

**Athens Institute for Education and Research
ATINER**



**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
PHI2015-XXXX**

**Open Dynamic Educational Project
(ODEP): Teaching Strategies for the 'Big
Questions' Philosophy Courses**

**Evgenia Cherkasova
Associate Professor
Department of Philosophy
Suffolk University, Boston
USA**

An Introduction to
ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. This paper has been peer reviewed by at least two academic members of ATINER.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute for Education and Research

This paper should be cited as follows:

Cherkasova, E. (2015). "Open Dynamic Educational Project (ODEP): Teaching Strategies for the 'Big Questions' Philosophy Courses", Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: PHI2015-1630.

Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr URL:
www.atiner.gr

URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm

Printed in Athens, Greece by the Athens Institute for Education and Research. All rights reserved. Reproduction is allowed for non-commercial purposes if the source is fully acknowledged.

ISSN: 2241-2891

7/10/2015

**Open Dynamic Educational Project (ODEP):
Teaching Strategies for the ‘Big Questions’ Philosophy Courses**

Evgenia Cherkasova
Associate Professor
Department of Philosophy
Suffolk University, Boston
USA

Abstract

This paper presents a course design model created in response to the pedagogical challenges inherent in a ‘Big Questions’ philosophy course. We conceptualize the model as an Open Dynamic Educational Project (ODEP), namely, a carefully designed learning environment—physical, intellectual, and digital—which comprises both a collection of growing multimedia resources and a dynamic community of learners who contribute to this collection and to the learning process as a whole. Methodologically, an ODEP aims at the ideals of “significant learning” and “deep learning” and makes use of digital technologies—in our case a website and a computer game—in order to enhance a student-oriented course design. As we discuss the role of digital aids we also touch on the new educational trend of “gameful learning”, its potentials and possible short-comings. Based on theoretical findings in conjunction with our practice of transforming a Big Questions course into an Open Dynamic Educational Project, we suggest a number of future trajectories.

Keywords: Big Questions, Digital Humanities, Educational Technology, Open Educational Resource, Serious Games, Course Design Models, Significant Learning, Gameful Learning, Open Dynamic Educational Project.

In the educational-cultural context, the term ‘Big Questions’ or ‘Enduring Questions’ refers to a deep, sustained exploration of a fundamental problem facing humanity.¹ Questions such as “What is justice?” “What makes a life worth living?” “What is happiness?” “How can we understand suffering and death?” evoke human wisdom and experience, drawing on a multitude of intellectual, artistic, and cultural traditions. If addressed in a serious, self-reflective manner, the Big Questions also call for reevaluation of our personal values and commitments.

In this article we discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of designing and teaching a reading-intensive, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, Big Questions philosophy course. We identify the pedagogical challenges² presented by such courses and propose a multimedia educational model as a holistic response to these challenges. In a nutshell, the model consists of transforming a course into a sustained, Open Dynamic Educational Project (ODEP) whose participants contribute to its growth and development over time. Digital technologies play an important role in this transformation: they help expand course content, stimulate deep contextual learning, and foster an intellectual community beyond the group of students currently enrolled in the course.

The model we describe here is based on personal observations and lessons learned while designing and teaching the *Meaning of Life* (MoL) course supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities.³ In MoL students explore a variety of perspectives on life-meaning in philosophical and religious texts, in art, fiction, autobiography, and in the scholarly work of philosophers and psychologists. Course material draws on traditions of Europe, Asia, and America. While designing the course, the instructor aspired to create a space—physical, intellectual, and digital—for her students to think deeply and creatively about what makes life meaningful for them and to “witness” the quests for meaning in the lives and works of the great thinkers. With this goal in mind she explored various options for interactive online learning. As a result, a website and a computer game were developed specifically for this

¹ Thus the *Big Questions Online* initiative features popular essays by leading scientists, philosophers, and writers who explore “questions of human purpose and ultimate reality” (“Big Questions Online,” 2015), The Big Questions BBC series presents a wide variety of moral, ethical, and religious debates (“The Big Questions,” 2015), The National Endowment for Humanities “Enduring Questions” program funds new college courses which “would encourage undergraduates and teachers to join together in a deep and sustained program of reading in order to encounter influential ideas, works, and thinkers over the centuries” (“Enduring Questions” 2015). For the purposes of this paper the terms ‘Big Questions’ and ‘Enduring Questions’ will be used interchangeably.

