The idea of a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) is a fast growing idea today. It is a concept that scares some universities, as some believe they could replace traditional education; conversely, many universities openly embrace MOOCs, producing and releasing many of their own.

This presentation briefly looks at the development and history of the MOOCs, analyzes relevant data over the past years, such as demographics, participation and completion rates, and tries to determine how MOOCs fit in with the current education style by making the analysis in comparison to university courses.

At the moment, it appears that in the majority of cases MOOCs are thought of as being complementary to a degree (not only when taken at the same time, but also before and after), with nearly 80% of online courses takers already having one or more Bachelor’s degrees. Since most MOOCs have been completely non accredited up until recently, they didn’t appear to stand a chance of being strong enough on their own. However, accredited MOOCs are slowly beginning to appear, with Georgia Tech offering a full masters degree in Computer Science for a fraction of the usual cost.

In conclusion, we decide that initial claims that MOOCs would destroy the face-to-face nature of education are overblown, at least for the next years. However, it is clear that they are a powerful and convenient tool for learning and certainly have an important role as a complementary tool for students to improve their degrees.