

Professional Practice in Design a  
Massive Open Online Course

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A Master's Thesis Project  
Presented to the  
Department of Communications and Humanities

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in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the  
Master of Science Degree

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**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

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## Abstract

This thesis project is the development of a massive open online course (MOOC), an open access course available to anyone with an internet connection. The course title for this MOOC is Professional Practice in Design and focuses on career development skills for a student enrolled in a college design program. Not all design programs offer instruction on these topics and the student gains an advantage in the workplace with this course instruction. The methodology selected is that of the xMOOC which mirrors the instruction found in a traditional on campus course with the instructor giving a lecture and then assessing students learning with assignments and tests. The conclusions found that in contrast to other xMOOCs, provided by such organizations as Coursera and edX where thousands of students participate at one time, this course would require an enrollment cap. Additionally, it was found offering a MOOC through a college program for tuition credit could potentially result in more consistent student engagement and participation. Finally, MOOCs are new to the online learning environment and there are a number of unanswered questions about topics such as, a business model for organizations offering courses, the ability to continue to offer open access courses for free and the acceptance by colleges and employers.

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## Introduction

Not all college design programs offer students a course that teaches resume development, portfolio presentation, job networking, interviewing skills and other career development skills. One solution is to offer a massive open online course (MOOC) on the topic of Professional Practice in Design. A global course intended for design students who are seeking their first real job in the working world, the focus is on the designer who is at the beginning of his/her career. Other design students could participate too such as those enrolled in a two-year design program who want to gain the knowledge and skills needed to pursue their career. Non-matriculated designers may want to participate as well in order to gain knowledge in the topics offered.

MOOC's have grown tremendously in popularity since Stephen Downes and George Siemens pioneered the connectivist theory and founded the first massive open online course which launched in 2008. (Levy and Schrire, 2012) Since then several other colleges and institutions (including SUNY at Empire State College) have offered MOOC's.

This MOOC will be designed using a variety of online learning tools in order for students to meet their objectives. Students will receive assignments and have access to learning tools such as video presentations, slide presentations, articles and other resources via the course website. The course will be designed such that the instructor will introduce a topic for learning, such as interviewing skills, and students will be given an assignment that relates to this topic. In the interviewing skills section, for example, they will be tasked with conducting mock interviews with one another (one student to one student). Once the weekly assignment is completed, the instructor will then review their presentations, grade these and provide feedback for improvement.

Final Project Result:

- 1) Final thesis paper to include the literature review
- 2) Prototype of the course (shown in a prototype website format)
- 3) Samples of online learning tools and resources
- 4) Slide presentation to convey visually the learning process and flow within this xMOOC

## **Literature Review**

### **What is a MOOC?**

A MOOC is a massive open online course offered globally for free (or in some cases for a small fee) to anyone with an internet connection. “In a MOOC, learners construct their own knowledge and develop their personal learning network from the nodes and connections in the digital environment” (Levy & Schrire, 2012). A MOOC is a type of online course aimed at large-scale participation and open access via the web. MOOCs are a recent development in the area of distance education, and a progression of the kind of open education ideals suggested by open educational resources (“Massive open online,” 2013).

Online courses have been available for some time, it is due to advances in technology that courses can now be offered for participation around the world. There has been quite a lot of participation by individuals in third world countries who formerly did not have opportunities to complete college level courses mainly due to the cost and distance to a college campus. Learners are now able to select from hundreds of available courses gaining skills and in some cases gaining fulfilling employment.

The components of a MOOC are comprised of “any combination and permutation of ...teachers, students, information (topic and related content), and context” (Cabiria, 2012). Typically these courses run in consecutive 10 – 12 week sessions with some shorter and some longer. The environment in which the course is taken is varied depending on an individual’s preference and access to the internet whether through a laptop, tablet, smartphone or desktop computer. As MOOCs have evolved, there appear to be two distinct types: those that emphasize the connectivist philosophy, or cMOOCs, and those that resemble more traditional and well-financed courses, such as those offered by Coursera and edX which are referred to as xMOOCs. (“Massive open online”, 2013)

### **The Connectivist MOOC (cMOOC)**

MOOCs are based on principles extracted from connectivist pedagogy first introduced by Stephen Downes and George Siemens. Stephen Downes describes connectivism as a form of learning where people are connected via the internet, sharing information and knowledge, creating the learning experience as they move through it. Unlike a traditional course format where the class lecture is predetermined, the subject matter in a cMOOC evolves as students share information with one another. Here the instructor acts as the facilitator introducing the topic as a foundation to the course. From there it is the students who develop the course by adding information to include their experiences, research, perspectives and building upon the knowledge shared.

