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## Enabling Online Learning: Who are the Educators?

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### Abstract

This chapter examines the teaching activities that educators engage in, in the context of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Data was gathered from 28 professionals involved in teaching on seven different MOOCs on the FutureLearn (FL) platform, using a multiple case study approach. Participants' prior experience was in face-to-face environments. The analysis uncovers the roles of people who carry out the teaching in MOOCs, and the wide variety of teaching activities in these settings. It provides a nuanced definition of teaching online courses (MOOCs), an activity which demands subject matter expertise, pedagogical decisions about the learning design, and technical skills. The need for this range of skills means professional development in these areas is crucial. This investigation contributes to a conceptualisation of who the educators are in online learning contexts and of what teaching means in MOOCs and in other online or blended learning contexts.

Keywords: MOOCs, Educators, online teaching, online learning

### Introduction

Division of labour in university teaching is changing. Traditionally, teaching has involved a single academic delivering a lecture or leading a tutorial session. As universities introduce online and distance learning to Higher Education (HE), labour is divided across a range of practitioners with diverse knowledge and expertise (Sharpe & Oliver, 2013). The terms 'distance learning' and 'online learning' may overlap, but they are not synonyms (Bates, 2005). Distance learning can involve learning material that is not available online (for instance, The Open University in the UK has been creating printed materials such as module handbooks and audio visual material such as video/TV programmes since 1971); and online learning can happen without physical or geographical distance (for instance, in a physical class an educator may ask students before/after a class, to interact with learning material such as a video online). However, in both circumstances, educators in distance and in online learning work within inter-professional teams comprising academic domain experts, technologists, planners, and media production specialists who work together to design and produce learning content, and to facilitate teaching, learning and assessment, implementing new and ever-evolving professional practice (Littlejohn et al., 2015). This chapter focuses on the emerging division of labour in the context of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in HE.

MOOCs differ significantly from traditional courses in that they are open to anyone and can be accessed free of charge (Ferguson, 2019) often recruiting thousands of learners. Numerous digital platforms have been designed and produced to host these courses, including Coursera and edX in the USA and FutureLearn in the UK. These platform providers offer services to universities to enable them to extend their reach and income through online

teaching (Littlejohn & Hood, 2018). Teaching on a MOOC involves a number of tasks and roles for educators as they work on their development and deployment. Online teaching more broadly may be implemented as online video lectures, effectively replicating face-to-face teaching rather than re-designing learning in ways that are effective for remote learners (Bates, 2016). Redesigning teaching requires a wide range of expertise, discussed in the next section.

## Background

Teaching online and at a distance requires a broader range of expertise than face-to-face teaching (Salmon, 2000). There are different understandings of what the role of educators is, and how they facilitate learning. Kember (1997) identified five different conceptions of teaching. Two of these conceptions focus on the role of the educator: teaching as imparting information (1) and teaching as transmitting structured knowledge (2). The other three are associated with the degree of active engagement of the students: teaching as an interaction between teacher and student (3), teaching as facilitating students' understanding (4), and teaching as facilitation of conceptual change and intellectual development within the student (5). Unlike the physical classroom, where teaching is typically delivered by a single teacher, online teaching requires a broad range of expertise.

When Moore (1997) set out his theory of transactional distance in the context of distance education, he identified a number of educator roles. These include presentation; supporting the learner's motivation; stimulating analysis and criticism; advising and counselling; arranging practice, application, testing and evaluation; and facilitating the students' knowledge creation. Moore did not set these roles out as an exhaustive list, but drew attention to the multiplicity of roles, including references to the teacher as a listener, contributor, administrator, organiser of teaching space, user of interactive video<sup>1</sup>, dialogue facilitator, contributor of appropriately structured learning materials, and collaborator with design teams (i.e. content experts, instructional designers and media specialists).

More recently, Salmon and her colleagues (Salmon et al., 2017) identified a series of teaching responsibilities, which extend those identified by Moore. These include access and motivation, online socialisation, information exchange, knowledge construction, and development. Supporting these aspects of teaching, there are what Salmon et al. call 'e-moderators': essentially educators who are responsible for enhancing connections between course participants, providing external links to relevant resources, building and deepening discussions, linking and highlighting relevant conversations, encouraging reflection, responses and the development of external networks, and producing weekly reviews.

