

# Engagement and Motivation in MOOCs



Stephen Downes

November 22, 2011

This is a discussion of issues, not a presentation of results.



Photo: <http://bit.ly/v5sF7k>

A long time ago, I developed and worked with an LMS. Then I built some online communities. Engagement was easy.



<http://www.slideshare.net/Downes/munimall-a-review>

More recently, I've worked with newsletters, social networks, and distributed networks. Engagement was assumed.



The screenshot shows the header of the OLDaily website. The logo "oldaily" is in a light blue font, with "by Stephen Downes" in a smaller font below it. To the right of the logo is a photograph of a bird in flight over a body of water. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: [HOME] [TOP] [ARCHIVES] [MOBILE] [ABOUT] [THREADS] [OPTIONS]. The date "November 22, 2011" is displayed. Below the date is a photograph of a hand holding a brush over a stone tablet with Chinese characters. The word "Joy" is written in blue, followed by the text "Clay Burell, Beyond School, November 22, 2011." Below this is a short paragraph of text starting with "It's so nice to see Clay Burell post again, and he comes up with a gem, on an example of beautiful learning. "Joy chose to explore the Golden Age of Chinese lyric poetry of the

<http://www.downes.ca/news/OLDaily.htm>



Even more recently, I've been working on MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses. These create new expectations.

PLENK2010

Personal Learning Environments  
Networks and Knowledge 2010

home discussion wiki the daily blog live sessions recordings

YOU ARE NOT LOGGED IN. [Login] [Register]

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

YOU CAN PLENK, TOO!

PLENK 2010

If you would like to register for PLENK2010 there's still time to register.  
[Click here to Register](#)

66 users have subscribed to The Daily. All users will receive notifications

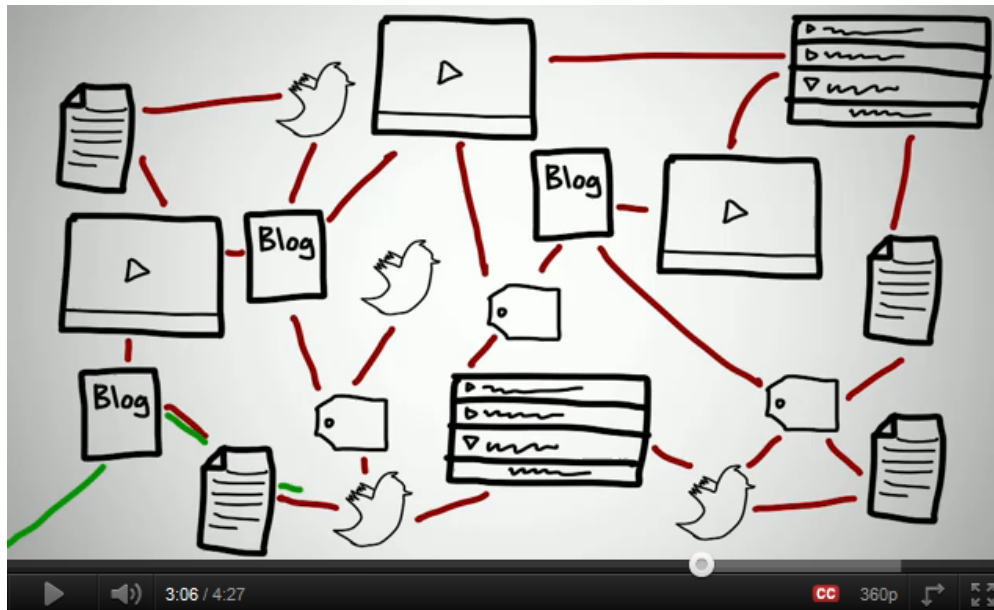
<http://connect.downes.ca/>

These aren't typical courses – they are based on a connectivist pedagogy of learning through linkages and conversation



<http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm>

Learning isn't a matter of acquiring facts, but rather the development of connections through engagement and interaction.

