A study of Perception of B.Ed. Students towards Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

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Abstract: The present research aims to explore the perception of B.Ed. students towards Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) through a qualitative analysis. The Data was collected from 266 B.Ed. students studying in Delhi who have enrolled in MOOCs and 30 In-depth interviews were also taken. The results show that B.Ed. students have a positive perception towards MOOCs as they provide them with flexibility, accessibility, and a cost-effective way to continue their education. However, the study also found some challenges also such as lack of interaction with the teacher, less socialization with classmates, and lack of support. The study concludes that MOOCs have the potential to democratize education and increase educational equity but there is a need to overcome the challenges faced by students. The study highlights that students appreciated the flexibility and the opportunities that MOOCs offer to supplement their traditional education but also felt that MOOCs were not able to replace traditional classrooms. The study also recommends that MOOC providers should keep in mind the specific needs and preferences of B.Ed. students to improve the MOOCs and make them more effective for the students.

Keywords: Perception, Education, Massive Open Online Courses, B.Ed. Students, Online Education.

Introduction:

Massive Open Online Courses have become increasingly relevant in the present times due to covid-19 pandemic and the shift towards online learning. The concept of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in higher education began to gain popularity in the early 2010s. The first MOOCs were developed and offered by a group of professors at Stanford University in 2011. These early MOOCs were designed to be open to anyone, anywhere, and to be offered at no cost. The MOOCs were also designed to be highly interactive, with features such as video lectures, quizzes, and peer-review assignments. The early success of these MOOCs led to a rapid expansion of MOOC offerings from other universities and organizations. By 2012, several major universities, such as MIT and Harvard, had begun offering MOOCs through the platform edX. In the same year, Coursera, a for-profit MOOC provider, was launched, and it partnered with several universities and organizations to offer MOOCs. The introduction of MOOCs in higher education was driven by several factors. One of the main drivers was the desire to increase access to education and to make high-quality education more widely available. MOOCs were seen to reach a global audience, including individuals in remote or underserved areas. MOOCs provide a flexible and accessible way for individuals to continue their education and skill development, regardless of their location of financial resources. They offer a wide range of courses on various subjects, from traditional academic subjects to more practical skills. Massive Open Online Courses have become widely studied in the field of education, particularly in the context of teacher education and professional development.

MOOCs were seen to promote active learning and to provide opportunities for learners to engage with the content in new ways. MOOCs were also seen to support the professional development of teachers and to foster innovation in education. MOOCs are often developed by experts and professionals from leading universities and organizations around the world which is providing learners access to high-quality education that may not have been otherwise available to them. MOOCs provide opportunities for learners to connect and collaborate with other students from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of community and global networking opportunities.

Review of Related Literature:

Research on Perception of MOOCs has generally found that learners have positive perceptions of the convenience and flexibility of MOOCs, as well as the opportunity to access high-quality education from top universities. **Sezgin, S. (2020)** conducted a study on 58 preservice teachers and 08 teacher trainers to understand the role of MOOCS in the professional development of teachers. The results showed that preservice teachers lack confidence in their knowledge of classroom management-related issues. Some preservice teachers' unfavorable opinions of MOOCs center on two distinct issues: language restrictions and the price of some courses. Most participants, however, were unaware of or had little knowledge of MOOCs. **Galan et.al. (2020)** mentioned in their paper that pre-service teachers value MOOC programmes as instructional models in socio-educational situations. They provide undeniable benefits including free use, training for underprivileged groups, flexible hours, etc. **Bhornya, A. (2019)** reveals that the function of MOOCs has changed constantly, from being just another online course to being a recognized source of education that is acknowledged across a variety of businesses and verticals. The purpose of the research includes upgrading to validated credential programs. **Kumar & Kumar (2020)** has revealed in their paper that the overall satisfaction level with MOOCs has been found to be highly influenced by course assessment, course content, and course delivery. A five-point scale was used to determine the overall level of satisfaction. However, it was shown that the influence of course support was also an important factor on overall satisfaction. Conclusions identified that assessment works as the mediating variable between course content and overall satisfaction whereas

course support was not found mediating variable between course delivery and overall satisfaction. **Herranen et.al. (2021)** examined how instructors in the present and the future regard MOOCs in terms of their personal, societal, and professional value. Teachers had positive expectations from the courses in terms of their usefulness for their professional goals or future professional progress, according to the replies they received through surveys. The results of this study also suggested a link between teachers' experiences and how relevant they felt they were. The courses were thought to be more relevant by more experienced instructors.

