Learning Management in Massive Open Online Courses:
MOOCs

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ABSTRACT

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are the unconventional and latest means of education in the present society. MOOCs are the strong alternative to traditional education and latest development in the area of open and distance learning. MOOCs are the online courses which are delivered with little rigidity in place of learning, time of learning, pace of learning, etc. Learning management in MOOCs is one of the prime features of MOOCs that helps for the delivery of MOOCs. Learning management in MOOCs plays a vital role for the success of MOOCs. The stakeholders of MOOCs must be well conversant with different aspects of learning management in MOOCs for achieving the success of the MOOCs. Referring to these contexts, in the present paper, thematic discussions have been made on different aspects of learning management in MOOCs. In the paper, special emphasis in discussion is given on different components of learning management in MOOCs, learning management in different platforms of MOOCs, and issues in learning management in MOOCs.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Rapid advances in information and communication technology (ICT) have touched every facet of our life including education. ICT is used to enrich the system of both formal and non-formal education. Formal education is mainly imparted in the conventional universities, colleges, schools, etc. whereas non-formal education is imparted in the distance education institutions, open learning centers, etc. The use of ICT in formal education improves the teaching-learning process of the education by adding the liveliness in the process whereas the advancement of ICT acts as a significant medium for making the delivery process of non-formal education system possible and/or successful. Initially, distance education was operated through the use of study material sent by post (Sriram, 2015; Siemens, 2013; Casey, 2008). But, after the use of ICT in distance education, distance education institutions started to initiate e-content delivery. After the success of e-content delivery and its usefulness in distance education, many formal and non-formal educational institutions started to deliver e-content in the form

of open educational resources (OER). Open educational resources were spreading rapidly across the world after 2001 (Sclater, 2009), which helped to start an era of open online education and massive online learning (Xiong and Suen, 2018). A recent development in the area of distance education and e-learning is Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) (Kesim and Altinpulluk, 2015). MOOCs are online courses which use web-based tools and environments to deliver online classes without restricting the geographical boundaries and time zone, and do not restrict admission either in terms of the number of learners or their educational qualifications (Voss, 2013; Liyanagunawardena, Adams and Williams, 2013). MOOCs are defined as *massive,* because technically there is no limit on how many learners can sign up a course at the same time under the MOOCs. Those are *open* in terms of access, regardless of the educational qualification required. All the learning processes in MOOCs, i.e., lectures, quizzes, tutorials, debates, assessments, etc. are performed *online*. In some instances, the course coordinator conducts meet-up and it is used as a part of flipped classroom where students view lecture materials at home to participate in further activities and discussion. Generally, MOOCs have a set start and stop time and are offered by the recognized learning institutions with structured and sequenced learning content. So, those are treated as *Courses* (Olin, 2015; Siemens, 2013). Dave Cormier (University of Prince Edward Island, Prince Edward Island, Canada) and Bryan Alexander (National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education, Washington DC, USA) first introduced the term Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in 2008 in reference to a course called 'Connectivism and Connective Knowledge/2008' (often referred to as CCK8) which was started by George Siemens and Stephen Downes (Pike and Gore, 2018; Weller, 2014). George Siemens (2013), one of the pioneers of the MOOCs phenomenon, has summarized three formats of MOOCs based on different pedagogical foundation and organisational models, namely connectivist or 'cMOOCs', extended or 'xMOOCs' and quasi-MOOCs whereas Kesim and Altinpulluk (2015) refer to cMOOCs as connectivist MOOCs as well as Canadians MOOCs (because the creators of the MOOCs are Canadian researchers) and xMOOCs are referred as Coursera type MOOCs. In the current situation, xMOOCs have become dominant MOOCs type, though the first MOOCs were cMOOCs (Stewart, 2013). Quasi-MOOCs are defined as web based tutorial in forms of open educational resources and those are technically not courses because those are a pack of loosely linked open education resources.

MOOCS AND PRESENT LEARNING SYSTEM

Starting from last quarter of 20th century, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) plays a significant role to fulfil the academic hunger of those people who are bound with geographical constraints, financial problems, and societal discrimination. Due to the spread of ODL, the idea of access of education to all regardless of their economic, demographic or geographic boundaries is quite possible. In the beginning years of the starting of ODL system, the medium of delivering the learning content to the learners in the system was mainly the printed text that was reaching to the learners by post. After the electronic revolution due to rapid advancement in information technology from 1980s, change is remarked in the mode of delivering learning content from printed text to virtual classroom in ODL system, i.e., face to face teaching at a distance with the help of cable, microwave or satellite (Keegan, 1998). The technology improvement, i.e., computer and internet, brought vital changes not only in distance education but also in whole educational setup. In distance education, learning content is delivered in the form of e-content because of use of ICT in it. These changes in education opened the scope of online learning, which is strengthened by some projects of online resources.

In 1997, MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching), a program of online library resources for students to free access learning resources, was developed (Atiaja and Guerrero, 2016) and in 2002, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) started an Open Course Ware, which is a free and open publication of quality content through the synchronous and asynchronous modes of instruction. Open Course Ware is one of the causes of shifting the learning process towards online education. Online education is a process that connects the learners to the

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