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An Evaluation of Learners' Level of Satisfaction using MOOC: Satisfied or Unsatisfied?

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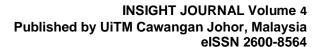
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Abstract

Massive Open Online Course or MOOC has been blooming and most universities are offering MOOCs so as to remain relevant with the current education trend. MOOC is one of the most recent innovations in education that offers a lifelong learning opportunity and free short online courses available to anyone in the world. The current study aims to investigate the learners' perception and satisfaction level on the use of instructional design of MOOCs using a quantitative research design. The study was based on a survey questionnaire which was carried out randomly to 68 Diploma learners of UiTM Perak Branch. In addition, comments and suggestions from the participants were also analysed. The results revealed that the majority of the learners had high level of satisfaction in using MOOCs. The learners were found to be receptive given that the courses were free, interactive and easily accessible. The most appealing aspects that contributed towards the satisfaction level were teaching methods and the learning environment, whereas the least was on the assessment aspect. However, the learners also shared their concern as part of their suggestions on the issue of improvising the connectivity as well as timely feedback by the instructors. It is hoped that the findings of this study would be beneficial for future offerings of MOOCs which could incorporate these suggestions to improvise learning experiences and learners' satisfaction.

Keywords: Evaluation of MOOCs, Satisfaction of Using MOOCs, MOOC





1. Introduction

Access to education has never been greater with a plethora of innovations in education. One of the recent innovations is the open source learning system which offers online education courses. As opposed to distance learning or online courses which are commercial in nature, an open source learning system is provided for free for anyone who has a keen desire to learn. Atenas (2015) makes the point that as "taxpayers are funding the development of these open learning systems, access to the resources should be considered a right for all citizens who are interested in increasing their knowledge and improving their skills" (p. 10). Some of the more popular open source learning systems are *Open Study* and *Khan Academy*. Currently, Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) Portal has started to gain relevance in this exciting world of open source learning system.

MOOC is defined as "online courses designed for a large number of participants, which can be accessed by anyone and anywhere as long as they have an Internet connection, MOOCs are open to everyone and MOOCs offer a full/complete course experience online for free" (Jansen & Schuwer, 2015, p. 4). In addition, they generally have no prerequisites, fees, formal accreditation or predefined required level of participation (McAuley, Stewart, Siemens & Cormier, 2010). It has been predicted by some that the introduction of MOOCs will change the nature of traditional elite universities from being establishments for the affluent and privileged few to becoming free, accessible, and for virtually everybody and anywhere (Ryan, 2013). Apart from that, Liyanagunawardena, Williams and Adams (2013), and Yousef, Chatti and Schroeder (2014) also suggested that MOOCs were hailed by many as a solution for the developing world's lack of access to education because MOOCs could provide learning opportunities to a massive number of learners from anywhere in the world as long as they could access the courses through the Internet. The first official MOOC started in the year of 2008. It is believed that this MOOC scenario has yet to peak (Chiam. 2018). In Malaysia itself, the Ministry of Education has made MOOCs as its priority agenda under Surge 9: Globalised Online Learning under the Malaysian Education Development Plan (Higher Education, 2015-2025). Although MOOCs were claimed to be beneficial, several unprecedented challenges still existed which most of E-learning possesses such as lack of interaction and supervision, imperfection of grading assessment (Pappano, 2012), plagiarism in online education (Cooper & Sahami, 2013) and quality of peer assessment (Yin, 2016). This has raised concerns which led towards this study since MOOCs development in Malaysia is still considered as very recent. Also, academic research in using MOOCs are still lacking in Malaysian context.

Therefore, the current study seeks to investigate Malaysian learners' perception of the instructional design of MOOCs that interpret their satisfaction and experience using the platform. The following research questions are addressed in this study:

- 1. How satisfied are UiTM learners with the instructional design of MOOCs?
- 2. Which aspects of MOOCs contribute the most and the least to learners' satisfaction?



