

Barriers to Learning through MOOCs: Student-Teacher's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research paper studied the difficulties faced by Student-teachers in completion of MOOCs. These courses were mostly free of cost or available at very reasonable price. They can be done from anywhere or at any time and were self-paced. In this study comprehensive literature survey was done through secondary sources and also survey was done on 148 student-teachers at Army Institute of Education, Greater Noida. This research paper, therefore, predominantly centers itself around the major fallouts of MOOCs courses, keeping in purview the perspectives of Student-teachers.

Keywords: MOOCs, Student-teachers, Barriers, Perspectives

MOOCs are "Massive Open Online Courses" which are accessed through internet and can cater the needs of large number of geographically dispersed students. These courses consisted of video lectures, interactive learning modules, quiz, assignments, examinations, feedbacks and discussion forums. The content of these courses are prepared by Instructors from different colleges or universities and are provided through different platforms like EdX, Canvas, Coursera or Udacity. Most of the courses are provided free of cost. These online learning courses are based on self-help, self-awareness and self-regulation variables. They can be assessed "before, during and after the completion of a degree course, and can also be integrated at course, module or degree program level in academic teaching" (Schultz, 2014).

Types of MOOC Courses-

- **Synchronous Course-** These courses require live attendance and have to be attended at the same time.
- **Asynchronous Course** – These courses are self-paced and can be attended any time when free.

Advantages of learning through MOOCs

- No physical barriers – Students can access from their homes and can save daily commutation time.
- Accessibility to quality higher education – Students can do courses from world's top university at their home place.

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- Affordability – The courses are either free or are provided at very reasonable prices.
- Flexibility – The courses are self-paced and pre-recorded lectures can be attended any time as per the suitability of the learners.

There are few studies on the learning through MOOCs courses in teacher training programs. The study conducted by Seaton, Coleman, Davies and Chuang (2014) analysed eleven MOOCs courses on the MITx platform and concluded that majority of participants in these courses were teachers. Therefore, it was concluded that MOOCs played a very significant role in professional development of teachers and that why these courses are included in the curriculum of B.Ed students. According to Greene, Oswald, & Pomerantz, 2015 a positive correlation was found between completion rate and academic achievement. MOOCs can lead to lifelong learning, democratizing education, helps in eliminating barriers for diverse learners and, most importantly, “ensure the liberalization of knowledge” (Kizilcec, Saltarelli, Reich, & Cohen, 2017; Zawacki-Richter, Bozkurt, Alturki, & Aldraiweesh, 2018). According to Tseng et.al. (2019) study was conducted on level of adoption of MOOCs by teachers but students perceives was not studied.

This particular study was therefore conducted on B.Ed students and their perspective regarding learning through MOOCs was studied.

Objectives

- To study the barriers faced in learning through MOOCs courses by Student-teachers.
- To give plausible suggestions for managing the barriers faced in learning through MOOCs courses by Student-teachers.

METHODOLOGY

For the present study, a comprehensive survey of literature was conducted through secondary sources such as research papers, articles, e-newspapers, e-books and different websites. Survey was done at Army Institute of Education in online mode. Army Institute of Education is affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University. According to curriculum of B.Ed by GGSIPU, it is mandatory for all students to complete 5 MOOCs courses of 4 credit each. The researcher asked students to submit in writing the major barriers faced by them in completing the MOOCs courses. The survey is inclusive of 148 students who responded with regard to the major barriers they face in completing MOOCs courses. This research paper, therefore; predominantly centers itself around the major fallouts of MOOCs courses, keeping in purview the perspectives of Student-teachers.

The below mentioned list hence elucidates upon the major barriers faced by student-teachers in completion of MOOCs courses.

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1. Lack of Communication- Doubts raised in Discussion forum were not addressed.
2. Inability to manage time- Difficulty in managing regular classes along with MOOCs
3. No notification for exam - Course was complete but no notification for exam
4. Inaccessibility of assignments on phone- Few Summative assignments were not accessible in phone only available on computer or laptop.
5. Lack of Guidelines - No proper Guideline for late Joiner's or if somebody missed assignment.
6. No queries were resolved as its a one way lecture delivery method

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7. Burdensome – Student-teachers did multiple MOOCs courses as part of their curriculum at the same time which was burdensome as everyone's submission dates were at the same time.
8. Lack of correspondence through mail/messages – There is no correspondence through mail/messages regarding last date of assignment submission, exam date etc.
9. Inability to manage time: Student-teachers find it difficult to manage efficiently their time for these online courses. They only focus on subjects which were taught in physical classes and therefore missed their assignments, quizzes etc.
10. Lack of Interest: Student-teachers found MOOCs courses not that much interesting as face to face classes. The video lectures were not interesting to be followed regularly.
11. Adaptability Issue – It was observed that student-teachers were not adaptable to the online courses. It was difficult for them to pursue course through online mode rather than traditional mode of learning. The probable reason may be lack of ICT Skills, unavailability of computer system, no access to wifi connections or limited data packs, issues of technostress etc.
12. Low Self-Motivation- When students shifted from face to face courses to online courses they tend to lose their motivation. In online courses staying motivated and completing a course with full energy along with physical classes /internships etc is a challenge for student-teachers.
13. Lack of Social Interaction- Healthy teaching learning process is only possible with effective social interaction. In MOOCs courses social interaction is missing so there is low level of interaction and engagement. Its only a one way process.

Suggestions in the light of above discussed Issues

1. **Provision of doubt sessions:** In order to overcome the doubts which were not cleared in discussion forums some doubt sessions can be arranged for the easy flow of course.
2. **Scheduled Planning:** To manage time, the rigorous planning is required. Student-teacher should try to manage time so that they can easily do quiz and assignments of MOOCs along with their other subject's syllabus. They should try to complete their assignments of MOOCs courses during their MOOCs/other practical classes in college itself. In this way they get easy access to computer and WIFI as well. Every college should include at least 3MOOCs classes per week in their timetable.
3. **Blue Print of the Program:** In order to avoid the issue of late announcement of examination and no proper communication with the students a proper blue print of the course should be shared at the beginning of the program and program should adhere to the time period scheduled for assignments, quiz, examinations, results etc.
4. **Accessibility to ICT Lab/Digital Library:** Student-teacher should be given access to computers and wifi connectivity during their practical classes or library periods.
5. **Number of MOOCs should be reduced:** As student-teachers had to complete 5 MOOCs in their B.Ed course, so it became quite burdensome on the part of students to complete these 5 courses along with their theory papers, internships etc so the number of MOOCs should be reduced.
6. **Communication through mail/SMS:** In these courses no communication was made through mail/SMS, so many times students missed their assignments and important notifications. Therefore, it is suggested that communication should be through mail/SMS should be made for easy conduct of course.
7. **Prepare students to adapt changes:** Student-teachers having traditional mindset must be encouraged to learn new ICT Skills for easy conduct of these online courses.

- 8. Workshop for basic computer course:** Student-teachers should be given workshop for training in basic computer skills like usage of MS Word, power point, excel etc. These skills will help the learner in attempting of quizzes, assignments etc.

CONCLUSION

The MOOCs are boon in today's time as we can learn any new course from any place and at any time through these courses at low/free of cost. These courses are very effective for teachers, educators as well as students. It was found that when these courses were made mandatory as a part of curriculum then student-teachers faced some obstacles in completing these courses. So, in order for the best interest of student-teachers some suggestions were proposed for course coordinators, educators etc. so that all the obstacles can be tackled and student-teachers can easily complete these courses.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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