In the first MOOC that Downes and Siemens introduced in 2008 the topic was the connectivist theory. At the beginning there were thousands of registrants and by the time the course was almost nearing the end, there were slightly over 150 participants. (Mackness, Mak,

Williams, 2010). The course itself was about the topic of connectivism, so while students were learning and applying this theory they were also witnessing the foundation upon which a MOOC was formed. Downes suggests that “the key characteristics of an online course using connectivist principles are autonomy, diversity, openness, and connectedness and interactivity” (Mackness, Mak, Williams, 2010). Learners are working independently at a place and time that is convenient for them and among people of many different cultures from around the world. The idea is that there is a sense of information sharing which is accessed easily and without restrictions in terms of time and place. “Connectivist learning is also based as much upon production as consumption of the content” (Levy and Schrire, 2012). Finally, “connectedness and interactivity is what makes all this possible...knowledge emerges as a result of connections” (Mackness, Mak, Williams, 2010).

In the cMOOC the role of the teacher is quite unique. They are introducing topics and ways in which students are able to share knowledge with one another. We can think of the instructor too as a facilitator of what is being shared and making sure that students are connecting with one another. Learners then have to connect the dots of information to draw conclusions and determine what information is valuable and what is not. The outcome of this experience becomes a personal learning environment for the student. Within this personal learning environment the student has control over setting goals, managing what it is they are learning and to whom they are connecting with. It can be quite challenging as a student within a connectivist MOOC as the course moves in many different directions. Often times the course takes on a life of its own and research and studies have shown students can become lost and worse, they get frustrated and drop out altogether.

## **The Broadcast MOOC (xMOOC)**

The xMOOC, also referred to as the broadcast MOOC, (“Massive open online”, 2013) is different from the cMOOC in that the courses are predetermined. The instructor has developed and prepared the course in advance of the participants registering. Courses take on the look and feel of a traditional classroom setting. Instructor’s video tape lectures similar to an on campus lecture environment. There is little if any knowledge sharing between students, that is to say, as a requirement of the course. Students may very well seek one another out in other ways such as through social media, however, the socialization aspect and knowledge sharing of a cMOOC does not take place within the broadcast xMOOC.

Student’s learning is assessed online with the use of technology, typically with multiple choice tests. They receive their grades immediately upon completing the task and know right away if they have mastered the material or not. Similar to the cMOOC, a student in an xMOOC can go back and revisit topics and presentations when they need to review and study information.

Many colleges and organizations have caught onto the xMOOC format. In the fall of 2012 several top colleges and universities placed their courses online in the form of an xMOOC giving students from around the world the opportunity to participate in higher learning never before imagined. (Hyman, 2012) Various organizations (mainly not for profit at this point) are offering “brand new platforms such as Coursera, edX, and Udacity .. committing themselves to making the best education in the world freely available to anyone who seeks it. There are no qualifications – other than an Internet connection” (Hyman, 2012).

There is minimal human interaction in an xMOOC, limited to registering for the course and filling out tests. Students would rarely interact with one another in an xMOOC unless it is

outside of the parameters of the course such as on a personal social media site. The xMOOC does not provide room for the students to develop the curriculum and share knowledge as with the connectivist MOOC. The professors have an established format and lecture such as with the MITx and Harvardx courses which will be taught by the same professors who teach in person on campus. (Hyman, 2012)

### **The Design of a MOOC**

A MOOC contains a variety of mediums for student learning and interaction via the internet. Some of these mediums or tools include discussion forums, blogs, videos, articles, websites and other methods of instruction. “The goal is to create a community of learners who bring personal resources and perspectives to those offered by the teacher, and to embark on a journey of discovery that is personalized, yet includes other students” (Cabiria, 2012). The student chooses which resources he/she finds the most supportive and interesting.

“Conversations, information discovery, and sharing may occur in the class forums, in social networks, and in virtual worlds – at the choice of the student....the keyword in a MOOC system is *flexibility*” (Cabiria, 2012).

There are many web-based instruction platforms to choose from in designing a MOOC such as on a blog or website. Time zones are free flowing and offer no restrictions in the availability and access of information. Learners choose when and how (with what internet accessible device) to participate without physical restrictions (i.e. access to a physical space such as a classroom). (Wood, 2013) MOOCs can be designed to be available in any language with consideration to the main target audience (“MOOCguide”, 2013). Learning within the MOOC

environment occurs between students as information is shared. Students are building their personal learning network while networking along with other students. “The challenge in a MOOC is for each learner to construct a personal learning environment (PLE), or a personal learning network (PLN), by eliciting what is personally meaningful from the network of information and interaction” (Levy and Schrire, 2012).

