conventional view of education privileges the active approach, and there is empirical evidence that active participants are frustrated by those who these learners do not perceive as active (ibid). Yet, some participants who appear unseen and invisible to other learners and course facilitators report positive experiences of learning. However, this type of behaviour does not fit well with dialogic pedagogies that emphasise people coming together to share their own unique viewpoints, questioning whether learners have a duty to participate actively in education, not only for their own learning but for the learning of others.

To ensure MOOCs support a more democratic form of learning, there needs to be a reconceptualisation of the ways learning goals, outcomes and expected behaviours in MOOCs can be determined by the learners, rather than by teachers.

Yet, it seems the possibility of this reconceptualization is receding. Learning analytics are being embedded into MOOC platforms to measure 'engagement' as defined by the course facilitators, rather than by the learners themselves. Analytics data are visualised in dashboards that measure learner behaviour, completion and achievement in assessments. If a learner chooses to behave or engage in the MOOC in ways that are not predefined and standardised, the data gathered and analysed may give negative signals about the learner. For example, a learner who is actively engaged outside the MOOC platform, or who drops in and out of a MOOC to engage with only what he or she wants to learn, may not appear 'engaged' or 'active' in an analytics dashboard. Some analytics are based on the assumption that there is a correlation between engagement and behavioural activities, such as browsing and exploring, or completion, for example, MOOCs for Development (MOOCs4Dev) analyse all types of engagement within the course platform to assess learner achievement (see https://issuu.com/delta51/docs/mooc_report_final_30_11). However, these assumptions presuppose that the learner wishes to follow a learning pathway predefined by the course designer. If MOOC learning is to be viewed as democratic, these measures and assumptions have to be reconceptualised.

Correlations associated with learner 'completion' are a measure of carrying out the activities determined by the course design, rather than an indicator of what the learner might have learned. This measure assumes that learners want to complete a course or even pass an assessment. However, these assumptions may not be valid in a MOOC. Learners may have set their own learning goals and learned what they wanted to learn, rather than following the course pathway and goals. There are calls to link learning analytics with learning design to ensure that MOOCs are designed to optimise learner progression and completion (see for example Lockyer et al. 2013). However, the idea of adhering to an optimal, standardised design may not allow for

democratic behaviours where the learner, rather than the tutor, decides what is to be learned and how. Though what these systems can offer are recommendations for the learner to consider and act upon. For example, recommender systems can suggest readings, further courses or people to link with in a 'just in time' way depending on what the learner is currently learning and how they are learning.

2.4 Different Challenges, Same Outcome

The use of ICT in teaching and learning is becoming a key component in educational policies of developing countries. Arguably, MOOCs can make an impact in terms of opening access to higher education in developing countries, where access rates are low.

The tensions experienced by MOOC learners in the developed countries, for example, the need to be able to learn pro-actively, also affect learners in developing countries. However, some of the challenges associated with ensuring access to education in developing countries are different from those in the developed world and such as poor infrastructure, limited digital capability, social and cultural inequalities and learning and teaching quality issues. Even where people have access to higher education, the quality of learning and teaching may be poor. For example, the government in India has flagged poor quality teaching in some universities, particularly smaller, private institutions, as a key problem in higher education in the country.

Around 4 billion people around the world do not have Internet access. These people are mainly in developing countries, where good digital infrastructure may be restricted to major urban areas and rural areas may have unreliable or no electricity, let alone Internet. In countries like Nigeria or Sri Lanka where students may commute to access Internet Cafes, claims about enhanced learning through MOOCs may not hold true (Anderson 2013).

Even where Internet is available, it may be slow, restricting the ability to stream MOOC content (Liyanagunawardena et al. 2013, p. 4). Access to good digital technology tools can be limited and cost makes these tools less available. Reduced availability to digital tools can limit digital capability within the population, which makes learning in a MOOC difficult. There are also issues associated with cultural diversity. Some developing countries have diverse ethnic communities speaking different languages. India has twenty-two official languages, Zimbabwe sixteen, which makes it challenging to provide equal opportunity to all groups unless they share a common language. People in ethnic minorities can experience discrimination and unequal access to educational opportunities.

