



Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): A New Wave of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Article 26¹ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 embodies the right to education. International agreement on Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) relies heavily on the notion of equal access to quality education for all people, regardless of socioeconomic status or geography.² SDG 4 is a human rights-based goal that emphasizes the need to ensure that all people have access to quality education to achieve long-term well-being.

In India, education is not only a human right, but it is also a constitutional and legal need. The Supreme Court has ruled that education provides a decent existence to a person and that education in India is a social and political matter. However, the Covid-19 outbreak impacted a wide range of everyday activities. The introduction of Covid-19 had a dramatic impact on our learning and teaching methods. The educational reaction to the outbreak includes massive open online courses or MOOCs. After the Covid-19 outbreak forced the temporary closure of institutions in the nation, the necessity for MOOC or online learning was revived, with several new solutions being developed. Online schooling has become the standard. Many businesses worldwide use MOOC providers like Coursera, edX, udemy, and others to deliver courses. The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) introduced the MOOC program in India for higher secondary, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees. MOOCs include various topics that students may choose from, depending on their interests and needs. Some of the courses are unusual and may or may not be part of the regular college curriculum.

¹ Art. 26 (1), UDHR: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

² Right to education - UNESCO. <https://en.unesco.org/themes/right-to-education>



‘Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds,’ in short, SWAYAM, a new site for MOOCs, claims to allow students to choose from 200 courses.³ These courses are taught using various methods, including audio-visual, graphics, research, and case studies with self-assessment.

MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOCS) EXPLAINED

MOOC stands for Massive Open Online Course, a web-based platform for teaching and learning that gives students from all over the globe the opportunity to get distant education from some of the world’s most outstanding schools.⁴

Massive open online courses are offered by different schools, universities, and private institutions to encourage learning and skill development. As the name suggests, massive open online courses are easy to enroll in and do not have any restrictions as to the class size available through an online method that is through an electronic method like laptops, mobiles, tablets, etc. the courses available in Massive open online courses are easy to enroll and comes with either no fees or very minimum fees, this ensures and encourage the development of the human being.

These courses are easy to access as only an electronic device with a good internet connection is needed, and these courses can be accessed throughout pan world. The online courses are designed in a way that is easy to understand and are effective in learning.

Massive open online courses have mainly four essential features: -

- 1) **E Tutorial:** - professors and teachers worldwide can upload their work on different chapters in Video Content, Audio Content, Simulation, Animation, and Virtual Labs. This helps students learn from the best professors and teachers in the world. Professors and teachers may alter and re-upload information whenever modifications are made to the courses provided.
- 2) **E-Content:** - courses are offered with world-class content and written notes. These are prepared after deliberation and research. The content developed by the developers is designed in a way that is easily understandable to people in general, and knowledge

³ Ileana Sharangpani, All about MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) in India & Abroad, <https://www.indiaeducation.net/online-education/all-about-moocs-massive-open-online-courses-india-abroad.html>

⁴ *Id.*



gaining is made easy. The primary purpose of education is to gain knowledge and skills. The content generally provided is E-books, text, self-instruction material, case studies, manuals, etc.

- 3) **Web resources:** - online courses also provide various online resources to help students develop their analytical minds and improve critical thinking. The resources provided are supplemental reading, related links, wiki/glossary, open content on the internet, etc. This helps to understand and forces the student to think about the topic more deeply and analyze different similar circumstances.
- 4) **Self-assessment:** - to know their progress, students are provided with an online form of self-assessments, which helps students assess their development. The goal of courses is not good unless the student proves that he has gained something from the course. If the student is unable to gain anything from the course, this helps the developers to make that course more effective this can be only done through assessment of the student. Online courses also provide the students with different methods to assess themselves. The methods are multiple-choice questions, assignment, solution online feedback through discussion, and setting up the frequently asked questions.

These courses also provide the platform for students to discuss the information gathered through the lectures provided and help students clear their doubts then and there or when doubts come to their mind. This implies that knowledge through online courses is at the fingertips of the students.

