FOREWORD

Mimi Miyoung Lee

The rapid rise and continuous proliferation of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and open education during the last decade have been documented in many forms of media, academic journals, and professional meetings. A cadre of high-profile trailblazers and early adopters have enthusiastically embraced MOOCs and open education for their potential to foster greater educational equity. In his 2013 keynote speech for the International E-Learn Conference in Las Vegas, one such MOOC pioneer, George Siemens, emphasized the power of MOOCs “as a keystone concept in reformulating education models and creating new ecosystems.” Others, more cautiously, have looked for firm evidence of learning success, in part, through a critical examination of attrition and completion rates.

While the impact of MOOCs and open education is global, there has always been a need and a demand for more local stories of applications and implementations from different parts of the world, especially those from emerging and less developed economic regions. Such local stories are important for several reasons. For instance, understanding the regionally specific implementation and subsequent outcomes of various MOOC or open education initiatives have huge implications for adoption and implementation policies at multiple levels of practice. Second, as the connections between formal and informal learning are becoming more seamless, MOOCs can play a vital role bridging the formal to the informal and vice versa. Third, localized cases can help policymakers and practitioners find better ways to design, implement, and evaluate new initiatives related to MOOCs and open education in their communities.

The localized examples also serve to challenge possible assumptions and beliefs behind the production and dissemination of MOOCs and open educational resources. For champions and skeptics alike, the promises and challenges of MOOCs and open education have largely been discussed within the social and cultural values based on North American and European educational systems. Locating the predominance of the MOOC and open education conversation in parts of what some now refer to as “the Global North” is not surprising as these regions continue to be the top producers of MOOCs as well as the prime investigators engaged in MOOC research. Equally important and more urgently needed are investigations into the ways these MOOCs get socially and culturally translated and interpreted in different parts of the world, especially areas with limited educational access and resources.

In response, this book makes salient all of these important issues related to MOOCs and open education in “the Global South” via powerful narratives of local and regional applications and implementations. The editors of this book, Ke Zhang, Curt Bonk, Tom Reeves, and Tom Reynolds, brought their many years of experience and recognized expertise both in research and practice to assemble and curate this much-needed platform of provocative dialogues and reflections. As you
will discover in the Preface, these four renowned scholars have been at the forefront of MOOCs and open education as well as online learning in general from the early days, serving as designers, instructors, researchers, and evaluators of many types of educational innovations.

One could not hope for a better team of experts than these four editors to address the various pivotal issues related to open education in the Global South. As this volume shows, their long record of individual and collective successes as champions of MOOCs and OER is extended in multiple novel and exciting directions with the publication of this timely and eye-opening book. Each chapter will transport you to a different part of the world where MOOCs and/or open educational resources (OER) are being deployed.

The idea for this volume was conceived during the 2017 E-Learn Pre-conference in Vancouver whose goal was to draw attention to how developing countries of the world are taking advantage of these exciting and impactful innovations known as MOOCs and open education. Interestingly, this pre-conference traces its origin back to the 2013 E-Learn Pre-conference resulting in an earlier parallel volume, *MOOCs and Open Education Around the World*, published by Routledge in 2015, of which I was personally fortunate to play a part. These two pre-conference symposia served as working sessions aimed at defining a robust research agenda around open education and MOOCs. In the process, they responded to the increasing need to better understand how people in different regions of the world are implementing and using these innovations. In both symposia, many important issues related to OER and MOOCs were identified and discussed with participants from around the world; among them, accreditation, credentialing, quality standards, instructor roles, participant motivation, assessment, and attrition. The excitement during those symposia can be experienced in many of the pages of this particular volume as well as the first.

The possibilities for transformational changes in education through MOOCS and open education, especially for learners in developing regions of the world, have been widely debated and, for many, generally accepted. However, cases from the direct narratives of local educators, researchers, and administrators have rarely been reported and shared in a common platform with such depth until this volume. Readers will find this timely edition full of valuable case studies, critical perspectives, powerful lessons, and thoughtful answers that will prompt deeper questions as well as capture the continuing evolution and growth of MOOCs and open education. As indicated, the following 28 chapters with cases from Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, the Pacific/Oceania, and the Caribbean were all masterfully curated by Zhang, Bonk, Reeves, and Reynolds. Each chapter speaks for itself but also engages in a dialogue with other chapters in ways that are sure to challenge the readers’ previous assumptions and stimulate future creative initiatives.

Mimi Miyoung Lee
Mimi Miyoung Lee is Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Houston (UH). She received her Ph.D. in Instructional Systems Technology from Indiana University at Bloomington in 2004. She is an expert in critical ethnography and design-based research as well as online, flexible, and open forms of learning. Mimi has published research on STEM-related professional development programs, global and multicultural education, cross-cultural training research, interactive videoconferencing, woman leaders in Asia, self-directed learning from MOOCs and OpenCourseWare (OCW), and emerging learning technologies such as wikis. Dr. Lee was co-editor of MOOCs and Open Education Around the World published by Routledge in 2015 which was awarded the 2016 AECT DDL Distance Education Book Award. At the same time, Mimi led a special issue of the International Journal on E-Learning on MOOCs and Open Education which simultaneously was published as a book by AACE. She may be contacted at mlee7@uh.edu.
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