**Contextualise this – taking devil’s advocate position**

**Are we afraid of participation rates in short courses / MOOC or are we just dodging the bullet?**

**Grainne:** People join for many reasons and with many aims. Need to be self-initiated, self-positioned, need to have motivation. Lots of material, can be a huge challenge. Lot of cheating, even though not accredited, even because people can

**Mark:** Categorically yes. Petrified. These concerns are not new. Produces graph from Ormond Simpson. MOOCs are a sub-set of online learning. Surely every course should publicise its completion rate, as part of the informed participation of learners. If we’re not afraid, we’re fools.

**Grainne:** Retention rates are important. Been looking at that in DCU. This goes back to the reasons people take MOOCs. Completion rate is not necessarily a bad thing.

**Tim:** Completion is a tricky thing. People complete over long periods of times. Blanket notion of completion is very problematic. Can take credit to other institutions. Learning journeys are perhaps more interersting

**Sally:** Global health and prof development. Huge range of contexts. We can’t see all those journeys – some local people take a group through, and that’s not visible.

**Tim:** How many people started at the university and dropped out in the first year? They won’t show as non-completers because they weren’t technically enrolled for a degree.

**Mark:** In Ireland, government largely does not fund online courses. Need to be able to evidence the public benefit and the private benefit. Ireland as a country has not invested in MOOCs.

**Isabel:** Amy Herne published in EdSurge last year saying MOOCs should be compared with other additional content online. Enrolment threshold is so low it’s not surprising so many people don’t turn up.

**Mairead:** Are we talking about edutainment. Is education about completing 100% of a course?

**Platforms, do they overly influence learning design decisions and misshape instead of enhance the learning experience or do they ensure consistency and comparability?**

**Mark:** Absolutely yes. Platforms are not neutral. Key word is ‘overly’ (too great). They constrain the art of the possible. If the aim is to produce something standardised, this is not the end game I’m looking for. Learning is messy. We have no agreement on which learning theory equates to reality (different approaches to learning that emerged from the HOTEL project). We want a ‘yearning to learn’.

**Grainne:** Platforms can influence learning design. But can enable interventions to be designed before they go on the platform. There are a range of different types of MOOC. Grainne broke that down into a typology.

**Tim:** When Edinburgh took decision to go on Coursera, Tim asked should we aim to standardise? Stanford advised using as many platforms as possible. Technology companies go bust. Edinburgh went on Coursera, and FutureLearn, and EdX, and Google CourseBuilder, and Blackboard, and also has home-made platforms for some specialist areas. MCQs, asynchronous/synchronous group work. No evidence that people complained about moving between them. Different syntactic conventions. They vary in their ability to use plug-ins.

**Mark:** ASU is a partner with DCU. DCU is Moodle, they are Blackboard. Platforms definitely impact on student experience. The richness of online platforms is in diversity. Big, small, emerging, declining platforms. Diversity is important because species become extinct as conditions change. Need to futureproof. The way you get flair and creativity is that you encourage experimentation. Platform has an impact, but it is impacted by what you start with.

**Grainne:** Standardisation. Agree about the importance of creativity. Learning design frameworks encourage you to be creative. Doesn’t think there will be a ‘killer platform’. Platforms are used for different purposes.

**‘If you are not paying, you are the project’, are we treating our learners equitably, or are we taking advantage of them.**

**Grainne:** MOOCs were promoted as inclusive and opening access. Majority of people already highly educated. Predominantly from western perspective. Seeing blurring of the lines but lots of work to do in terms of equity.

**Mark:** We are taking advantage of them. Our jobs are dependent on the income we generate through students. Universities have been incredibly successful in perpetuating privilege. You would predict that universities would enter the online space to maintain their control and privilege. FutureLearn has now moved to subscription model. To what extent do these MOOCs change our learners’ lives? MOOCs are not neutral. They are perpetuating privilege. If educators are not careful, we are playing someone else’s game.

**Grainne:** I agree. Need to think about how we provide more equity.

**Bronwen:** University of Cape Town has been looking at who private companies work with. Tends to be the high-ranking universities.

**Sally:** There are ways forward. Looking at collaborations with institutions. MOOC is just part of a larger project about teaching and learning and building digital skills.

**Tim:** Worldwide University rankings are accurate! University of Edinburgh has put a lot of energy into getting scholarships for students. Who are the disadvantaged learners and how can we find the money to help them?

**Mairead:** Is it justifiable to use learner data

**Conor:** This goes beyond MOOCs. It is the Faustian bargain. We get access to the content in return for our data. To what degree is this obvious? To what extent do learners understand what is happening? Do they care?

**?** Start-ups will tell SFSX that they are changing the world. We’re biased because most people involved in delivering education are taking a trade-off against a sense of vocation / mission / purpose. MOOCs are a shining beacon of what people who worked to make the Internet wanted to happen. Stands as a contrast to Facebook, with its toxic corporate culture. You can see amazing information without signing up or by sharing minimal education. We are doing what the Internet was made to do.

**Mark:** Education is third largest export earner in NZ and in Australia.

**Do-it-yourself learning, otherwise known as autonomous learning. Is there an over-emphasis on this, particularly when we know the importance of the teacher/instructor in learning contexts?**

**Mark:** Learning is not the same as education. Learning has always occurred. Teachers are very dangerous in the context of learning. Brought paper along on the impact of beliefs o shaping learning design. Also brought along Hank Becker’s work. Beliefs shape with design. The learner needs as much freedom as possible, to learn what they want to learn. Do you teach people how to fish? The learners should be the teachers. In Maori, there is no different word for teaching and for learning.

**Grainne:** Rhetoric of learner centred. Spectrum of different pedagogical approaches. No one is right. It’s about the right mix for the learner. Need to teach learners digital literacy skills. Teacher still matter most.

**Mark:** Scratch a good teacher and you will find a moral purpose.