Phan & Zhu (2020) considered MOOCs as an important resource for a variety of educational goals. It was also considered an excellent experiential learning environment for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Additionally, it implied that MOOCs could support their present and future professional development. **Chauhan & Soe (2017)** carried out research on Indian pre-service teachers whose courses were delivered using the SWAYAM platform. The results of this study show that teacher educators are familiar with the fundamentals of MOOCs, including their advantages, modes of delivery, and strengths. Regarding the function of MOOCs in teacher preparation, there prevails a misunderstanding and Indian MOOC projects like SWAYAM are still not fully understood. According to the study's findings, there is a growing demand for teacher educators to not only have a thorough understanding of MOOCs but also to have access to resources that will enable them to create and incorporate MOOCs into their regular teaching methods. India's MOOCs have a promising future. **Koukis & Jimoyiannis (2018)** developed a framework to assist Greek language teachers employ collaborative writing strategies with Google Docs in their separate classes after conducting a study utilizing a mixed method analysis. The study found that there was more support, interaction, and active participation in the classroom. Teachers also regarded the MOOC as a useful tool for their own professional growth. **Singh (2022)** a study was undertaken in India to investigate participants' perceptions of the quality of MOOCs for teachers' professional development. It was discovered that the length of the courses, the SWAYAM platform's user interface, and the engagement of the students in MOOCs were thought to be the most important areas for improvement by the teachers. The suggestions for including third party participation in assessments can raise the caliber of MOOCs were also given by participants.

Need and Rationale of the Study:

The notification released by University Grants Commission of India recognises MOOCs as a valuable tool for imparting education and it also outlines guidelines for universities to provide credits for successful completion of MOOCs. The main objective of the UGC notification on the MOOCs is to make quality education accessible to a larger audience and to promote the use of technology in education and encourage universities to adopt MOOCs in their teaching and learning processes. In the present study, the researcher aims to explore the perception of B.Ed. students towards Massive Open Online Courses to evaluate the effectiveness of MOOCs in teacher education, to identify factors affecting students' perception of MOOCs in education and to provide insights for future improvement in online education.

Objective of the Study:

The main objective of the study is to explore the perception of B.Ed. Students towards Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Methodology of the Study:

The present study is descriptive in nature. The population consists of all the B.Ed. colleges of Delhi and Questionnaire in form of google form was sent to collect data and researcher got the responses from 266 B.Ed. students. 30 In-depth interviews were also taken to explore the students' perceptions towards MOOCs. The researcher made qualitative and Quantitative analysis of Interview and Questionnaire for transcribing and analysing the data.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data:

The following are the responses got from 266 B.Ed. Students through Google form of Questionnaire.

54.9% students responded that they have taken MOOCs Before in B.Ed. curriculum whereas 45.1% students have not enrolled in any MOOCs. 52.3 % students have positive attitude towards MOOCs, 10.5% have Negative and 37.2 % of the students have Neutral attitude. 47.7% found MOOCs as more beneficial in comparison to traditional in-person classes, 36.5% responded that MOOCs are not beneficial. However, 74.4% of the students stated that MOOCs will impact the future of education in Positive way. Moreover 69.2% students have already completed the MOOCs in which they have enrolled while others are pursuing. 55.3% students have used MOOCs to help them in preparing for a certification or professional development opportunity. More than 50 % students felt that the cost of MOOCs is affordable. 72.3% students responded that MOOCs are very relevant and fit into their overall education and career goals. More than fifty percent students are satisfied with the flexibility and convenience of MOOCs.

The following are the responses got from 30 Students through Interview

- What are your main reasons for taking MOOCs?

70% students responded that they want to learn new skills and to gain knowledge in a specific domain. Almost all the students responded that they want to earn certificates and credentials, to fulfil the requirement for a B.Ed. program.

