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RESEARCH BRIEFS

February 2016

Georgia Southern University College of Education

In Search of Quality: Using Quality Matters to Analyze the Quality of Massive, Open, Online Courses (MOOCs)

Authors

Patrick R. Lowenthal, Ph.D. Boise State University, College of Education

Charles B. Hodges, Ph.D. Georgia Southern University, College of Education

Abstract

The concept of the massive, open, online course (MOOC) is not new, but high-profile initiatives have moved MOOCs into the forefront of higher education news over the past few years. Members of institutions of higher education have mixed feelings about MOOCs, ranging from those who want to offer college credit for the successful completion of MOOCs to those who fear MOOCs are the end of the university as we know it. We set forth to investigate the quality of MOOCs by using the Quality Matters quality control framework. In this article, we present the results of our inquiry, with a specific focus on the implications the results have on day-to-day practice of designing online courses.

Practical Application

MOOCs have been in the higher education news often in the last few years. Many university faculty members have viewed them as a threat to traditional course offerings or simply another online learning fad. The authors posit, however, that MOOCs are an opportunity to rethink how we design and teach online courses. In this analysis of six MOOCs, the authors highlight the key differences between the type of learning experiences that some MOOCs offer to learners. They also explain how MOOCs are not drastically different in design than many on-campus courses taught at universities, and provide suggestions for how some MOOCs could be revised to improve their design with respect to the popular Quality Matters online course design framework.

Citation

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For more information, contact Charles B. Hodges - chodges@georgiasouthern.edu

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