Another problem is that some MOOC platforms, such as the for-profit Coursera, operate under strict copyright rules, limiting their use in developing countries. Thus, open-source platforms, such as that used by edX, have the advantage of giving local educators control over the applications, content and curriculum. To address this issue,

some MOOC providers, for example, MOOC providers in India supported by the Commonwealth for Learning, are building their own platforms in order to influence developments.

Despite these challenges, MOOCs are viewed in the developing world as a useful mechanism to scale up higher education. There is a recognition that developing nations may lose be vulnerable to neo-colonial effects associated with studying MOOCs largely based on Western knowledge and cultural and philosophical assumptions. This issue has led some governments to develop policy and platforms to expand higher education using ICT and MOOCs.

In India, for example, the government aims rapidly to expanding the higher education system. India is one of the fastest growing economies, yet, only 18% of the population participated in higher education in 2014, compared with 26% in China and 36% in Brazil and over 50% in many developed countries (British Council 2014). By 2020, the Indian government wants to increase the number of higher education places by 14 million to reach a target of 30% participation. To help achieve this goal, the government has invested in the development of a MOOC platform, SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), and courses. By introducing India-focused policy, platform and courses, they aim to address challenges specific to the country.

Some countries have taken a different approach by partnering with international organisations to provide access to higher education in areas where skill shortages have been identified. The World Bank funded an initiative with the Coursera platform to provide MOOCs for students in Tanzania to enable them to develop IT skills relevant for private sector employment tracks (Boga and McGreal 2014). For students in rural areas, the ability to access these MOOCs via mobile phones is crucial. A number of private organisations have sponsored MOOCs as a way to identify future talent for their workforce. Although there are a number of ethical issues associated with this approach, it can be viewed by people, particularly in developing countries where opportunities are limited, to offer huge opportunities. However, while MOOCs go some way in supporting developing countries in facing different educational challenges compared with developed countries, MOOCs still benefit most those who are able to self-regulate their learning, leaving the most disadvantaged behind.

2.5 New Name, Repeating Model

Exploring the myriad of ways MOOCs are being conceptualised and offered prompts the questioning of claims that MOOCs, as a rule, democratise learning. While they are positioned as outside traditional educational provisions and structures, resulting in the ability to shift conventional ways of conceptualising education and learning leading to a redistribution of power, the reality is somewhat different. MOOCs, on the whole, are very much embedded within the existing power structures and the control of the pre-eminent institutions.

MOOCs appear to be a response by the education sector and advocates of open learning to try to retain key aspects of conventional forms of education. The ways in which MOOCs are designed and evaluated tend towards standardised design and normative forms of participation, rather than focusing on personalization and meeting the needs of the learners. In this way, MOOCs are not as open to student needs and may not be as democratic as claimed ideas that will be explored further in the following chapters.

MOOCs in many ways have focused on the potential and affordances of technology to revolutionise education, or at least to shift the balance of power away from traditional institutions and towards individual learners. However, in doing so, they often pay too little attention to the ways in which technology is utilised, both by designers and by the learners. As Kellner (2004) warns:

> Technology itself does not necessarily improve teaching and learning, and will certainly not of itself overcome acute socioeconomic divisions. Indeed, without proper re-visioning for education and without adequate resources, pedagogy and educational practices, technology could be an obstacle or burden to genuine learning and will probably increase rather than overcome existing divisions of power, cultural capital, and wealth. (p. 12)

There is a great deal of rethinking needed before we can consider MOOCs as a form of democratisation of education.

2.6 Concluding Thoughts

The theme of the [un]democratisation of MOOCs is returned to throughout this book. This chapter has explored the tensions that exist between the potential of MOOCs to offer a new reality and order in education, which is more just, fair and open, aligning with the neoliberal agenda of the learnification of education and individualism. However, as we have started to explore, the realities are more complex, in particular the ability for everyone to participate in, and reap the rewards of this new open education. Chapters 3 and 4 will build on these ideas to explore diversity among learners and the variation in learning in MOOCs.

Acknowledgements The authors wish to thank Vicky Murphy of The Open University for comments and for proofing this chapter.

References

Anderson, T. (2013). Promise and/or peril: MOOCs and open and distance education. *Commonwealth of learning*.