² We set aside the discussion of institutional challenges, as some colleges/schools resist the idea of BQ and focus on very specific vocational or highly specialized training. Also, since many BQs deal with the spiritual dimension, there is secular resistance discussed by several authors (Tritelli, 2007). We recognize these tensions but their analysis lies beyond the scope of our project. For an insightful discussion see <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/forum-helping-students-engage-big-questions>

³ Course website: <http://meaningoflife.cherkasova.org/>

project. The new model—an Open Dynamic Educational Project—started to take shape.

Pedagogical Challenges and Associated Questions

While the basic structure of the Open Dynamic Educational Project emerged from analyzing the core tenets of the MoL course, the implementation process helped reveal the common patterns and challenges inherent to the Big Questions courses in general:

Vastness of material: By definition, the Big Questions are some of the oldest and most perplexing questions posed by humanity. The relevant themes and perspectives can easily supply material for dozens of different courses. How do we organize a single-semester course whose subject matter has no distinct disciplinary or chronological parameters? Which structure and/or progression could best orient the audience?

Diversity of content: A Big Questions course often comprises diverse disciplines, traditions, and historical periods. In this context, how do we avoid a superficial survey approach and do justice to the depth and complexity of ideas? Is it possible to preserve diversity while maintaining a focused classroom conversation? Will the students have a chance to immerse themselves in the material? And throughout the course, will there be opportunities to revisit and apply what they will have studied?

Personal, introspective dimension: One of the reasons why the Big Questions persisted throughout ages and cultures is that they cut to the core of human nature and the human condition. They inquire about the fundamentals of our existence—mortality, subjectivity, free will, happiness, suffering, etc. On an existential level, each person and each generation confront these questions anew. Consequently, the Big Questions courses often deal with sensitive issues which may resonate very strongly with students (e.g. death, loss of meaning, suicide). How do we approach difficult, emotionally charged topics in a classroom? Which activities and assignments could foster students' introspection and self-reflective, caring attitude?

Students' attitudes and study habits: Students' prior training and study habits may hinder their involvement in a particular course. Some students tend to study only what they think they will be tested on (Lonka, Olkinuora, & Mäkinen, 2004; Marton and Säljö, 1976); they may also see course work as something to be done exclusively in order to “get a specific requirement out of the way.” The phenomenon is as common as it is regrettable. In a Big Questions philosophy course specifically, such tendencies go directly against the spirit of the course. Can we overcome the students' inertia and help them discover the pleasures of self-directed inquiry?

We believe that the current structure of the *Meaning of Life* course as an Open Dynamic Educational Project provides a helpful paradigm for addressing these and other related challenges and can be applied to a variety of courses similar to MoL in nature and scope. The next section summarizes MoL

pedagogical strategies and preliminary results which led to the development of ODEP. In the consequent sections we provide a working definition of ODEP, describe its key features in connection to Fink's model of Significant Learning, and sketch out future implementation trajectories.

Responding to Challenges: *The Meaning of Life* Course before and after ODEP

Given the subject's breadth and diversity, the *Meaning of Life* course combines intellectual history with in-depth examinations of key texts. The readings cover a broad range of perspectives from the Old Testament's *Ecclesiastes* to the ancient Chinese classic *Tao Te Ching* to the twentieth-century existentialist writings and beyond. The students are encouraged to see a search for meaning as an exciting intellectual endeavor and an existential challenge of great practical importance. For this reason, the material is organized thematically, around three interrelated units: 1) *A Life Worth Living: Humanity's Ideals* focuses on the ancient and modern visions of harmonious existence and human flourishing; 2) *Threats to Meaning: Humanity's Discontents* discusses the disillusionments leading to a loss of meaning and purpose; and 3) *Recovery of Meaning: Crises and Hopes* explores the possibilities of self-discovery and growth as a result of a major crisis.

