# How Can MOOC Providers Create an Interactive Learning Experience in the Arts?

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#### Introduction

MOOCs (massive open online courses) are a model of online education that is growing around the globe. Arts education in MOOCs, however, has developed slowly in comparison to the rapid growth of the courses at large. Unlike education in other subjects, arts courses require more interactive forms of teaching and varied forms of assessment. The following research explores the current situation of arts education in online courses, and the future path for MOOC providers interested in creating an interactive learning experience.

In order to understand MOOCs and opportunities for arts education in this environment, this report will first seek to define this digital phenomenon and to present up-to date trends in the sector. Then, current trends in arts courses provided by traditional MOOC providers will be contrasted with a those of a pioneer in the field, Kadenze. The report concludes with some reflections and questions regarding the future of MOOC-based arts education.

#### THE RISE OF MOOCS

MOOCs started emerging as a mode of online education in 2008. Oxford Dictionaries Online defines a MOOC as "a course of study made available over the Internet without charge to a very large number of people." It is characterized as an open-ended, open participation and typically free higher education course delivered via the web. MOOCs break through the geographical limits of traditional education to let students from remote areas gain access to popular courses taught in premier universities.

The New York Times named 2012 "The Year of the MOOC" with major MOOC providers emerging across the globe including Coursera, edX and Udacity. These organizations partner with leading universities and offer courses online through their educational platforms. Statistics from Class Central show that by November 2015, over 35 MOOC providers maintained partnerships with 550 universities around the world to offer more than 4000 courses. Among the top 25 universities in the US News rankings, 23 of them now offer online courses for free.

Coursera, the MOOC provider currently offering the most courses, has partnerships with 136 universities around the world. It offers 1472 courses to more than 16 million students in over 200 countries via its platform. The subjects of these courses range from physics and engineering to humanities and business.

# MOOC Providers Number of courses started/scheduled

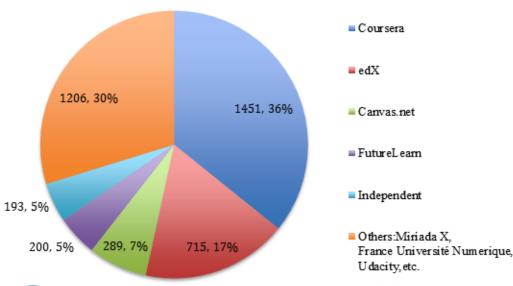


Figure 1: MOOC Providers Source: <u>Class Central</u>





# ARTS EDUCATION MOOCS TODAY

While MOOCs are developing quickly, arts education courses are often left out. According to data from Class Central, the majority of courses offered by MOOC providers fall under the subjects of Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics, or Business. Art and Design is the subject that has the least courses, with only 4.5% of the total courses listed. On Coursera, under the Arts and Humanities,

category, only 73 Music and Art courses are provided while 385 courses are available under the subject of Computer Science.

A popularity disparity between arts courses and courses in other subjects is further evidence that arts education is falling behind in the field. In the list of Most Popular Courses in 2014, four are business courses, three are computer science courses, and none are arts courses.

# Course distribution by subject

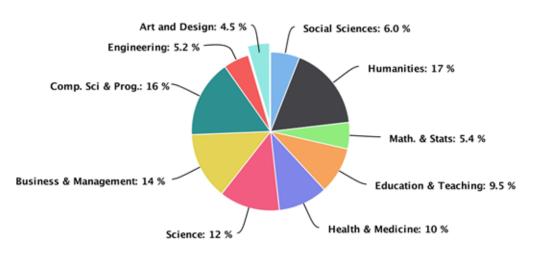


Figure 2: Course Distribution by Subject. Source: Class Central

Metric	Jazz Improvisation	Programming in Java
Number of Lessons	6	6
Form of Teaching	Video Lecture	Video Lecture
		Supporting Material
<b>Course Content</b>	Concept Explanation	Concept Explanation
	Examples of Playing	Coding Example
Form of Assessment	Quiz	Quiz
	Paper Assignment	
	Recording	
Assessor	Peer Review	Automatic Assessment

