

MOOCS: A New Way for Continuing Education with Special Reference to India

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Abstract

The Massive Open Online Course is a result of technological advancement in the field of Education. It is not a problem for the learner who has dropped out from his education due to various reasons. With the emergence of MOOCs, learners can resume their education at any point in their life. In the present article, an attempt has been made to discuss about MOOCs very briefly, how it has become and way for continuing education, and also the status of MOOCs in India.

1.0 Introduction:

MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Course that tries to provide open education and training covering a massive number of people worldwide. It provides the learner to become the generator of its own course of content by replacing the traditional teacher-student relationship. In other words, it gives the learner the opportunity for self-learning. It covers a wide range of students by providing free and accessible education to students irrespective of their age.

McAuley, Stewart, and Cormier, (2010) and Siemens (2013) have put forward the following characteristics of MOOCs:

- Free education
- Unlimited seats
- No certificate for free students
- Audiovisual as well as written study materials are provided to the students
- Teaching and learning are collaborative and participatory in nature, providing more opportunities to the students for self-learning.

It is a technological platform that provides classes to thousands of interested students to get access to the teaching-learning process. (Ramírez-Fernandez, 2014). It is a recent phenomenon introduced in the year 2008 by Dave Cormier who actually used the term to indicate the online course initiated by George Siemens and Stephen Downes. After this, in the year 2011, another online course by Stanford University took place covering 58000 students

followed by other such programmes jointly initiated by The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University. In 2012, the New York Times published an article by giving emphasis on the impact of MOOCs and their possibilities to be a great platform for higher education through online mode

By talking about MOOCs, Marauri (2014) has pointed out the following reasons for its rapid growth in the Teaching-Learning process:

- It has been able to gain the interest of a large number of audiences as it provides high-quality knowledge in a very interesting and creative way.
- It helps people to continue education or training throughout their life providing innovative learning experiences be it for recognition or just to gain knowledge.
- It gives opportunities to the teachers as well to become more creative in the teaching process to make the process more interesting for the learners.
- It is in the hands of the institutions to set some minimum levels for acquiring education through MOOCs platform.

Alongside these above-mentioned reasons of growth, there exist some challenges such as MOOCs are often said to be the traditional version of online education covering all the aspects of the educational process. Another such drawback is that a great number of dropout rates may be seen in the MOOCs platform (Galán et al., 2018).

Despite these drawbacks, MOOCs are a very important phenomenon in the modern education system. It has given education a new way to reach more people by means of technology,

2.0 MOOCs as way of continuing education:

Before MOOCs came into existence, distance education and open universities allowed people second-chance access to formal education and now with the introduction of MOOCs, the learners are getting opportunities to continue their education at any time of their life. The University of London's correspondence education system, which provided study possibilities from the outside of the university's facilities, was the first important step toward open education in the 19th century. The founder of the current University of South Africa (UNISA) was given a new purpose as a distance education university in the mid-twentieth century. The major breakthrough, however, occurred in about 1970, when Open University was founded in the United Kingdom (Mulder, 2015). This successful project was replicated in many nations around Europe and the world over the next four decades, resulting in huge operations reaching out to many learners who were not covered by the traditional university system. In India also there is a number of open and distance university that enables learners to access education in distance mode. Since the introduction of the Internet, technological capabilities in terms of speed, interaction, and potential reach of new technologies and online platforms have expanded at an increasing rate.

In recent years the education system has witnessed a significant change due to technological changes and developments. MOOCs stand out as one of those changes that have brought education to a new level. Especially adult learning is widely influenced by MOOCs. It came into existence with a view to providing skills and knowledge to individuals by promoting the idea of lifelong learning (Alhazzani, 2020)

As mentioned above Open Universities, offered distant education long before online technology was accessible. Once Internet connectivity became popular and dependable in the 1990s, the institutions started to provide education through online mode (Hollands & Tirthali, 2015). As online education came into force the enrolment rate in higher education started to grow more rapidly than earlier. In other words, it can be said that online education has been able to give access to education to learners all over the world. It is not only the teaching-learning process that became online, along with this the whole education system including student admissions, course registration, billing, hiring employees, purchasing goods, contracting, and countless other activities are done in online mode (Alhazzani, 2020). The libraries are also transformed into an online learning platform giving access to learners from anywhere and everywhere in the world.

Online learning is made available to the general public through websites such as EDX, Coursera, and SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds [SWAYAM]). Learners may advance their careers and gain new skills and knowledge by picking appropriate courses provided by top institutions through such online platforms. The students come from a variety of backgrounds in terms of age, educational attainment, geographic area, and financial resources. Learners can obtain knowledge that is equal to full-time schooling through online learning, which would otherwise be impossible owing to geographic, economical, and educational restrictions (Al-Shabandar et al., 2018). When compared to full-time studying from the same university professors who are presenting the online course, such online courses offer a low-cost learning solution. It is possible to learn using the internet. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide online learning opportunities (MOOCs) to the learners. Certificate courses, credit-based courses, and audit courses are all available online at various costs. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are certainly a revolution in scope, but they are still part of the long-standing concept of open and distance learning (Pomerol et al., 2015)

3.0 MOOCs in India:

In India, the government has attempted to make use of technological advancements to provide MOOCs to learners, allowing them to improve their knowledge, skills, and talents at their own speed and time. MOOCs are created by prominent Indian institutions, and learners benefit from being taught by professors from these universities, which would not have been possible otherwise. The MOOC programme was started in India by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the HRD (Human Resource Development) Ministry for higher secondary, bachelor, and master's degrees. SWAYAM, or 'Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds,' is a new MOOC portal that claims to provide students the option of studying anything from a list of courses. MOOC courses were previously only available as certificate courses, but after the SWAYAM initiative is taken to provide online education to students from ninth grade to postgraduate level. Professors from top Indian institutions create and deliver online courses as part of this initiative.

The Indian government has now permitted colleges to provide online degrees via SWAYAM or any other online platform (with prior authorization), allowing students to get a degree

online. Universities, on the other hand, must seek and gain permission before beginning any online course (Gupta et al., 2019).

4.0 Conclusion:

MOOCs have been able to be a way for learners to continue their education at their own pace and time. With the passage of time, it is growing and is able to gain the interest of the learner by providing a number of courses to the learner. In a very short span of time, the MOOCs phenomenon has covered many parts of the world including India. SWAYAM is a large platform introduced by the Government of India that provides a number of courses through online mode. One of the reasons that attract the learners to the MOOCs platform is due to its flexibility. But it also possesses certain drawbacks that are needed to be taken care of by the course designers so that learners complete their learning through the MOOCs platform.

5.0 References:

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