To enable students' introspection and immersion in the material, course assignments and projects combine elements of close reading, conceptual analysis, and continuous reflective activities/exercises. All projects are meant to be shared, revised, and polished throughout the semester, a practice which we intend to steer students away from surface learning and "quick fixes." The best student work is published online, creating a record of class results and best practices. The assignments include:

- *Meaning of Life Profile*
At the beginning, students answer a few questions about their personal values, goals, and ideals. Throughout the course they revisit their initial answers, identifying the texts which affirm, challenge, or completely refute their ideas about life's meaning and purpose. At the end of the course, students submit revised, expanded profiles containing an analysis of any change of perspective which may have occurred as a result of course work.
- *Collection of Questions and Quotes*
In this reading intensive exercise which runs through the whole course students are asked to record their impressions of the texts by collecting and commenting on memorable passages. A quote may be chosen because it rings true or sounds completely absurd; because it is deeply moving or highly controversial, pessimistic or uplifting, illuminating or obscure. The assignment combines a personal dimension (students choose quotes which "speak" to them) and a skill-building dimension (students learn to articulate

why a particular quote caught their attention while practicing critical reading and proper source documentation).

- *Reflection Papers*

A reflection paper is a thoughtful, engaged, well-written exploration of a key idea of the course. It prompts students to work toward mastery of the material by exploring its depth and complexity from textual, historical, and personal perspectives. Students may also make connections to contemporary issues, course work in other classes, and share personal observations.

- *Crisis of Meaning Interview*

Students interview a friend, colleague, or family member who is willing to share his/ her story of crisis and recovery. A crisis of meaning is a turning point in someone's life characterized by a loss of purpose, rejection of values once taken for granted, or the shattering of a familiar self-image. An interview must include both a crisis event and a narrative of recovery, e.g reconciliation, personal growth, deepened self-awareness, etc. Completing this assignment requires theoretical grounding in the issues related to the loss of meaning and the interviewer's ability to handle the intimate, interpersonal nuances of such issues in a conversation—not to mention basic interviewing and communication skills. For this reason, students go through a number of preparatory exercises before they begin work on an interview itself.

Some course projects encourage students' active involvement with historical and intellectual traditions and texts (*Reflection Papers, Collections of Questions and Quotes*). Others focus primarily on personal values, goals, and experiences, suggesting connections between class discussions and life problems students face (*Profiles, Crisis of Meaning Interviews*). At the same time, each project is intentionally multidimensional, combining theory and practice, cultivation of skills and introspection. The epigraph for the course, which comes from the Roman philosopher Seneca, captures its main goal: *Vitae, non scholae discimus* – "It is for life, not for school, that we learn." Each classroom activity and assignment is designed to reveal this vital connection between life and learning.

The activities listed above were a part of the MoL course before it was transformed into an Open Dynamic Educational Project. Two digital components were instrumental in creating an ODEP version of the course—the enhanced MoL website and a philosophical computer game. Within the new framework, the website became a digital hub for course projects, a space to record and display student work showcasing the most successful projects and increasing publicity. Through ODEP, the quality of student writing and intellectual insight is assessed on two levels: 1) whether a paper/ project meets the general standards for college work (applied in both pre- and post ODEP contexts) and 2) whether a paper/ project merits potential publication on the MoL website. Publications set the higher standards of quality, encourage

connections among different generations of students, publicize the course content and invite independent feedback from colleagues, students, and public at large. Most importantly, publications motivate: all students whose work was chosen to be featured on the website saw it as an honor and continued to work on revisions long after the course was over and the final grades were in. Publicity played an important institutional role as well: for example, during orientation sessions over the summer, some prospective students cited the website as a key resource in their course choice.