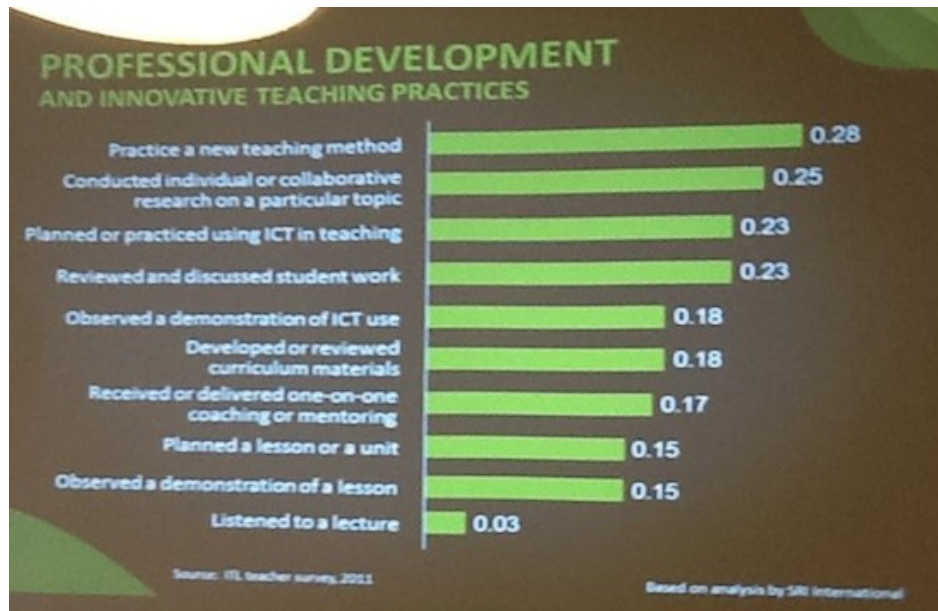


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eW3gMGqcZQc>



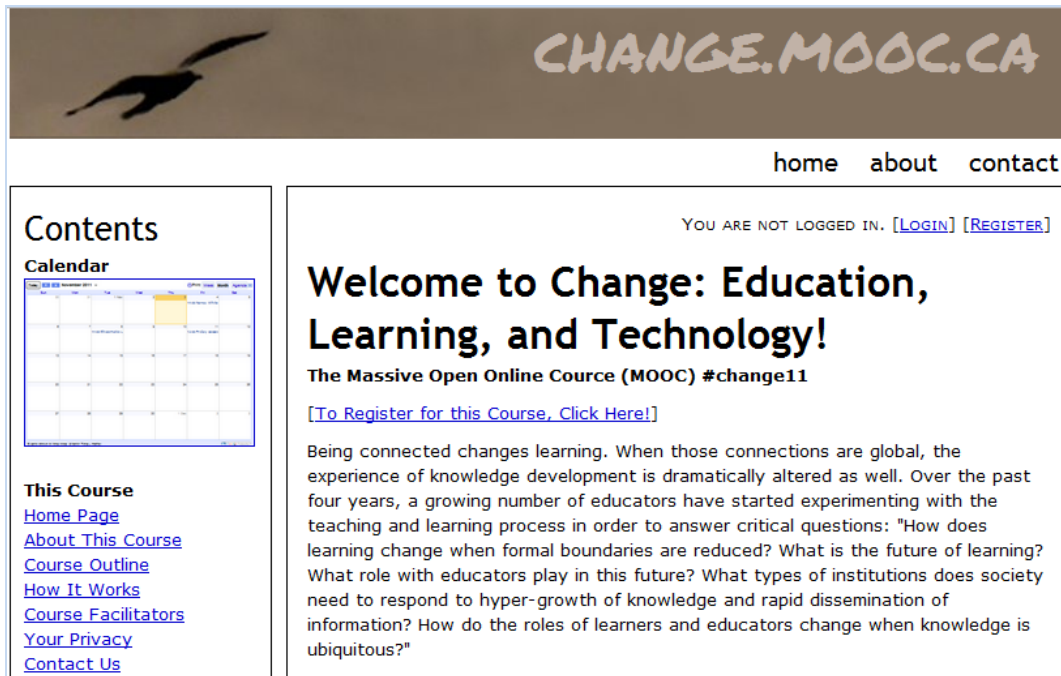


The idea is to learn through practice and reflection, *becoming* a knowing person by doing – the way we know people *do* learn.



