DEVELOPMENT OF MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCS) IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT
Since ancient times, education has undergone an unprecedented change. Today, technology is playing a vital role in changing the entire delivery of education. As a latest development, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are emerging all over the world. MOOCs have been flourished massively in the last few years to sharpen the various skills of youths. MOOCs consists a web-based platform which provides distance education to unlimited number of learners worldwide. The learners from diverse geographical areas, academic backgrounds and profession pursuits get benefit of it. Today, after US, India is the second largest user country of MOOCs. Latest, NEP 2020 set target of achieving 50% GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) in Higher Education by the year 2035 with the help of MOOCs offered by SWAYAM. UGC Regulation 2021, aims to facilitate multidisplinary institutions to offer 40% of their courses in a semester through online mode of learning.
KEY WORDS - *Education, Online Courses, Internet, Digital, Students, Universities, Technology, MOOC, Platform, Govt., Mobile App, Teaching, Content, SWAYAM, NPTEL, e-Pathshala, etc.*

INTRODUCTION

Dave Dormier, an educational activist, researcher, online community activist working at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada coined the term MOOC in 2008 for the first time. He worked on open education, MOOCs and the impact of technology on the future of education. Later on, the term MOOC was coined to refer to course developed by online learning and media specialists Stephen Downes and George Siemens. They launched a MOOC entitled 'Connectivism and Connectivity Knowledge' in 2008. They developed a theory for the digital age, called 'Connectivism' denouncing boundaries of behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. This theory forced educators to apply digital education. Their intension was to start interaction between wide varieties of participants in online tools so as to provide a richer learning environment than traditional tools.

On the campus of University of Manitoba, Canada, at the beginning, 25 students attended the course and a further 2300 students from around the world participated online. These MOOCs are focused on interaction and connectivity.

In 2011, Stanford University, California, US offered free online courses. Then, Peter Narvig and Sebastein Thrun offered a course entitled 'Introduction to Artificial Intelligence' which received overwhelming response of over 20,000 students. These MOOCs are focused less on interaction between students and more on exploiting the possibilities of reaching a massive audience.

Sebastien Thrun, with Mike Sokolsky, founded a company called 'Udacity' in Feb. 2012, which developed and offered free MOOCs. Then, in April 2012, two other Stanford professors, named Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller, started a company called 'Coursera' which partnered with many universities in preparing and offering MOOCs.

MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) developed MITX, a Massive Open Online Program at MIT platform for offering MOOCs, which was renamed edx, a Massive Open Online Course Provider. In collaboration with Hardward University, it hosts online university level courses in a wide range of disciplines to worldwide students.

The non-profit edx consortium now develops and offers more than 2500 MOOCs from more than 140 topmost institutions. The consortium has made available an open source version of the platform used and developed by other institutions and individuals. The consortium carries out research into learning by using new technologies. Presently, more than 20 million students have enrolled for these MOOCs.

Getting into the track, the Govt. of India has also decided to use technological resources in helping its mission to make

higher education accessible to all deserving students. In 2009, Govt. of India has launched its 'The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology' (NMEICT). The aim is to provide the opportunity to all the teachers and experts in the country to utilize their collective wisdom for the benefit of every Indian learner and thereby, reducing the digital divides. Through it, the Indian Govt. tries to achieve access, equity and quality, the three cardinal principles of its education policy in order to join the main stream of knowledge economy.

In this regard, MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India), on 9th July 2017 has launched National MOOC platform named SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) to offer online courses from 9th class till Post-Graduation. SWAYAM is assessable to anyone, anywhere at any time. All the SWAYAM courses are interactive, prepared by the best teachers in the country and are available on Internet free of cost to any learner, however fees are levied for certification. Thousands of specially chosen faculty and teachers from across the country have participated in preparing these courses. All courses hosted on SWAYAM are in divided in four quadrants – (1) Video Lecture, (2) Reading Material that can be downloaded or printed, (3) Self-Assessment Tests and quizzes and (4) Online Discussion Forum for clearing doubts. Steps are taken to enrich the learning experience by using Audio-Video and Multi-Media and state of the art pedagogy or technology. SWAYAM is getting overwhelming response from all levels of education. More than 1 crore students have enrolled for its various MOOCs for March/April-2020 semester. Its biggest impact lies in its potential to increase the quality of education in India. UGC Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through SWAYAM Regulation 2016 allows enrolled students in higher education in India to earn up to 20% credits via SWAYAM courses in their regular syllabi. Each credit is equivalent to 13-15 hours of online learning activities.

In order to ensure the best quality content production and delivery of all disciplines, 9 National Co-ordinators have been appointed by MHRD which are - AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) for self-paced and international courses, NPTEL (National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning) for Engineering, UGC (University Grants Commission) for non-technical post-graduation education, CEC (Consortium for Educational Communication) for under-graduate education, NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) for school education, NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) for school education,

IGNOU (Indira Gandhi National Open University) for out-of-school students, IIMB (Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore) for management studies and NITTTR (National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research) for Teacher Training programme.

Much of the SWAYAM contents are already created by seven Indian institutes (IITs). NPTEL (National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning), a group of seven Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Science (IISc)) are contributing about half of the courses. NPTEL has already put its courses online on YouTube, and it also hosts its own MOOC platform. All the videos created for SWAYAM are also are available on a platform called e-Acharya. E-Acharya is developed by INFLIBNET (Information and Library Network). It hosts educational video content created by the MHRD. These videos are also available on its YouTube channel. Apart, e-Pathshala is a portal initiated by MHRD AND NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) in 2015. It has launched free assessing of e-books from 1st to 12th standard. All these portals are available in the form of Mobile Apps for instant and user friendly usage for learners.

The Govt. of India launched The Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC), a premier institution for the development and dissemination of educational e-content in order to transform education through new technologies with emphasis on learner-centric pedagogy. CEC has become one of the largest repositories of digital education content in India. MHRD also established SWAYAM Prabha, DHT (Direct To Home) channels offering a bouquet of 11 educational channels in various disciplines. CEC is equipped with web-based LMS (Learning Management System) with its self-paced learning taxonomy. It also has a rich web repository on the form of e-courseware and Short Learning Object (SLO), re-introduced in a new format to facilitate conceptual clarity. CEC has produced digital content in 87 subjects as per model syllabi of UGC under National Mission of Education through ICT (NME-ICT). It makes the acquisition of knowledge and skill-sets more efficient and effective. CEC also takes education to the remotest learners.

CONCLUSION

The great Indian philosopher Swami Vivekananda aptly said, 'If the mountain does not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere'. Similarly, online education is knocking to the doorsteps of the common Indian students, today. They are developing skills and knowledge for the economic growth and

social development of India. Now a days, millions of people around the world use MOOCs to learn for different reasons like career development, changing careers, college/school preparations, supplemental learning, lifelong learning, corporate learning, training and so on. The newly coming 5G mobile networks will certainly boost MOOC education in India. Taking into account the development of MOOCs all around the world since 2008, Indian government has established different digital channels. These digital contents are easily accessible to the vast population of students and academic faculty overcoming the geographical barriers of time and space. Students can watch online video lectures, participate in online discussions forum or carry out research at home while engaging concepts in the classroom with the guidance of a mentor. It saves their time, money and energy. Therefore, the government has promoted the stakeholders namely policy makers, academicians, collaborators and students to fulfill the current educational needs to empower people with the power of knowledge.

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