Figure 3: Class Comparison. Source: Coursera





## Curriculum Design

To further examine arts-based courses in MOOCs, let's analyze Coursera's offerings. On Coursera, Music and Art is a subcategory of Arts and Humanities while its science counterparts, Computer Science, Data Science, and Life Sciences, are major categories. Furthermore, most of the courses in Music and Art are introductory courses, such as "Fundamentals of Graphic Design," "Introduction to Guitar," or "Understanding Video Games." On the contrary, in Software Development there are both introductory and advanced courses, such as "Fundamentals of Computing" and "Advanced Data Structures in Java."

Figure 3 is a comparison between two courses: "Jazz Improvisation" from Music and Art, and "Object Oriented Programming in Java" from Software Development.

This comparison shows that Coursera does not differentiate its pedagogical approaches between arts courses and other subjects, though arts courses often have more active learning needs. The teaching methods are the same -- video lecture.

Course content in these lectures are delivered in a similar fashion: The Learning Pyramid the instructor explains concepts and demonstrates instruments. Coursera does include a special feature for arts courses—peer assessment, but most of the teaching methods Lecture 5% would be characterized as passive according to The Learning Reading 10% Pyramid. **Passive Audio Visual 20% Teaching Methods Demonstration 30% Group Discussion 50% Participatory Teaching Methods** Practice by Doing 75% Teaching Others 90%

Figure 4: The Learning Pyramid. Source: The Peak Performance Center





The Learning Pyramid originated from National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine. It illustrates retention rates of associated with different teaching methods. The first four levels (lecture, reading, audio visual, and demonstration) are categorized as passive teaching methods. In contrast, the bottom three levels (group discussion, practice, and teaching others) are participatory/active teaching methods. Lecturing is the least successful method, with only 5% retention. Generally, high retention rates are associated with active teaching methods, which engage students to develop their own ideas rather than fill them with the ideas of their instructors. Significantly, MOOC providers today rely more on passive teaching methods such as video lectures and demonstrations, while devoting less attention to group discussion and practice. Thus, students are absorbing learning passively, even in courses like "Intro to Guitar."

In terms of measuring learning outcomes, Coursera provides various forms of assessment in arts courses. However, due to the large volume of students, submitted assignments are not reviewed by instructors but by peers. This peer review feature

fosters interaction in the course, but the feedback is not as insightful or reliable as it would be if it came from from a professor. Throughout the learning process, students are often unable to receive personalized guidance based on their performance from an instructor.

# Unique Needs of Arts Education

Due to the creative and subjective nature of art, MOOC providers cannot use the same education format for their arts courses as in other subjects. To create an interactive learning experience in these courses, MOOC providers must pay attention to the unique needs of the subject.

## **Active Learning**

In arts education, active learning plays a very important role. Arts courses involve creative production processes such as designing, painting and music improvising. According to the Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOT), creative thinking skills require more cognitive processes that go beyond concept learning. To develop these skills, students must do more than listen and watch during class time (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Thus, video lectures and reading materials are not enough in arts courses; students need to be provided with an interactive learning environment. One limitation for MOOC education is that it is asynchronous, meaning that students and instructors are rarely in the same place at the same time, preventing direct communication. However, internet-based platforms offer new opportunities that a traditional classroom does not. For example, screen-sharing technology can help students to get an insider's look at an instructor's creative process. Such platforms also create online forums where students from all over the world can exchange ideas.

MOOC providers might consider taking advantage of such tools and implementing more features to engage students in art courses via synchronous engagement and live sharing technologies.