<http://dougpete.wordpress.com/2011/11/22/learn-ict/>

- We are currently offering a 30 week monster course called #Change11 with 2200 students



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Change MOOC website. At the top, there is a dark banner with a silhouette of a bird in flight on the left and the text "CHANGE.MOOC.CA" in a light, stylized font on the right. Below the banner is a navigation menu with links for "home", "about", and "contact". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains a "Contents" section with a "Calendar" link and a small calendar widget. Below the calendar is a "This Course" section with several links: "Home Page", "About This Course", "Course Outline", "How It Works", "Course Facilitators", "Your Privacy", and "Contact Us". The right column features a login/register prompt: "YOU ARE NOT LOGGED IN. [LOGIN] [REGISTER]". Below this is a large heading: "Welcome to Change: Education, Learning, and Technology!". Underneath the heading is the text "The Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) #change11" and a link: "[To Register for this Course, Click Here!]". The main body of text in the right column discusses the impact of global connections on learning and the role of educators in a future of rapid knowledge dissemination.

CHANGE.MOOC.CA

home about contact

YOU ARE NOT LOGGED IN. [\[LOGIN\]](#) [\[REGISTER\]](#)

## Welcome to Change: Education, Learning, and Technology!

The Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) #change11

[\[To Register for this Course, Click Here!\]](#)

Being connected changes learning. When those connections are global, the experience of knowledge development is dramatically altered as well. Over the past four years, a growing number of educators have started experimenting with the teaching and learning process in order to answer critical questions: "How does learning change when formal boundaries are reduced? What is the future of learning? What role with educators play in this future? What types of institutions does society need to respond to hyper-growth of knowledge and rapid dissemination of information? How do the roles of learners and educators change when knowledge is ubiquitous?"

**Contents**

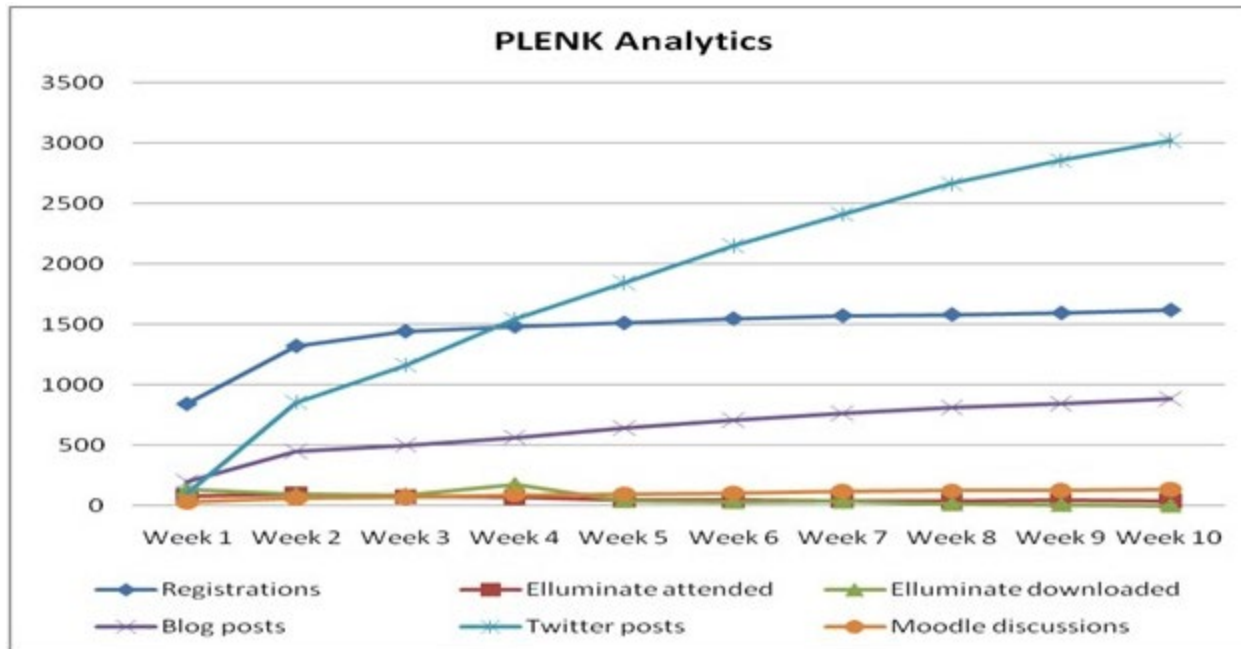
**Calendar**

**This Course**

- [Home Page](#)
- [About This Course](#)
- [Course Outline](#)
- [How It Works](#)
- [Course Facilitators](#)
- [Your Privacy](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

<http://change.mooc.ca/>

And we're seeing the same sort of pattern we've seen in other connectivist courses.