Perspectives on Gameful Learning: Implications for the MoL Game

The second component of the MoL ODEP—a newly developed computer game—merits special mention. Recently, the issue of the educational potential of game technologies has received widespread attention. Some researchers have found that (video/computer) games increase student motivation and achievement of learning goals (Divjak & Tomić, 2011; Erhel & Jamet, 2013; Felicia, 2011; Tüzün, Yılmaz-Soylu, Karakus, Inal, & Kizilkaya, 2008), thereby championing integration of games into the education system at large. At the turn of the millennium, there was a spike in publications about videogame technologies and their potential place in education. One rather popular account came from Prensky (2001a) who coined the terms “digital natives” and “digital immigrants,” advocating for a radical change in educational strategies based on the alleged “digital” generational differences (Prensky, 2001b, p. 1). For the better part of a decade Prensky’s assumptions and methods went without critical examination while many authors employed his terminology to discuss gaming technology and education. In 2008, Bennett, Maton and Kervin labeled the majority of this discussion “an academic form of moral panic” (p. 785) that had allowed “unevidenced claims to proliferate” (p. 786). They called for “a considered and disinterested examination of the assumptions underpinning claims about digital natives such that researchable issues can be identified and dispassionately investigated” (p. 787). The debate is ongoing.¹

On the one hand, there are studies that show educational games to have significant positive impacts on learning outcomes and motivation as experimental constructs. On the other, we are suspicious of the unfounded enthusiasm about the prospects of the wholesale “gamification” of education.²

¹ Thus, one study suggests that belonging to a certain generation (age-group) does not have a significant effect on ‘digital nativeness’ (Helsper, & Eynon, 2010). Supported by such findings and following the same critical argument, Koutropoulos (2011) argues that “these figures and overgeneralizations have oft been repeated by followers of the digital native message, without much self-reflection or critique” (p. 526), referring to it as a “fetish of insisting in naming this generation the Digital/Net/Google Generation” (p. 523).

² Overall, we side with Young et al. (2012) who propose that researchers ask precisely how “a particular video game being used by a particular student in the context of a particular course curriculum affect the learning process as well as the products of school (such as test grades,

The question we kept in mind while developing the MoL game was: what kinds of games do we play and therefore which practices do we rehearse and perfect? In this sense, it was our intention to create a *serious game*, one that is “designed to entertain and educate players and to promote behavioral change” (Blumberg, Almonte, Anthony, & Hashimoto, 2013, p. 334).

Here is how we intended the Meaning of Life game to function in the classroom: students would be encouraged to apply philosophical insight to the decision-making process in a series of constructed game situations while reviewing course material on the way. We expected this approach to be effective in presenting vast intellectual material in an accessible form as well as reinforcing the learning process through repetitive strategic choices. The implementation of the game met our expectations.¹ In our game called *Vixi: A Master’s Way* (“vixi” in Latin means “I have lived”) the player functions as an active learner, choice-maker, and “traveler” in the history of ideas. *Vixi* features diverse paths to meaning represented by eight “philosophical schools”: the Classical Greeks, the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Taoists, the Existentialists, the Pessimists, the Humanists, and the Buddhists. The game generates various scenarios/situations to which the player has to respond. Throughout the game the “Great Masters” from different schools offer their “advice” or “warnings” in the form of direct quotations. Each of the player’s strategic choices is assessed by all the schools and the player’s affinities with different philosophical perspectives gradually emerge. At the end of the game the player receives a “post-mortem” analysis of his or her virtual life choices.