#### Personalized Feedback

In arts courses, personalized feedback is vital; students can only improve their work by learning from the comments. Art is subjective and there may be thousands of ways to interpret a single painting or play a piece of music. There is no "right" answer for art assignments, and it is unrealistic to expect general feedback to apply to all students. Thus, the measurement of creative work relies heavily on

independent judgment and personalized feedback. As Debra Satz, the Senior Associate Dean for the Humanities and Arts at Stanford University says, "writing is one of the most important skills that people learn in the humanities, and... it tends to happen by people going line by line over essays and giving detailed feedback."

# Comprehensive Assessment

In regards to assessment techniques, arts courses need different ways to measure learning outcomes. A quiz may be a good form of assessment to measure if students understand key concepts, but what are the effective tools to measure the emotional value in a painting? Some aspects of artwork can only be measured by actual human beings. Many MOOC's solve this problem through the use of peer-to-peer evaluations, but arts instructors themselves must convey feedback to help students progress. There need to be various forms of assessments. Arts Impact, a program offering professional training for teachers, suggests the following learning assessment strategies:

- Criteria-based checklists
- Criteria-based rubrics
- Self-reflection
- Peer assessment
- Responding to the work of others
- Portfolio
- Evidence of learning: art works, performances, presentations, photographs, video

These assessment strategies are not only useful in traditional classrooms, but also on MOOC platforms. On these platforms, instructors can easily post and update checklists and rubrics for the assignment so that students can have a clear guidance. For example, RubiStar, a non-profit organization at the University of Kansas, has created an exemplary painting rubric based on design, color choice, painting skill, and use of materials (See Appendix 2). Peer assessment is also an effective way for students to learn from each other. Some arts courses now incorporate peer review as one of their assessment tools, but it is not yet a universal feature on some MOOC platforms. Creating a portfolio is likewise very important for arts students because it





shows the sum of their accomplishments and can be used when they apply to colleges or jobs. All of these assessment strategies can help to create a comprehensive measurement system in art courses on MOOC platform.

### CASE STUDY ON KADENZE

In light of the unique nature of arts education, what techniques can MOOC providers employ to make the virtual classroom more interactive and effective? Kadenze may give us some enlightenment on this question.

#### Introduction to Kadenze

Launched in June 2015, Kadenze is a pioneering MOOC platform built especially for creative education. It offers online courses in the fields of design, music, painting and creative technology. It has offered around 30 advanced creative courses in partnerships with leading arts colleges and institutions around the world, including California Institute of the Arts, Stanford University, Seoul Institute of the Arts, and National University of Singapore.

Kadenze's founder is Dr. Ajay Kapur, a former Coursera instructor and the Associate Dean for Research and Development in Digital Arts at California Institute of the Arts. Kapur recognized the limitations of traditional MOOCs who offered arts courses, and he created Kadenze, an online learning platform specifically for arts learners. As Kadenze's Communication Manager John Johnson, puts it, Kadenze has built its platform "from the ground up" to follow the needs of various arts disciplines. To differentiate Kadenze from other MOOC providers, they created a communitylearning environment where students can showcase their portfolio and comment on each other's work. While the platform's content is freely accessible, they also provide for-credit courses priced at \$300 dollars per credit hour.

#### **Kadenze Innovations**

To provide a better learning experience for arts learners, Kadenze incorporates some innovative

features that satisfy the unique needs of arts education. By using interactive tools, it creates a connected, dynamic and personalized learning environment.

#### 1. Diverse Teaching Methods

While MOOC platforms primarily use video lectures, Kadenze takes advantage of Internet-based technologies to make these lectures more interactive. For example, screen-sharing technology allows the teacher in the "Sound Synthesis" course to demonstrate how to use the software on their screen. When introducing a painting, teachers can easily switch the screen between the slides and the full view of the painting. A built-in audio player offers students an opportunity to listen to samples of compositions in their music classes. These techniques satisfy the specific teaching needs in arts courses, and make it easier for students to retain the course content.