MOOCs are offered to everyone regardless of their educational background which is another significant contributor to their widespread growth and popularity. There are guidelines with the more technical courses such as those in engineering and computer science. For example, a computer science course offered on Coursera, the instructor, Professor Alex Aiken of Stanford University, indicates “as a rough guide, you should already be an experienced programmer and be comfortable writing substantial C++ or Java programs; writing a compiler is not a good way to learn either programming or these particular languages” (Aiken, 2012). Students “will improve their lifelong learning skills, for participating in a MOOC forces you to think about your own learning and knowledge absorption” (“MOOCguide”, 2013)

As with all new products and services some are well done while others are poorly executed. One differentiator between those that are successful and those that are unsuccessful “will be how they are implemented and delivered....synchronous MOOCs hold a substantial advantage over asynchronous, in that interaction can be live in the moment and multilateral among participants” (Wood, 2013). At the same time the size and scope of a MOOC may be overwhelming and hinder a student’s learning experience. There is “reduced structure in a pure MOOC course, which can become a demotivating factor for students used to, or requiring, firmer guidelines with measured milestones” (Cabiria, 2012). Students have to be disciplined enough to manage their time and course schedule in meeting the course objectives, for some the experience

becomes more chaotic. In reference to the MOOC model of instruction, Steve Knapp, President of George Washington University, is quoted as saying that “one can lecture in a stadium and wonder how engaged are the people in the top row” (Wood, 2013)

Other issues include large forums become inefficient in addition to difficulties in developing learning assessment measurements. (Cabiria, 2012) Students have to have a high level of patience for sometimes vague and uncertain course structure which may be frustrating for some. (Cabiria, 2012). Course developers need to keep in mind that one of the biggest reasons students drop out of online courses is due to the lack of responsiveness from their instructor. (Serwatka, 2005) Students want and expect to have timely responses from their instructors and when they don't receive this they become disengaged and lose interest. As with other types of online learning, in designing a MOOC it's important to keep in mind there are many different learning types. Not everyone learns the same way and for this reason offering a variety of interactions to include video, audio, articles and other resources is important to appeal to these different learning styles.

George Siemens (2012) offers guidelines in developing an effective connectivist MOOC with the first to start with selecting a topic of personal interest and a target audience (i.e. students, peers, adult learners or all three audiences). He advises to never teach alone and to ask someone also knowledgeable in a particular topic and with a different perspective on the subject. (Siemens, 2012). The content of the cMOOC is an interesting next step in that facilitators or instructors of the course are in effect introducing an idea upon which students will then forge ahead and develop further. (Siemens, 2012). It's important to mix up the learning resources so that students stay engaged and motivated to continue to learn. Course developers also need to take into consideration that students will participate in different time zones and therefore creating

opportunities for them to view videos and other resources regardless of time and location is most beneficial. (Siemens, 2012) The instructor should be involved but is not the central control point of the course discussion, “in an open course you are not the central node but you remain an important node....don’t try and dominate the conversation...but be active” (Siemens, 2012).

As noted earlier, one of the biggest challenges with MOOCs and other forms of online learning is successful and accurate student needs and learning assessment tools. “Another marker of good vs. not so good will rest in the manner of outcome assessment of MOOC learning....assessment by a recognized expert (be that person a rigorously hired faculty member, or outside subject-matter expert), to standards expected of the subject matter and desired level of learning accomplishment, remains stronger than peer (student to student) assessment” (Wood, 2013). “While there can be numerous assessment areas, a number of areas are essential when planning web-based learning, including; computer skills, learning styles, available resources, learner’s desired outcomes and prior learning experiences” (Dupin-Bryant and DuCharme-Hansen, 2005). In a presentation at the annual TedGlobal Conference in 2012, Dr. Daphne Koller of Stanford University and co-founder of Coursera discussed the methods in which students learn and are assessed in an xMOOC. (Koller, 2012) She indicates with enrollment in some courses exceeding 100,000 students, so much can be done with the use of technology to improve how student’s work is graded and their learning assessed. (Koller, 2012)

Finally, in designing either type of MOOC Siemens (2012) informs us that we need to promote the MOOC to students, peers, co-workers and through personal networks such as blogs, twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. (Siemens, 2012). It’s important for instructors to design a MOOC with some degree of uncertainty as to the outcome and where it will lead. In this way, “if you design your course with fluidity, you will add/change as you go....listen to your course

participants they will let you know what to improve” (Siemens, 2012). In a case study involving the establishment of a MOOC at a college in Israel, “the process of designing a MOOC can be taken as an object of inquiry into organizational culture, change, and leadership in the context of emerging innovative technologies” (Levy and Schrire, 2012).

