

AWARENESS OF MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCS) AND SWAYAM AMONG STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

In modern times, the process of teaching and learning has been changed with time and people are being multitasking and learning lots of things simultaneously. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) and SWAYAM platforms have emerged as an alternative to increasing the access and quality of education, reducing educational costs and inequality, particularly in India. This research paper attempted to study the consciousness of Massive Online Open Courses and SWAYAM among the students of higher education. The study revealed that female students are more aware of Massive Online Open Courses and SWAYAM than male students.

Keywords: MOOCs, SWAYAM and higher education



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Introduction: In the present scenario, digital education plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process. Now e-learning is converting the appearance of education in India and made life simple for students and teachers. Today, the teaching profession is evolving due to the emerging information and communication technologies. This has caused a shift in emphasis from teacher-centered lecture-based instruction to the learner-centered interactive environment in the classroom. Manjulika (2014) rightly pointed out that simply lectures or text alone does not give the learners the actual feel of the subject whereas e- content delivered through audio, video, and animation can provide the learners with a multi-sensory perspective of the subject and they can, in turn, experience their subject in a vicarious manner, which undoubtedly can be very enriching and rewarding. The core of educational reforms and new education policy demands traditional educational setups to be open, flexible, and learner-centric. Open education is built on the belief that everyone should have the freedom to use, customize, improve, and redistribute educational resources without constraint.

Educators, learners, and others who share this belief are gathering together as part of a worldwide effort to make education, both, more accessible and more effective by including new approaches to assessment, accreditation, and collaborative learning (Cape Town Open Education Declaration-2008). In this background, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have emerged as a radically new approach for expanding access to knowledge to all types of learners pursuing non-formal, formal and informal education.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): The term Massive Open Online Courses was first coined by Dave Cormier, University of Prince Edward Island in the year 2008 with the objective, to help the learners those who are involved in online courses. The basic philosophy of MOOCs is 3A's - Anytime, Anyone, Anywhere. In the higher education system, the MOOC is very helpful due to its collaborative approaches with different institutions and also with different countries. Massive Open Online Courses are available online, often free of charge, and provided by recognizable institutions. In addition to the course materials, MOOCs provide interactive forums to support community interaction between students, professors, and teaching assistants. Massive Open Online Learning Course (MOOC) is a new phenomenon in India providing opportunities for life-long learning. Here learners can choose from hundreds of courses taught at the university or college or school level. The transfer of credit earned by taking these courses into their academic record of students. There are two types of MOOCs namely cMOOCs and xMOOCs. a) cMOOCs are based on the philosophy of connectivism and they include discussion forums, allow people to bounce ideas around and discuss learning together and one-on-one interaction, and easy back-and-forth questioning. b) xMOOCs are based on a tutor-centric model that establishes a one-to-many relationship to reach massive numbers and testing through objective online assignments. Although cMOOCs are considered to be more advanced concept than xMOOCs but xMOOCs are more into practice, because cMOOCs are meant for meta-cognitively matured learners who can learn and study in the same peer group in a collaborative manner, without the direct involvement of teacher. Massively Open Online Courses" audience is growing steadily and their recognition as equivalent to a regular university is slowly establishing itself. A lot of MOOC platforms were launched in the past decade. The most popular and trusted platforms of MOOCs are edX(MIT), Coursera (Stanford), MOOC.org(edX+Google), Udacity, Udemy, Khan Academy, and SWAYAM (MHRD, GoI). Courses on edX are interesting but can be quite challenging and started by Harvard and MIT, it now contains courses from around 30 universities from all over the world. In this era of digitization when India is transforming into "Digital India". In India, the Ministry of Human Resources

Development started various initiatives and programs for e-learning and to avail MOOCs to the learners like SWAYAM. SWAYAM is a big milestone in the path of MOOCs.

Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM): SWAYAM is an initiative launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India under Digital India to give a coordinated stage and free entry to web courses, covering all advanced education, high school, and skill sector courses. It was launched in 2017. SWAYAM provides an integrated platform and portal for online courses, using information and communication technology (ICT) and covering high school till all higher education subjects and skill sector courses to ensure that every student benefits from learning material through ICT. SWAYAM is essentially a portal that has been formulated as a solution to the problem of difficult access to physical educational infrastructure and teachers along with study material and textbooks.

