Expanding Access to Higher Education Through Blended MOOCs: A Case Study From a Ghanaian University

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ABSTRACT

This chapter evaluates the efficacy of blended MOOCs in promoting universal educational access at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, by examining data from 2,875 students. The study reveals significant insights regarding the revised

Community of Inquiry (RCoI) model and the extended unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT2): Campus-based course engagement exceeded MOOC engagement, although teaching presence and learning presence significantly augmented engagement. The results suggest that blended MOOCs could improve access to education in settings with limited resources. However, challenges persist, such as facilitating conditions and effort expectancy, which were the least favourable UTAUT factors. The chapter ends with practical suggestions for improving institutional policies and integrated learning frameworks to help achieve the goals of SDG 4 in the Global South. These empirically substantiated observations contribute to the ongoing discourse regarding technology-mediated learning as a means to achieve egalitarian and scalable education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance e-Learning (ODeL) refers to educational delivery that combines open access principles with distance learning technologies, enabling learners to study remotely with flexible pacing and minimal physical attendance (Commonwealth of Learning, 2020). Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are large-scale, freely accessible online courses offered by universities or platforms such as Alison, Coursera, edX, FutureLearn, etc. They typically include video lectures, automated assessments, peer interaction, and optional certification (Zheng et al., 2015). Blended MOOCs describe a pedagogical model where MOOC content is integrated into traditional or hybrid learning environments. This may involve face-to-face facilitation, institutional support, or curricular embedding to enhance contextual relevance and learner engagement (Edumadze et al., 2022).

Global educational equality and rapid technological progress have made more people want higher education that is scalable and accessible. Traditional schools are unable to meet the learning demands of diverse populations, especially those in rural or resource-limited locations, and swiftly adjust to natural catastrophes and pandemics. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global shift has magnified the need for flexible, inclusive, and scalable educational solutions, such as digital learning modes. However, when using technology to promote equity, it's crucial to address the digital divide (Memon & Memon, 2025). Simply providing technology is not enough; schools must also provide devices, internet access, and digital literacy training to prevent technology from worsening the digital divide. ODeL has also emerged as a viable strategy for a flexible, scalable, and inclusive approach to democratising access to higher education, particularly in developed and underserved regions (Ally & Samaka, 2013). MOOCs, a disruptive technology, are becoming popular among ODeL alternatives because they make knowledge and higher education more