2. Literature Review

2.1 Development and Controversial Issues of MOOCs

Baturey (2014) in his research found out that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) were one of the most protuberant movements in higher education in the past years. It represents open access, global, free, video-based instructional content, problem sets and forums released through an online platform to a large number of participants aiming to take courses or to be educated. With time and place flexibility, MOOCs gather scholars and learners around the world. MOOCs are the latest movement in the field of distance education that seems to go on for some time which specifies a noteworthy need of research studies on it. In the Malaysian setting, MOOCs started to make an appearance back in 2013, with only one private university offering a course on entrepreneurship, and later in 2014, four public universities began offering MOOCs too (Fadzil, Latif & Munira, 2015). From there on, more and more higher educational settings began to realise that it was only relevant that higher education institutions in Malaysia, in time, must learn to familiarise and be more pioneering in the world of information and technology in order to avoid the risk to be left behind and eventually being irrelevant in the long run.

As far as the higher education is concerned, many of the higher education settings have recently utilised the advancement of educational tools to be in line with educational aspirations. There were mixed opinions on the execution of MOOCs in the higher education setting. Jurenas (2014) described MOOC as a means of online education that offers great availability and laidback, that encouraged the participation of learners as well as gave the opportunity of learning throughout one's lifetime with no or minimal cost. Apart from the hassle-free enrolment, respondents also participated in MOOCs due to their development of specific skills as well as personal skills which were in line with Malca's (2015) claim. Additionally, a study by Ng (2012) also suggested that MOOCs have become one of the platforms for knowledge transfer which include feasible methods and techniques for learners to adapt and this also supports Beetham's (2007) claim which MOOCs provide a helpful, collaborative and accommodating learning atmosphere and is useful for learners to achieve a positive learning environment and experience.

Although MOOCs were claimed to be beneficial, several unprecedented challenges still existed like most E-learning face such as lack of interaction and supervision, assessment grading errors (Pappano, 2012), plagiarism in online education (Cooper & Sahami, 2013) and quality of peer-reviewed assessment (Yu, 2016). In Malaysia for example, Amantha and Al-Samarrie (2018) found that the controversial issues faced by instructors when using MOOCs were dismissal, lack of amenities and experience, lack of knowledge in MOOC designs and progress, and inadequate control and capacity-building programmes. There were also other negative opinions that question the sustainability of MOOCs and their position in higher education (Yin, 2016) as well as the chances of MOOCs posing a threat to the existing models (Wiley, 2012). Even though MOOCs have been the topic of many controversial discussions, many researchers still hold their belief that online education has never been a threat to the education spectrum. It is believed to be an infusion or alternative platform which replaces the conventional form of education. It has never been the intention of MOOCs to replace the interactions or activities in conventional education but somehow to offer varieties of opportunities and experiences to learners with the support of technology (Ng, 2012). With the rapid development of technology, learning today has become a life-long process which makes people obtain knowledge more effectively. Taking into consideration all controversial issues and arguments, there is no doubt that MOOCs still face huge challenges in the future. However, there are also massive opportunities to be weighed





ahead. With this, the institutes, universities and government should collaborate and work hand in hand to resolve the difficulties and challenges that MOOCs present.