Besides video lectures, Kadenze utilizes multiple active teaching methods including portfolio feedback, communication forum, and peer assessment. In the "Course Gallery," students can create their portfolio using Kadenze's building tools to showcase their work to the public. One benefit of this feature is that students can track their learning accomplishments and save the collection of work for later use. Another highlight of Kadenze's active learning strategy is its communitylearning environment. Students are allowed to post their questions and thoughts as conversations, encouraging students to exchange and develop their ideas. In the Student Submissions section, students can comment on each other's work and give feedback. It is a good way for students to receive personalized feedback and to learn from other people's work.

Not confined by the limitations of the online education, Kadenze embraces the Internet to make their virtual classrooms interactive and engaging.

#### 2. Course Management System

Kadenze has adopted an optimized course management system. This system has similarities with "BlackBoard," which most higher education institutions in U.S. implement in course





management. It allows students to view all their courses, syllabi, video sessions, assignments, and grades. Kadenze uses this system to help students manage their learning progress and achieve their objectives.

This system makes online courses more rigorous. It presents teaching materials, a grading policy and learning objectives in a systematic way as a traditional educational institution would, legitimizing the courses. Students can take advantage of the system to go through courses with structured benchmarks and objectives. In this system, students have control over their learning progress, and are more likely to complete the course.

#### 3. Premium Membership Service

Like other MOOC providers, Kadenze provides free access to their courses. Students can take courses for free, view all the video sessions, and participate in the forum discussion. However, the benefits of free service are limited. To receive grades and feedback, collaborate with peers, or build a portfolio, students have to pay a \$7 monthly fee to enroll as a Premium Member.

This paid membership service seems to go against the MOOC's free and accessible ethic, but compared to arts colleges with soaring tuition prices, a \$7 membership fee makes creative education more accessible to people who cannot afford to study these subjects at traditional institutions.

Another difference between Kadenze and traditional MOOC platforms is that Kadenze offers for-credit courses. While Coursera, edX and most other MOOCs offer verified certificates to purchase once students complete the course, Kadenze offers credits that can be transferred and recognized by several institutions. Students can choose to pay \$300 for a credit hour as they enroll in a for-credit course. According to Kadenze's Communication Manager John Johnson, two students admitted to Cal Arts received a one-year adjustment accounting for courses taken at community college combined with their Kadenze credits. This system is a "win-win" situation for institutions and Kadenze students: Institutions have the chance to assess student potential, while students are able to take courses in advance at a lower price.

The Benefits	Free	Premium (\$7/Month)
Enroll in unlimited courses	<b>⊘</b>	<b>⊘</b>
Enroll in For-Credit courses and receive college credit*		<b>②</b>
Submit and share assignments		<b>②</b>
Receive grades and feedback		<b>②</b>
Ask questions and participate in forum discussions		<b>②</b>
Collaborate with peers		<b>②</b>
Build a portfolio to showcase your work		<b>②</b>
Display completed courses and accomplishments on your profile, résumé, or through professional online networks using a verified link		<b>⊘</b>
Receive discounts on select course materials		<b>⊘</b>

Figure 5: Premium Membership Benefits. Source: Kadenze





# NEXT STEPS FOR MOOC ARTS EDUCATION

MOOCs provide a platform where students around the world can benefit from open courses, but there is still room for improvement in MOOC-based arts education. Some MOOC providers like Kadenze have already realized the limitations in the traditional MOOC teaching models, and have made efforts to optimize their platforms. Yet, there are also unanswered questions and emerging trends facing MOOC providers as they look towards the future.

## Use of Educational Technologies

The development of educational technology offers MOOC providers an opportunity to make the classroom more efficient and engaging. Major MOOC platforms like Coursera and edX allow students to share opinions and ideas through an online forum. But, there are more opportunities. Kadenze utilizes an auto-code program to detect plagiarism in media files. Julliard Open Studios (though not a traditional MOOC) partners with the mobile application developer Touchpress to include innovative interactive features in their units, such as synchronized scores in piano class. In the future, more educational technologies are expected to address the unique needs of arts education, and MOOCs must incorporate these technologies to further improve their service.