Many premium universities like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard, and Berkeley have started providing online courses.⁵

NEED FOR MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES

After the pandemic, the whole globe, not just India, needed new ideas for educational programs. There is a persistent need for India to become more self-sufficient to fulfill Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aspiration.

⁵ Shankar Venkatagiri, The MOOC Revolution: Education on Tap, Nov 22, 2015, Business Today, <https://www.businesstoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/india-best-business-schools-2015-massive-open-online-courses-offers-premium-education-56525-2015-11-13>



India has achieved great success in the recent decade through its knowledge and hardworking people. Indian Space Agency (ISRO) has achieved a milestone by sending a mission to Mars in its first attempt. This has only happened due to education and hard work.

In recent times Indian government has been analyzing the situation in Russia and Ukraine Conflict. This conflict has affected the people of the world and students by endangering their lives and affecting their studies negatively. We cannot let the conflicts between two groups affect the development of a person due to these conflicts, and evacuating such a massive population of students costs the country's taxpayers. A world without education will further lead to more conflicts and war.

Also, due to the lack of facilities in their states, many students are traveling to hostile countries toward India. Recently to avoid this government has issued an advisory so that people do not risk their lives and study in their own country⁶. The Indian government is working to provide education to every person. Still, due to a lack of resources and other lined up agendas, the government cannot spend a significant chunk of gross domestic product on education.

Not only war but coronavirus pandemic has increased in numbers of college and schools drop out because many were unable to reach the school and college due to corona vires as it is a contagious disease around 6 million⁷ people have lost their lives to this virus, but this does not mean that all the development whether economic, social, or personal be stopped, and around 1.2 billion⁸ children remain uneducated.

Many students get themselves enrolled in the institutes but are unable to continue because of higher fees, family problems, and other problems. This is resulting in the wastage of Indian talent due to pure economics. A person cannot and should not be deprived of education and skill only on the sole basis of economics if he possesses excellent talent. wastage of talent not adversely affects the person but also his own country.

In developing countries, many people also do not have the resources to gain an education. The condition in underdeveloped countries relating to gaining education is worse than in developed and developing countries. Many people who have resources in developing or underdeveloped

⁶ Zee Media Bureau, Do not travel to Pakistan for higher education: UGC, AICTE advise Indian students, Apr 23, 2022, Zee News, <https://zeenews.india.com/india/do-not-travel-to-pakistan-for-higher-education-ugc-aicte-advise-indian-students-2456547.html>

⁷ Worldometer, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

⁸ Cathy Li and Farah Lalani, The COVID-19 pandemic has changed education forever. This is how, 29 Apr 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-education-global-covid19-online-digital-learning/>



countries send their children to Europe and the United States for studies, resulting in foreign exchange outflow, worsening their conditions. As well as a person moving to a foreign for education does not return to the country of their origin as he gets himself adapted to the lifestyle of the foreign nation; not only this, but they offer him huge packages which, if converted into the currency of their native countries looks huge.

According to an article in Indian Express, approx. 93 million⁹ people are engaged in agriculture practices directly or indirectly. One of the major problems in front of the government is making the Indian farmer aware of their rights and duties and the modern development in science and technology relating to agriculture. The government puts forth the time and effort to ensure that farmers' incomes treble in the next decade. This is only feasible if we supply our food suppliers with the most up-to-date information and technology.

THE NEW FORM OF LEARNING

The institutes worldwide came with innovation so that education can be easily provided to the people in every corner of the world and skill development. A key aspect of human development can be promoted. They introduced massive online courses on their respective platforms in situations like pandemics, wars, or conflicts.

Offering online courses is somehow not new to the world, as many western universities and schools have offered various courses online. Still, the change introduced in recent times is that universities and schools have developed platforms to provide education to people effortlessly and effectively.

In a recent study by World Economic Forum, it is found that online learning results in better retention of information. This means that the online form of learning is the future of education. In the same report, World Economic Forum has provided that around US\$ 18.66 Billion was invested in online education in 2019, and the total market for online learning is projected to be US\$ 350 billion by 2025.¹⁰

In India, some companies offering online classroom programs and other education-based services are diversifying the way of learning. For example, BYJUs, an Indian company, offers

⁹ Harish Damodaran and Samridhi Agarwal, Revealing India's actual farmer, October 5, 2021, The Indian Express, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/revealing-indias-actual-farmer-population-7550159/#:~:text=And%20now%2C%20we%20have%20the,to%20almost%20150%20million%20farmers.>

¹⁰ *Supra* note 8.



e-learning programs to school goers but also offers courses on UPSC, NEET, JEE, etc. Initially, BYJUs only offered courses to school goers.