2.2 Implications to Higher Education

MOOC is known to be a new pedagogic tool that goes beyond traditional teaching in which most of the higher educational settings have been practising for decades. It can be said that educators are worried if MOOCs can actually replace the traditional teaching and learning and eventually affect the whole man-power issue of higher educational institutions (HEIs) (Li & Stephen, 2013). However, Dennis (2012) reassured that MOOCs would not substitute HEIs. In fact, they would only complement rather than substitute. This is due to their ability to solve issues faced by the higher education such as unsustainable costs, unmanageable student debts and college participation rates. Additionally, it is also worrying that MOOCs were created to cater to the need to supply the knowledge to the users rather than to cater to the demand of the users themselves since higher education settings are running after the new market created by the MOOC platform which in time contributes to the increasing number of students (Li & Stephen, 2013). MOOCs also do not really offer validated credentials which is the main reason why students are not attracted to enrol since they want to look for courses that are backed by the institutions (Daniel, 2016). Literat (2015) in a more positive note agreed that MOOCs create new openings for innovation in higher education which substantially permits the higher education institutions as well as academicians to discover new online learning models and advanced practices in teaching and learning. MOOCs have also turned into the newest in-thing in the world of distance education which signals a profoundly important need of studies to be done to lessen the threat related to them (Literat, 2015). According to Li, Sun and Sun (2018), MOOCs have definitely helped HEIs in the United States to provide more learning opportunities with their availability. minimal cost and easy-access criteria. Aside from bringing trials to higher education, they also offer supervision for the conventional education in higher education and encourage the new experience of teaching methods in HEIs, (Li, et al., 2018). These implications of MOOCs were derived from the experience of the MOOC educators around the globe, and there are some of these issues that are still worthy to be explored if MOOCs are ready to take the centre stage of our educational system be it in Malaysia or anywhere else respectively.

2.3 Satisfaction vs Dissatisfaction of MOOC

Among the challenges that were raised during the initial development of MOOCs were whether there would be issues on the reliability and effectiveness of the MOOCs and whether participants would be satisfied with the implementation and outcomes derived from the programme. Participants' satisfaction is one of the key points to ensure that the effectiveness of MOOCs is achieved. Khalil and Ebner's (2013) research work explored the importance and satisfaction on the level of interaction in MOOCs as perceived by learners and instructors which was based on data from online students and instructors of MOOCs. Findings of the survey revealed that students rated the importance of interactions in MOOCs as highly important. In addition, the study revealed that students and instructors reported a high level of satisfaction in MOOCs. This was also supported by Bozkurt and Aydin (2015) who revealed that MOOCers were satisfied with their MOOC experience and had positive





feedbacks regarding MOOCs. They also planned to participate in other MOOCs in the near future and it proved that MOOC hype would go on for some time.

In contrast, some students expressed less satisfaction in terms of interaction because of the lack of instructor's interaction. Khalil and Ebner (2013) found that it was impossible for the instructors to interact with quite a large number of MOOC participants but the researchers suggested that a study should be carried out to assess the importance of instructor-participants interaction as this may give a big impact of the level of satisfaction from the view of both instructors and participants respectively. Additionally, Khalil and Ebner (2013) also suggested that trained teaching assistants were made available to assist the instructors in handling a large number of participants. However, Gameel (2017) in his study found that learner-learner interaction and learner-instructor interaction had no impact on the participants' satisfaction with MOOCs. Instead, the study found out that the participants perceived usefulness, the teaching and learning process in MOOCs, and learner-content interaction were what really contributed to the satisfactory levels of MOOCs. These findings will help us to identify the need to understand the participants' level of satisfaction towards the possibility of implementation of MOOCs in the near future.

3. Method

The nature of the study is in quantitative research mode. The findings were mainly collected through responses using a questionnaire. This section includes descriptions of the instruments, the respondents, and data collection and analysis.

3.1 Instruments

An online questionnaire (Google form) was designed to investigate the learners' satisfaction level of the MOOCs that they have enrolled in. The questionnaire included questions which explored part of the MOOCs that contributed the most and the least satisfaction among the learners. The questionnaire was adapted from Yin (2016). The theoretical base of the questionnaire was grounded from the Fundamental Components of Instructional Design of E-Learning programme which was firstly developed by Morrison, Ross, Kalman and Kemp (2011). In this model, Morrison, et al. (2011) offered instructional designs of the e-learning. Yin (2016) adapted the model to suit with the questionnaire which entailed the instructional designs of MOOCs. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section the questionnaire was related to the demographic information of the respondents. consisted of seven items. The second section of the questionnaire was about satisfaction of the instructional design of the MOOCs. In this section, there were six parts (A, B, C, D, E and F) with a total of 30 items. Part A included six items on the course content, part B included five items on teaching method, part C included six items on evaluation system, part D included six items on discussion forum, part E included six items on online learning and finally, Part F included one item on the overall satisfaction level of MOOCs. The final section of the questionnaire comprised four items that were open ended questions. The open ended questions were about the strengths and weaknesses of MOOCs, other comments related to the usage of MOOCs and a question on whether the respondents would recommend the use of MOOCs in their learning. The questionnaire used Likert scales to rate the participants'



perception with options such as Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree or Strongly Agree.

