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This week on MOOCs, ep. 6

The must-read articles on MOOCs from around the web

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Is it really a question of bricks vs clicks?

In a debate at Columbia University, the question whether it would be bricks or clicks—in other words campus vs MOOCs—in the future of higher education, the clicks won. Now, in all fairness, I believe that the future of (higher) education lies in combining both (and add in other elements) to get the best outcomes for students, but nevertheless [the debate, as reported on in the New Yorker](#), is an interesting one. Three things to take away from it:

1. Those arguing against MOOCs often use the idea of accelerated learning through teacher-student and student-student intimacy (peer-powered learning, I like to call that). The basic premise seems to be that physical proximity has some magical powers that helps people to get even more out of their education. And that's partly true. Being able to touch someone, see their expression and body language from close by, does have magic powers, but digitally facilitated communication is something we're so used to these days, that you can largely create that intimacy without being in the same room.
2. Another argument often used to temper the inflated expectations about MOOCs, is the fact that very few people actually complete an online course. Firstly, this argument is nicely countered in the debate by Anant Agarwal from EdX, when he says that even 5% of MOOC students are in absolute terms more students than he will teach in a lifetime in a classroom. The comparison of completion rates is indeed maybe unfair. Especially, because not all MOOC students have the same reasons and expectations of a MOOC as they would have for a paid-for classroom course. In the bricks-system, a certificate is sort of the proof of having accomplished your learning goals, but for MOOC students, it might be just browsing around. Or auditing a course. When a course is free, student motivation and goals are different, than when it's paid for. It would be interesting to see the comparison of completion rates between those who pay for a certificate

in a MOOC (such as the signature track of Coursera) and students in a bricks-system. I'd wager a couple of Euro's that MOOCs then have a higher completion rate.

3. MOOCs are just the first step in a transformation process for Higher Education. There's great value in campuses, but also in online courses and combining that with hands-on projects where students learn how to put theory into practice. Add in a bit of globalisation, where you see students completing modules of a 'degree package' in different locations in the world, and you get a glimpse of the future.

Here be dragons

In a [very thoughtful article, Dan Butlin](#) lays out three ways in which MOOCs will disrupt higher education. The first two ways are basically continuations of trends that were already in motion, but the third... that is, as ancient map makers you to say about uncharted territory, where dragons swim. The question now is: how will higher education deal with a new promised land.

The world a laboratory

Some of the MOOCs I've taken, were also used for research purposes. In most forms it was by asking the students to participate in surveys. But also the in-video quizzes are used for gathering data. But this MOOC takes it even further, as it [enables students to do lab experiments](#) right where they are.

How to make a campus from a MOOC

Couldn't resist adding my inaugural guest post on the Mootivity blog, in which I share [tips on how you can create a MOOCampus](#) and enhance your peer-powered learning.

If you have tips for great stories on MOOCs, let me know. Here, or on [Twitter](#), where I talk about MOOCs, too.