

ROLE AND IMPACT OF MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: Education is one of the significant factor that helps in overall development of the nation and also helps in defining academic capital and human resource development. Although, there is rapid advancement in technology that helps to uplift the progress of nation but still education needs to be approachable and also affordable to make these technologies more viable. Many schemes had earlier been launched to improve literacy rate in developing country like India. But Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is one of the new paradigm that can help students from every sphere of life to have quality education. It is massive approach that provides digitized open education while nurturing the nation with more opportunities in every sector and advance the career by integrating new skills. This not only improve the overall literacy but also there is tremendous increase in the employment. Undoubtedly, MOOCs is dominating the education sector and unleashing the potential of nation. In this paper, the role and impact of MOOCs has been discussed in detail.

1.INTRODUCTION

A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is an online course which is freely available on web. It is highly interactive courses where one can get not only notes, videos of lectures but also they can interact with the teachers on public forums for their doubts [1]. A course can be declared as a part of MOOC programme if it satisfies the following features:

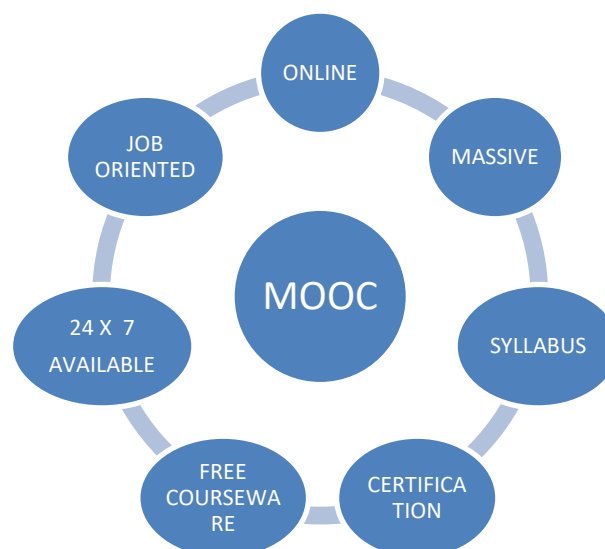


Fig 1. Features of MOOCs

MASSIVE: It can be accessed by large number of students and the number of students can further increase in future. Therefore, there could be unlimited participation.

OPEN: Firstly, open means that the course material is freely available and accessible to all. Secondly, open means anyone can be enrolled without any education qualification hindrance.

ONLINE: The backbone of this is internet. Therefore, anyone who is having internet access can easily participate in these courses. Also, there is no need of physical attendance. Student can join as and when he or she gets time. Therefore, it is not time bounding.

COURSE: The main objective of any course is learning. To make a course successful, the interaction between the student and teacher is an important step. Also, exams and some quizzes are required for building knowledge amongst the students.

The main features of this MOOCs technology is depicted above in Fig 1.

MOOC.org is an extension of edX, which is leader in online learning and education [2]. The online courses of various fields such as computer science, business and management, etc. are available.

2. IMPACT OF MOOC

The development of MOOC is replacing traditional system of Distance education with an online education system. Two biggest challenges of conventional education system was highly paid fees for the courses and secondly, it was not possible for every student to reach the universities and colleges due to various reasons [3]. Therefore, it is boon to the working professionals who can cut their cost by avoiding high fees and also flexible for them to participate as and when they can. Also, they will get the certificates which are recognized worldwide. It is different from e-learning which also provides online courses but those are totally paid. So, MOOC indeed provides an opportunity for working professionals who could not be regular and can enhance their knowledge from skilled faculty and subject experts [4].

3. EVOLUTION OF MOOC

The development of MOOC is rooted with idea of openness in education and learning can be done without any geographical and economic constraints. Some of the MOOCs were open but not massive and some were massive but not open.

The first MOOC program was launched in 2008 with the name "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge/2008" (CCK8). Two educators namely Stephen Downes and George Siemens introduce this at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Around 2,200 people participated at that time.

In 2012, Two Stanford Professors Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig offered course on "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence". This was one of the first purely massive online course where around 160,000 students participated.

In 2013, MOOCs platform such as Futurelearn came to feature the universities of United Kingdom. Later on, open2study in Australia and iversity in Germany appeared.

4. PROS AND CONS

Although the number of benefits of MOOCs are more than their drawbacks. Some of them are listed below in Fig 2.

PROS	CONS
Enhanced Learning	Digital Literacy Barrier
Low cost	Self-Regulation Required
Convenience	Massive Participation Needed

Fig 2. Pros and Cons

5. Availability of MOOCs

One can participate in MOOCs provided by Universities, non-profit organizations and also from independent providers.

Universities:

After 2014, many Universities are providing MOOCs facilities. This includes Harvard University, University of Phoenix and many more. This also provides worldwide recognized certificates and accreditation.

Non-profit Organizations:

EdX is an M.I.T.-based not-for-profit that provides internationally-acclaimed MOOCs in Chemistry, Computer Science, Electronics, and Public Health.

Independent Providers:

Coursera and Udacity are two largest independent providers of MOOCs. Coursera is offering MOOCs in 18 subjects and is cheaper than Udacity. The benefits of Udacity is that it offers much more courses that are required by companies for their skilled workers and also they provide certificates. Although fees is higher than Coursera [5].

6. Future Scope of MOOCs

Since the inception of MOOC in 2008, there has been a remarkable adoption of this worldwide. It has been scaled to over 20 million students, 200 top universities, 40 providers and 20,000 courses till 2014 [6].

India is also not devoid of this as it constitute of 2 million learners worldwide. It is considered as the second largest massive group of MOOCs. In future, MOOC is going to pervade every sector of Higher education through its training and skilled courses as it is meeting the industry standards and thus helpful in recruitment of million of learners. It not only provides courseware but also hands on training which is necessary for quality education.

Undoubtedly, this is giving endless opportunities and transforming the potential of millions and going to revolutionized the entire world education system and will reach inflection point in technology enabled learning.

Conclusion:

World is witness to the phenomenal growth of Massive Open Online Course in the passing years and it will stay as a powerful medium for learners and teachers. Some of the challenges faced by the traditional classroom system includes lack of digital class facilities, shortage of faculty and subject experts, weak infrastructure, affordability, time constraints and high quality digital content. Therefore, MOOCs has come as a boon to the new generation who can not only explore their interest but also participate while continuing with

their professional career and make themselves skilled and thus play a vital role in overall development of nation.

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