This team-working approach has become more evident over the last decade as HE moved increasingly online. The introduction of (connectivist) MOOCs is an example of the division of labour in online education evolving from teaching carried out by a single teacher or a small group of teachers, to a model involving large multirole teams (Cormier, 2008).

Commonly-used titles for online educators include 'instructor' (Hew et al., 2018) and 'facilitator' (Liyana Gunawardena et al., 2013). White & White (2016) expanded these terms to include 'subject matter experts' and 'instructional designers', as well as 'learning designers' and 'educators'. Ferguson & Whitelock (2014) examined some of the ways in which MOOC educators introduced themselves to learners via emails, and identified multiple roles played by these educators, including 'host', 'instructor', 'assessor', and 'evaluator'.

White & White (2016) explored how MOOCs can be embedded into Higher Education in campus-based universities. They argued that, using this model, learning designers take a central role in MOOC development, working within a 'third space' located between academic and managerial roles. Their analysis identified a range of other peripheral actors (including

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<sup>1</sup> Moore did not include books, though, as back then books were the norm, whereas interactive videos were not

legal and copyright specialists, and marketing experts) who make significant contributions to shaping the course design and development, but also distribute the division of labour normally associated with educators. A study conducted by Buhl et al. (2018) pointed to a possible 'fragmentation' of the educator role in this new division of labour.

Watolla (2016) highlights that labour is further divided though the trend towards co-participation of online educators (academics, guest lecturers, and so on) with learners, through a 'co-design' process in which learners take on the role of 'co-creators' of course resources. Watolla argues that 'distributed teaching', where teaching is complemented by peer-support and peer learning, is perceived by learners as beneficial.

In summary, practitioners who can be considered 'online educators' include people with a range of roles with broad expertise. Although there is awareness within the Higher Education sector of a shift in educator roles, there is, as yet, no clear understanding of which roles are involved in online teaching, and of what activities are carried out under each role. This issue was emphasised by Ross and her colleagues (Ross et al., 2014) who described online 'teacher experiences and academic identity', highlighting how the role of the MOOC educators is perceived in a number of ways, ranging from 'academic celebrity' to delivering 'a set of automated processes' (p. 60). This variation in terminology is associated with an uncertainty about how teaching online and at a distance differs from teaching face-to-face in a classroom.

To examine this phenomenon, this chapter addresses the question: 'What teaching activities do online educators engage in?' To reduce the variants in practice associated with different online platforms, this study analyses MOOCs run on a single platform, FutureLearn, which is one of the four largest global MOOC providers, with more than 17 million registered learners at the time of writing.

In this chapter, capitalised titles: 'Educator' and 'Mentor' are used to specify two named roles (i.e. categories) on FutureLearn, which are defined in the next paragraph. Although these appear to be discrete categories, they often blur into each other in terms of specific roles and the activities they undertake. However, each title is associated with a specific set of permissions on the platform. A third capitalised title, 'Collaborator', is used to refer to a role that was identified in this research.

FutureLearn 'Educators' are academics 'with specialist knowledge of the course subject' (Coleman, 2016). Their signature appears at the bottom of emails to learners, their name appears with the feedback on the course quizzes, they usually introduce the course at the launch of the MOOC. FutureLearn 'Mentors' are academics 'with a good understanding of the course subject who can help with the discussions' (Coleman, 2016). The term 'Mentor' is interpreted in different ways in different learning contexts. In online social learning environments, including FutureLearn, a reflective mentoring model is used, which helps to develop self-reflection in those who are mentored (Wong & Premkumar, 2007). This is associated with 'learning by interactions and connections with and through a person or a learning object which is likely to be informal and unstructured' (Liu et al., 2012, p.180). Collaborators are not visible to learners on the FutureLearn platform. They are individuals who collaborate with Mentors and Educators to make learning possible. Collaborators include people whose substantive role might be learning designer, administrator, or librarian.

In this chapter, the term 'educator' is used to refer to an interconnected set of roles that extend beyond those who would normally be described as 'teachers', 'lecturers' or 'instructors', depending on the context. It includes professionals who carry out related activities, including learning designers, editors, and librarians. The term 'educator' (with a lower-case 'e') is used to refer to any individual involved directly in the process of MOOC teaching and is also used as an umbrella term.

