

Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) Avenues for Students and Employed for Productivity and Growth

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Abstract— Paper If we are using news paper every morning we are considered to be in small minority. It may be the news on TV ,Radio or may switch to internet for brief information using Smartphone or tablet there by engaging ourselves in micro learning. Millennial have grown up with devices, they are comfortable with them, and they demand that they deliver in lightning speed. This new rapid demand and rapid delivery, many say, is the major cause of the human attention span decreasing by 4 seconds since 2000 – to an average of 8 seconds, according to a recent Microsoft study.[1]Employees crave is short spurts of learning in bite-sized chunks that they can engage in on their own time. They are not opposed to training and new learning – they just want more control about how and when they do it. Employers need to respond to the truth that technology can meet these employee needs and wants, and that micro-learning will be cheaper, more efficient, and, ultimately, more effective.[1]

Index Terms—Online Courses , EdX, Udacity, Coursera

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's era whatever you get handed on a platter is never enough, be it business, career, or knowledge. We are always required to have something extra, one or the other kind of an edge over others around us. Education is no different today. It is said that Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself. But did you know what we are being taught formally will only constitute about 20% of what we will need in our corporate lives? [2]

Now a very economical way, both on your pockets and time to juice up that meagre percentage is available in the form of Massive Online Open Courses or as they are more commonly called, MOOCs. MOOCs are available through many online portals or websites. Most of these websites provide this highly interactive course content through direct collaborations with large, renowned universities which include Ivy League universities such as Harvard, Stanford, MIT and Oxford to and many, many others.

II. THE RISE OF A GIANT

MOOCs made a huge splash in 2012, creating hype so great at the time that New York Times dubbed 2012 as “The year of MOOC”[3] . Looking through the flashy curtain created by

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the hype, let's see where the MOOCs have come from, where they are and where they might be going.

MOOC is a trend that like all other big tech trends, faced its initial hype and criticism in the year 2011 when it was launched by the first non-profit provider, EdX (edx.org).

“A year or two ago a number of people who wanted to grab a bit of public attention in higher education claimed loudly that MOOCs (‘massive open online courses’) were the future, and that all universities would have to go down this route,” Don Nutbeam writes – in a Times Higher Education article from last year in which the vice-chancellor of the University of Southampton, urged institutions to produce MOOCs or face dire consequences. “It's MOOC or die. More to the point, do it quickly,[4] Professor Nutbeam said at the time. A handful of years later, although, the giant is still around but the over-excited bunch of hype creators have calmed down.

The university content is still organized and posted online, free and open to all. Many MOOCs include videos, readings, and forums that can promote interaction among students and teachers. But to handle such huge amounts of data requires storage capabilities and a reliable network infrastructure. It is also imperative that a very powerful broadband network must exist, invisible to both the educator and the student.

However, MOOCs are now evolving further, some even calling this the advent of MOOC 2.0. And in this virtual evolution process, they might end up changing our real world i.e. the way we teach in our classrooms.

MOOC platforms are moving towards making agreements with big business, specifically Coursera(coursera.org), the US MOOC provider, which recently announced that it is to work with companies such as MasterCard and Shell, among others, to provide courses for employees.

Also, research on the behaviour of the enrolled students has revealed patterns that suggest a shorter, to-the-point lecture is much more preferred than a longer one and this has the power to revolutionize the way we are being taught in our classes.

In the end, all that can be said is that it's important to remember that this is a developing trend, and it's highly dependent on technology, therefore we should expect it to go through multiple changes in the coming years.

A few renowned portals that can be accessed to further our education are:

- EdX.org
- Udacity
- Coursera
- Udemy
- KhanAcademy; and the list includes many more key players

Some websites such as edx.org award you with a certificate on completion and that too absolutely free.

The same websites also showcase highly-professionalized courses that can be taken for a very nominal fee.

The list of areas that these portals offer courses in is endless. All you need is the curiosity or the need to learn about something and you will have someone helping you out by offering either their lectures or some cool problem sets to solve or both.

