How will universities deal with online degrees (MOOCs)?

February 2014

Dennis Hayes , Claire Beecroft , John Hutchinson and Joe Gazdula introduced a discussion on MOOCs, chaired by Shirley Lawes

Promoted as a way of using technology to extend education to all, **M**assive **O**pen **O**nline **C**ourse s (**M OOCs**) have also been criticised as being a portend for the reduction in the quality of educational content. Is there a real decline in educational standards as many think there is, and what is the relationship between standards of education and the use of technology in facilitating education?

Education is a ***hotly contested subject*** due to the special role it plays in passing on knowledge in society, or what Oakeshott described as 'the conversation between the generations'. Many in education, the media, politicians, policy makers and academics have celebrated a '***learning age***' in which easy access to information has been confused with knowledge and understanding, and led to the pronouncement that it is redundant. Others suggest that the idea

that constant innovation and change mean that knowledge is soon ‘
out of date
’, undermining the requirement to pass on ‘the best that has been known and thought in the world’ and is a
symptom of the decline of the social project of educating.

The ***celebration of technology*** in education is surely not ***in itself*** progressive. Technology can have an educational role but
if we are not educating then
it may only worsen the crisis of meaning in education.
A facile and
faddish concern
with the processes by which students learn or ‘co-construct’ what they are learning could be denying them the possibility of an intellectual life. In essence, students are potentially getting more of an
edutainment
than an education in this ‘
learning age
’.

Some background readings

Three cheers for the Mickey MOOCs University? by Dennis Hayes, spiked online 4 September 2013

The free online education revolution , by Sam Dumitriu, The Mancunion 24 September 2013

Laptop University? The future of HE , Battle of Ideas session 19 October 2013

Moocs hotly debated at Battle of Ideas , by Matthew Reisz, Times Higher Education 24 October 2013

University of Manchester joins Coursera , by Chris Parr, Times Higher Education 24 October 2013

For busy teachers, online degrees can help in the rat race , by Teru Clavel, Japan Times 1st December 2013

MOOCs: Futurelearn 4 pluses & 4 minuses , by Donald Clark 27 January 2014

Is the treason of the intellectuals inevitable? by Jason Walsh, Economia 8 February 2014

Watch video of the speaker and audience discussion below. Thanks to Dan Clayton the documentary filmmaker from Leeds for this.

Discussion sponsored by

The Open University plays a unique role in society making lifelong learning open to all, inspiring and enabling people to develop wherever, whenever and however they need. Promoting social justice by inspiring learning throughout the world, the **OU** aim to lead the learning revolution by taking innovation to the heart of learning and research.

Responding to the needs of individuals and employers and of the societies in which they live and work, the **OU** are dedicated to supporting their students' learning success.

Students from the UK and around the world have free access to some of the country's leading universities through Futurelearn Ltd, an OU funded company bringing together a range of free, open, online courses.

With a student body of around 11,000 the University of Bolton believe you will get the best of all world. Based around a modern, compact campus where no-one feels anonymous and, with small teaching groups on many courses, you can be sure you are a name, not just a number.

Bolton itself is a friendly, thriving town close to the big cities of Manchester and Liverpool.

The University of Bolton's teaching quality has consistently won the highest ratings possible from the Government's quality control agency and have professional accreditation for more than 30 of their teaching programmes.