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How to make Badged Open Courses more engaging in a community of wider participation?

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SAT: How to make Badged Open Courses more engaging in a community of wider participation? (Kulvir Bahra)

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13 February 2016

How to make Badged Open Courses more engaging in a community of wider participation?

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Abstract:

I will be looking at ways to engage the wider community into completing badged open courses to improve wellbeing, employability and further development. Discuss ways to bridge the digital divide gap amongst the nation, with digital literacy and digital wellbeing. Are we too connected to the digital world and do we need time to reflect as much online as offline? The uptake of EPUB and tablet devices are now on the decrease. The world of student learning in classrooms are changing fast from reading textbooks and completing exercises to more engaging online interactive resources in learning. We must ensure that we cater for all learning styles, abilities and make the content as accessible as possible. Other nations around the world have already embraced badged open courses. Could this be the answer to how the UK improves the skills shortage. Recognition could be gained not just from within the class but from voluntary work to sports skills to interests in connection with extracurricular interests. The article will review ways that we can engage with communities that may not be able to connect with education as well as other parts of the cultural community. Looking at the success behind the Princes Trust Mosaic Mentoring programme to help ensure that the ethnic minorities have role models for inspiration. The paper will also look into how BOCs could be used to gamify learning in school, university and the workplace. I have also tried to refer or draw upon the following website on understanding some of the issues relating to the subject; widening participation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/higher-education-participation>

Open badges lend itself to ensuring that they are inclusive to all learners regardless of background. My presentation will tackle ways we can implement BOCs into our everyday lives as both formal and informal ways of learning. MOOCs have utilised many forms of OER and creative commons content for learning content. The question arises from this on how this will affect the paying pupils and the pupils receiving the material free user expectations. In terms of

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what, both groups will expect from their learning journey. Will the paying students feel more motivated by the learning content as opposed to students signing up to free courses and feeling disengaged after beginning a MOOC. Figure description of diagram: I will try to tackle ways that this can be addressed by creating an illustration that fits best to explain this. With the user in the middle and all the barriers to learning listed around the user in a circle. By beginning a basic assessment in the form of a needs analysis. A practitioner would be able to understand the learners strengths and weaknesses of subject knowledge and be able to tailor make the content to fit best with the learner. Learning analytics would be greatly beneficial plus the understanding of pupils learning styles. Another question that I will conclude on is how successful will BOCs be in the long run and is there any future possibilities with how we engage more users?

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[John Baglow](#)

9:59am 22 January 2016 [Permalink](#)

Kulvir, this is an interesting subject. I have wondered how I could use badges on my teacher-training course to reward participation in forums etc.

I think your spoken commentary is much easier to follow than your abstract; I wonder if it contains too many acronyms, some of which were new to me. Your oral delivery is clear and relaxed.

Your abstract is very wide in its reach. You talk about ways of engaging students, for example. Could that be related more directly to the use of badges ie show how badges might increase motivation? Also, you touch on quite a lot of aspects of demography, not all of which you explain. Of course, I realise that you will be going on to explain their significance in the project but do you think that there is a danger that you will overload people with info.

It is implicit in your title that you will talk about how badges could make learning more engaging and could appeal to a wider audience. Will you be exploring exactly how you believe badges might engage students more? Also, are there any disadvantages to

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badges, as opposed to formal qualifications? How about showing a few badges?



[Kulvir Bahra](#)

3:54pm 24 January 2016 [Permalink](#)