It is important to note that MoL students’ engagement with the game is not limited to playing it. We created a game whose database and structure is open to revisions by the players themselves. While working their way through the game, each class of students/players is asked to participate in game design through mini-assignments suggesting new strategies, clarifications, improvements, and content additions. As game-designers, students must familiarize themselves with the particular principles of game play in order to generate interesting challenges for the player, a conceptual activity which has been shown to positively impact motivation and deep learning strategies (Vos, van der Meijden, & Denessen, 2011). To further motivate students, we offer the chance for the most intriguing and well-ordered situations to be included in the future version of the game. Working from a dual perspective of the player

course selection, retention, and interest)” (p. 84). See also Selwyn’s (2012) ten conditions for improving academic research and writing on education and technology and Gallagher *et al.* (2012).

¹ In order to gauge educational effectiveness and student experience with the MoLgame for our personal records, we created a series of surveys to investigate our initial hypotheses. Here are some of the responses. When asked what the best point about the MoLg was student [K] wrote: “it puts into practice the theory of every school so that you see examples and are able to get a better understanding of every reading.” When asked for an “*overall initial reaction*,” student [G] wrote “I think this game would be extremely helpful and being able to compare/contrast different schools of philosophy. I’m excited to see where is goes ☺” while student [K] noted that introducing the game is a “very good idea. Makes philosophically heavy subjects easier to grasp”.

and the designer, students have a unique opportunity to experience and reflect on key ideas of the course and their applications. As we expected, most participants picked up on the benefits of this “dual-role” and reportedly spent more time on related course work.¹

By integrating gameful learning, game design and website activities into the MoL structure we were able to create multiple conceptual links among textual resources, learning activities, and course participants; to cite just one example, game development prompts students to practice and perfect textual analysis skills in a larger context when they select passages to be included in the game as the “Master’s advice,” or when they construct challenging existential situations and connect philosophical principles to practical life choices. To sum up, the three MoL components—the course, the website, and the game—have been evolving together to form what we call an Open Dynamic Educational Project.

The ODEP Model: A Definition

An Open Dynamic Educational Project is a learning space—physical, intellectual, and digital—which comprises *both* a collection of multimedia resources developing over time *and* a dynamic community of learners who are also contributors to this collection and to the learning process as a whole. As a touchstone for our model, we reference UNESCO’s concept of an “Open Educational Resource” (OER). In 2011, the organization published a set of guidelines in which OERs are defined as “materials used to support education that may be freely accessed, reused, modified, and shared” (UNESCO, 2011, p.1). The basic framework of an ODEP aligns with the spirit of UNESCO’s vision of universal accessibility. At the same time, our model calls for some qualitative modifications:

- *Open:*
The first term, “open,” is augmented. For UNESCO, open *access* to educational materials is the main concern. For us, the term also implies an invitation to contribute. We believe that openness is more than access to and distribution of materials, it is also a

¹ Here are some characteristic responses from the second round of MoL surveys addressing a updated version of the game and corresponding assignment: when asked whether *the game assignment should continue to be a part of course*, 100% of students answered “yes”. To the question “*Did you think both playing the game and designing parts of the game are more helpful than doing either one or the other? Please explain*” student [D] answered: “Yes because playing the game gives you an idea of what you’re working toward and designing the game helps you reflect on and apply course material” and student [L] answered “Yes, playing the game gives you a sense of how to design your own parts. Designing parts helps you remember course work”. When asked “*What were, if any, the positive aspects of the assignment?*” student [D] responded that “engaging in the game helps us understand the material and see its importance”.

welcoming environment, open to participation, inventiveness, creative adaptation, and cultivation of talent.

- *Dynamic:*
We add the term “dynamic” to capture the idea that learners are participants as well as designers. Through their active involvement and contributions all components of the project evolve and improve *over time*. Most importantly, dynamism also refers to the participants’ development and personal growth.
- *Project:*
Since the learning process is irreducible to a collection of objects and/or resources we introduce a rather broad term, “project,” to connote a communal, interactive, cross-generational set of activities. Thus, an educational project combines interrelated components, digital or otherwise, constantly evolving and future-oriented. Innovation is a project’s driving force while collaboration is its cohesive activity.

