**Job offer: postdoctoral researcher - teaching argumentation to enrich exchanges in educational platform forums**

UCLouvain is looking for a post-doctoral researcher in linguistics, communication or education

* Full-time (100%) post-doctoral fellowship for one year, renewable once (max. 2 years)
* Start date: October 2022 at the latest

This proposal for a postdoctoral position is part of the multidisciplinary project MOOCresearch2.0. "A mixed and multi-disciplinary approach to socio-cognitive conflicts in online learning environments", co-directed by Mariane Frenay (GIRSEF), François Lambotte (Social Media Lab), Magali Paquot (CECL) and Valérie Swaen (LOURIM). The MOOCresearch2.0 project is based on the idea that discussion forums in MOOCs offer a unique opportunity to support the social aspects of learning. Educational research has indeed shown that controversies and conflicts over ideas are the source of conceptual change and learning (Limon, 2001; Vosniadou, 2017). More specifically, learning concepts in the humanities and social sciences requires exchanges, questioning and argumentation to overcome common sense representations and to understand scientific concepts, which sometimes have fluctuating contours (e.g., essentially contested concepts such as democracy, human rights, corporate social responsibility) and are embedded in controversies (e.g., climate change) (Gallie, 1956; Buchs, Darnon, Quiamzade, Mugny & Butera, 2008). However, in a MOOC, discussion forums are the only space where it is possible to provoke questioning and learn from social exchanges.

The overall aim of the MOOCresearch2.0 project is therefore to deepen our understanding of the dynamic process of social learning on online education platforms by studying the emergence, development and resolution of socio-cognitive conflicts in MOOC discussion forums. With this new understanding, the project also intends to develop pedagogical devices and instructions that elicit socio-cognitive conflicts and their cognitive resolution, via argumentation and constructive controversy in a cooperative environment.

See https://uclouvain.be/en/research-institutes/ilc/moocresearch2-0.html for a short presentation of the different projects currently underway and the teams involved.

The postdoctoral researcher will focus more particularly on aspects related to argumentation and constructive controversy in an online educational device. The ability to debate and argue in a discussion forum is most often taken for granted in MOOC courses (teachers ask their students to discuss, debate, argue, etc. but students are not taught these complex skills). The exchanges in discussion forums are generally poor, and there is often little interaction and even less engagement with the ideas put forward by peers. When there is interaction, it is often in the form of a validation or not of a peer's contribution (I agree with you, I disagree with you) but these exchanges are rarely argumentative (students do not necessarily appeal to factual arguments, external sources, etc.).

The project aims to develop students' argumentative skills and written debating skills to foster rich, constructive and learning-oriented exchanges in MOOC discussion forums. The first stage of the project will be the development of a teaching module that will aim to make explicit the expected types of interactions in discussion forums. The module will focus on the quality of argumentation, both in its content-related aspects (e.g. the importance of qualified and guaranteed assertions, the reliability and quality of sources, the consideration of previous arguments) and in its social aspects (respect for the other and for divergent positions, politeness). The device will then be implemented in a set of UCLouvain MOOCs that use forums to discuss topics that should lead to debate. Several approaches will be used to measure the effect of the device on the interactions in the forums.

The evaluation will focus on the quantity and quality of the content of exchanges between participants in these forums. It will be largely qualitative, but one avenue of development is the automation of the evaluation of the outputs.

**Qualifications and skills required**

The candidate will meet the following qualifications:

* Have a doctoral thesis in Linguistics, Communication, Educational Sciences or equivalent.
* In view of the tasks to be performed, the following skills are required
  + Excellent linguistic and communication skills
  + Methodological skills in setting up experiments and analysing results
  + Pedagogical skills
* Excellent oral and written English (minimum level: C1)
* Knowledge of French is an asset but not a requirement
* Excellent research profile (publications, conferences, etc.)
* Research and/or professional experience in one of the following areas is a plus: university pedagogy, online teaching, social media, argumentation
* Autonomy, sense of teamwork, ability to listen and analyse needs, responsiveness.

**Conditions of engagement**

This postdoctoral **fellowship** is subject to the following conditions:

* The candidate will be in a situation of international mobility, i.e. he/she will not have resided or worked in Belgium for more than 24 months during the 36 months immediately preceding the first fellowship period
* **One year grant**, renewable once (total of **two** years on the project).
* The candidate will receive a postdoctoral fellowship (starting at approximately 2600 euros net per month).
* This position requires residence in Belgium for the duration of the mandate.

**Application form**

**Application deadline: 6 July**

The application file should include :

* a detailed curriculum vitae in English including the various qualifications and skills required as well as publications and other academic and scientific experience;
* a letter of motivation in English (maximum 2 pages), describing your interest in the position, how your profile meets the job description and the project objectives, etc.;
* a letter of reference in French or English.
* A writing sample (preferably a published article or a chapter of the PhD thesis).

Successful applicants will be invited to participate in an (online) interview in July.

If you are interested in this position, please send your application to Magali Paquot by email (magali.paquot@uclouvain.be).