Chapter 37
Redefining the Classroom:
Integration of Open and Classroom Learning in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The printing technology revolutionized the dissemination of knowledge at a pace never conceived of earlier. In recent times, radio and television brought education within the reach of masses. More recently, the multimedia technology, and Internet have revolutionized the delivery of education. Top universities of the world have collaborated to develop massive open online courses (MOOCs) that are made available to public either free of charge or at a nominal cost. Mainly supported by start-ups such as Coursera, Udacity, and EdX, MOOCs are mostly created by universities in United States and Europe. This essay reviews the impact of these changes on higher education using available reports, articles, and meta-analyses. Although there is no conclusive evidence of the impact of MOOCs, there is a strong possibility of MOOCs leaving a lasting mark on the traditional higher education system. This chapter falls within the book section 'RIA and education practice of MOOCs,' aligning to the discussion on the topic of 'educational training design.'

INTRODUCTION

Even though the concept of open learning has been around for quite some time with many universities offering open learning courses and open educational resources (OER), but the popularity, visibility, and acceptability of these options has seen a huge upswing in the past four years. Technological advancement has played a very important role in this wave with online learning environment becoming a favorite

platform for open learning. Recent times have seen a gradual shift from traditional method of imparting education solely through class-room teaching to an integrated approach that uses the modern day technologies and blends classroom and open learning with the goal of improving student learning while providing more flexible opportunities to the students. We aim to review the available open learning/online educational programmes and to understand the impact of integrating open learning in traditional classroom higher education.

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

The concept of distance learning was started with the goal of delivering education, often on an individual basis, to students who cannot be physically present in a traditional educational setting such as classrooms. This concept dates back at least as early as 1728, when Caleb Phillips placed an advertisement in 'The Boston Gazette' seeking to teach students the new method of shorthand through lessons that were to be sent weekly. Distance education initially relied on postal services and was later supplemented by radio and television broadcasting. University of London claims to be the first university to offer distance learning degrees, establishing its External Programme in 1858 which is now known as the University of London International Programme and includes postgraduate, undergraduate and diploma degrees created by colleges such as the London School of Economics, Royal Holloway and Goldsmiths (Wikipedia, 2012).

There are many definitions available for open and distance learning. Most definitions agree with following characteristics: separation of teacher and learner in time and/or place; institutional accreditation; that is, official recognition of learning from a learning institution; use of mixed forms of courseware, including print, television broadcasts, video, computer based learning and telecommunications; two-way communication that allows learners and tutors to interact rather than learner being a passive recipient of information (The Commonwealth of Learning - An Introduction to Open and Distance Learning, 2000).

Distance learning may be defined as a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning (Greenberg, 1998). Distance learning may be characterized as a method where the teacher and the learner are separate in space and possibly in time (Keegan, 1995; Teaster & Blieszner, 1999).

According to one definition, open learning may be defined as "an approach to education that seeks to remove all unnecessary barriers to learning, while aiming to provide students with a reasonable chance of success in an education and training system centered on their specific needs and located in multiple arenas of learning" (Butcher, 2011). Although there is a lack of consensus on a definition for open learning, the main points that arise from various definitions are: it is learner-centered rather than institution-centered; implies use of wide range of teaching/learning strategies; is about removing barriers to learning, particularly those inherent in conventional learning environments (Lewis, 1986). It is purposeful, directed learning as opposed to simply the accumulation of knowledge. It takes place in a volatile environment that the individual learns to customize and provides the user with feedback that is constantly used to refine and improve upon the experience. Open Learning is largely available because of the Internet, although it is possible for it to take the form of offline content as well. It very often makes use of OER (Tarrant, 2012). "OER are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use or re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules,

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