

MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCS)

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

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INTRODUCTION

A massive open online course MOOC is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions between students, professors, and teaching assistants (TAs). MOOCs are a recent and widely researched development in distance education which was first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012.

Early MOOCs often emphasized open-access features, such as open licensing of content, structure and learning goals, to promote the reuse and remixing of resources. Some later MOOCs use closed licenses for their course materials while maintaining free access for students.

EARLY APPROACHES

The first MOOCs emerged from the open educational resources (OER) movement. The term *MOOC* was coined in 2008 by Dave Cormier of the University of Prince Edward Island in response to a course called *Connectivism and Connective Knowledge* (also known as *CCK08*). *CCK08*, which was led by George Siemens of Athabasca University and Stephen Downes of the National Research Council, consisted of 25 tuition-paying students in Extended Education at the University of Manitoba, as well as over 2200 online students from the general public who paid nothing. All course content was available through RSS feeds and online students could participate through collaborative tools, including blog posts, threaded discussions in Moodle and Second Life meetings. Stephen Downes considers these so-called cMOOCs to be more "creative and dynamic" than the current xMOOCs, which he believes "resemble television shows or digital textbooks."

TYPES OF MOOC'S

MOOCs are broadly classified into C-MOOCs and X-MOOCs.

- (i) **C-MOOCs**—They are based on connectivism. It is a creation for emphasising connecting learners called as connectivist MOOC and build upon the idea and platform originally visualised by George Siemens.
- (ii) **X-MOOCs**—They have their background in the evolution of open courseware and open educational resources. X-MOOCs are generally offered by universities in

collaboration with a commercial organisation/company whose aim is to gain profit.

X-MOOCs are online versions of traditional learning formats (lecture, instruction, discussion, etc.) on proprietary specialist software platforms owned by independent firms.

MOOC'S PLATFORM

ALISON

COURSERA

Edx EdX

Educart

Inversity

Open Learning

The Open University

Udacity

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MOOC

Advantages

MOOCs offer the entire learning community equal rights to education. People can choose from the varied range of programs and enroll for the course of their choice from the convenience of their homes without spending a dime. Although students study independently in these courses, they at the same time collaborate with their peers from different parts of the world.

MOOCs are a boon for people who have faced obstacles in pursuing education due to lack of funds, no proper opportunities, un-accessible geographical location, etc.

Pedagogically, MOOCs are designed to be extremely interactive. It uses all the interactive media available on the internet to engage students. The various tools used are blogs, videos, podcasts and forums that are embedded into the programs seamlessly. These tools collaborate learners and help them solve real world problems rather than discussing hypothetical material. Real discussion of ideas, theories and concepts are an integral part of a MOOC and are used for peer review and assessment.

Disadvantages

Although MOOCs offer a lot of advantages, there are still some grey areas in MOOC that need to be addressed. In MOOCs, the teachers and professors deal with a huge audience, as a result, they are unable to give active feedbacks for assignments and tests to the students. Moreover, at times if the professor taking the course teaches it in an uninteresting way or the students find the classes boring, there is absolutely no way one can interact with the faculty to give feedback. There is no way teachers can interact directly with students and engage them.

Only students with a lot perseverance and self-discipline can complete these courses. Students who are unable to manage their time often drop out of these courses.

Due to the above reasons the dropout rates of MOOCs is very high. As per a research, on an average only 7.7% of the learners complete MOOCs. These courses can be coupled

with certificates and badges as an incentive for completing the course, however one cannot ensure whether the student will complete the course or not.

LIMITATION OF MOOCS

Providing timely support and assessment of students has become a challenging task as far as MOOCs are concerned. Professors or academicians might be able to design and deliver online lectures but at the same time they may not be able to connect and evaluate the thousands of students world around who are the participants of their course.

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