- Did you find the MOOC to be helpful in terms of expanding your knowledge and skills in your field of study?

It was found that B.Ed. students have positive attitude towards MOOCs as they provide an opportunity for them to expand their knowledge and skills in their field of study. They appreciate the flexibility and accessibility of MOOCs, as they allow them to learn at their own pace and on their own schedule. Students found MOOCs useful as they provide additional resources and support materials for their coursework and can be used as a supplement to traditional classroom-based education. They also appreciate the opportunity to learn from experts and professionals in their field.

- Were there any challenges you faced while taking the MOOC?

Most of the B.Ed. students have the concerns about MOOCs such as there is lack of interaction with the teacher, less socialization with classmates and lack of support when facing difficulties. Additionally, they have concerns about the quality and rigor of the MOOCs as they may not be held to the same standards as traditional in-person courses.

- What do you think are the main benefits of taking a MOOC? Please specify.

70% students viewed that Massive Open Online Courses have significantly impacted the higher education as these courses have increased the access to high-quality education for many individuals, including those in remote or underserved areas. These courses are also very cost effective as there is a nominal fee. 60% students viewed that MOOCs provide access to a wide range of educational resources, including videos, readings, and interactive activities. 80% students responded that MOOCs offer flexibility to students as they can be taken at any time and from anywhere. 40% students responded that MOOCs help in developing the digital literacies and skills that are essential for success in the 21st century. 50% students responded the MOOCs also help in developing the teaching competencies in terms of integrating technology in teaching and learning.

MOOCs have also been shown to have a positive impact on the education system, by providing a cost-effective way to scale up education and reach a larger number of students. They can also be used as a supplement to traditional classroom-based education, providing additional resources and opportunities for students to explore their interests and deepen their understanding of a subject. Moreover, MOOCs have been used in developing countries to supplement the education system and provide access to education to remote and underserved areas. MOOCs also have the potential to democratize education and increase educational equity, by providing equal access to education for individuals regardless of their socio-economic background or location. They can help to reduce barriers to education, such as the cost of tuition and transportation, and provide opportunities for those who may not have been able to attend traditional institutions. MOOCs also have the potential to have a positive impact on the workforce, by providing workers with the skills and knowledge they need to adapt to the changing demands of the job market. With the rapid pace of technological change, MOOCs can help workers to stay current and competitive in their field. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that MOOCs are not only beneficial for individuals and organizations but also for the society. They can help to promote social mobility, reduce poverty and inequality, and contribute to sustainable development by providing access to education and training to people who would otherwise not have access to it.

Findings of the Study:

The results of the study revealed that B.Ed. students appreciate the flexibility and accessibility of MOOCs, as they allow them to learn at their own pace and on their own schedule. It was also found that MOOCs are very useful as they provide additional resources and support materials for the coursework to explore their interests and deepen their understanding of a subject. However, some students have concerns about MOOCs, such as lack of interaction with the teacher high dropout rates, less socialization with classmates, and lack of support when facing difficulties, about the quality and rigor of the MOOCs.

To conclude, it can be said that MOOCs are relevant in present times as they provide a flexible, accessible, and affordable way to continue learning, improve employability, and bridge the education gap. They offer a wide range of courses, taught by experts, and provide opportunities for community building and global networking. Additionally, they have a positive impact on the education system, and can be used to supplement traditional education and provide access to education in remote and underserved areas. Overall, MOOCs have the potential to contribute to higher education by increasing access to education, improving the quality and effectiveness of education, supporting the development of digital literacies, fostering innovation in education, being cost-effective and flexible.

Implications of the Study:

The findings of the study suggests that more hands-on and interactive learning opportunities, such as simulations, case studies, and projects should be provided for improvement in MOOCs. This can help students to apply the knowledge and skills they learn in the MOOC to real-world situations and make the learning experience more engaging and meaningful. Additionally, MOOCs could be improved by incorporating more formative assessments and feedback throughout the course. This can help students to track their progress and identify areas where they need additional support. Furthermore, MOOCs could be improved by providing more resources and support for students who may have limited access to technology or internet connectivity. This could include providing offline resources, such as PDFs and videos, and offering support for students to access technology and internet services.

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