<http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/882/1689>

# The decline can be dramatic.

<p><b>Blog Posts</b></p> <p>This is a list of the blog posts of blogs submitted (Browse all Blog Posts)</p> <p><b>Collective Learning 11</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> This morning in my eLearning. Change. By the presentation paper those links because the Learning-As-I have me learning as radically re [Comment]</p> <p><b>Collective learning 11</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> After having been as a make a relevant post to teacher of IB Compute [Comment]</p> <p><b>Imagine your world 7</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Imagine Your World 7 different professions to 0700 [Comment]</p> <p><b>MIT: Collective in</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> MIT: Collective in Oct 2011 13:49:43 +0 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Change 11: Fight for</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> What is your life lesson Prize Winner in Chem controversial. In the cc [Link] Wed, 05 Oct 2011 10:38:03 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Open Access scholar</b> Gillon, <i>Change MOG</i> Should academics ever Kest Anderson on this for support of Open A useful degree the limit 05 Oct 2011 10:38:03 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Collective and comm</b> Gillon, <i>Change MOG</i> In a position paper by (Change 11), she states a single person" and b reading -&gt; [Link] Wed 05 Oct 2011 10:38:03 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Twitter Updates for:</b> Langford, <i>Change MOG</i> RT @ingridhobbs: I'm coming to a Collectiv... # RT @Virtualizing... # RT @Virtualizing... # RT [Comment]</p>	<p><b>Jeffrey's Twin</b> Jeffrey Keefer, m. My interests, an officially exorc learning be act fchange11 @a Littlejohn http: 05 Oct 2011 0 [Comment]</p> <p><b>fchange11</b> Mary Pringle, I missed last w John Kasi, feel mistakes in sub The size of the group with an Technology... [Lir reading -&gt; [Lir [Comment]</p> <p><b>Collective Lea</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Yesterday, a/b is being discuss this does not re Collective Lea price I started 04T09:20:00 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Reading and 3</b> Glasgow, A Pa. The topic of BI description of f what binds the of knowledge I [Link] Wed, 02 Oct 2011 10:38:03 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Frustrated with</b> Glasgow, A Pa. Not everybody an old Mac, we frustrating..... [Comment]</p> <p><b>The A-Z Diet</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Group meme Tags: twitter, b 0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>How to work</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> In a facebook di home). I had Puz check "Fast" - o the changemoo: 2011 07:30:27 + [Comment]</p> <p><b>Change 11 Di</b> Glasgow, A Pa. I will be arriv Weiler what is you encounter the fchange11 becoming profes I am coming to a discussion base innovations for 19:05:34 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Technology o</b> Glasgow, A Pa. I'm coming to a discussion base innovations for 19:05:34 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Initial Reactio</b> Jeffrey Keefer, I study like to Collectiv Lea all of this, and i post. In some v +0000 [Comment]</p>	<p><b>Go!</b> J. Meacher, m. Everything is a work for fchange11 began! Pernal [Comment]</p> <p><b>fchange11</b> Mary Pringle, I missed last w John Kasi, feel mistakes in sub The size of the group with an Technology... [Lir reading -&gt; [Lir [Comment]</p> <p><b>Tooth for Coll</b> George, <i>Change MOG</i> I. Somewhat def getting involved. This blog, on our progress, but b 18:59:51 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Contact student</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Reflecting: Mem about the lecture JOANNEUM. S different ways... [Comment]</p> <p><b>Bloom's Taxom</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> In our 3 seminar used Bloom's Ta Bloom's Taxom useful for my ma 2011 07:30:27 + [Comment]</p> <p><b>How to work</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> In a facebook di home). 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[Link] Thu, 29 Sep 2011 0 [Comment]</p> <p><b>The digital scholar - wh</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Savven Verjans, Steve's ad Within the context of the M dealt with different aspects new book by Martin Weiler: Martin on Wednesday, and digital technologies on prof contributions in this discuss 30T18:21:00.000+02:00 [Comment]</p> <p><b>task1</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Welcome to week 4 of PCL learning. What is collective already engaging in collect lea? During the week 5 09:31:25 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Interviews</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> collective learning by learn myself and Lou McGill do dip into whichever one you [Comment]</p> <p><b>collective learning task2</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> COLLECTIVE LEARNING exploring issues of collect information on collective le Collective Learning is how they are