Hi John, Firstly apologies for taking a while to respond. And secondly thanks for your advanced feedback, I think you have raised some very good points that I will take forward. I agree that the scope of my subject is quite broad and it would also be good to hone into a particular aspects, otherwise I could be talking about a very broad view when answering my question. I like your point about asking or answering how would badged open courses motivate learners or showing this by example. I have since writing my assignment and conference preparation have found some more research to cite. I will need to look at how successful Moocs have been and on what makes a successful module for study? There could be a list here to develop on what makes the perfect ingredients to a successful course? Apologies if I repeat myself here. Also I discovered an edX paper on reflections on the success of their first mooc. I also agree that badged open courses may not suit everyone, but I feel there is still more that can be done to help all wide ranging of students, pupils and learners in engaging into study when they may not had the confidence to embark on this type of study before. The Open University prides itself on having at least 40% of its students registered as disabled, (I will double check the figure on the OU website) and this is very high compared to other brick university's. So I feel that here is a great opportunity to see what has worked well and on how to apply this to other courses in future when creating brand new production or maintenance modules. Going back to your points raised I will be mindful when discussing acronyms as not everyone will know what I was referring to. I will take a look at your poster shortly and provide feedback hopefully by today or tomorrow, have a good weekend.



[Laila Burton](#)

8:57pm 26 January 2016 [Permalink](#)

Hi Kulvir

It's really interesting to see how your project is progressing. I had problems accessing the Prezi poster in OpenStudio, so it's great to access it and hear the audio.

I was going to make the same point as John - it would be good to show some of the existing badges. There's quite a few through Open Learn that you could show.

This is quite an ambitious project, but worth it as it's very topical at the moment. There was some discussion on badges for employability at the technology for employability webinar and this is something the researchers were very keen on. If you want to watch the recording of the session it's available at: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/events/preparing-for-employability-in-a-digital-age-25-jan-2016>

Good idea about checking the figures for your presentation - the percentage of OU students who have disclosed a disability is less than 20%. It's higher than campus-based universities, but I don't think it could be 40%.

Laila



[Kulvir Bahra](#)

2:27pm 13 February 2016 [Permalink](#)

Hi Laila,

Thanks for your response on cloudworks.

The figures for disabled students at the OU was around 20% thanks for confirming this.

The jisc link you sent was very useful, thank you for forwarding this.

Good luck with your presentation today.

Kulvir



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

11:44am 14 February 2016 [Permalink](#)

Hi Kulvir

Here is a summary of the questions/comments from your presentation - please respond as you wish:

- ▶ How will the feedback be delivered? Face-to-face? Or online? Does it make any difference, do you think?
- ▶ Useful curation (see earlier) of resources on OpenBadges.
<http://www.scoop.it/t/badges-for-lifelong-learning>
- ▶ Some BOCs are more about skills and less about subject topics/topics of interest. Do you think this is an impediment for students? (Often students don't know why they need to learn how to learn.)
- ▶ How do learners on BOCs engage with tutors?
- ▶ There is a strong learning preference 'theorist' where it's essential to have the learning journey mapped out, in order to provide the wider picture / context
- ▶ Do you think 'grades' are a vital part of feedback? I think ppl often yearn for this kind of encouragement and validation, and that's why they're not so keen on badges. There needs to be recognition of excellence.
- ▶ Interesting point about MOOC being less motivating than BOC.
- ▶ HE often seen as a "bit snifty" about badges - too trivial a term for digital credentialising. Fear of security of credit too. I have heard of recent research looking at blockchain technology (as used by bitcoin) to authenticate credit.
- ▶ I'm motivated by any little thing that acknowledges success. In New Malden, you get a big lit up smiley for doing under 30mph. Much more motivating than a 'SLOW DOWN'!
- ▶ Do you think students are likely to get confused by BOCs, MOOCs, OpenLearn and other informal learning offers?
- ▶ Gamification of learning does help to get through the tough parts
- ▶ Something I wondered about some of the BOCs, or about other Open Learn offerings, is that they could include a certain point where students on, say, a SocSci BOC, could temporarily join a national forum (or similar) with a relevant,

selected fee-paying module.

- ▶ Is gamification just sugaring the pill of learning? or is it making it engaging?
- ▶ MIT looking again - <https://medium.com/mit-media-lab/certificates-reputation-and-the-blockchain-ae03622426f#.r7qyufhxq>
- ▶
- ▶ Again, collecting these on LinkedIn (etc) would be interesting
- ▶ JISC Digital Literacies guide - <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/developing-digital-literacies>



[Dr Susan Morris](#)

10:51am 16 February 2016 [Permalink](#)

I enjoyed your presentation and I have an additional comment to make in the context of hearing Peter Scott's presentation last night about MIT Scratch with adult sniffiness about it being used in primary schools with 7 year olds to learn coding.

