

# Do We Still Need Universities?

By **Alexander Baron** - Jan 27, 2016



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Last year, the British Government announced it was to replace maintenance grants for lower income university students **with loans**. Understandably, this has caused consternation and led to **considerable resistance**. While the Government is right to try to save money on education, the question has to be asked, is it going about it the wrong way, to wit, instead of abolishing student loans, why not abolish universities?

This requires some qualification, while there are many disciplines that require practical experience, there are many others that do not. Medical students need to cut up bodies if they are to learn about human anatomy; engineers need practical experience in the workshop; chemistry involves a lot of theory, but it also requires its neophytes to don white coats and tinker with test tubes. But what about history, philosophy, even law...? Although they also require time in the classroom and lecture theatre, practical work – mock trials for law students, etc – it has been possible for many years to study the bulk of these subjects on-line. Indeed, distance learning predate the Internet by decades: the

Open University was established in 1969, while correspondence courses actually go back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. More recently we have seen the **MOOC**, which has extended the franchise of higher education to everyone who has an Internet connection. And we haven't even mentioned YouTube yet, where universities and individual scholars from all over the world contribute to the around 300 hours of video uploaded to the site every single minute!

If the Chancellor hasn't checked out the various university and other learning channels on YouTube – all of them free, that is no reason for you not to. If you do, unlike some of the airheads who are currently **teaching in universities** across the Western world, you might actually learn something.

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