We'll start MOOC MOOC by working synchronously and asynchronously to co-create a single short essay about MOOCs, a wild experiment in mass-collaboration.

One day. A mass of folks in a Google Doc. 1 essay.

If you're new to Google Docs, and want a bit of helpful advice, take a look at Jesse Stommel's article, Theorizing Google Docs: 10 Tips for Navigating Online Collaboration. Here are a couple of important highlights:

> "A potential pitfall of this sort of work is a variation of the bystander effect, whereby participants will see a problem or gap in the document but assume someone else will fix it. The more collaborators involved, the more the effect is amplified." **So, make sure to jump in where you see you're needed!**

> **"**Embrace chaos. There is something slightly crazy about a shared writing space, especially when there are more than 2 contributing authors. A Google Doc can seem to write itself, a new digital ecosphere that bubbles with lively and chaotic energy. I'm frequently startled when I leave a Google Doc to realize that *it will go on without me*. If you haven't collaborated within a Google Doc ... Don't be surprised when weird and sometimes wondrous things begin to happen." With so many cooks, wonder how the broth will turn out!

Ready? Set. Go!

Click the Comments button in the upper right corner to discuss the changes, and use the Insert->Comment menu to post notes on selected text.

Instructions:
1. Consider these questions: What does learning mean in K-12 education? How do MOOCs affect that learning, and what can they teach us about it?
2. Collaborate as a group (a potentially very large group) in this document to write one **exactly 1000-word** essay that responds to both questions. (For a word count at any point, highlight the body of the essay, then go to Tools > Word Count in the main menu.)
3. Somewhere in the essay, reference, quote, or cite articles from within the course.
4. Include (and attribute) a single picture chosen via http://search.creativecommons.org/.
5. Revise and title the finished essay. Keep these instructions at the top of the document.

All this before 6:00 PM Eastern time.

What is learning in the K-12 stage?

What does learning mean?

Learning involves a new experience that creates and/or reinforces knowledge and skills. This can be a negative or a positive experience. It need not take place in a school, and it happens constantly, particularly in young life when everything is so new. Education in the K-12 arena is currently experiencing a significant upheaval as the spectrum of assessment is being renegotiated across the entire field, from student achievement to teacher evaluation. Consequently, what constitutes learning, particularly in the United States, is being interrogated in a high stakes effort to craft a redefined notion of what learning means and how it can be measured.

Within the K-12 age range, there are many subranges that involve vastly different types of learning. How and what young children learn is very different to how and what adolescents learn.

Learning in Grades K-5

To start, wanting to learn about something requires curiosity and the initial awareness that the topic exists. Also, everything requires a certain baseline set of skills, such as reading and writing skills. While it's not necessary to go to school to learn how to read, it certainly helps a country as a whole if all children learn these baseline skills at a young age so that they can later be productive and self-supporting in the future. For these skills to be acquired quickly and effectively, the standard method of teaching is necessary; for example, a teacher must teach spelling techniques. This allows for all children to have a more equal footing in later education – a base knowledge of maths, sciences, language, etc. With this, children will be more successful in exploring more indepth and advanced knowledge, with more awareness of what they can learn if they are interested.

Yet if the learning process is democratic and purpose-driven for each individual, the social purpose of learning will take care of itself, without state intervention.

Learning in Grades 6-12

Learning, developmentally, moves from the concrete to the abstract, as the learner is able to increasingly learn and develop critical thinking skills. Learners become more independent, aware and focused as to their goals, and they begin to explore and create their own learning path based on interest.

There is great potential for MOOC as a tool for the home educated community, and potentially this could be used in collaboration with schools. There is already an established relationship in this field for 'self taught' students to take final examinations within mainstream schools, which somewhat echoes the MOOC system of free and open courses with a focused final assessment requirement.

In a classroom environment teachers have the responsibility of managing the social interactions of students, potentially addressing issues of confidence, difference of opinion and misunderstanding. Whilst online learning provides an anonymity which young learners especially with confidence issues may appreciate, there is a risk that students will become demoralised at some point in the process and without direct intervention they will disengage from the course in a way they couldn't in a classroom. MOOC ideology assumes learners are self motivated and proactive and teenagers are, but not consistently. Courses targeted to this age group would need to address their specific social learning requirements.

