



EVALUATING LEARNER FEEDBACK: A STUDY OF THE 'BASICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY' MOOC ON SWAYAM

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Abstract

A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is an open and distance learning platform. SWAYAM is a program initiated by the Government of India and is designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of education policy, access, equity and quality. SWAYAM is offering courses in various subjects. Many universities run courses on SWAYAM in various subjects in the January and July semesters. The “Basics of Photography” course was one of them. The objective of this study was to analyze the feedback of learners towards the course “Basics of Photography” offered at SWAYAM. 150 learners participated in the study. The findings revealed that most learners agreed that the course was useful to them.

Keywords: SWAYAM, Massive Open Online Course, Open and Distance Learning

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Open Courseware is a type of e-learning model which is delivered via the internet and run by universities or institutions. Open Courseware provides education free of cost to all learners. There is no fee for any type of course. It does not provide any degree or certificate but provides self-learning course material to learners. Open Courseware or OCW is a term applied to course materials created by the universities and shared freely with the world using the internet (Patidar & Singh, 2018). After open courseware, new terms MOOC came into focus. MOOCs which stand for Massive Open Online Courses, is boon to education. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provides an opportunity for flexible education with the intervention of a teacher called mentor (Kumar & Brahmhatt, 2015). Like OCW, MOOCs are also developed by the subject experts of the universities and institutions. But MOOC differs from OCW. If a learner or student wants to learn any course on MOOCs, he/she needs to register for that particular course. The learner can get the completion certificate at the end of course. To get the certificate, the learner should complete the internals assignments (subjective and/or objective) given and need to register for the proctored exam at the end of course by paying some fee and pass it successfully. Another important element of MOOCs is that it has interactive user forums to provide interactions between students, professors, and teaching assistants (TAs) (Agrawal, Kumar & Agrawal, 2015, Kumar & Brahmhatt, 2015). MOOCs are offered in a certain period such as 6 weeks, 8 weeks, 12 weeks, etc. It has a start date and end date to complete the course. OCW provider organizations have now become big MOOCs providers like MIT, Coursera, NPTEL, etc. (Patidar & Singh, 2018).

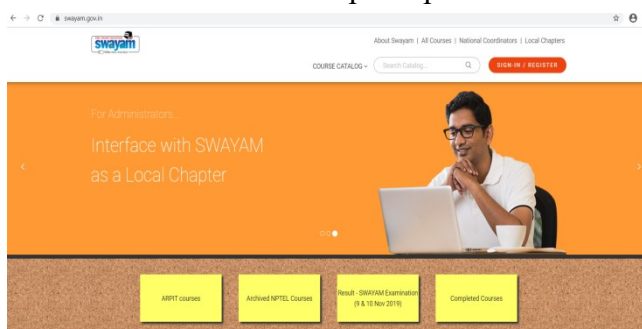
Varma and Kataria (2018) highlighted the importance of SWAYAM in the education system and highlighted the features of SWAYAM. MOOCs became popular worldwide because of their free, quality, massive and attractive features (Joshi, 2015). As per the Shah (2019), the number of registered users of the top five MOOC providers are as follows: Coursera — 37

million, edX — 18 million, XuetangX — 14 million, Udacity — 10 million and FutureLearn — 8.7 million. These numbers proved the popularity of MOOCs worldwide.

SWAYAM: AN OVERVIEW

SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) came in to focus in the Indian context as a contribution towards MOOC. SWAYAM is a programme initiated by the Government of India and designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy viz., access, equity, and quality.

The objective of this effort is to take the best teaching-learning resources to all, including the most disadvantaged. SWAYAM seeks to bridge the digital divide for students who have hitherto remained untouched by the digital revolution and have not been able to join



the mainstream of the knowledge economy (About SWAYAM). SWAYAM is offering many MOOCs in various disciplines since 2016. As per the SWAYAM website, Nine National Coordinators (NCs) have been appointed as per the course to ensure the best quality of content production and delivery of the MOOCs. Following table was taken from the SWAYAM website shows the enrollment stats of SWAYAM course in India:

Year	Semester	Course Enrolments	Exam Registrations	Certifications
2023	July	3635030	675439	Exam registrations for 2023 have not started yet.
2023	January	3543333	516962	315143
2022	July	2670694	436043	282306