The form of learning is changing, and many innovations are being made in this field. Many universities and schools are working to develop online courses so that education can be readily available as well as developments are being done so that e-learning can also result in acquiring skills and developing new skills through online learning.

Many institutions are developing open-source libraries and offering courses free of cost so that people can learn and become comfortable with the idea of online courses. This has resulted in the massive enrollment of students, the development of new learning techniques, and widespread awareness. Online learning systems can decrease the need for schools and universities buildings, and other infrastructures.

In its New National Education Policy launched on 29th July 2020, India has aimed for Access, Equity, Quality, and Accountability.¹¹ These are called the four pillars of the new education policy, which mainly concentrate on education by skill development, mental development, and physical development. It covers whole aspects of a life of a child. If implemented, it will result in a gigantic skilled, learned, and analytical workforce, but due to pandemic and geopolitical conflicts government is unable to implement it at its full pace; government can use online methods and courses to implement this policy not only in an urban area but also in semi-urban and rural areas which will only need a small amount of investment and efforts.

Advantages Of Massive Open Online Courses

Technology can help the world to grow, develop, and prosper. If used for noble purposes like education, medicine, and research, technology will result in the development of humankind and the prosperity of the human race.

The advantages of Massive Open Online Courses are: -

- 1) Easy learning: - Massive open online courses will easily help people learn and understand complex topics. The research and development teams of the developer work day and night to make learning more accessible, comfortable, and understandable.

¹¹ Pradeep Negi, New National Educational Policy 2020, <https://nvshq.org/article/new-national-education-policy-nep-2022/#:~:text=The%20new%20NEP%20is%20based,replacing%20old%2010%2B2%20structure.>

Learning through online mode also provides us a better learning experience as things can be explained through videos, audio, artificial intelligence, and simulations.

- 2) Easy to access: - Massive online Courses are primarily open and can be enrolled by many students at a particular point of time. It does not have any restriction as to enrolment capacities. It is also available and can be accessed from any part of the world. The only need is to have an electronic gadget and an internet connection.
- 3) Low cost: - Massive online open courses either come with no or low costs. Many universities provide these courses free of cost. This will ensure equity in the education sector and will also ensure the basic human right of education for all human beings.
- 4) The information available at fingertips: - online courses can be accessed anytime and anywhere in the world, resulting in the quick and easy gaining of knowledge.
- 5) Help To Implement New National Education Policy: - through online education, the four principles (Access, Equity, Quality, and Accountability) of the new national education policy can be easily implemented.

Disadvantages

The usage of MOOCs is not a substitute for conventional classroom learning, but they may be utilized to bridge the gap between different educational institutions. The following are some of the alleged limitations of MOOCs:

- 1) Need for electronic gadgets: - to learn from the online courses, a medium is needed which is not affordable to the poor section of society.
- 2) Internet needed: A good internet connection is needed for learning, which is unavailable in many parts of the world. Also, the monthly cost of maintaining it is high where it is available.
- 3) Minimum knowledge of computer needed: - to ensure an online mode of learning, the learner must possess a minimum computer operating skills.
- 4) Candidates and students cannot be monitored in MOOCs since they are web-based, which opens them up to plagiarism and cheating.

CONCLUSION

Education is a fundamental human right that should be made available to every individual on the face of the planet. MOOCs are a fantastic platform for providing education in India and throughout the globe. Still, they offer both advantages and disadvantages regarding the future

possibilities of students who have completed MOOCs and are looking for employment. Because the concept is fresh and has received positive feedback lately, it has the potential to become one of the most innovative ideas in recent memory.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are the future of learning. They will benefit individuals and governments throughout the world, allowing them to assure a widespread distribution of education in their respective nations.

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