Biesta, G. (2005). Against learning. *Nordic Educational Research, 25*(1), 54–66.

Biesta, G. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. *Education Assessment Evaluation and Accountability, 21*(1), 33–46.

Boga, S., & McGreal, R. (2014). *Introducing MOOCs to Africa: New economy skills for Africa program*. Available from https://auspace.athabascau.ca/bitstream/handle/2149/3473/MOOCs_in_Africa_2014_Boga-McGreal-2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

British Council. (2014). *Understanding India Report*. Retrieved from: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/understanding_india_report.pdf.

Council Canada. Retrieved from http://www.downes.ca/files/Connective_Knowledge-19May2012.pdf.

Daniel, J., Cano, E. V., & Cervera, M. G. (2015). The future of MOOCs: Adaptive learning or business model? *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 12*(1), 64–73.

Downes, S. (2012). *Connectivism and connective knowledge: Essays on meaning and learning networks*. Ottawa, ON: National Research.

Dua, A. (2013). College for All. In *Voices on society: The art and science of delivery*. New York: McKinsey & Company. Retrieved from http://voices.mckinseyonsociety.com/college-for-all/.

Equipping people to stay ahead of technological change. (2017, January 14). *The Economist*. Retrieved from https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21714341-it-easy-say-people-need-keep-learning-throughout-their-careers-practicalities.

Field, J. (2000). *Lifelong learning and the new educational order*. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2014). Global reach and local practice: The promise of MOOCS. *Language Learning and Technology, 18*(3), 5–15.

Guàrdia, L., Maina, M., & Sangrà, A. (2013). MOOC design principles: A pedagogical approach from the learner's perspective. *eLearning Papers,* (33), 1–6.

Hanushek, E. A., Jamison, E. A., Jamison, D. T., & Woessmann, L. (2008). Education and economic growth. *Education Next, 8*(2), 62–70.

Hood, N., & Littlejohn, A. (2016). *Quality in MOOCs: Surveying the terrain*. Burnaby, Canada: Commonwealth of Learning.

ICEF. (2012, July 16). China and India to produce 40% of global graduates by 2020. *ICEF Monitor*. Retrieved from http://monitor.icef.com/2012/07/china-and-india-to-produce-40-of-global-graduates-by-2020/.

Illeris, K. (Ed.). (2009). *Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists… in their own words*. London, UK: Routledge.

Illeris, K. (2014). Transformative learning and identity. *Journal of Transformative Education, 12*(2), 148–163.

Kellner, D. (2004). Technological transformation, multiple literacies, and the re-visioning of education. *E-Learning, 1*(1), 9–37.

Kennedy, J. (2014). Characteristics of massive open online courses (MOOCs): A research review, 2009–2012. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 13*(1), 1–15.

Knox, J. (2016). *Posthumanism and the massive open online course: Contaminating the subject of global education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Littlejohn, A., Hood, N., Milligan, C., & Mustain, P. (2016). Learning in MOOCs: Motivations and self-regulated learning in MOOCs. *The Internet and Higher Education, 29*, 40–48. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.12.003.

Liyanagunawardena, T. R., Adams, A. A., & Williams, S. A. (2013). MOOCs: A systematic study of the published literature 2008–2012. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 14*(3), 202–227.

Lockyer, L., Heathcote, E., & Dawson, S. (2013). Informing pedagogical action: Aligning learning analytics with learning design. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(10), 1439–1459.

Margaryan, A., Bianco, M., & Littlejohn, A. (2015). Instructional quality of massive open online courses (MOOCs). *Computers & Education, 80,* 77–83.

Milligan, C., Margaryan, A., & Littlejohn, A. (2013). Patterns of engagement in connectivist MOOCs. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 9* (2), 149–159. Retrieved from http://jolt.merlot.org/vol9no2/milligan_0613.htm.

Olssen, M., & Peters, M. A. (2005). Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: From the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of education policy, 20*(3), 313–345.

Selwyn, N. (2012). *Education in a digital world: Global perspectives on technology and education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Selwyn, N. (2016). *Is technology good for education*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Books.

Siemens, G. (2014). Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, 2*(1). Retrieved from http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jan_05/article01.htm.