**Self-Direct to Learn, Self-Direct to Live:**

**Exploring Learner Choices, Experiences, and Possibilities in a Self-Directed Learning World**

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(with Meina Zhu, Wayne State University)

**Abstract:** Open, online, and distance learning have always relied on a large percent of learners to self-direct their own learning. During the past decade, the emergence of open educational resources (OER) and massive open online courses (MOOCs) made self-directed learning (SDL) more prominent, essential, and celebrated. As would be expected when in a pandemic, the percent of people engaging in self-directed learning pursuits has multiplied. In response, Professor Curt Bonk at Indiana University has conducted a series of studies related to SDL in MOOC and OER environments. His studies with Dr. Meina Zhu include how MOOC instructors design and deliver their courses to foster SDL. On the learner side, Bonk and Zhu’s research includes interviews of 15 MOOC learners regarding their perceptions of SDL when learning from MOOCs. The focus of that study was on the three key components of SDL, namely, self-management, self-monitoring, and motivation. In addition, Professor Bonk recently conducted a study of online language learning using the popular platform Duolingo where they are investigating how this system supports and facilitates student self-directed learning (SDL). That study included a survey of 84 Duolingo learners and follow-up interviews with 10 such learners from around the world. Currently, Bonk and his team are interviewing high school students in Nepal about their SDL practices. During the pandemic, these students have received certificates after completing MOOCs to learn English and dozens of other topics from prestigious universities in the United States. Implications for instructional designers and educators will be discussed, including specific features that can be embedded in MOOCs and OER to foster notetaking, self-reflection, time management, and other strategies found to be beneficial for self-directing one’s learning.

Key words: self-directed learning, MOOCs, open educational resources (OER), online language learning, motivation

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**Bio:**Meina Zhu is Assistant Professor in the Learning Design and Technology program in the College of Education at Wayne State University. She received her Ph.D. degree in the Instructional Systems Technology program at Indiana University Bloomington and her master’s degree in educational technology at Beijing Normal University. Her research interests include online education, MOOCs, self-directed learning, STEM education, and active learning. Meina has published her work in such places as IRRODL, BJET, the Internet and Higher Education, the Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology, Online Learning, and Distance Education. She has taught courses in instructional design, emerging technologies, instructional strategies, Web design, and the history, issues, and trends in instructional technology. She can be reached at meinazhuiu@gmail.com or meinazhu@wayne.edu.