According to the guidelines of Ministry of Human Resource Development Department of Higher Education, the courses hosted on SWAYAM are in 4 quadrants – (a) video lecture, (b) specially prepared reading material that can be downloaded/printed (c) self-assessment tests through tests and quizzes and (d) an online discussion forum for clearing the doubts (Bhagyalakshmi-2020). The SWAYAM courses list is divided into 10 main categories which include AICTE – NITTT – Courses, Annual Refresher Program in Teaching (ARPIT), Architecture and Planning, Education, Engineering and Technology, Humanities and Arts, Law, Management and Commerce, Maths & Science and School.

Reviews of Related Literature: In some parts of the country, various studies on different aspects of online learning programs have been conducted. The relevant research studies conducted by different research scholars and agencies on online learning in India and Abroad are as mentioned here: Rajul Sharma (2018) revealed that presently there are 12 Indian LIS-MOOCs, developed by faculty from LIS departments all over India, and are provided through Swayam platform. Jayanta Nayek (2018) published a survey report on awareness among LIS Professionals/Students about Swayam: A Government of India Initiative on E-Learning. The results of this study revealed that most of the LIS professionals are very much interested in SWAYAM but the numbers of LIS courses are less in number concerning other courses. Anuva Samanta (2018) undertaken an analytical study of Swayam and revealed that Swayam is a new era in the ODL mode of education. Complete and exhaustive information in different types of courses helps the learners to enroll their courses on Swayam. Gaurav Kumar (2019) compared three machine learning algorithms named decision tree, naïve Bayes, and logistic regression in terms of their accuracy percentage in the prediction of

dropouts in MOOCs. Josephine Sangitha & Vignesh.G (2020) undertaken a study on the preference of Swayam courses among collegestudents concerning Chennai and revealed that out of 101 respondents, 74% of the respondents know about the Swayam Course. Bhagyalakshmi R & Karthika P (2020) conducted a study on the impact and awareness of Swayam. The results show that Swayamis more cost-effective, and ease-to-learn, compared to the private online coaching centers. Ayisha Jothi & Tamilarasi Mailachalam (2020) conducted a study on the challenges of swayam courses in higher education in rural India. The study revealed that there is a significant association between educational qualifications and challenges faced by the ruralcollege going students of Kanchipuram district and lack of motivation factor, the adaptability factor is the two major factors affecting the students about the swayam courses.

Research Gap and Research Questions: The above reviews of the literature have synthesized trends and provided an analysis of findings, but no systematic research study has been conducted on the consciousness of MOOCs and SWAYAM among students of higher education particularly in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. Based on the above- related reviews and own experience, the researcher has identified the research questions: a) Are students and teachers aware of different online courses on SWAYAM? b) Can MOOCs affect the academic achievement of students in higher education? c) What are the views of students towards online courses on SWAYAM? d) Are Massive Online Open Courses essential components of the higher education curriculum? and e) What are the challenges and opportunities of MOOCs in higher education institutions particularly in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra?

Objectives of the Study: The study was undertaken with the following allied objectives:

- i. To explore the awareness of students of higher education about different online courses on SWAYAM.
- ii. To study the reactions of teachers about the awareness of Massive Online Open Courses among students of higher education.
- iii. To know the challenges and opportunities of Massive Online Open Courses in higher education institutions.

Methodology of the Study: For this research study, an online survey was deployed. Mixed qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. The study area was higher education institutions in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. The stratified and purposing sampling techniques was used to select 200 male and female students and their 60 teachers of higher education institutions. Tools like interview schedule, and checklist were used for the data

collection. A pilot study was undertaken to verify the relevance of the questions.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data: The analysis is a vital process of research. The tabulated data were scientifically studied to determine the underlying or inherent facts. The data were scored according to the scoring pattern of the scale. The appropriate statistical technique was employed for describing and analyzing the data.

Findings: Based on the analysis and interpretation of the field data obtained from checklist and interview schedule, the following findings have been drawn:

- It is observed that female students are more aware of Massive Online Open Courses and SWAYAM than male students.
- Almost 66% of teachers agreed that SWAYAM platform provides alternative opportunities for higher studies to the students of higher education.
- Nearly 48% of students expressed that the course content of MOOCs is relevant to understand context-specific issues.
- Almost 89% of teachers stated that Massive Online Open Courses are useful to earn additional credits in Post Graduate Courses.
- 16% of teachers argued that students of higher education are making little use of MOOCs due to language barriers and technological infrastructure.

Conclusion: Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) are in huge demand among the students of higher education, with the majority of students enrolling in national and foreign universities. This is the right time to develop a strategy to develop a proper understanding about MOOCs among students and teachers of higher education and provide them facilities to develop and integrate MOOCs in their regular classroom learning.

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