MOOCs: What’s all the hype about?

Ann H. Taylor
Director, Dutton e-Education Institute
Penn State University
Agenda

What is a MOOC?

What is new about this?

Why MOOCs?

Who participates?

What does it get them?

What is the budget model?

What are the benefits? What are the concerns?

Will this replace traditional education?

How is learning being assessed?

How do I know who is taking my course?

Common MOOC mistakes

What we have learned?
What is a MOOC?

- Massive Open Online Course
- Free or low cost
- Big players: Coursera, EdX, Udacity, Udemy
- “Typical” enrollments around 50,000
- Most have completion rates of <10%
- Instructor “light”
- More than OER – adds assessment and access to others

The term MOOC originated in Canada. Dave Cormier and Bryan Alexander coined the acronym to describe an open online course at the University of Manitoba designed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes.
What’s new about this?

- The market reach
- The scale
- The tools
- The cost to students
- The institutions

“While the hype about MOOCs presaging a revolution in higher education has focussed on their scale, the real revolution is that universities with scarcity at the heart of their business models are embracing openness.”

(Making Sense of MOOCs: Musings in a Maze of Myth, Paradox and Possibility ~ Sir John Daniel)
Why MOOCs?

- Rethink education in the 21st century
- Lower the cost of education (maybe)
- Reach the masses (“most”)
- Advance core education mission
- Access to worldwide expertise
- Access to potential clients
- Research how people study, collaborate, & learn with technology

...while across the U.S., tuition has risen faster than other costs

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Source: Wall Street Journal
Who participates?

- Precocious youngsters
- College students wanting help with a subject
- Faculty wanting to see how others teach
- Employees looking for professional development
- Folks looking personal enrichment
- Folks looking for something interesting to do
- Lookie-loos

“It’s better for me than TV!”
What does it get them?

- Personal enrichment
- Professional development
- “Certificate of achievement” (value?)
- Job placement recommendations (Udacity, Coursera)
- College credit!

The American Council on Education announced in November 2012 that its College Credit Recommendation Service would assess the credit-worthiness of a set of massive open online courses.

In February, 5 Coursera courses were approved.
What’s the budget model?

There isn’t really one yet.

- “Teaser”
- “Loss leader”
- Low cost but make it up in volume
- Free basic service, fee-based premium services
- Paid advertising
What are some of the benefits?

- New audiences
- Huge, collaborative learning network
- Test drive without commitment
- Ease back in to learning
- Ask “dumb” questions and take risks
- Encourages improved teaching
- Encourages innovation

Source: Flickr – “Crowd surfer” by Photos by Mavis
What are some of the concerns?

- Quality

- Intellectual property

- Copyright

- Identification

- Credentialing

- Access for ALL

- Bandwidth limits

- Epic failure

"…when they (moocs) are good, they are very, very good, when they're bad, they are very very bad."

(MOOC student comment posted on a NYT article on MOOCs)

"…if you tried to stream video lectures on [a low cost data plan], you'd reach the data cap after about three hours and then face fees of $15 per gigabyte. If you tried to complete a course with 15 hours of video a month, your phone bill could arrive with as much as $70 in extra fees."

(Chronicle of Higher Ed, Data Caps Could Dim Online Learning’s Bright Future)
Will this replace traditional campuses?

- Certainly opens many more options
- Many will still seek the college “experience”
- Many need more small-scale experience and support
- Low-cost institutions can be built around MOOC curricula
- Potential alternative to lower-division courses

"I don't think it is a perfect substitute," she says. "The question we must ask is whether what we're providing these students is better than they would have had otherwise."

~ USA Today (9/12/12), College may never be the same
How is learning assessed?

- Automated tests and quizzes
- More advanced, and automated, simulations
- Peer-grading
- Proctoring

“On the discussion boards, there was considerable discussion of grade deflation, plagiarism, and cheating. Alas, academic sins do follow us into the land of MOOC's....

Bad behavior in any classroom, real or virtual, should be no more surprising than gambling in Casablanca.”

(Chronicle of Higher Ed, A Pioneer in Online Education Tries a MOOC By Ann Kirschner)
How do I know who is taking my course?

Does it matter?

- Honor codes
- Anti-plagiarism software
- Massive question banks
- Biometrics – e.g., Coursera’s new “signature track”
Common MOOC mistakes

- Not communicating expectations
- Not communicating prereqs
- Not enough guidance (no “hand-holding”; “talk amongst yourselves”)
- Not enough support (what if they don’t “get it”?)
- Using a “fill the empty bucket” approach
- Boring, long, recorded lectures
- No activities where students can apply learning
- Going it alone without an instructional designer
What have we learned?

- Have a communications strategy
- Help students assess readiness
- Make it fool-proof
- Provide avenues for remediation and help
- Involve the learners in the process!
- Use media when/where appropriate
- Make sure ALL course components scale
- Work with an instructional designer!
Acknowledgements

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