# Relationship with Higher Education

MOOCs are constantly surrounded by a discussion of whether or not digital classrooms replace colleges. Others believe that they will become a near-ubiquitous complement to traditional higher education. There is no doubt that MOOCs and traditional institutions of higher education are cooperating more than ever before. More MOOC platforms are offering for-credit courses at a relative low price that may transfer to some universities. This October, MIT announced that they will use MOOCs as an admission criteria in its Supply-Chain Management program; students who do well in their online courses and examinations will enhance their chance to get in the program. This cooperation makes higher education more accessible for students, especially for art students. According

to statistics from U.S. Department of Education, among the "Schools With the Highest Net Tuition Prices," 7 out of top 10 are art schools. MOOCs enable art students to receive education at affordable prices while offering institutions a chance to have an early look at their prospective students.

#### Free or Fee?

One of the major characters of a MOOC is that there is no fee for students. This is a good thing: there is increased access to premier institutions for students who would otherwise might not be able to study there. However, free online education does come with some problems. According to the book, a publication of the Information Resource Management Association, "people will not value a free education; people value what they pay for." According to their data, in June 2015 the average completion rate for MOOCs was only 15%. Research shows that the completion rate jumped from 10% to 70% when students paid \$50 for a paid program. A small fee may act as a motivator for students to increase self-discipline and avoid procrastination.

In addition, free courses bring in a large volume of students, which makes it difficult for teachers to communicate with every pupil. A small charge for premium services offers students an option to receive personalized instructions and feedback from instructors, enhancing their learning experience.

#### Conclusion

Though these trends must be addressed, there are signs of hope for the future of art courses on MOOC platforms. Increased access is promising, and technologies are evolving to serve the needs of students. Though pricing schemes might make courses less accessible, they also allow for a deeper connection between teachers and students. The question remains, though: how can providers balance the inclusiveness and effectiveness of MOOCs? It is not just a question facing digital arts education, but for MOOCs in general.