### **The Future Influence of MOOCs in Academia**

Siemens professed in 2005 that “connectivism provides insight into learning skills and tasks needed for learners to flourish in a digital era” (Siemens, 2005). Since 2005 the increase in the use of smart phones, tablets, laptops, social media and online education accessed by ever changing technology has grown tremendously (de Waard, 2011). To many educators, a MOOC is a logical solution in bringing learners and technology together in a learning environment. “As new technology enables – and even forces – the 21st century learner to learn in a very different way and at a very different pace from any other time in history, the need arises for adopting new learning structures, networks, and tools. These structures should fit complex learning of distributed knowledge – the type of learning that is best explained by connectivism. A MOOC is one such learning structure” (Levy and Schrire, 2011).

Richard Baraniuk, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Rice University and founder of the non-profit education project Connexions, views the impact of MOOCs in education as a strong contributor in the open education movement. (Baraniuk, 2012) “MOOCs democratize access to high-quality learning experiences, provide a massive potential audience for talented instructors and enable students to form long-lasting social bonds with students from around the world, which bodes well for our increasingly global economy” (Baraniuk).

Yet there are many in the academia world who are skeptical and uncertain regarding the quality of education a MOOC offers and whether or not they will meet the educational demands in the future to the degree that some forecasters anticipate. There is a great deal of hype about the compounding future growth of MOOCs and yet there are concerns whether they can truly meet the demands and whether or not technology will support these demands. For those educators focused on developing MOOCs, there are a series of concerns still unresolved; how to make the MOOC pay for itself, effective student learning assessment and the difference between receiving credit from an accredited university and a certificate from a MOOC. In addition there is evidence in the research that suggests when online students evaluate teachers they rank them lower than in the real life classroom setting. This poses a real problem in the fair evaluation of educators.

The financial situation among current and prospective students is a contributor to the demand for free online courses offered in MOOCs. “The enormous buzz about MOOCs is not due to the technology’s intrinsic educational value, but due to the seductive possibilities of lower cost” (Vardi, 2012). Student debt is now over \$1 trillion combined with a weaker economy and fewer jobs causing it to be even more difficult for students to repay their loans. (Vardi, 2012). There is a focus about the rising costs of health care when in comparison tuition rose faster than the cost of medical care to a staggering 559% increase between 1985 and 2011 which prohibits many people from furthering their education. (Koller, 2012). MOOCs are being offered via platforms other than colleges, “the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently announced a round of 10 grants for the creation of MOOCs for remedial coursework. The growth in the number of MOOCs is now underway with the appearance of several organizations partnering with major universities to provide a variety of courses” (Herman, 2012).

In a recent survey of over 1000 expert and other users of the internet conducted by Pew Research Center on their predictions of higher level education in the year 2020, “many respondents agreed that university-level education will have to adopt new methods of teaching and certification driven by opportunity, economic concerns and student and parent demands” (Anderson, Boyles & Rainie, 2012). Advancements in technology create opportunities for students to interact with the course material, for example by answering a question posed part way through a lecture and given immediate feedback if the answer is not correct until they enter the right response. (Koller, 2012) Students are given homework, quizzes and tests and earn a certificate at the successful completion of a course which they can show to a potential employer. Feedback from students participating in courses through Coursera has been highly positive from students unable to take traditional college courses due to the high cost, disabilities that may restrict their ability to participate in a real-live classroom and those in underdeveloped countries without access to college courses. (Koller, 2012)

Yet there are concerns among educators about the broad range use of MOOCs as ineffective tools for the smaller non-technical course such as those that are more research and project focused. (Martin, 2012) Feedback and student assessment are challenged within a MOOC setting as with other forms of online learning. Students lose that one on one teacher to student attention that is experienced in the traditional classroom setting and can occur in online learning outside of courses such as MOOCs which are offered globally and have hundreds upon thousands of participants. Students can quickly become lost within a MOOC threatening their motivation and engagement. Many colleges and universities around the world are giving consideration to advances in online learning including the MOOC platform. It’s clear too that MOOCs will be met with some resistance and reluctance by some educators.