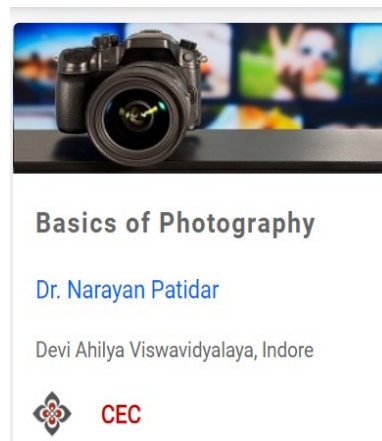
Course enrollments and certifications are increasing every year.

BASICS OF PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE ON SWAYAM

Basics of Photography was a 12 weeks course which was offered on SWAYAM in various semesters. This course was one amongst various universities courses that were offered under the CEC, New Delhi.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Every nation has various types of educational systems for its students from classroom-based learning to open and distance learning. Classroom learning has its benefits over learning but competition is increased day-by-day and students want to gain more and more knowledge. But there are so many



barriers like communication, finance, residential background, etc. which pool back them from various sources of learning. MOOCs and OCW could solve these problems because these e-learning models are learner-centric models in which each individual can access and learn according to their pace. The structured curriculum will help the learner to know what he/she will get from the course, and learners can get the certificate after course completion (Patidar, 2016). These factors can motivate learners to enroll in the MOOC course. They have choices as per their need to enroll in a course but enrollment doesn't guarantee course completion. MOOCs providers are facing this problem of dropouts from enrolment to course completion. However, students should be motivated under the credit transfer policy.

Photography is a course that caters to the interest of learners from different disciplines. Since this field is very creative and there is easy availability of DSLR cameras and Smartphone, people are directly or indirectly attracted towards photography. Therefore, it is interesting to understand the feedback of learners enrolled in SWAYAM course on "Basics of Photography".

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The title of this study was entitled as "Evaluating Learner Feedback: A Study of the 'Basics of Photography' MOOC on SWAYAM".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following were the objectives of the study:

To know the demographics of learners of SWAYAM course on "Basics of Photography".

To evaluate the feedback of learners towards the SWAYAM course on "Basics of Photography" at the end of 3rd week of this course.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to collect data. Quantitative data was collected using surveys. The survey link was emailed to registered students after completion of the third week of the Basics of Photography course. There were 9 items on the perception scale to obtain feedback on this course. Whereas, for qualitative data, respondents were asked two open-ended questions.

SAMPLE

A total of 150 learners participated in the study. Out of 150 learners, 73% of the learners were male while 27% of the learners were female. The following sample details are given from table no. 1 to 3 in terms of age group, qualification and profession:

Table No. 1: Age Group		
Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
16-25	91	61
26-35	33	22
36-60	26	17
Total	150	100.0

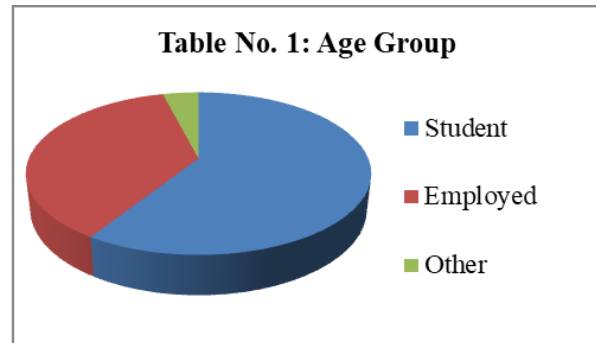


Table No. 2: Qualification		
Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
12th	36	24
Undergraduate	59	39
Postgraduate	43	29
Doctorate	12	8
Total	150	100.0