3.2 Participants

The link of the online questionnaire (Google Form) was given to the learners who were enrolled in any of the MOOCs before this. The information about the purpose of study was also included together with the questionnaire. A total of 68 learners, who joined the MOOCs for online courses, participated in the study. The respondents were semester 1 Diploma learners from Art and Design Faculty, and Architecture and Planning Faculty of UiTM Perak Branch. There were 27 males and 41 females who completed the survey.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data were stored automatically in the hosted online survey service (Google Form) after submission of the responses. Descriptive data analyses such as frequencies, min and average were conducted using SPSS. The findings were tabulated and displayed using graphs.

4. Findings and Discussions

The overall findings and data analysis are presented and discussed based on the research questions.

4.1 RQ1: How satisfied are UiTM learners with the instructional design of MOOCs?

Based on the results in Table 1, learners relatively have high levels of satisfaction with the use of MOOCs. When respondents were asked why they chose MOOCs rather than other open online courses, more than 50% of the respondents reported enrolment to be easier and free. They appreciated that the MOOCs were convenient. This is parallel with the claim made by Jurenas (2014), where she described MOOCs as a tool that offers great accessibility, easy and convenient, enhances learner's engagement, and encourages lifelong learning through open availability with low or zero cost. Apart from the hassle-free enrolment, respondents also reported that they participated in MOOCs because of wanting to develop specific skills as well as personal skills which are in line with Malca's (2015) belief. Prior to this study, out of the 68 respondents, a total of 98.5% (n=67) respondents stated agree and strongly agree on the satisfaction level of the overall design of MOOCs. Only 1.5% (n=1) somehow disagreed and claimed otherwise as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Overall Satisfaction

	Frequency	Percent	
Disagree	1	1.5	
Agree	54	79.4	
Strongly Agree	13	19.1	
Total	68	100	

Table 1 shows that most of the Diploma learners were satisfied with the instructional design and quality of MOOCs which they have gone through and experienced throughout their



Diploma studies. Moreover, almost all of the learners commented that they have positive outcomes and experiences using MOOCs as one of their learning platforms. Based on the comments, most of the participants' feedback and reactions regarding their satisfaction levels and perceived learning were positive. For instance, Respondent 48 commented "I really enjoy the awesome platform, easy to learn and understand...something different from the old school method. Best part is I can also improve my English at the same time". A number of respondents liked how the courses were presented. For instance, Respondent 15 commented "the video available in MOOC makes it easy to understand on certain topics and it is very interesting way to learn". Respondent 3 commented "The best platform so far. I gained more knowledge and it's not boring. I can connect with other friends from different background...very interactive". This indicates that MOOCs are considered as a means of providing virtual classroom that offers traditional learners more flexible learning opportunities with greater extent of tools that meet variety of educational demands (Gaebel, 2013). In line with the 'Linux of education', MOOCs have become one of the platforms for delivering knowledge that provides viable methods and techniques for learners to adapt (Andrew Ng. 2012). With this said, 66 respondents agreed to highly recommend this platform to others.

Despite the respondents reporting that they were satisfied with the overall courses, a few recommendations were highlighted in terms of its accessibility as well as timely feedback by the instructors in charge. Due to the limited connection availability on campus, this caused problems for learners to get access to MOOCs. Some of the respondents hoped that the instructors would be able to provide feedback on time and be more engaging. Although MOOCs have been heralded as part of the national agenda that offer meaningful learning, these vital issues must be countered by the institutions, thereby bridging the gap of dropout rates which has been one of the controversial issues among MOOC users.