Universities and organizations boasting the hundreds upon thousands of registrants to their courses have met some criticism when entrants settle in or out of the MOOC. “Both MIT and Coursera have had to defend the tremendous attrition rates in their courses... MIT’s course 6.002x, Circuits and Electronics, there were 155,000 registrations....from 160 countries... 23,000 tried the first problem set, 9,000 passed the mid-term and 7,157 passed the course as a whole” (Daniel, 2012). The institutions then defend these challenges by comparing these numbers to how many years it would take to teach the course to that many students, in this example the answer at MIT was 40 years. (Daniel, 2012) Coursera has not been left without scrutiny about the credibility of their courses. There were so many cases of plagiarism in one of the courses in Coursera that the instructors were begging students to stop. (Daniel, 2012). There are many thoughts on how and why this occurs, namely though, the major culprit is peer grading. (Daniel, 2012) While peer grading offers a solution to assist the instructor, it challenges the quality of the learning process and credibility of the program offered.

There’s little doubt that MOOCs have stirred up academia and created quite a commotion. “In retrospect, 2012 may well be remembered as the year when Internet technology enabled the popularity of MOOCs – or a form of disruptive or transformative education currently growing at a meteoric rate” (Hyman, 2012). While it’s an exciting time in education there are many questions left unanswered to include; how to ensure the quality of the courses and learning and a business model that allows for free open access education. (Baraniuk, 2012).

## **Project Design, Implementation and Evaluation**

### **Topic for Instruction**

This Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is focused on today's design student. It is offered via the web-based learning method which is a learning methodology "for *course delivery* or a methodology for *developing* a learning environment." (Alessi & Trollip, 2001) By use of this tool, this course will teach skills and techniques for the design student in developing their brand as it relates to conducting a job search for a professional career.

In an ever changing world, designers have to adapt to new technology in presenting their portfolio, conducting a job search and networking in the professional environment. Not all design programs offer students a course that teaches these techniques in addition to helping the designer develop his/her resume, gain confidence in interviewing skills and understanding the different careers and work environments within the design industry.

### **Description of Target Audience/Learner**

This global course is intended for design students who are seeking their first real job in the working world. It is focused toward the designer who is at the beginning of his/her career and is seeking guidance on how to develop a resume, present a portfolio, conduct a job search and interview effectively. It is geared toward the design student who has completed at least three years in a four year undergraduate design program and are about to embark on their job search. Other design students could participate too such as those enrolled in a two-year design program who want to gain the knowledge and skills needed to pursue their career. Non-matriculated designers may want to participate as well in order to gain knowledge in the topics offered.

This is a full ten week course encompassing the many aspects of professional practice which combine several modules as described in the course outline. This course is designed to provide the learner with skills to develop their brand or professional identity for purposes of presenting themselves in a professional arena. Topics will include:

- ✚ Resume Development
- ✚ Cover Letter
- ✚ Interviewing Skills
- ✚ Networking
- ✚ Job Search Techniques
- ✚ Portfolio Development
- ✚ Portfolio Presentation
- ✚ Work Environments

### **Description of Methodology**

At the start of the design and development of this MOOC the connectivist format was the focus. It is an intriguing instructional method which allows for students to participate and interact with one another throughout the entire course. In a sense, the learners steer the course direction and determine what is and is not important. The idea of students influencing the course outcome and learning seemed unique and could make for an enjoyable experience for learners. However, further evaluation of the connectivist pedagogy created some doubt about the ability to incorporate the learning modules of this course. The instructor would not have control of what

the students learn and worse inaccurate or misguided information could jeopardize student's knowledge and application of effective career development skills. The potential too exists for widespread frustration and confusion among the learners.

The design of a successful MOOC is less about an intriguing and fun experience. Rather, a successful MOOC is one where students stay engaged through the length of the course and where their mastery of the subject matter is fairly assessed. The instructor for the professional practice topics has to be the one with the expertise. The students in this course are attending most likely with minimal background and experience in the subjects discussed. The broadcast MOOC or xMOOC is the better format for this type of course. It allows the teacher control over what is taught, how learning is assessed and provides for clear control and course direction.

### **The Online Learning Platform**

The design of this platform is based on research conducted during the literature review and additional research about the design and development of the course materials. Among the articles reviewed, one study in particular was helpful in thinking through the most effective methods in course development for online learning, by the [US Department of Education](#). In this study updated in 2010 from the original version in 2009, researchers found that online learning can be as effective as traditional in-class education as long as the technology and tools used promote student engagement and retention. (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia & Jones, 2010)

Students will register and conduct all of the course activities, assignments and tests via a website. The prototype of the website contains course instructions and sample modules which may be found at [www.professionalpracticeindesignmooc.weebly.com](http://www.professionalpracticeindesignmooc.weebly.com) The online platform within

the website is designed to be simple and easy to navigate. A recurrent theme found throughout the research is that students can quickly become frustrated and lose motivation to continue the course if it's too confusing to navigate the site. For this reason, each module (i.e. resume development, for example is one module) is designed to look and navigate similarly with the same pull down menu options to include; module outline, lecture presentation (video), weekly assignment and quizzes/tests.