Though there is conceptual overlap between ODEP and 1) the concept and intention of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and 2) the concept and intentions of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), a rough-and-ready distinction between ODEP and these other models is that the latter emphasize “availability” above all whereas our framework highlights genuine interaction, grounded coherency, and shared history.

MOOC proponents argue that a well-designed MOOC can offer much more than just a free online instruction. A recent blog post paints an impressive picture:

...a MOOC is an evolving and dynamic learning and collaboration ecosystem that may encompass more than one technical platform and various modes of learning from short, byte-sized videos and e-learning capsules to user-generated content... MOOCs are well-suited for open-ended topics that generate discussions and debates, have new knowledge and research growing around it, and are of interest to a wide audience...A MOOCs core aspects are participation and emergence. The characteristics and context of a MOOC (*when effectively facilitated and thoughtfully designed*) evolve as it progresses. The initial topic becomes the trigger around which communities and cohorts form, discussions take place, resources get created and shared (Chattopadhyay, 2015)

Our reader will note that the description above utilizes some of the same concepts and terminology central to an ODEP definition.¹ Yet an ODEP (at its

¹ For example, Morris and Stommel (2013) respond to the critics who claim that MOOCs are not sufficiently interactive: “interaction is not only possible within a MOOC; it also has

best) has a particular advantage over a MOOC (at its best): it effectively connects open education with “closed” institutional setting, utilizing their respective strengths.¹ In the next section we discuss the specifics of this crucial connection.

ODEP and Significant Learning

As a holistic pedagogy, an ODEP contributes to what educational theorist L. Dee Fink calls “Significant Learning” (Fink, 2013; Fink, n.d.a; Fink, n.d.b). With a revamped taxonomy based on Bloom and colleagues’ original work from the mid-20th century, Fink advances a perspective on teaching and course design grounded in six interdependent kinds of learning: Foundational Knowledge, Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring, and Learning How to Learn.² Fink broadly conceives of learning in terms of change.

We believe that a well-designed Open Dynamic Educational Project has the capacity to engage all aspects of significant learning. Thus, in the emerging MoL educational project, “Foundational Knowledge” category (understanding and remembering information and ideas) is addressed throughout: MoL students study primary texts in the history of Eastern and Western philosophy, learn basic terminology, and explore conceptual links between different disciplines, such as philosophy, literature, psychology, history, and art. Class discussions, website resources, and the game, each in its own way, provide support for the intellectual foundations of the course and evoke two other categories of Significant Learning: 2) Integration (connecting ideas, people, realms of life) and 3) Application (skills; critical, creative, and practical thinking). Specifically, the game makes explicit the real-life applications of theory by offering diverse scenarios/situations in which the player encounters first the general principle of action and then chooses among courses of actions corresponding to this principle. Both “Application” and “Integration” are further enhanced by *Crisis of Meaning Interviews* and *Reflection Papers*. The engagement goes beyond coursework when students learn about their friends and family members, connect to other students who took the course before or contribute to website resources. Meaningful connections with other departments and colleagues are possible as well; among the links formed through MoL activities are those of philosophy and computer science (game

the potential to be extremely dynamic... MOOCs are anthropological opportunities, not instructional ones” (para. 3, 4).

¹ Ulf-Daniel Ehlers, president of the European Foundation for Quality in e-learning, convincingly argues that making such a connection in a meaningful way is one of the major challenges contemporary educators face. (“The Big Challenge,” video interview, 2013, [7:40-8:18])

² Fink’s pedagogical framework has been successfully put into practice in diverse content areas, including humanities (“Designing Significant Learning Experiences,” 2014; Fallahi, 2011; Rose & Torosyan, 2009; Zhang, 2012). Educators report uniformly positive results.

structure), journalism (interviews) and creative writing (introspective narratives, story-telling aspects of the game).