It made me think about the popularity of digital badges with home schooling communities in the UK and where BOC sit within the collection of (in) formal portfolios of home schooling children. For Level 1 to 3 modules there is a lower age limit of 16 years at the OU (? used to be aged 14). What is the minimum age requirement of BOCs and is this an issue.

best wishes, Susan



[Kulvir Bahra](#)

10:43am 23 February 2016 (Edited 10:45am 23 February 2016) [Permalink](#)

- ▶ How will the feedback be delivered? Face-to-face? Or online? Does it make any difference, do you think?

That's a great point, I think that so far a lot of Badged courses have been delivered online without much interaction from the tutors or academics. As most BOCs are usually starter, taster or introductory courses within an informal learning setting. I do feel that it would be good to give more feedback in the face to face setting as this would motivate the learner further. BOCs appear to be reliant on the issuer checking that the person has met the criteria before issuing the badge, it feels quite 'automatic' like a machine churning out badges in a factory without a sense of context.

- ▶ Useful curation (see earlier) of resources on OpenBadges.
<http://www.scoop.it/t/badges-for-lifelong-learning>.

Thank you for sending the link that was very useful, since listening to Terry McAndrews presentation on Saturday 13th February on #H818Conf I thought that scoopit would be a great resource as a further avenue to look into. That is a very useful link.

- ▶ Some BOCs are more about skills and less about subject topics/topics of interest. Do you think this is an impediment for students? (Often students don't know why

they need to learn how to learn.)

I agree with the comment that BOCs are more about acquiring skills, I think if you wanted to learn more about a subject then participating in a MOOC may be more subject matter based than a BOC. I still think and feel that BOCs are about building skills and confidence, however I feel that they can be multi levels to attaining more from a particular badge in terms of progressing for example, bronze, silver and gold levels. To show your level of attainment or level of experience.

▶ How do learners on BOCs engage with tutors?

Most BOCs rarely have interaction with a tutor or academic, some rely on pupils posing questions in a forum or social media setting that the tutor or fellow pupils reply to. A good example of this is within the Udemy platform: Learn 14 languages to build a website has very good examples of tutor and pupil feedback.

▶ There is a strong learning preference 'theorist' where it's essential to have the learning journey mapped out, in order to provide the wider picture / context

Thank you I agree this makes it easier for the pupil to understand the way the course is being led on a pedagogical level. Almost like a map with the directions of which way to go from A to B.

▶ Do you think 'grades' are a vital part of feedback? I think ppl often yearn for this kind of encouragement and validation, and that's why they're not so keen on badges. There needs to be recognition of excellence.

I agree it would be great to have a W3C consortium, or a guidance of best practice of how to create the most effective badged course for students to attain there badge. Standardizing the process or having a benchmark or standard would mean that the learner will know that the course will meet their specific needs. Wikipedia may be a good resource to refer to have a table with all the BOCs listed with the basic criteria it meets listed out.

▶ Interesting point about MOOC being less motivating than BOC.

Thanks there has been a large uptake to MOOCs but not necessarily completing the full MOOC course. BOCs appear to be more attainable and easier to complete. Getting the badge seems to be a big motivator for learners to then place on their Social Media profiles.

▶ HE often seen as a "bit snifty" about badges - too trivial a term for digital credentialising. Fear of security of credit too. I have heard of recent research looking at blockchain technology (as used by bitcoin) to authenticate credit.

This is an interesting area of discussion that I will need to look into further, as I felt that bitcoin and blockchain are similar to how they work. Unfortunately I do not know much about them both, but will take that as an area to research further into, thanks for mentioning this to me.

▶ I'm motivated by any little thing that acknowledges success. In New Malden, you get a big lit up smiley for doing under 30mph. Much more motivating than a 'SLOW DOWN'!