4.2 RQ2: Aspects Contributing to the Overall MOOCs

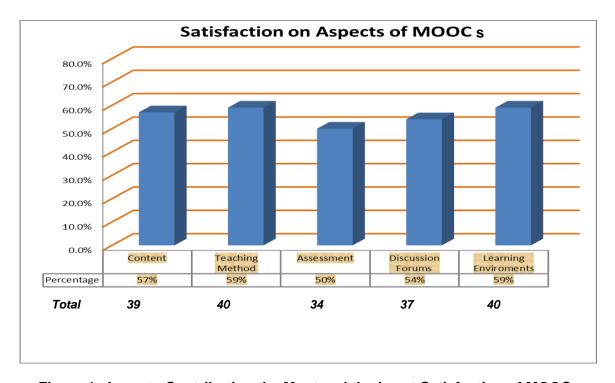


Figure 1: Aspects Contributing the Most and the Least Satisfaction of MOOCs





Based on Figure 1, the results indicated that teaching methods as well as learning environment contributed the most towards learners' satisfaction with the percentage of 59 (n=40) respectively. The respondents agreed with the content used in MOOCs that projected the criteria of good organisation and structure, rich and plentiful, up-to-date and easy to fit in with their needs which were the strongest predictor for the respondents' satisfaction. Learning environment was also highly rated based on its interface, technical support, interactive lessons and activities as well as handiness of the system. This supports Beetham's (2007, p. 27) claim that "a supportive, interactive and cooperative learning environment is beneficial to learners for obtaining positive learning environment and experience".

The least noted aspect which the respondents rated at 50% (n=34) was on the assessment methods. UiTM learners had significantly lower satisfaction especially on peer assessment. Based on the recent literature review, numerous researchers expressed the same concern about the quality of peer assessment. The low satisfaction of UiTM Diploma learners shows a similar response with Kulkarni et al.'s (2013) study where the research was conducted on the quality of peer assessment. Prior to this, MOOC providers should take into account in implementing concrete measures in improvising the quality of peer assessment (Luo, Robinson and Park, 2014). In addition, further research should be conducted extensively to test its reliability, validity and the effects. Even though the overall findings generally project positive results towards MOOCs, yet there is a need to emphasise the importance of the course design with appropriate format since MOOC development in Malaysia is still considered to be very recent.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the learners were satisfied and contented with their learning experiences using MOOCs. The features of MOOCs such as ease, flexibility and convenience permitted them to have a positive learning experience. The strengths of using MOOCs have influenced their interest to learn. The attractive features which were different from the normal traditional classroom learning heightened their interest to learn particularly in using the English language.

Nevertheless, the respondents reported that the process of learning using this medium would be more effective when the Internet access was available and when the lecturer or instructor was able to provide feedback promptly. They reported that the setback was due to the factors mentioned which might affect their motivation and perception to learn.

The majority of the respondents were satisfied with the features available on MOOCs such as the content, discussion forums, flexible teaching methods using video, discussion, and the positive teaching environment. They reported that the features available made the learning fun and attractive. However, they pointed out that they were unsatisfied with the assessments particularly the assessments done with the peers.

The results of the study illustrated that MOOCs might be used not as an alternative to learning but a medium to reinforce learning. The medium of using MOOCs permits students to engage in the learning as the features permit students to explore learning in a more creative and flexible manner rather than the usual convention manner in a classroom. However, the role of the instructor or the lecturer is vital in ensuring that the medium permits

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them to monitor and respond to the learners. In addition, the medium should create an avenue for both learners and the instructor to interact throughout the process of teaching and learning. When both parties are able to play their roles well, learning would be able to take place effectively. Learning transcends through time. With the surge of technology, education needs to be aligned to the needs of today. Thus, MOOCs indeed have a place in the education system, and will definitely be a demand in this century.

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