The literature highlights tensions between established and emergent job roles, though these have not been examined through empirical research. This study bridges this gap through empirical examination of educators who teach in online Higher Education, examining the roles

of the three categories discussed above (Educators, Mentors and Collaborators) to provide a new conceptualisation of who these educators are.

## Methodology

This study examines educators who were involved in the design, production and facilitation of seven FutureLearn MOOCs on the subject of History and Politics. Data was gathered from 28 professionals involved in teaching these MOOCs. Six of these courses were produced by UK institutions and one was offered by a non-UK organisation. Five courses were run by universities and two by specialist institutions. A multiple case study approach to data collection and analysis was used, with each MOOC treated as a separate case (Yin, 2014).

Table 1 outlines the cases and the participants involved with similarities and differences amongst them.

Cases	University partners	Universities & non-university partners	Involved Educators	Involved Mentors	Involved Collaborators
A	✓		✓	✓	✓
B	✓		✓		
C	✓		✓	✓	✓
D	✓		✓	✓	✓
E	✓ (non-UK)		✓		✓
F		✓	✓		✓
G		✓	✓		✓

Table 1 Similarities and difference between the cases

Cases were chosen because they are sufficiently distinct to show a range of approaches (different institutions, UK and non-UK, university and non-university), yet sufficiently similar to allow for comparison: they are all FutureLearn MOOCs that ran in the same year and dealt with related subjects. Data collection was via Skype interviews, gathering different perspectives from participants involved in the learning design, content or assessment, video production and presentation, and facilitation of discussion. This ensured that work around pedagogical planning and decision-making was included. Data was transcribed verbatim and Yin's strategies for data analysis were followed (Yin, 2014). Codes were assigned by working from the 'ground up', noting patterns of useful concepts, and examining 'plausible rival explanations'. The teaching activities in which participants engaged were recorded, and a second stage of analysis identified who were acting as educators and in which subset of activities they were engaging.

## Analysis

During the analysis that is presented across the cases, participants were grouped into three categories identified in the literature section: Educators, Mentors and Collaborators. Categorisation was based on the FutureLearn role-title they had on their course. Although participants were assigned specific responsibilities within a MOOC, their job titles did not always fully correspond to the activities they carried out. Those who acted as Educators and Mentors had formal, recognised roles, while Collaborators worked behind the scenes, and although they engaged in teaching activities in collaboration with the Educators and Mentors, they were not formally recognised in the online course information.

Interviewees' responses show that the Educators were usually described as 'academics', and this was typically their everyday role. The term 'academic' reflects a hierarchical structure and positions these individuals as experienced professionals. However, there was a tension inherent in the FutureLearn definition of Educators (i.e. "academics with specialist knowledge of the course subject") because it assumes that this role will be carried out by academics. By implication, it excludes non-university partners from the role, even when they develop and run courses on the platform. Other titles used for people assigned as Educators were 'service provider' and 'subject matter expert which focus attention on a small part of the expertise that Educators bring to the MOOC, reducing their role to a specific service or subject knowledge that they are expected to provide in the MOOC context.

Those identified as Mentors on the FutureLearn platform were rarely referred to as 'Mentors' by interviewees. Instead, they appeared as 'facilitators', which implies that the work they were recognised for was facilitation of learners' discussions. Some Mentors considered themselves educators and saw the MOOC experience as an opportunity for professional development. Other interviewees often described Mentors by their everyday role – 'postgraduate students' – rather than in terms of their role on the MOOC. In the context of academia, 'postgraduate' suggests someone who is less experienced, has less subject matter knowledge, and is likely to be in a subordinate position in relation to other academics. Less skilled and less important jobs are typically assigned to postgraduates. In contrast, the term 'facilitator' does not position individuals in terms of experience or power. The FutureLearn definition of 'Mentor' did not reflect the work undertaken by Mentors, the ways they regarded their role, or the ways in which their colleagues understood their role.

Interviewees classified as Collaborators included learning designers, a MOOC organiser, a Digital Learning Team Manager, and a Head of MOOCs. These professionals did not explicitly appear in the course and students would not have been aware of them, but they had significant roles and worked with Educators to help them make decisions about the teaching. Not all institutions involved in this research regarded Collaborators as an integral part of the MOOC, so some cases did not include this category. In such cases, Educators had additional responsibilities. However, the main activity undertaken by Collaborators was carrying out learning design and this task was not understood by everyone in the same way, therefore the titles of these professionals differed. In some cases, the work of Collaborators was a collective activity through which Educators and Collaborators worked together; in other cases, it was a hierarchical process and Collaborators were expected to assist Educators.