Built into each module and throughout the course students may return to review material previously presented. This will reduce frustration over topics they've not yet mastered and provide flexibility for various learning styles. Some students will need more time to revisit and review topics than others. Once a weekly module is presented, the next one will open. This way the instructor maintains control over the pace of the class and students are all on the same module together.

### **Course Outline**

This is a ten week course and after each week students will be given assignments to demonstrate what they have learned. For instance, week one is an introduction to the course, technology used and course objectives. Students will be given a short quiz to assess their learning in this first module.

In the second week, students will learn how to write an effective resume. They will view a video presentation on the topic and take a skills assessment quiz. Such is the purpose of applying dual coding; "dual coding theory suggests that learning is enhanced when complimentary information codes are received simultaneously" (Alessi & Trollip, 2001). In addition, students will have access to many articles and examples of well written resumes to

review. Following the second module, students will be given a homework assignment to write their resume followed by peer review and assessment. Socialization within the MOOC is limited to requests made by the instructor, for example, to post their feedback on the course blog. More often in this xMOOC, students' interaction will be more on a personal level through email, Facebook or Twitter. Students will listen and view lectures, complete homework assignments weekly and receive instant feedback regarding the success in the course. Customized technology provides the means by which student's work will be assessed and graded.

The following weeks (or modules) will cover topics sequentially as students build what is referred to as their personal brand tool box. Students will learn via:

- 1) Audio conferencing
- 2) Video instruction
- 3) Links to various articles and websites as additional topic resources
- 4) Mock interviews (for critique and evaluation)
- 5) Interacting with other students and design professionals via the MOOC blog at the request of the instructor.

### **Description of Objective and Assignments**

Throughout the course students will meet several milestones of development and demonstrate the skills he/she has learned. The idea is to help design students build their own personal brand or tool box of resources in which to engage in a career search. Student's learning will contribute to their increased confidence in reaching out to professionals within the industry, presenting themselves professionally with a well written cover letter and resume and improved presentation skills.

As an example of the student's interaction within the MOOC, the *Interviewing Skills* module starts with a video presentation by the instructor include PowerPoint slides such as the one in Figure 1 below:

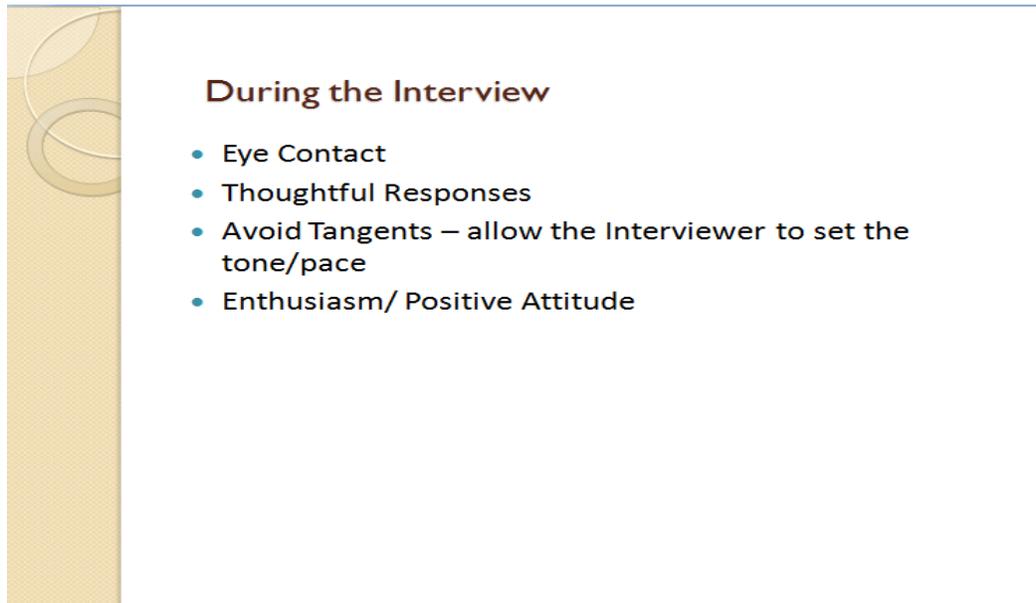


Figure 1

In addition to the instructor's presentation, the module will contain links to other resources on the same subject, such as this one to show a [mock interview](#). In order for the student to master a particular skill or assignment it's important to have multiple methods in which to learn the subject matter. Other resources on the subject will be in the form of links to online articles such as this one by monster.com, [tips to improve interviewing skills](#).

