EUNIS 2019: Is there a Nordic Scandinavian model for MOOCs? Studying the effects of digital transformation in higher education in Norway, Sweden and Denmark

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1. Summary

We study MOOCs in the Scandinavian context as a key empirical area to investigate some of the short and long-term effects of digital transformation in higher education. Several trends at play with MOOCs have broader relevance for other areas of higher education affected by digitalization. For example, through MOOCs, we can study the involvement of technology providers in higher education, and the changes these relationships bring to traditional learning. The delivery of MOOCs is linked to new forms of negotiations and tensions between academic, administrative and IT staff. Another important phenomenon is how these new teaching formats blur boundaries between HEIs and the broader society, and between formal and informal education. MOOCs can also shed light on the potential for pedagogical innovation at play in the broader field of digital learning (e.g. big data, learning analytics, flipped learning). At the EUNIS2019-conference we will present a work in progress that gives an overview of current studies on MOOCs in the Scandinavian countries. We critically assess these in the light of global developments (outside the Nordic region) and in the context of a broader, future comparative study on the topic.

2. EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Over the years digital transformation in higher education (HE) has increased, most likely due to international trends such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) and similar alternatives for open education with the support of technology (Fevolden and Tømte, 2015). Ongoing policy attention (Nordics and beyond) towards quality issues in HE (Karlsson et al. 2014), and a shift towards student-active learning also impact digitalization in that digital resources and tools may support these approaches (Damsa et al. 2015). Technology support new and flexible studies and may affect curricula and study habits, such as blended learning formats, which combines online and campus teaching and learning. Moreover, there are also expectations towards digitalization from government's side. For example, in Norway a 2016-17 white paper (St.meld. 16) suggests that HE institutions (HEIs) raise the digitalization of the education sector to a strategic level and implement comprehensive measures for digitizing teaching and learning. Following that, in September 2017 the Ministry of Education and Research launched the government's digitalization strategy (2017-2021) towards HEIs (KD 2017).

The current work is informed by the following overarching question: is there a Scandinavian model of MOOCs? We thus focus on MOOCs in the Scandinavian context as a key empirical area to investigate some of the short and long-term effects of digital transformation in HE. Several trends at play with

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4. AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Cathrine E. Tømte is Associate Professor at Dept. of Information Systems at University of Agder, UiA, and participant in the research group, Center for Digital Transformation, CeDiT. Tømte has a demonstrated history of working in the research industry, and is skilled in ICT, Digitalization, Online Learning, Sociology, Lecturing, Organizational Development, and Gender Studies. Strong education professional with a Dr.Art (PhD) focused in Organizational communication (ICT-based) from Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU). Before joining Dept. of Information Systems at UiA, Tømte worked as a research professor at Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, NIFU, where she was responsible for projects on digitalization of education and learning.

She has also been affiliated to the OECD where she was responsible for the gender ICT and education strand within the New Millennium Learners-project. Previously she has also worked as a researcher at the Center for ICT in Education. Tømte has published her work in books such as *International Handbook of Higher Education Policy and Governance* and in several scientific journal such as *Computers & Education, European Journal for Teacher Education, The International Review of research in open and distributed learning* and in *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy.* In the latter she was also guest editor of a special issue on online learning in the Nordic countries.

Vito Laterza is Associate Professor of Development Studies at the University of Agder (UiA), and research associate in the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation, University of Johannesburg. Vito received his PhD in social anthropology from the University of Cambridge. He is an anthropologist and organisational scholar working on higher education studies, political economy, organizational ethnography, technology, and communication studies. Laterza's started his work on digitalization in higher education as researcher in a study of virtual research environment at the Centre for Applied Research in Educational Technologies, University of Cambridge (2005-2007, funded by JISC). He was also lead researcher on a study of participation in health research projects in the UK (2011-2013, funded by NIHR). He is currently leading a study of academics' and institutional responses to the #FeesMustFall university student protests in South Africa. Vito has published several edited collections, articles and book chapters in leading international journals and publishing outlets, such as Cambridge University Press; *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*; and *Journal of Development Studies.* He has received competitive funding from several high-profile research institutions (i.e. ESRC and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) and held research and teaching posts in universities in Norway, UK and South Africa.

Rómulo M. Pinheiro is Professor of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Agder (UiA), Norway, where he co-heads the research group on Public Governance and Leadership (GOLEP). He is also a Senior Researcher at NORCE (Norwegian Research Centre), a Visiting Professor at the University of Tampere (Finland) and member of the Centers for Digital Transformation (CeDiT) and for Advanced Studies in Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS) based at UiA. Rómulo's research interests are located at the intersection of public policy and administration, organisational theory, economic geography, innovation and higher education studies. His work has been published in scientific journals like Public Administration Review, Science and Public Policy, Higher Education, Studies in Higher Education, European Journal of Higher Education, Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration, Tertiary Education and Management, City, Culture and Society, International Journal of Cultural Policy, etc. Rómulo has co-edited numerous books by Springer, Routledge, Palgrave, Sense, Emerald. He has secured close to 3 million Euro in external, competitive funding, and is currently leading a number of comparative projects.