The interviewees described a broad set of activities they carried out, all of which contributed to MOOC teaching. The wide scope of these activities is in line with the definition of teaching in HE supplied by UK graduate careers site named Prospects (2019), which does not limit teaching to supporting learning and includes a range of additional processes and activities. The main teaching activities identified in the data were:

- securing funding for course development (Educators, Collaborators)
- allocating work to Educators and Mentors involved in the MOOC (Educators)
- designing MOOC process – this was instantiated differently across cases (All categories)
- ensuring rights clearance for learning materials (Educators, Collaborators)
- presenting videos (All categories)
- editing videos (All categories)
- creating the course on the FutureLearn platform (Collaborators)
- facilitating the course by responding to learners' comments, and, in some cases, translating materials and subtitling videos (All categories)
- extending teaching roles outside the MOOC platform: writing external blogs, running Q&A sessions, using social media or websites to facilitate learners' understanding (All categories)
- repurposing MOOCs (Collaborators).

The many job titles used to represent the work of online educators indicate the complexity of these roles. A number of activities involved each category of educator, including course design, video presentation, video editing, facilitating discussions and extending teaching beyond FutureLearn.

The activities of 'securing funds' and 'allocating work' often involved administrative work, managing organisational processes. This was usually done by Educators and, less often, by Collaborators. Although this task might, in some cases, be associated with a pedagogical rationale underpinning bidding for funding for a certain course, set of courses, or number of specialist staff, there was no evidence of any pedagogic rationale behind securing funds for the cases studied.

FutureLearn provides guidelines for course design developed by Sharples (2015), however every case analysed in this study used a different approach, and guidelines were often not followed. Course design was conceptualised differently, depending on the case. Typically, course design foregrounded the production of content and was rarely conceptualised as a process that involved consideration of the learners and learning objectives. Most interviewees had a limited understanding of the process of learning design. They discussed the design as a pragmatic and functional process, often without due consideration of what they wanted learners to learn, and of how they intended to support learners to achieve specific learning outcomes. There was lack of pedagogical decision making with a focus on content and practicalities that was consistent across most cases.

Some interviewees described course design as a process that required people with diverse expertise to work together. Expertise ranged from knowledge of subject matter and media development, to awareness of course design and pedagogy. Others took a different view and did not involve people with a wide range of expertise. This meant that, for example, academics had to learn to create multimedia resources. In some cases, course design was perceived as a collaborative activity involving interdisciplinary teams. Other cases involved Mentors in the course design process.

An activity that could be considered part of course design and it was not, was the process of gaining rights clearance for learning materials. Educators considered they had limited knowledge about rights clearance and did not always view this work with Collaborators as productive.

Educators were usually the people who appeared in learning material videos. Mentors were included in videos less often and only one Collaborator had been filmed. Video editing was mainly done by Collaborators although, in their absence, some Educators took on editing activities. Both editing and presentation are activities that involve pedagogical decisions. Pedagogic issues were considered low priority and Educators did not devote their time to video editing. Editing was rarely carefully planned by Educators because they felt overwhelmed by the workload involved in creating the MOOC and the number of activities they had to complete.

Facilitating MOOCs involved responding to learners' comments, attracting their attention and, in a few cases, translating materials and subtitling videos. Time was a factor that influenced the ways Educators engaged in an activity. In one case, the pedagogic approach was changed between the first and second run of the MOOC facilitation, removing facilitation in the second run due to heavy workload. However, in MOOCs where people collaboratively shared facilitation activities, workload appeared more manageable and time spend on facilitation was not reported as an issue.

Creating a course on the FutureLearn platform was usually carried out by Collaborators or Educators. This also involved organisational processes. At times, teaching activities extended outside the FutureLearn platform through the use of blogging tools or other forms of social media to respond to learners. Another teaching activity that was identified was repurposing a MOOC, but this was not commonly done.

Teaching activities were associated with different conceptions of teaching that related to Kember's (1997) framework. These conceptions were: first, to impart information through the learning materials using video presentation and creation of content; and second, to enable understanding on the part of the learner related to the 'facilitation' activity - either within the platform or through blogs, Twitter, or other websites. However, not all cases gave much consideration to their understanding of teaching because of limited time. Workload and time limitation influenced their participation in these types of activities as well as reducing time spent on learning design.