Each module will consist of an assignment that is due by the end of the week for that particular topic. Weekly assignment deadlines encourage students to manage their time effectively and stay motivated. Timely deadlines are helpful to the instructor too by keeping all of the students on the same topic and schedule. At any time during the course, students can go

back and review the topic content if they need to. The modules are designed for ease in navigation and to limit or eliminate any confusion or frustration for participants in finding information and following along.

As an example of one of the assignments or exercises the students will complete, refer to the information below in Figure 2. This is an assignment within the *Cover Letter* module. After the students listen to the instructor's presentation, and access other resources such as examples of well written cover letters, they will then be asked to complete an assignment. In addition to the instructional resources provided by the teacher, students can source their own resources on the subject matter and share what they've found helpful with the rest of the class participants. For instance, a student may decide to search the internet for well written sample cover letters. Upon doing this search he/she may discover a resource such as <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Cover-Letter> and share this on twitter or blogging. The quality of the resources students post and share will need to be reviewed by the instructor to make sure that it is consistent with the subject matter and not a contradiction.

## Cover Letter Assignment Module 2 Week 2:

- Select a job posting that you are interested in. Some suggested resources:
  1. [www.behance.net](http://www.behance.net)
  2. [www.coroflot.com](http://www.coroflot.com)
  3. [www.idsa.org](http://www.idsa.org)
  4. [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)
  5. [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)
  6. Facebook, Twitter and Blogs have job postings too!
  7. Corporation or design firm website (only if there's a job opening/posting)
- **Write a cover letter** responding specifically to the job posting. GOOD COVER LETTERS ARE READ AND ARE MEANINGFUL!
- **Include the job posting** with this assignment.
- **Cover Letter Must Haves:**
  - 1) Include your name and contact information on the cover letter.
  - 2) The company name, contact person (make a phone call if you need to get a name for the Creative Director, Recruiter or Human Resources Manager) and always include a full company mailing address.
  - 3) Proper Salutation (i.e. Dear Ms. Edwards:)
  - 4) Limit the use of "I", "me" and "my" – focus on what the company is seeking and how YOU can contribute in meeting their needs/qualifications.
  - 5) Don't repeat what is on your resume – make full use of the cover letter to further promote yourself. For instance, your personality traits, skills, talents, special projects (not on your resume), attributes about you that set you apart from another applicant.
  - 6) Keep your use of type consistent with your resume.
  - 7) Watch your spelling and grammar! Proofread and have someone else proofread for you....don't rely on spell check.

**Grading** – Your cover letter will be graded on a scale of A, B, C, D or F based on the following elements:

- Overall appearance (use of white space/layout)
- Use of action verbs to articulate work experience
- Spelling and grammatical errors will affect the cover letter grade
- Too many uses of the words "I", "me" and "my" will negatively impact the grade – think about what you bring to the role/job and how you can help *the company*!

Figure 2

### **Sequence of Instruction: Flowchart**

To help explain and communicate the flow of this MOOC to the students, a flowchart with an audio presentation will accompany the course prototype. (Figure 3) The student will start out by signing into the course and assign themselves a User ID and Password. Once they are signed in and registered, they will be asked to view the introduction section for an overview of the course content and their role in the MOOC. In the next section students will contribute to the blog by introducing themselves to include their geographic location and knowledge of the subject matter.

Each week the instructor will introduce a different topic and present a lecture on this topic via a video presentation. Additionally, students will be directed to other resources to further enhance their learning. For example, links will be built into the learning modules to connect to other video presentations by other instructors on the same subject matter. There will also be links to online articles for further research. At the completion of each weekly module, the students will be given an assignment to reflect on the module. Once the course is completed, students will have developed their resume, written a cover letter, participated in an interview, and successfully presented their design portfolio.

