

Topic choice: the essay I have written is about MOOCs and MOOC based curricula. The idea behind a MOOC based curriculum is to develop a set of MOOCs that mimic a curriculum of an academic degree program. This can be based on existing curricula in the same major. Key difference however is that at the end of the MOOC curriculum no official degree granting certificate is awarded.

Why this interest me: as a learning professional in the field of online education, I am always looking at innovations in this field. Further the use of technology is related to my major here at UoPeople in Computer Science.

The rise (and fall) of MOOC based curricula

Note: This essay appear earlier as a blog on [LinkedIn Pulse](#). It is however my own work and thus isn't plagiarized.

Some of you might know my story and will be familiar with my MOOC accomplishments. I completed around 140 courses (I stopped keeping track) and 7 Coursera specialization tracks. Not because I needed it as I have a masters degree, but because I thought it was a nice addition to what I studied in university, loved the idea of a no-pay MBA and am an advocate for life-long-learning.

MOOCs, in their initial setup, where a great idea. You take the courses which already take place, record them and put them online for free. It provided some great marketing for your university and you gave access to everyone what originally was reserved for a select few. Further, if you, as a student, did not want to do a full degree programme, you could only attend these courses that were of interest to you. This was great, especially if you were working or majoring in another subject like me. This was also how I got first into contact with this phenomenon.

When MOOCs became more popular and both the number of courses and students grew, it would only take so long until someone would come up with the idea to mirror traditional education and try to bundle them into an unofficial degree. When Poets & Quants posted about this (Schmitt, 2013), I was immediately thrilled about the idea and when Laurie Pickard started her No-Pay MBA blog, I quickly became a subscriber.

Some years have passed since then and we have seen plenty of new features and business models introduced in the MOOC world. We now have specializations that offer opportunities outside the real world, ranging from internships to scholarships and other 'prizes'. On the other side, we have the rise of the pay wall. Due to the unsustainable costs of producing more and more professional videos and MOOC platforms needing some form of revenue to keep their virtual doors open, this was something that was bound to happen. And although some considered this to be bad (CT, 2015), it is not fundamentally against the philosophy of MOOCs as most of the content is still freely available.

This, however, puts us in the situation where MOOCs might not give us the best value for money if we want to get some form of credential as the value of a MOOC certificate is still debatable (McIntyre, 2015). With universities providing us with a short (series) of courses that award official

certificates (for example Harvard with their CORE program) or online universities providing near free degrees (for example the University of the People), one can start to question the added value of MOOC-based curricula. They might still be able to serve a specific niche, but have lost the potential they once had. Given educational credentials are still (over)valued today, MOOCs might not be the best way to go anymore for those looking for a job. Nevertheless, for life-long-learners, it still can be a valuable option.

As for me, I never got hired because of my MOOC background (it was just a traditional case of having the right network). Nevertheless, I was able to show all I had learned once I was in. Therefore, I believe that, MOOCs in general won't get you a job, but allow you to get most of it once you get in.

Sources

CT, M. f. (2015, November). *An update on assessments, grades, and certification*. Retrieved June 23, 2016, from <https://blog.coursera.org/post/131520811622#comment-2318298427>

McIntyre, C. (2015, September 25). *Is getting a verified certificate on Coursera worth it?* Retrieved June 23, 2016, from www.linkedin.com/pulse/getting-verified-certificate-coursera-worth-carolyn-mcintyre

Schmitt, J. (2013, December 17). *The MOOC Revolution: How To Earn An Elite MBA For Free*. Retrieved June 23, 2016, from <http://poetsandquants.com/2013/12/17/the-mooc-revolution-how-to-earn-an-elite-mba-for-free/>