learning. Read this home). I had Puz check "Fast" - o the changemoo: 2011 07:30:27 + [Comment]</p> <p><b>task3</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> COLLECTIVE LEARNING learning that professionals i structured and non-struct research in focused specific participation in daily work probably change [Link] Wed, 21 S [Comment]</p> <p><b>"Moneyball" and Educat</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Kathleen Wilbur, RW or Dear Education. Why are no learning institutions and (and even sports) has been working. I'm doing in specific participation in daily work probably change [Link] Wed, 21 S [Comment]</p>	<p><b>http://change.assoc</b> Kathleen Wilbur, RW or Dear Education. Why are no learning institutions and (and even sports) has been working. I'm doing in specific participation in daily work probably change [Link] Wed, 21 S [Comment]</p> <p><b>Digital Scholarship</b> George Velesianos, I just came across Na MOOC organized by Stephen's announcements session sounded won session descriptions [Comment]</p> <p><b>Assessing digital sch</b> George Velesianos, It's digital scholarship on Twitter and a must read that details the find evidence on rese [Comment]</p> <p><b>Change 2011 MOOC</b> TeacherTeacher, Bi So, the first thing I ne for the course.* First, and connections with teachers.* I have not that this course will b with the course for its 04:00 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Yet! Another Toy</b> TeacherTeacher, Bi Okay, so Blogging it didn't manage to keep year-old was home fr 15 minutes looking re [Comment]</p> <p><b>Collective Learning</b> Niskotte, <i>Change MOG</i> I love the concept of different skills is abe education. I suspect g work and collective i two Group work tak a piece of work toget [Comment]</p>	<p><b>Crowdsourcing: Ingenuity or pure laziness?</b> Glasgow, A Pa. <i>Change MOG</i> In fchange 11 we are being challenged to examine collective learning with a focus on how we learn. As one who comes from the business sector and not that of the academic sector, I can't help but synthesis how this applies within my given context. Many companies have turned to crowdsourcing in their research and development of products or services. I have seen numerous academics do likewise (although they have not called it "crowdsourcing"). Crowdsourcing is defined by crowdsourcing... [Link] 2011-10-04T08:37:00.000+04:00 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Jeffrey's Twitter Updates for 2011-10-04</b> Jeffrey Keefer, <i>Change MOG</i> @allison! Thank you; I will share this with my colleagues and the list, as there seems to be continued confusion about this fchange 11 in reply to @allison! # @robbyapp # @joonroben You may find the 3 readings in this week's fchange11 MOOC on collective learning interesting http://co.LHG11-K5w # @allison! Looking forward to reading your work OPEN/LOCK... [Link] Tue, 04 Oct 2011 06:25:00 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Connected knowledge collective learning fchange11</b> birom, <i>Change MOG</i> Allison Littlejohn has a fine paper on the subject. It makes me think of an aspect of connected knowledge and collective learning. Allison does not mention the co-ownership of knowledge because that is not his subject. This connected learning, collective learning is also called crowd-sourcing. I do not know if the two concepts are identical. [...] [Link] Tue, 04 Oct 2011 06:54:57 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p><b>Twitter Updates for 2011-10-04</b> Langford, <i>Change MOG</i> RT 3 Ways to Avoid Common Roadblocks When Building... by @tonkabbmann #eLearning http://co.LHG11-K5w # @Virtualizing... #eLearning http://co.LHG11-K5w # @Virtualizing... # RT @Virtualizing... # RT @Virtualizing... # RT @Virtualizing... # RT @Virtualizing... # RT [Comment]</p> <p><b>The Evolving Roles of Educators and Learners (fchange11)</b> bernadettefergo, <i>Change MOG</i> I love reading Florence Lyon's blog "Teaching French in Kwiland". Her reflective style of writing never ceases to challenge me to think more deeply about how I view myself as an educator. She has written some great things about constructivism... Continue reading -&gt; [Link] Mon, 03 Oct 2011 23:46:54 +0000 [Comment]</p> <p>If your blog post isn't here, don't panic. Participant feeds have not yet been checked and added to the list. Give us a few days. :)</p> <p><b>New Discussion Threads</b></p> <p>Consider commenting on a blog post to create a new discussion here. To view the entire discussion thread, click on the title of the post.</p> <p><b>Frustrated with the fchange11 RSS feed, Technical difficulties</b> Rainbowhill, <i>Change MOG</i> I have the same issue. Clicking the title of some posts takes me to 500 Internal Server Error and clicking the blog link on the bottom right takes me to Durff's blog which is empty. The comment link takes me to a comment page like this one, thankfally, but I have to copy the link from the field and paste into the browser address bar. Rather hit and miss and it does slow me down. Learning how to work around it is [Comment]</p>
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<http://erikduval.wordpress.com/2011/11/08/the-speed-of-tech-owd11/>

