

QUESTIONS OF COMPLIANCE:

Is Title IX applicable to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)?



Summary

The introduction of MOOCs into higher education coincides with OCR's Dear Colleague Letter (2011) announcing a new interpretation of Title IX. MOOCs have created an unprecedented grey area regarding questions of compliance. Exploring this topic impacts both public policy and post-secondary institutions as it may lead to fundamental changes in what defines an enrolled student, educational record, and liability management. In an attempt to better understand this phenomenon, this pilot study aims to answer the question:

Do higher education professionals think MOOCs should be required to comply with Title IX?

Method & Design

Using convenience sampling, 55 participants were solicited via email to participate in an on-line survey administered through SurveyMonkey. Role, gender, years in the field, and institutional type were all factors in the selection of the sample.

The survey was comprised of two sections of a series of 16 multiple-choice, Likert-scale agreement model questions which served as a pre- and post-tests, with a third section for demographics.

Between the pre- and post-tests, participants were asked to read a selection of the article "We all Felt Trapped" (Straumsheim, 2015) which explores the intersection of MOOCs and Title IX through a recent edX incident. This article interrupts the survey in order to introduce bias into the instrument.

The independent variable is the interjection of the article in the survey, and the dependent variables are the opinions of the participants.

Findings & Observations

Survey Questions	Pre-Test Means	Post-Test Mean	P-Value
Q1	3.79	3.88	0.83
Q2	3.67	3.76	0.65
Q3	3.91	3.97	1.00
Q4	2.00	1.88	0.55
Q5	3.50	3.83	0.12
Q6	3.12	3.56	0.03*
Q7	4.03	4.15	0.56
Q8	3.82	4.03	0.20
Q9	4.00	4.03	0.48
Q10	3.32	3.53	0.30
Q11	3.88	4.09	0.33
Q12	4.15	4.24	0.63
Q13	4.21	4.44	0.23
Q14	4.24	4.32	0.57
Q15	4.15	4.44	0.09
Q16	2.24	2.29	0.20

*N=34, Participation Rate=62% *data point is statistically significant*

- The participants demonstrated a change in opinion shifting towards the intended bias for every question in the post-test.
- More respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Title IX is applicable to MOOCs in the post-test than in the pre-test.
- A statistically significant difference in the change of opinion between was only observed in Question 6: *MOOC users are a vulnerable population.*
- A cross-tab analysis indicates that gender does not appear to be a factor in a participant's baseline or post-test opinion.
- There does not appear to be a correlation between years of professional experience and opinions regarding MOOCs, Title IX or the need to require MOOCs to comply with Title IX.

Gender	Responses	Role	Responses	Experience	Responses
Male	55.25%	Faculty	10.53%	0-3 Years	10.53%
Female	44.74%	Staff	68.42%	4-15 Years	71.05%
Ze/Zhe	0	Other	21.05%	16+ Years	18.42%

Conclusions

- The introduction of the intended bias was successful but did not lead to statistically significant changes in the participants' opinions. This may be due to design flaws in the instrument.
- Further research is needed to better learn how higher education professionals understand MOOCs and Title IX apart from each other. This can help to improve the survey design which aims to measure the feasibility of the integration of these two elements.
- A mixed-methods approach may increase the validity of the findings. Integrating interviews into the methodology can provide insights as to why opinions changed or were not greatly impacted by the article.
- A follow-up study may be used to assess the longevity or impact of opinion shifts on participants in order to measure consistency in opinions for the need to require MOOCs to comply with Title IX.
- Due to the newness of both MOOCs and interpretations of Title IX, this study may yield different results after more time has passed and the participants have had the opportunity to expand their knowledge base of both elements.

References & Contact Information

U.S. Department of Education, & Office of Civil Rights. (2011, April 4). *Dear Colleague Letter*. Washington: DC. Ali, R.

Straumsheim, C. (2015, January 23). We all felt trapped. *InsideHigherEd*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/01/23/complainant-unprecedented-walter-lewin-sexual-harassment-case-comes-forward>

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