Further, it would not be an exaggeration to say that all MoL activities are designed to evoke the learning categories of “Caring” (developing new feelings, interests, values) and “Human Dimension” (learning about oneself, others). To cite just one example, many students while analyzing the interviews they conducted noted the revelatory moments such as “this interview helped me better understand my sister and other people who suffer from depression” or “I knew that my mother did not graduate from high school but I had no idea how deeply she regrets the lost opportunities.”¹ The MoL ODEP also responds in a number of ways to the “Learning How to Learn” category (becoming a better student, a self-directed learner, inquiring about a subject). For instance, students who choose to revise their work throughout the semester learn to incorporate constructive critique, anticipate objections, and build on their existing strengths as writers and thinkers. As we have mentioned earlier, through ODEP, there is an opportunity for willing, caring students to revise their work for the website or the game. Students thus learn to recognize the difference between a good paper in a course and a publishable paper. This lengthy yet fruitful process maintains students’ interest and provides a structure for acquiring self-directed learning skills.

While there are many more parallels between MoL ODEP activities and SL categories, their detailed exposition lies beyond the scope of this paper. Concluding our discussion of Fink’s taxonomy we suggest that with the proper application of the ODEP framework, the idea of “integrated course design,” central to Fink’s system, would take on a new dimension. Take, for example, the two digital components of the *Meaning of Life* project—the website and the game. They are not just auxiliary tools or fancy supplements. Both are designed and maintained as vehicles of a comprehensive, “active” learning experience. Intertwined with course activities and assignments, they serve many purposes: from stimulating interest to fostering students’ sense of agency.

We are excited to share some preliminary results of the ODEP framework and implementation with educators and educational theorists. We are also very interested in a further discussion of the theoretical aspects of the Open Dynamic Educational Project, its definition and potential applications. In this article we focused exclusively on an ODEP as it applies to the *Big Questions* philosophy courses. Perhaps in the future, the model described here can also be adapted to other educational contexts.

¹ For the purposes of this paper, students’ testimonies are slightly modified aiming at the overall picture. The actual interviews and students’ post-interview reflections can be found at <http://meaningoflife.cherkasova.org/course-materials/student-work/crisis-of-meaning-interview/>

References

- Bennett, S. J., Maton, K. A. & Kervin, L. K. (2008). The 'digital natives' debate: a critical review of the evidence. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39(5), 775-786.
- Big Questions Online. (2015). [website] Retrieved from <https://www.bigquestionsonline.com/>
- Blumberg, F. C., Almonte, D. E., Anthony, J. S., & Hashimoto, N. (2013). Serious Games: What Are They? What Do They Do? Why Should We Play Them? In K. E. Hill (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Media Psychology* (pp. 334-351). Oxford: Oxford UP.
- S Chattopadhyay. (2015, February 6). MOOCs in Workplace Learning - Part 3: Launching a MOOC [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://idreflections.blogspot.ca/2015/02/moocs-in-workplace-learning-part-3.html>
- Designing Significant Learning Experiences. (2014). [website] Retrieved from <http://www.designlearning.org/examples-of-design/examples/>
- Divjak, B. & Tomić, D. (2011). The impact of game-based learning on the achievement of learning goals and motivation for learning mathematics- literature review. *Journal of Information and Organizational Sciences*, 35(1), 15-30.
- Ehlers, U. (2013, October 29). *Open Education Europa*. [video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcHxvnlUuc>
- Enduring Questions. (2015). National Endowment for the Humanities: Grants. [website]. Retrieved from <http://www.neh.gov/grants/education/enduring-questions>
- Erhel, S., & Jamet, E. (2013). Digital game-based learning: Impact of instructions and feedback on motivation and learning effectiveness. *Computers & Education*, 67, 156-167.
- Fallahi, C. (2011). Using Fink's Taxonomy in Course Design. *Observer*, 24(7). Retrieved from <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2011/september-11/using-finks-taxonomy-in-course-design.html>
- Felicia, P. (2011). *What evidence is there that digital games can contribute to increasing students' motivation to learn?* Retrieved from Research for European Schoolnet website: http://linked.eun.org/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=23126&folderId=24047&name=DLFE-756.pdf
- Fink, D. (2013). *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fink, D. (n.d.a). *What is "Significant Learning"?* Unpublished manuscript, Instructional Development Program, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. Retrieved from http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/facultycenter_SignificantLearning.pdf
- Fink, D. (n.d.b). *A Self-Directed Guide to Designing Courses for Significant Learning*. Unpublished manuscript, Instructional Development Program, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. Retrieved from <http://www.deefinkandassociates.com/GuidetoCourseDesignAug05.pdf>
- Gallagher, P. S., & Pretwich, S. H. (2012). Supporting cognitive adaptability through game design. *Proceedings of the 6th European Conference on Games Based Learning, Cork, Ireland*. Retrieved from Advanced Distributed Learning website: <http://www.adlnet.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/CA-Games-Design-EBL.pdf>