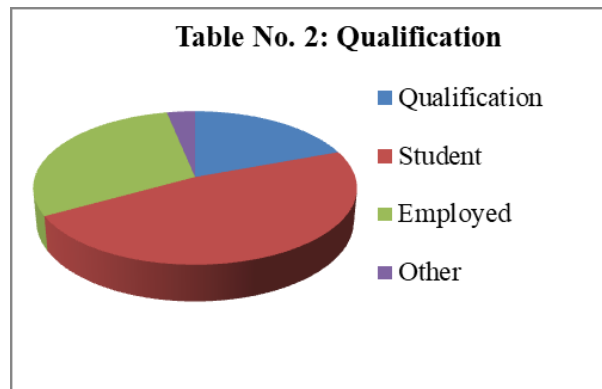
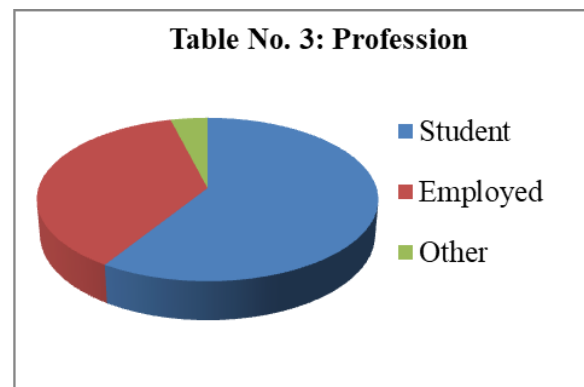


Table No. 3: Profession		
Profession	Frequency	Percentage
Student	88	59
Employed	56	37
Other	06	04
Total	150	100.0



Majority of respondents were male undergraduate students from 16 to 25 age group.

RESULTS

Following is the feedback taken from respondents at the end of third week of the MOOC:

Feedback related items on the scale		SD	D	UD	A	SA	
1.	The course contents met with your expectations	F	7	3	28	57	55
		P	5	2	19	38	37
2.	The lecture sequence was well planned	F	6	6	28	52	58

		P	4	4	19	35	39
3.	The contents were illustrated well with graphics	F	4	12	36	40	58
		P	3	8	24	27	39
4.	The level of the course was good	F	4	6	23	49	68
		P	3	4	15	33	45
5.	The course exposed you to new knowledge and practices	F	4	4	24	41	77
		P	3	3	16	27	51
6.	Recommend this course to your colleagues	F	5	5	25	39	76
		P	3	3	17	26	51
7.	The lectures were clear and easy to understand	F	6	3	24	49	68
		P	4	2	16	33	45
8.	Quiz given in each lesson is good for self testing	F	7	3	20	39	81
		P	5	2	13	26	54
9.	Questions given in weekly tests are at good level	F	7	4	18	46	75
		P	5	3	12	31	50

It is clear from the above table that

About 74% of respondents agreed that the course content met their expectations and the lecture sequence was well planned,

66% of respondents agreed that the course content was well illustrated with graphics,

About 77% of respondents agreed that the level of the course was good, the course exposed them to new knowledge and practices, they recommend the course to their colleagues, and the lectures were clear and easy to understand,

About 80% of the respondents agreed that the quizzes given in each lesson are good for self-testing, and the questions given in the weekly exams are of a good standard. Overall, learners liked the course.

Therefore, at the end of the third week of the course, very positive feedback was received from the respondents.

STRENGTH OF THE COURSE

50% of respondents commented about the strengths of the curriculum. Many of them wrote that the course was good. Some of them wrote that it is a complete knowledge bank for learners. The remaining comments on the strengths of the course are conceptual and the basis is explained, consistency of the knowledge presented, method of explaining is easy to learn, easy to understand, discussion forum is very useful, graphics shown are good, questions are of good quality, Are very informative and practical, and weekly assignments.

WEAKNESS OF THE COURSE

35% of respondents commented about the strength of the curriculum. All comments vary like some respondents suggested that the audio and video quality could be better, one wrote that its pace is fast, some said that practical sessions and demonstrations are lacking, the course is in only one language i.e., is in English only, and lectures should be more explanatory.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was to evaluate learners' response to MOOCs. The feedback received was good. However, there is always room for improvement and some learners had suggested some weaknesses of the course. Basically, skill-based courses like this course will always be in demand. However, there is a need to promote SWAYAM courses further to create awareness about the credit transfer facility among students. There is a need to highlight the benefits of credit transfer among students and its connection with SWAYAM. So that, its reach and usage can be increased and more learners can get the benefit of SWAYAM courses.

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