The problem may well be a lack of engagement – the presumption is engagement is related to outcomes





# So, how do we raise engagement in a MOOC?



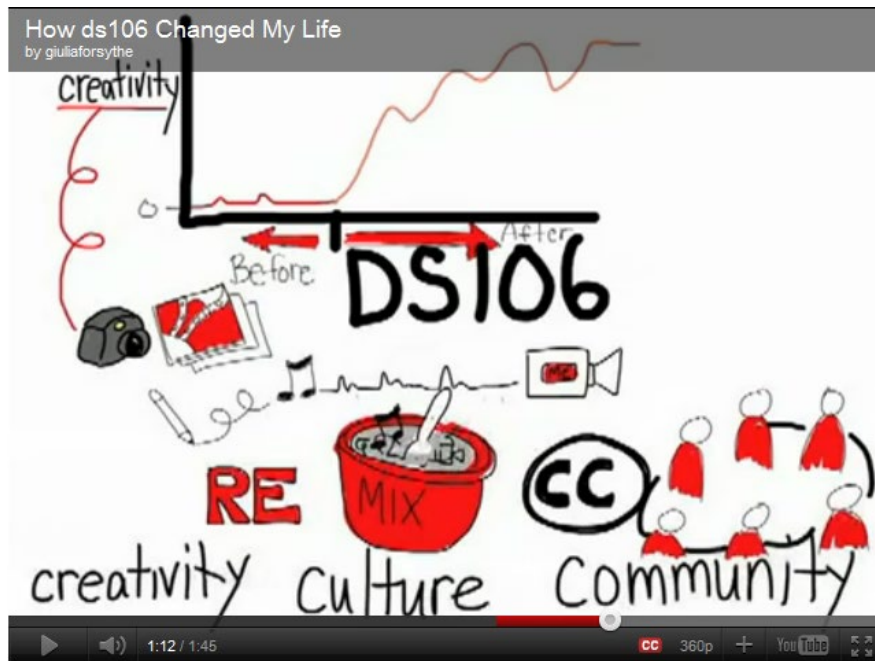
[http://cst.usc.edu/blog/beyond\\_clickers\\_-\\_polling\\_tech.html](http://cst.usc.edu/blog/beyond_clickers_-_polling_tech.html)

Engagement can be a “a broad construct” fostering active and collaborative learning....

Table 1: Examples of positive and negative engagement

	Positive engagement	Non-engagement	Negative engagement
Behavioural	Attends lectures, participates with enthusiasm	Skips lectures without excuse	Boycotts, pickets or disrupts lectures
Emotional	Interest	Boredom	Rejection
Cognitive	Meets or exceeds assignment requirements	Assignments late, rushed or absent	Redefines parameters for assignments

# Online engagement *can* be life-changing



<http://gforsythe.ca/topics/openlearning/ds106-openlearning/>

What *is* it though? Most of the research... has concentrated on the simple measure of attendance (Douglas & Alemanne, 2007).

