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Abstract

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Unbundling is the process through which products previously sold together are separated into their constituent parts. In higher education, this dynamic has been driven primarily by financial motivations, and spearheaded by the for-profit sector, but also has pedagogical motivations through its emphasis on personalisation and employability. This article presents a theoretical analysis of the trend, proposing new conceptual tools with which to map the normative implications. While appearing to offer the prospect of financial viability and increased relevance, unbundling presents some worrying signs for universities: first, the removal of possible synergies between teaching and research, and between different modes of learning; second, the undermining of the ability of institutions to promote the public good and ensure equality of opportunity; and third, the threat of hyperporosity to the conducting of basic research with long-term benefits.

Keywords:

Commodification for-profit higher education future of the university MOOCs unbundling

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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