
MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES ON SOCIOLOGY: REVIEW

Article Particulars

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Abstract

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become incalculably popular within a very small span of time. MOOCs are focused by the higher educational sector under Digital initiatives movement. The usage of MOOCs has drastically transformed higher education delivery system by way of accessing and cost. The combat over MOOCs tends to up come in some years on major domain areas. MOOCs offer college-level courses as like courses offered by traditional universities. MOOCs important value intentions are free of cost, available online and to open a convenient learning platform to as many people as possible. The heart of the MOOC and the element transformed the traditional education system to next generation is the Information services and Technology. MOOCs are supremely suited for teaching the Social Sciences which penetrated the spirit of most students. This article reviewed the MOOCs related to Social Science courses offered by various MOOC platforms. It mainly focusses on analysis of Social and Historical Science course offerings, the target audience, duration of course and credentials provided.

Keywords: MOOCs platform, Educational Resources, Sociology, Historical Science, xMOOC, cMOOC.

Introduction

MOOCs have time-honored an attention from the media, vendors, educationalists and technologists. "MOOCs is a web-oriented online course platform developed under digital India initiatives for infinite number of participants, which can be invoked by anyone anywhere with the help of internet connections, it is open to everyone without any qualification limitations and provides a complete course through online for free of cost." The online courses are mostly sponsored and financed by the esteemed universities and corporate through partnerships influenced by venture capital [1]. The broad availability of access to computing devices and internet facilitates learning reserves and media to generate additional opportunities for business models that concentrates on education [2]. The high curiosity of professors on MOOCs moved their courses to a new platform, and with the greedy of tech-skilled students, MOOCs Social Science courses makes perfect sense. MOOCs can be considered as a pioneering

addition to the online learning system. Those online courses are accessible via web and allows user to register courses without any limitations on prerequisites and course materials are purely free of costs. Even though in some courses user need to pay for obtaining a certificate of completion or verified certificate or credentials. The similar kinds of credential courses have time limitations specifying start date, end dates and the registration into these courses are kept open unlike conventional online courses which close the registrations at the start of the course. MOOCs provide a path way for service minded professionals in doing their jobs better or prepare them for facing the new challenges in their designations. They offer additional credentials to their profiles without having to attend a conventional college system.

Background of the Study

The online learning is on a crucial rising curve that intends a wide transformation in education. In future, the significance of estimating the growth of MOOCs on the educational landscape will highly be interesting and are cuddled by huge audience. The modern movement of MOOC is initiated by Stanford in 2011 with three courses, then over 500 universities providing 4200 MOOC courses that benefited 35 million students by late 2015 [3]. MOOC is a hub of Open Education; it is a digitally enabled learning technology intended to widen the access and available to everyone [4]. Open Education offers several ways of teaching, learning, building and sharing knowledge and acts as a bridge between formal and non-formal education.

Meyer & Zhu (2013) stated that the MOOCs are available for anyone with internet access at anytime, can be regarded as a way for access the teaching and learning throughout the life time [5]. The MOOC courses are designed to congregate large amount of geographically scattered students [6] and these courses incorporate social networks, e-resources and teachers in the study area [7].

The MOOCs can be alienated into two important pedagogical streams: xMOOCs and cMOOCs. The xMOOCs pedagogical concept spotlights on the content or the teacher [8]. The cMOOCs focuses on the connectivist style and it provides a novel way of learning [9]. The core idea of the connectivist approach is that the knowledge is shared via network connections [10].

Methods

MOOCs offer a wide range of courses varies from soft skills to astronomy. In this paper, the courses related to Social and Historical Science by key MOOC platforms were explored. Many methods were used to accumulate the relevant courses for the review; extracting data from publically available information on MOOC platform sites and extensively from MOOC aggregator sites. This paper provides all-inclusive review of MOOCs offered on "Social and Historical Science" or on its related criteria.

Data Collection

In general, researchers collect data from a systematic review of literature, database search or search engines and from resource chains [11]. This review was done by accumulating data from different sources. The course details that are publically available on their MOOC offerings were used in this review and also data collected from aggregator sites were also included in the review process. The classification of MOOCs under computer science was considered for collecting the data for the review. Likewise, a complete set of Sociology courses related data was also collected. The list of MOOCs courses offered by various providers was not readily available for analysis. The MOOC provider's platform websites did not contain the necessary information. The two MOOC platform providers Future Learn and Canvas responded with the information to request via email. Hence, the two major aggregator websites Class Central [12] and My Education Path [13] were consulted to collect the list of MOOCs related to Social Science.

Class Central

Totally 40 MOOCs providers offers the courses related to Social Science in the MOOC aggregator site Class Central [12]; 845 courses are under the Social Science stream with 5,69,000 followers. Among the 845 courses 487 are offered with certificates and others are audit courses. The Table 1 shows the different status of MOOCs Sociology courses offered by Class Central.

Table 1: Status of Courses in Class Central Aggregator

Status	Number of Courses
Recently Started	150
Just Announced	31
Course in Progress	33
Future Courses	301
Self Paced	196
Finished Courses	309

My Education Path

Totally 30 MOOCs related to Computer Science are listed in the MOOC aggregator site My Education Path [12]; 457 courses are listed under the Computer Science stream in which 447 courses are free of cost and 10 courses are paid. In these paid courses, four courses are offered by the Udemy MOOC provider, other paid courses are offered by various MOOCs and the 447 free courses did not have any time duration i.e., self-paced courses.

Results and Discussion

Microsoft Excel and NVivo Software have been used for performing the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the collected data. The bulk amount of Sociology related

courses were offered by Coursera (283 / 713) and edX (204 / 713). The entire analysis of courses offered by various important providers/platform is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: MOOCs by Platform / Provider (n=713)

MOOC Platform / Provider	N	%
Coursera	283	39.69144
edX	204	28.61150
Future Learn	79	11.07994
Canvas Networks	42	5.890603
Independent	24	3.366059
Miriadax	26	3.646564
Iversity	22	3.085554
Federica	19	2.664797
NPTEL	13	1.823282
Udacity	1	0.140252

Coursera can be considered as leading MOOCs provider, lists nearly 283 different Sociology courses. The next edX offers 204 various Sociology oriented courses and all these courses are offered through highly regarded universities. In this review, the highest number of MOOCs related to Sociology stream was offered by University of Pennsylvania (23), followed by the University of Michigan (18). The number of MOOCs offered by various major universities is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: MOOCs by Universities (n=112)

University	MOOCs, n
University of Pennsylvania	23
Stanford University	18
University of Michigan	18
Harvard University	16
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	12
Peking University	11
University of California	7
Indian Institute of Technology	4
University of Washington	3

An analysis of frequently used word in course titles was made and that the most frequently used word was "Introduction" which has 261 occurrences. The next highest used word was "History" with 152 occurrences and the occurrences rating of various keywords are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Word Frequency Analysis on MOOCs Titles

Word	Frequency
Introduction	261
History	152
Sociology	146
Civil	50
War	46

Conclusion

MOOC has gained popularity within a very short span of time and it offers 'n' number of courses on various disciplines. Reviewing, MOOCs offered on "Sociology",

40% (283/713) of courses were provided by Coursera MOOC platform and on analyzing universities offerings on Sociology, 20% (23/112) of courses were provided by University of Pennsylvania. Only about 14.5 % of the MOOCs (16/112) were provided by the institutions. Most of the courses are at introductory level and some courses offered with credentials are hardly useful for enhancing the knowledge of socially committed people.

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