Educators were usually unaware that video editing decisions had pedagogical implications, for example asking learners questions or giving them tasks to help them learn, and therefore did not get involved in editing. This meant the videos that were produced often had the aim of imparting or transmitting information rather than actively engaging the learners. However, when learning designers worked with Educators tasks became collaborative, rather than individual, which led to better teamwork and sharing of expertise. Good collaboration also happened when Educators viewed MOOC work as teamwork and involved Mentors in activities other than facilitation, such as video presentation and editing.

When participants worked collaboratively, there was less of a sense of hierarchy or obvious power structures, and more of a sense of individuals bringing their expertise to the course. Teaching activities were often distributed across Educators, Mentors and Collaborators, with none of these roles having only one exclusive activity. Most Educators engaged with all the activities described above. Mentors were involved primarily in facilitating the courses, but in two cases they engaged in designing and creating content, and in one case they were involved in editing videos. The main teaching activity undertaken by Collaborators was design, but across all the cases at least one Collaborator undertook most of the activities discussed. In one case, a Collaborator took a lot of responsibility for the preparation of the subject-matter text and Educators were not involved. In another case, the Collaborator was only involved in decisions on how to gain funding and course evaluation.

This analysis has identified a range of teaching activities, and of roles to support these activities. The next section discusses the complexity of the roles of online educators.

## Discussion

What the analysis of these cases demonstrates is that, although each MOOC had a different course structure, those who designed, developed, and facilitated them were allocated comparable roles. However, their activities were not well defined, and often changed during the course development. For instance, although Mentors were expected to facilitate learner discussions, they also authored learning materials. Collaborators were expected to design the course, but were also involved in facilitation. The distribution and variation of these activities suggests that task ownership cannot be attributed to one specific role and extends across multiple categories. Thus, the term 'online educator' is an inclusive term that generally applies to all these activities.

The findings of this study echo Watolla's (2016) description of 'distributed teaching' in MOOCs, although here the distributed teaching happened only among online educators, and not between learners and teachers. Unique findings from this analysis include the power structure and hierarchies associated with course design, production, and facilitation; the genres of expertise needed to create an online course, particularly a MOOC; the different experiences and knowledge that each participant brings to the course; the individual and teamwork involved; specific activities associated with the learning design process of the MOOC; and the (lack of) awareness of pedagogy and of the conceptions of teaching underlying the pedagogy.

Power, as it was observed in the classifications of the interviewees, implied that people with specific roles (e.g. academics) were perceived to have more power, depending on their place in the academic hierarchy. In some cases, the role of Mentor was seen as less significant than the role of Educator. However, each role made important contributions to MOOC design and



facilitation. Educators were at the top of a hierarchy and tended to be regarded as 'the experts', although their Collaborator colleagues were not consciously aware of the varied types of expertise needed in MOOCs and the importance of their role. This reflects Salmon's (2003) work, in which she argued that the role and skills of the e-moderator call for wide-ranging expertise, including an understanding the online process, technical skills, subject matter expert knowledge, and more.

This research confirms the findings of White & White (2016), that indicate the importance of 'peripheral actors' in MOOCs, including the legal, marketing, and media production teams that shape the course design and development process, which sometimes dilute the role of educators. The findings of Buhl et al. (2018) also relate to the current research, as they showed that a cast of actors with different areas of expertise was essential in MOOC development, which demands the collaboration of many new actors.

Although Educators are experts in their course's subject, at the same time, they are novices in other areas of expertise that MOOC teaching demands. So, when MOOC work is an individual task, and institutions do not involve dedicated people with the necessary expertise, the job of Educators becomes harder. It is through collaborative teams, and when expertise is combined and integrated, that participants create new knowledge more easily.