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#### APPENDIX 1: THE LIST OF MOST POPULAR COURSES IN 2014

# Most Popular Courses in 2014

# 1 Developing Innovative Ideas for New Companies

via University of Maryland, College Park | Coursera

#### 2 Introduction to Statistics

via Stanford University | Udacity

# 3 Learning How to Learn

via University of California, San Diego | Coursera

# 4 Introduction to Computer Science

via University of Virginia | Udacity

# 5 Principles of Project Management

via Polytechnic West | Open2Study

# 6 CS50x: Introduction to Computer Science

via Harvard University | edX

# 7 Inspiring Leadership through Emotional Intelligence

via Case Western Reserve University | Coursera

## **8 Introduction to Finance**

via University of Michigan | Coursera

# 9 Strategic Management

Open2Study

# 10 R Programming

via Johns Hopkins University | Coursera

Figure 6: Most Popular Courses in 2015. Source: Class Central





# APPENDIX 2: RUBRIC FOR PAINTING COURSE FROM RUBISTAR

Category	4	3	2	1
Design/ Composition	Student applies de-sign principles (such as unity, contrast, balance, movement, direction, emphasis, and center of interest) with great skill.	Student applies design principles (such as unity, contrast, balance, movement, direction, emphasis, and center of interest) with fair skill.	Student tries to apply design principles (such as unity, contrast, balance, movement, direction, emphasis, and center of interest) but the overall result is not pleasing.	The student does not appear to be able to apply most design principles to his/her own work.
Color Choices	Choice and application of color shows an advanced knowledge of color relationships. Color choice enhances the idea being expressed.	Choice and application of color shows knowledge of color relationships. Colors are appropriate for the idea being expressed.	Choice and application of color shows knowledge of color relationships. Colors are, however, NOT appropriate for the idea being expressed.	Student needs to work on learning color relationships and using that knowledge in his/ her work.
Painting Skill	Application of paint is preplanned and done in a logical, sequential manner.	Paint is applied in a careful, logical manner. Colors remain sharp and texture is evident.	Control is somewhat lacking. A few drips, ragged edges and failure of certain areas of pattern/texture may be evident.	Student needs to work on controlling paint and preplanning paint application. Muddy col- ors, ragged edges, lack of texture, drips and/ or blobs are evident throughout the paint- ing.
Capturing A Style/Artist	Paint is applied in a manner very consistent with the technique or artist being studied.	Paint is applied in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the technique or artist being studied.	An attempt has been made to apply paint in a manner that is con-sistent with the tech-nique or artist being studied, but it is not effective.	No attempt has been made to apply paint in a manner that is con-sistent with the tech-nique or artist being studied.
Use of materials	Student typically keeps painting materials and area clean and protected without reminders. The student shows great respect for the materials and his fellow students.	Student typically adequately cleans materials and work area at the end of the session without reminder, but the area may be messy during the work session. Student shows respect for materials and fellow students.	Student adequately cleans and takes care of materials if reminded. Occasional spills and messy work area may be seen. Shows some respect for materials and fellow students.	Student deliberate- ly misuses materials AND/OR does not ade- quately clean materials or area when reminded. Shows little respect for materials or fellow students.





# APPENDIX 2: RUBRIC FOR PAINTING COURSE FROM RUBISTAR

Category	4	3	2	1
Time/Effort	Class time was used wisely. Much time and effort went into the planning and design of the mask. It is clear the student worked at home as well as at school.	Class time was used wisely. Student could have put in more time and effort at home.	Class time was not always used wisely, but student did do some additional work at home.	Class time was not used wisely and the student put in no additional effort.
Planning and Explanation	Student can describe in detail at any point during the painting process how s/he en-visions the final product and how they intend to reach their goal. Very focused and goal-oriented.	Student can somewhat describe how s/he envisions the final product and can describe some of the steps s/he will use to reach the goal. Focused with some planning.	Student can describe how s/he envisions the final product but finds it difficult to describe how s/he will reach that goal. Has set a goal, but let\'s things evolve in somewhat random manner.	Student has thought very little about the project. Is present but is not invested in the product
Knowledge Gained - Technique	Student can accurately name 5 characteristics of the technique being studied and describe how these 5 characteristics are used in his/her own paintings.	Student can accurately name 4 characteristics of the technique being studied and describe how these 4 characteristics are used in his/her own paintings.	Student can accurately name 3 characteristics of the technique being studied and describe how 2-3 of these characteristics are used in his/her own paintings.	Student cannot accurately name 3 characteristics of the technique being studied OR cannot describe how characteristics relate to his/her own work.
Sources of Inspiration	The student used 5 or more sources of inspiration and cited them correctly.	The student used 4 or more sources of inspiration and cited them correctly.	The student used 3 or more sources of inspiration and cited them correctly.	The student used less than 3 sources of inspiration AND/OR and did not cite them correctly.
Drawing	Drawing is expressive and detailed. Shapes, patterns, shading and/ or texture are used to add interest to the painting. Student has great control and is able to experiment a little.	Drawing is expressive and somewhat detailed. Little use has been made of pattern, shad- ing, or texture. Student has basics, but had not "branched" out.	Drawing has few de-tails. It is primar- ily representational with very little use of pat-tern, shading or tex-ture. Student needs to improve control.	The drawing lacks almost all detail OR it is unclear what the drawing is intended to be. Student needs to work on control.
Creativity	Student has taken the technique being studied and applied it in a way that is totally his/her own. The student's personality/voice comes through.	Student has taken the technique being studied and has used source material as a starting place. The student's personality comes through in parts of the painting.	Student has copied some painting from the source material. There is little evidence of creativity, but the student has done the assignment.	Student has not made much attempt to meet the requirements of the assignment.