To name a very few broad areas of study that are available:

- Architecture
- Biology & Life Sciences
- Business & Management
- Chemistry
- Computer sciences
- Economics & Finances
- Energy & Earth Sciences
- Engineering
- Food, Nutrition, Health & Safety
- Humanities & Ethics
- Language
- Math
- Medicine
- Music
- Philanthropy
- Social sciences; ...the list seems endless

III. WHATS TRENDING ?

In the last three years, over 25 million people from around the world have enrolled in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) offered by Coursera, EdX, and other platforms. HarvardX's review of first-year MOOC enrolments revealed vast online interest in signing up for courses perhaps due to the ease of registration, but rapid attrition.[Fig.1]

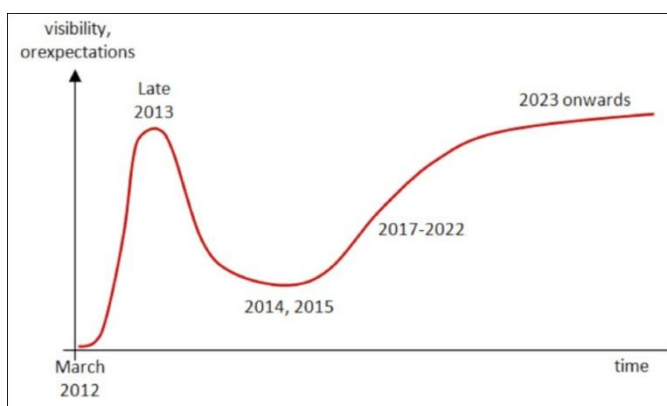


Fig. 1 A Gartner “Hype Cycle” projection for MOOCs. [5]

Research revealed that only a small percentage of these millions were completing the courses, approximately 80% already had at least a bachelor's degree, nearly 60% were employed full-time, and 60% came from developed countries. The same study also emphasized the fact that the courses being generated by universities such as Harvard or MIT tend to attract students who already have college

degrees rather than earlier-stage learners.

There are various reasons though, which may motivate us for taking up an online course. The survey below suggests a few of the reasons students gave for them.[Fig. 2]

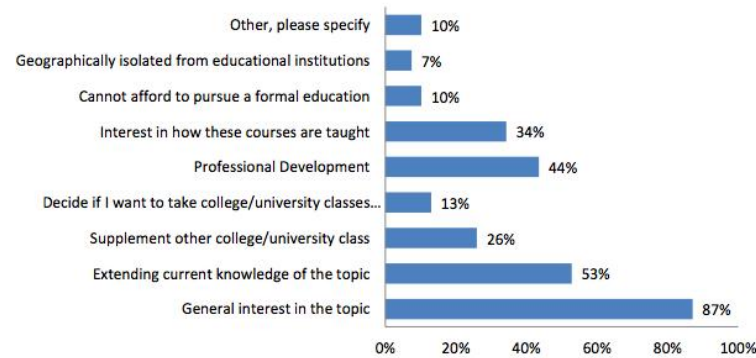


Fig.2 Students motivation for enrolling [6]

IV. BENEFITS

Because A mere intellectual diversion or are there any tangible benefits of MOOC? I do not command a neutral view towards the online courses as I have taken on quite many of these online courses in the past.

The guys at Harvard Business Review believe they have evidence that suggests the critics might be overly pessimistic. Their latest research demonstrates that among learners who complete courses, MOOCs do have a real impact: 72% of survey respondents reported career benefits and 61% reported educational benefits.

Furthermore, their findings suggest that people from developing countries, especially those with low socioeconomic status and with less education are more likely to report frequent benefits from taking MOOCs.

The critics are right on their part; only 4% Coursera users who watch at least one course lecture go on to complete the course and receive a credential. However, given the large reach of these courses, this absolute number is still quite significant.

Coursera course completers reported two types of outcomes: career benefits and educational benefits. Career benefits seemed to be the more common reason for taking a MOOC. 52% of the people surveyed report a primary goal of improving their current job or finding a new job.

The charts below show the breakdown of tangible and intangible benefits of MOOCs with respect to Career, Education and getting ahead at work because of MOOCs[7].