An integral part of a MOOC is its design. Conole's (2013) argued that design should be pedagogically informed and make effective use of appropriate resources and technologies. This was not reflected in all the cases in this study. MOOC design involves activities that need to be thought through in advance, because once a course is up and running there is little room for change, and any changes entail financial cost. Not all cases started with a learning objective as suggested by FutureLearn guidelines (Sharples, 2015), nor did they always have the learner explicitly in mind. Two cases attempted to have the learner at the centre of design process. In three cases, design was not seen as a process but mainly as production of content according to week structures. Participants in these cases did not consider learning design as a methodology, or as a structured process that involved making pedagogically informed decisions about the activities the learners would carry out and the resources they would use. One case had a dedicated team working on design and in another case an interdisciplinary team of subject matter experts, legal experts, and library team experts was established. Overall, most participants had a limited understanding of learning design and did not consciously engage in the design process. They viewed design in a pragmatic and functional way, without explicitly acknowledging the learning objectives and how they would support learners in achieving those objectives. This attention to pedagogy is evident in three of the cases in this study where Educators were not involved in the process of video editing. In one case the Educators did not write the video script, nor did they watch the final version of the videos.

Not all the cases in this study considered how learning design could support specific forms of pedagogy. This was due to time constraints that influenced the ways people participated in course design. In one case, the responsibility for pedagogical design was passed to Mentors and Collaborators, implying this part of the design was considered less important than other tasks, or inferring that Educators were not aware that pedagogy and learning design should be part of their role.

Although in face-to-face courses assessment is used to evaluate whether learning outcomes have been achieved, assessment was not part of course design in any of the seven cases in this study. Assessment was perceived as a way to facilitate course accreditation and was not considered as a way to support learning.

This analysis of who teaches in a MOOC contributes to a new conceptualisation of what online teaching is and how it takes place. It is not an individual activity weighted towards the teacher or learner's activity but can be conceived as a team effort that requires the synthesis of different types of expertise, and the ability of professionals from different specialisms to work together. This conceptualisation of teaching requires MOOC teams that involve educators with

expertise in diverse areas because the teaching activities involved are diverse. These areas include the course subject, MOOC design, presentation and editing of videos, legal requirements for using learning material and, ultimately, the pedagogy. Pragmatic and functional processes need to be supported by what educators want learners to learn and how they want to support them in achieving that. Finally, because a lot of preparation is needed for a single MOOC to go live on a platform, collaborative work is essential, an idea that Moore (1997) put forward in his work on distance learning.

## Conclusion

This research uncovered the various roles of people who teach in MOOCs, and the wide variety of teaching activities in MOOC environments. This study provides a nuanced definition of teaching online. This study contributes to a conceptualisation of who the educators are in online learning contexts and of what teaching involves, particularly within MOOCs. It shows that the practice of educators as they teach in MOOCs is different from traditional teaching in campus-based Higher Education contexts.

MOOC teaching involves a range of diverse activities that are too broad to be able to be carried out by a single individual. MOOC educators are not only the subject-matter experts but have a wide range of roles. Therefore, a catch-all title for these various different types of work is 'online educators', which is inclusive and can involve a range of people involved in MOOC teaching who are not academics and may come from non-university institutions. The power associated with certain groups of professionals can be balanced by focusing on working collaboratively and ownership should be collective where individuals bring their expertise to the course development.

This study highlights that the people teaching in MOOCs are not always prepared for online teaching and tend to transfer face-to-face teaching practices to online settings. Although they recognise online teaching is different from teaching on campus, many do not have the expertise and knowledge required to teach effectively online. Although they recognise the benefits of co-operating with others who have complementary skills, the misalignment of existing job roles with the forms of collaboration needed for new work processes inhibits the move to online teaching. More work is needed not only to support professionals in learning new roles, but in integrating these roles in ways that enable online teaching.

## Future Directions

MOOCs are a form of online teaching that is still evolving. The development of MOOCs has prompted Higher Education institutions and educators to move further in the direction of online education. MOOC platforms are now offering different forms of online education, including for-credit courses such as microcredentials. For this reason, a professional development plan of online educators is essential. This needs to involve experienced professionals training newcomers on administrative tasks, on design and technical skills (i.e. video presentation and editing), together with reflection on pedagogical decisions and subject matter expertise. Moreover, the uncertainty created by COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in early 2020, the sudden closure of university campuses around the world, and the rushed move to online teaching, makes it important to understand the roles of online educators as well as providing them with professional development while working on online courses so that they are able to do an effective job. The findings can also inform future directions in the work of educators in other contexts, including campus-based professionals who also need to employ online methods of teaching (i.e. blended or hybrid). It is crucial to educate existing staff and learning designers about flexible, collaborative working; raise their awareness of available resources; help them to combine their expertise and work collaboratively; to reflect and to evaluate their practice continuously, and therefore to engage in the process of learning to be an online educator.

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