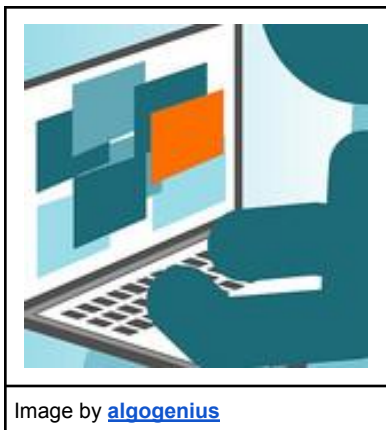## How do MOOCs affect that learning, and what can they tell us about it?

Image by **algogenius**

At this point, the MOOC concept has very little traction, outside of the possibilities offered as professional development for teachers. It has existed primarily in the university domain, even originating to some degree within the teacher preparation work done by Alec Couros at the University of Regina.

One major challenge with the MOOC model is, in fact, the openness. K-12 students are

emerging as autonomous individuals with their own digital identities. Many tools, including commonly used social networking platforms, have age requirements that inhibit usage. Different countries operate with a variety of laws in an effort to protect children. Moreover, most online courseware is currently employing a "walled garden" approach that maintains student work within a Learning Management System that is likely not completely open to the public.

There is also a greater emphasis on control of student behavior and outcomes in the K-12 arena, as standards are being applied across a wider range. Additionally, K-12 institutions have a higher threshold of direct accountability to parents and the community to govern and address student behavior than universities, where the students are essentially expected to behave as adults. As a result, schools are working with a greater degree of fear, where expectations need to be managed differently.

A MOOC is most successful for the learner when they have a clear motivation or purpose in taking the course, and when they have mastery of their own time and focus. There is a risk that this mode of learning may be inefficient and chaotic for young people, who perhaps do not have a basic grounding in a subject, or who are unfocused in their purpose. The 'Wiki' effect where students leap from snapshot to snapshot of knowledge, without necessarily mastering any of it is already a recognisable experience for K-12 students who are not taught to use the knowledge they gather from online sources. If MOOC courses have no distinct outcome, students may not use the information they find and, therefore, not absorb or connect with it.

Even more problematic, the K-12 model of education is still driven by normed assessments that often shape or determine learning outcomes for students. Consequently, the more fluid, dynamic, and individualist nature of MOOCs runs into opposition with the current model. While there may be a lot of discussion about changes to existing models of K-12 education, the alternatives remain primarily private or privately funded efforts.

There are a growing number of open educational efforts that are making headway in the K-12 sector, however. Efforts like Mozilla's Peer-to-Peer University are beginning to offer possibilities, along with their badges effort, and K-12 schools are now experimenting.

COPPA is a real challenge in terms of offering MOOCs.

Important questions we might wish to ask here:
Background
- Is there any research or exemplars of MOOCs being used at K12?
- Do we need to differentiate between a MOOC as a platform and Intranets or LMS?

Implementation
- Would MOOCs at K12 be predicated on a *c*Mooc or *x*Mooc?
- How tightly would the curricular content be defined?
- How (can) MOOCs cross cultural boundaries?
- How do we draw the students in from K5 - what is the progression

Application? Advantages? Affordances
- Could MOOCs provide a solution to teacher shortages?
- Remote locations and geographically isolated learners
- Connect disparate home-schoolers ?
- Increase open mindedness and social interaction ?

Tools
- What tools/services if any would need to be included?

References

1. http://www.globaleducationconference.com/forum/topics/moocs-massive-open-online-courses-for-k12
2. http://www.aiqus.com/questions/41231/making-sense-of-moocs-20-page-report-by-distinguished-he-distance-learning-educator
3. **Public Online Charter School Students: Choices, Perceptions, and Traits - paper by**
   1. Paul Kim phkim@stanford.edu,
   2. Flora Hisook Kim and
   3. Arafeh Karimi

Relevant resources

- TEDxMuskegon -- Maria Andersen -- Recipe for Free Range Learning:
  http://youtu.be/mWdSz2nHQNY
- Charles Leadbeater: Education innovation in the slums:
  http://www.ted.com/talks/charles_leadbeater_on_education.html
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