I agree yes that gives me a little boost in my mind too, don't know why sometimes the smaller things in life make us happy.

- ▶ Do you think students are likely to get confused by BOCs, MOOCs, OpenLearn and other informal learning offers?

Yes I think as a digital designer/ educator/ networked practitioner we need to somehow educate learners on the difference between the different ways of learning. Almost like an unbiased guidance to all the different ways to learn showing both the advantages and disadvantages of the courses. This almost goes back to my earlier response that a Wikipedia format of presenting this would be a good idea.

- ▶ Gamification of learning does help to get through the tough parts

I agree a fun element to learning makes the learning process more enjoyable. I think learning should be seen as enjoyable and enriching not a chore or something too difficult. Otherwise this becomes disengaging and the learner will switch off or not participate.

- ▶ Something I wondered about some of the BOCs, or about other Open Learn offerings, is that they could include a certain point where students on, say, a SocSci BOC, could temporarily join a national forum (or similar) with a relevant, selected fee-paying module.

Yes I agree an idea that I think could work is to offer an introductory BOC or MOOC to a full version but offer a certificate or badge at an extra cost and then take that off as a discount on a full paying course so that the institution does not lose out financially. This means that both the MOOC/BOC pays partly towards the full paying course.

- ▶ Is gamification just sugaring the pill of learning? or is it making it engaging?

I disagree to some extent but do correct me if I am wrong. I know from experience how addictive playing scrabble is or playing a game that makes the learning more enjoyable. I remember playing a lot of text based RPG games on the 8bit machines back in the day and they were very addictive as you went around solving various life based problems. Again this is an area that could set us up in life to have life skills that we would not learn in a classroom setting.

- ▶ MIT looking again - <https://medium.com/mit-media-lab/certificates-reputation-and-the-blockchain-ae03622426f#r7qyufhxq>

Thanks for sending me the link. I had a look and it looks very interesting, the site looks very similar to the FutureLearn platform in design and layout. The medium site is like Scoopit but has a nice user experience.

- ▶ Again, collecting these on LinkedIn (etc) would be interesting

Yes I agree that would help I know Doug Belshaw made a YouTube video showing how this can be done: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jo4Wdj5sRa4>

- ▶ JISC Digital Literacies guide - <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/developing-digital-literacies>

Thank you for sending the website link, a lot of my research stemmed from JISCs website.



[Kulvir Bahra](#)

10:51am 23 February 2016 (Edited 10:52am 23 February 2016) [Permalink](#)

Hi Susan

Thank you for your response that was very reassuring and nice to hear from you:

I enjoyed your presentation and I have an additional comment to make in the context of hearing Peter Scott's presentation last night about MIT Scratch with adult sniffiness about it being used in primary schools with 7 year olds to learn coding.

It made me think about the popularity of digital badges with home schooling communities in the UK and where BOC sit within the collection of (in) formal portfolios of home schooling children. For Level 1 to 3 modules there is a lower age limit of 16 years at the OU (? used to be aged 14). What is the minimum age requirement of BOCs and is this an issue.

best wishes, Susan

I think there is no age limit to BOCs but I think this raises another question about where or who stores the data and who has access to the information as this could be held anywhere around the world. Personal data is an area that should be kept secured so having an open access system may not be the best solution. Signing up to a BOC from a mainstream setting or a well known branded university may have two things

a.) better credibility

and

b.) better security.

Khan Academy is a good example of badging pupils progress. Hope this helps, best wishes,

Kulvir



[Laila Burton](#)

5:50pm 2 March 2016 [Permalink](#)

Hi Kulvir

I hope you're having fun finishing off the EMA!

There's an Open Badges in HE conference at the University of Southampton on 8th March that you might be interested in

(<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/iliad/news/events/2016/03/open-badges-he.page>). It's a long way to travel, but I you can join online for any sessions you're interested in!

Best wishes,

Laila



Kulvir Bahra

9:56am 3 March 2016 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Laila much appreciated good luck with your EMA too.

Best wishes,

Kulvir

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