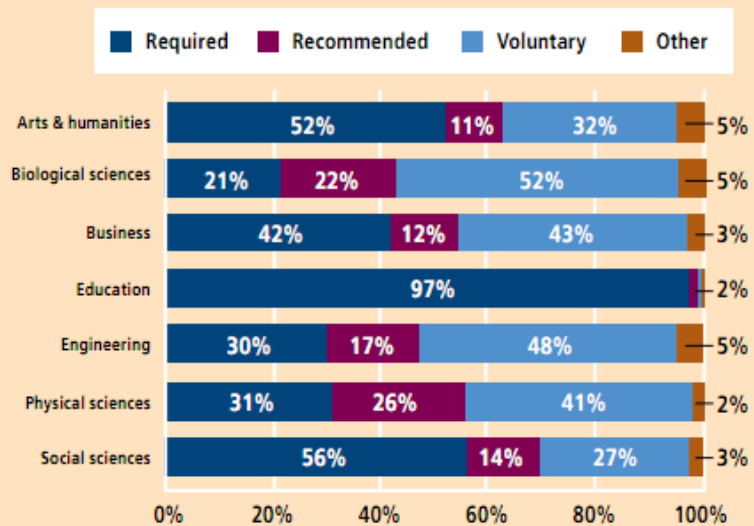


<http://beerc.wordpress.com/2010/03/09/online-student-engagement/>

Photo: <http://bit.ly/us0Joe>

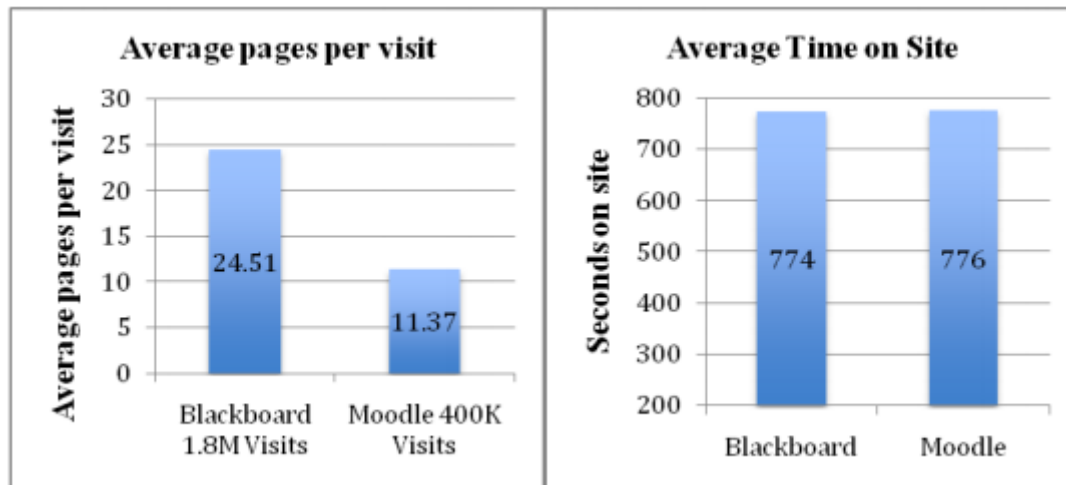
# But, on-campus engagement may be very different from online engagement

Figure 12: Motivation for Career Experience by Major Category





In the online world, this translates into counting page hits or time on the LMS



<http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/sydney10/procs/Beer-full.pdf>

We can force attendance by measuring attendance, but we want something deeper

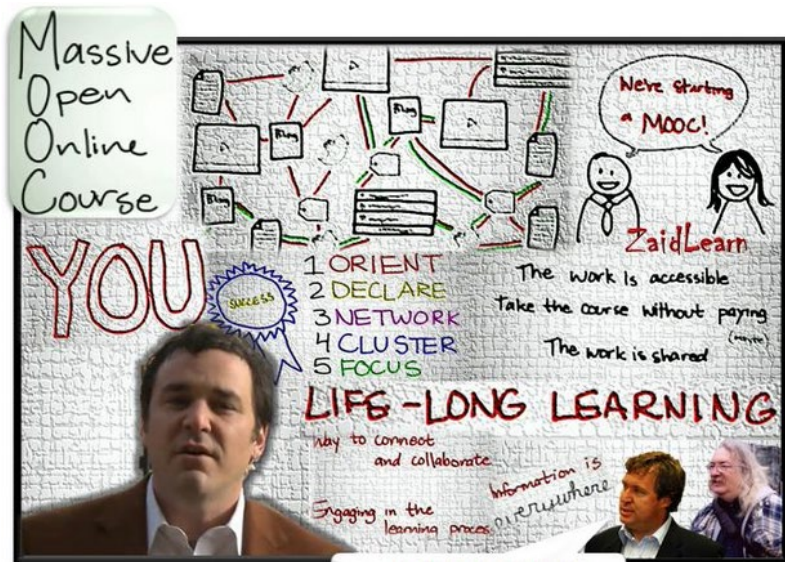


What about engagement as relevance – the idea that people choose their learning?



<http://vimeo.com/9216308>

But the presumption of a MOOC is that participants have self-selected, that they're already interested and motivated.



<http://bit.ly/uBXovH>

# Engagement as the fostering of activities



<http://bit.ly/suyUVJ>



Perhaps we can take lessons in engagement from games and game design?



[http://www.ted.com/talks/gabe\\_zichermann\\_how\\_games\\_make\\_kids\\_smarter.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/gabe_zichermann_how_games_make_kids_smarter.html)

But where is the challenge in a MOOC? Where is the possibility of failure?