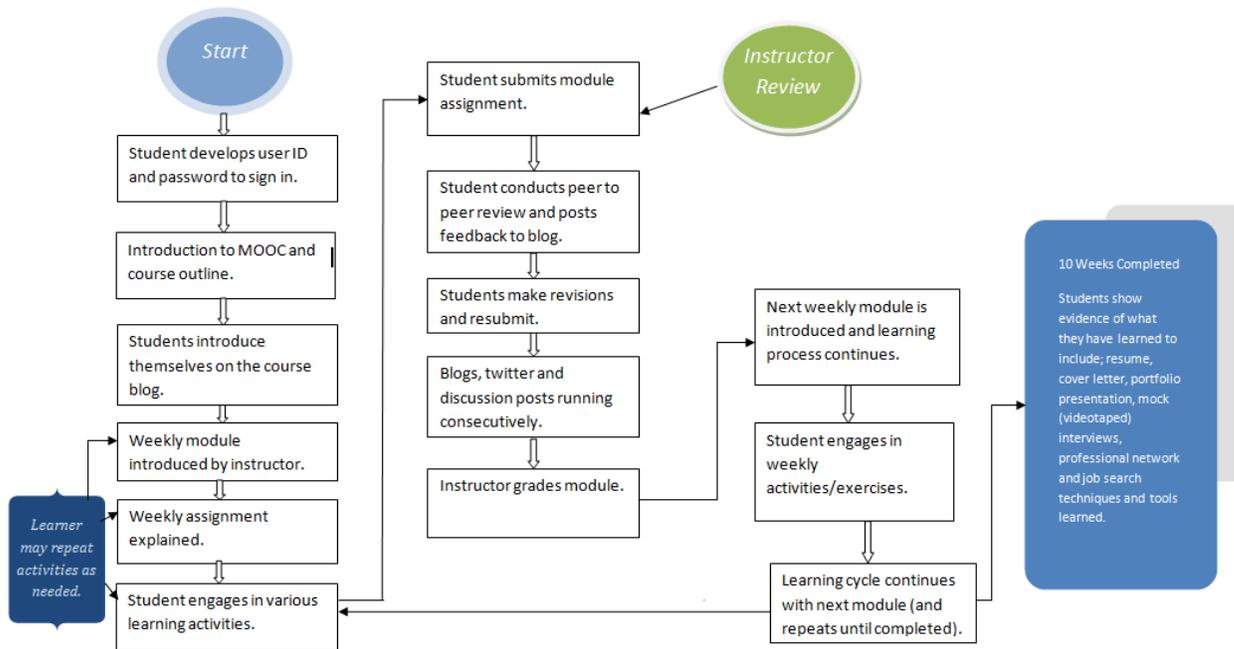


Figure 3

## Student Evaluation and Assessment

Similar to the traditional classroom setting, students need and want to know how they are doing within online learning. Students will be graded promptly upon completing their assignment each week. They will have quizzes and tests intermittently to further assess their learning. Learners will have many opportunities to test their knowledge along the way to further confirm that they have mastered the material. “Learning should be *assessed*, usually with tests or rubrics, which are an important part of the instructional process” (Alessi & Trollip, 2001).

There will be some socialization between students and between students and instructor. Participants will communicate with one another via email, blogging and twitter. Opportunities will be provided for students to view one another’s work and offer feedback, peer to peer assessment and helpful critique. For example, in the module *Resume Development*, the completed resumes will be posted within

the blog for other students to view and share their feedback. This is in addition to the instructor's evaluation which would be completed prior to posting resumes for student's review.

## SUMMARY

### Conclusion

This project focused on the exploration of MOOCs from various perspectives. The literature review included; a look at web based learning in general, the two types of MOOCs; cMOOCs and xMOOCs, case studies of both successful and unsuccessful MOOCs and how to design a massive open online course. Additionally, it may actually be probable to offer a course on the subject of professional practice as it appears from the research that one does not currently exist.

Initially the cMOOC seemed to be the right format for the professional practice course. However, a developing gap arose. Quickly the course would risk losing credibility as students new to these topics began assessing other students work. The broadcast format or xMOOC was determined to be the better choice for a course in professional practice where the instructor is the knowledge expert and would more fairly gauge student's learning and understanding.

Many questions still remain. How do we know a MOOC is successful? Is it because a student has learned a new skill, received a certificate, or once they have secured a new job? It could be all of these things. To what extent will colleges, universities and employers accept these courses as they do on campus or online accredited course offerings? How will MOOCs sustain themselves for long-term existence? Lastly, is it possible to offer college level courses for free to

hundreds upon thousands of students ongoing? These are just some of the unanswered questions as we think about and discover what a MOOC is and will be going forward. There is still a great deal of research to be discovered which makes the world of MOOCs an open canvas for creative learning and education.

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**Fitness Forum Physical Therapy, Syracuse, New York** February 1997 - May 1999  
Human Resources Manager

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**Health Care Data Systems, DeWitt, New York** July 1990 – July 1994  
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