

THE DARK SIDE of MOOCs

There has been a sudden rise in the popularity of MOOCs, but skeptics can't help but wonder: Are they worth all of the hype?

WHAT IS IT?

MOOC

MASSIVE

Classes may consist of up to 100,000+ students.

OPEN

Registration is open to anyone around the world.

ONLINE

The course is taken completely online.

COURSE

They're similar to college courses, but don't offer credit.



Bruce Shippoe

POPULAR PLACES TO TAKE MOOCs

coursera

edX

UDACITY

TYPE OF INSTITUTION

\$ For-profit

Ⓢ Nonprofit

\$ For-profit

NUMBER OF COURSES

210+

25

22

ORIGINS

Founded by two Stanford professors

Run by MIT, Harvard and Berkeley

Founded by a Stanford professor

9.4%

said they were in the planning stages to offer MOOCs

2.6%

said they currently offer a MOOC

55%

said they were undecided about their plans to offer MOOCs

HOW POPULAR ARE MOOCs?
Of surveyed institutions:

32.7%

said they had no plans to offer MOOCs

According to one report,
**"ACADEMIC LEADERS
REMAIN UNCONVINCED
— that —**

MOOCs

REPRESENT A SUSTAINABLE METHOD
FOR OFFERING ONLINE COURSES."

THE CONCERNS

Some believe that MOOCs may end up devaluing American higher education. Here's why:

MASSIVE

Taking a course with hundreds, if not thousands of other students presents many challenges:



MOOCs cannot provide the same intimate experience as a traditional classroom.



Students may feel the need to break up into smaller learning groups to better grasp information.



Students may not get to know their professors well, let alone have access to them, and vice versa.



MOOCs can spread too much of the same thinking, which can limit the diversity of thought.

OPEN

While many call MOOCs' open quality a strength, it does create complications:



The students that MOOCs target are often the ones who need face-to-face instruction the most.



Few students who sign up for courses actually complete them. Even popular courses have low completion rates:

MITx's Circuits and Electronics

154,763 registered, 7,157 completed the course



completion rate



dropped out before the course started

58%

of surveyed professors said they felt more fear than excitement about the growth of online education

ONLINE

While learning online may mean that students can learn anywhere at anytime, it does have its drawbacks:



MOOCs may be a poor option for students who struggle with motivation, as students need to become responsible for their own learning.



Technical difficulties with a participant's computer or Internet connection can impede learning.



MOOCs cannot be set up as traditional courses online; they need to have a unique course structure.



Academic dishonesty can become an issue. In August 2012, students taking Coursera classes discovered and reported dozens of plagiarism incidents via peer grading.

COURSES

A MOOC's characteristics (massive, open, online) can naturally impact the course in several ways, including:



MOOCs are considerably more hands-off than courses that involve off-the-cuff discussions and constant interaction.



Some question courses' pass/fail standards, if credit should be assigned, and how degrees will be rewarded.



Some have raised quality concerns, as there is no universal standard MOOCs must meet.



Some MOOCs require peer feedback and grading, which can be unreliable and unhelpful.



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