- Helsper, E. J., & Eynon, R. (2010). Digital natives: where is the evidence? *British Educational Research Journal* 36(3), 503-520. doi:10.1080/01411920902989227
- Koutropoulos, A. (2011). Digital natives: Ten years after. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 7(4), 525-538.
- Tritelli, D. (Ed.). (2007). Liberal Education and the “Big Questions” [Special issue]. *Liberal Education*, 93(2).
- Lonka, K., Olkinuora, E., & Mäkinen, J. (2004). Aspects and prospects of measuring studying and learning in higher education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(4), 301-323.
- Marton, F., & Säljö, R. (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: I. Outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46, 4-11.
- Morris, S. M., & Stommel, J. (2013). MOOCagogy: assessment, networked learning, and the meta-MOOC. *Hybrid Pedagogy*. Retrieved from <http://www.hybridpedagogy.com/journal/moocagogy-assessment-networked-learning-and-the-meta-mooc/>
- Prensky, M. (2001a). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-6.
- Prensky, M. (2001b). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, *Part II: Do they Really Think Differently?* *On the Horizon*, 9(6), 1-9.
- Rose, M., & Torosyan, R. (2009). Integrating big questions with real-world applications: Gradual redesign in philosophy and art history. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 119, 61-70. doi: 10.1002/tl.365
- Selwyn, N. (2012). “Ten Suggestions for Improving Academic Research in Education and Technology.” *Learning, Media and Technology*, 37(3), 213–219. doi: 10.1080/17439884.2012.680213
- The Big Questions. (2015). BBC. [website]. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007zpll>
- Tüzün, H., Yılmaz-Soylu, M., Karakus, T. Inal, Y., & Kizilkaya, G. (2009). The effects of computer games on primary school students’ achievement and motivation in geography learning. *Computers & Education*, 52(1), 68–77. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2008.06.008
- UNESCO. (2011). *Guidelines for Open Educational Resources (OER) in Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002136/213605e.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2015). Office of educational technology. [website] Retrieved from <http://tech.ed.gov/what-we-do/>
- Vos, N., van der Meijden, H., & Denessen, E. (2011). Effects of constructing versus playing an educational game on student motivation and deep learning strategy use. *Computers and Education*, 56, 127-137. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.08.013
- Young, M. F., Slota, S., Cutter, A. B., Jalette, G., Mullin, G., Lai, B., Simeoni, Z., Tran, M., & Yukhymenko, M. (2012). Our Princess Is in Another Castle: A Review of Trends in Serious Gaming for Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 82(1), 61–89 doi: 10.3102/0034654312436980.
- Zhang, C. (2012). *Using Fink's Integrated Course Design Model in Developing a Health IT Course*. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Information Technology, Southern Polytechnic State University, Marietta, Georgia. Retrieved from http://educate.spsu.edu/czhang2/publications/SIG-ED2012_Zhang_etal_CourseDesign.pdf