Fig. 3 is as reported by those who stated career benefits as their primary reason for completing a MOOC

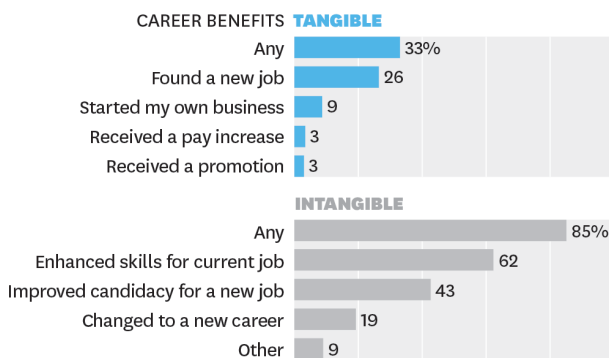


Fig.3 The career benefits of MOOCs [8]

Fig. 4 is based on tangible benefits reported by those who stated such benefits as their prime reason for completing MOOC

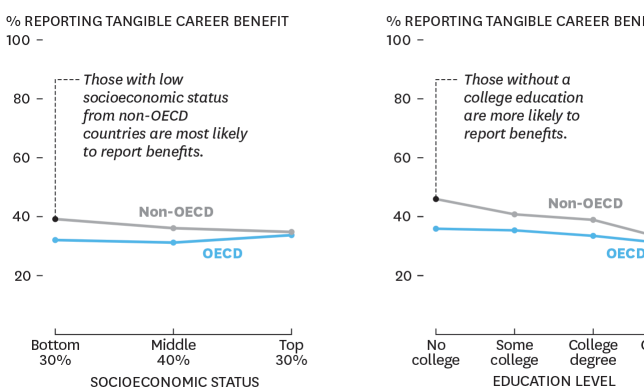


Fig.4 Contribution of MOOC in Progress at work [8]

Fig. 5 is based on report by those who stated educational benefit as their prime reason for completing MOOC

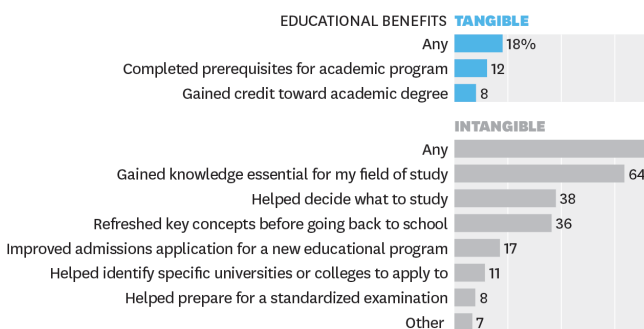


Fig.5 Educational benefits of MOOC [9]

V. CRITICISM

Now of course what is any new technology without criticism that may or may not be proven wrong in the longer run? Much has been said for MOOCs and not all of it is pretty. Some think of it as a mere intellectual diversion and nothing more; or just another corporate hoax to make money from its innocent audience without providing much or any true benefits.

If we are to listen to its avid critics, the attrition rate is atrocious and a matter of concern. Just 4% of Coursera users who watch at least one course lecture went on to complete the course and receive a credential and presently this number is quite similar across all the MOOC platforms. In contrast, when we consider the 25 million connected students, even the meagre percentage turns into a huge number of students passing with credentials.[10]

According to an article appearing in Harvard Magazine, the MOOCs offered by institutions such as Harvard or MIT tend to be a little biased towards attracting only students who have a college degree rather than earlier stage learners. This preference is attributed to the prerequisites required to be fulfilled by these courses prior to beginning. This has in turn raised questions about the “massiveness” of MOOCs originating from elite institutions.

VI. FUTURE PROSPECTS.

MOOC is still getting out of its infancy stage and it has already influenced a few changes despite much criticism.

Out of the disapproval rose an idea, a more promising avenue called the “flipped” or “blended” courses. Using this approach, course content such as recorded lectures is made available to students, like a multimedia textbook, *before* they meet with teachers in the classroom. This will have two currently visible benefits; the students will be able to deepen learning, if class time formerly spent on lecturing is used instead to grapple with difficult concepts or work through problem sets with fellow students. They will be an avenue toward efficiency and economy as more students, in effect, will share a lecturer.

Many cons have also been stated by sources which include identifying MOOCs as chaotic or Organic since the participants create their own content and the course ends up in its self-made trajectory; It demands digital literacy which may or may not always be possible; and lastly, it requires its students to practice self-regulation and possibly to set their own learning goals to achieve.[11]

VII. CONCLUSION

There has been much said in favour of MOOCs and even more so against it. A MOOC is a new knowledge and networking method and as new things get tested, they will always have their evangelists and bashers. The nice thing is that a MOOC does not necessarily stop once the course closes, you may continue learning by sharing or from the new group of friends you made through the discussion forum that share your interests and passion.[12]

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