MOOCS AND OPEN EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: CHALLENGES, SUCCESSES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

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The MOOCS have been seen as a game changer in the higher education ecosystem not only in the Global South but in other parts of the globe as well. Consequently, the MOOCS have taken a prominent role in the higher education system and the governments have legitimised the use of MOOCS in educational programmes at different levels. Due credit for MOOCS is given to the students in their regular programmes also. This leverage has made the conventional education system to make special provisions for accommodation of MOOCS in their curricula for awarding degree certificates with MOOCS as one of the components. This is an achievement in itself. The initiatives for design, development and use of MOOCS globally have been documented during the recent decade. The MOOCS have been found as one of the most favourite dishes on the platter of the youth who is not only tech savvy but also knows how to make best utilisation of time and technology to access updated knowledge in this information age.

The volume in hand is an attempt to take stock of the current state of not only design, development and implementation of such MOOCS but also evaluation of the effectiveness of such initiatives in democratisation of higher education by extending their reach. This edited volume consists of 28 Chapters organised in 7 different Sections. These Chapters cite the experiences and outcomes of the research projects and initiatives across the Global South with a total of 47 countries - that includes 8 countries from Africa, 11 countries from Asia, 3 countries from the Caribbean, 16 countries from Latin America, 18 countries from Middle East and 1 country from the Pacific. The Sections cover broad themes such as historical perspectives, current practices and designs, MOOCS and open education for professional development, multi-country collaborations and collections, government policies and strategies, organisational innovations, and the future of MOOCS and open education. The first chapter "MOOCS and open education in the Global South: Successes and Challenges" sets the tone for other authors to find their place in the Continuum.

While authors of the individual chapters have done an excellent job in elaborating their experiences, the expertise, knowledge, research base and usual experiences of the editors have added value remarkably to the quality of content of this volume.

The first Section on Historical Perspectives contains two chapters. Chapter 2 is the trajectory of the launch of K-MOOC (Korean Massive Open Online Courses) under the aegis of Korea Open Course Ware (KOCW). Almost 44% of the Korean population is registered on K-MOOC. The quality management and general utilisation of digital resources have been highlighted by the authors. Chapter 3 focuses on a broad spectrum of present, past and future scenarios of MOOCS in Chinese context. The authors have tried to portray the general characteristics of the MOOC learners from their perspective. The authors have tried to accomplish this task by analysing articles under different dimensions from 147 peer reviewed journals published between the year 2012 and 2017.

Section 2 on 'Current Practices and Designs' is spread over 8 chapters. Chapter 4 focuses primarily on complex cultural environments with special reference to the potential and reality of open and distance education from an Egyptian perspective. Process of creation of OERs at local level by way of using local models are of interest in the Chapter. The authors have also made a reference to the 'Virtually Connecting' - an open project partnered by one of the authors. The authors in chapter 5 lay emphasis on 5 critical issues that are important to be addressed in order to make the MOOCS and OERs relevant vis. a. vis the open textbooks and other formats of open contents. The under-compensated academic workforce and inadequate emphasis on potential accessibility requirements among others have been highlighted by the authors. Chapter 6 narrates the experiences of design and implementation of MOOCS in Indonesia for enhancement of access to quality digital educational resources in the country. The author revisits the design and development of MOOCS in the Indonesian context starting from the first MOOC developed by a private University in the year 2013. The author vehemently confesses that the digital resources including moves are not fully utilised to reach the advantages to the far needy in the country.

In chapter 7 the authors discuss a paradigm shift in offering MOOCS from overly content and teaching centric ecosystem to the one with more learner and learning oriented focus so as to optimally integrate with the educational needs at the local level. In order to make this shift happen at a rapid pace, the authors propose to redesign the process purporting the general systems theory. Chapter 8 discusses the need of developing the MOOCS suiting the availability of technological infrastructure as in the context of Fiji Islands. The infrastructural constraints have directly limited the access to better learning opportunities for the learners at large. The authors find design and development of MOOCS with a different perspective following innovative architecture appropriate to the context.

Chapter 9 highlights the mechanism and security strategies used by high school teachers in Nepal to make MOOCS more relevant for the students at the school level by arousing their interest and enhancing their engagement with the digital educational resources. While the potential of the books and open educational resources is being tapped for making higher education affordable in different parts of the globe, it is heartening to note that the teachers in Nepal are able to inculcate the culture of using open educational resources at school level. Chapter 10 presents a perspective of the current scenario of design, development and utilisation of MOOCS in Latin America. The authors emphasise that the educational institutions in the region are left just behind in making an entry to the world of books. They are of the opinion that though scattered efforts here and there are being made to popularize MOOCS, the efforts are still incomplete and a bit confusing when it comes to actual design, development and implementation of MOOCS, and subsequent research on different aspects.

Chapter 11 is based on groundbreaking research study on emotional benefits of diversity in MOOCS. This being a qualitative study, lays emphasis on the emotional benefits of

teaching and learning as a result of exposure to diverse global audiences. The designers and instructors of MOOCS have taken utmost care in their development so as to cater to a wide range of global learners. This has made them perform more than one role in the process such as instructional designer, instructor, content developer, and so on.

Section 3 on 'MOOCS and Open Education for Professional Development' consists of four chapters. Chapter 12 presents a narrative of the development of 'pdMOOCS' for professionals and students in Turkey. As observed by the authors MOOCS are still at a nascent stage in Turkey and the Middle East region. The portal houses as many as 100 courses for development of soft skills and technical skills among the individuals. Now people at different levels such as working people, employees, students, and job seekers including K-12 students are making use of MOOCS. Chapter 13 describes the journey of Thailand towards Thailand 4.0 with the use of MOOCS. This initiative will help the people in Thailand to become lifelong learners with the extensive use of ICT and its applications. The chapter also highlights the salient features of gap and SWOT analysis of different operations in open education in Thailand.

Chapter 14 describes the efforts made by Commonwealth of Learning and Athabasca University jointly to testify TEL MOOC for development of teachers at global level. This initiative works on the premise that pedagogical and technological skills of the teacher are prerequisites for effective learner engagement. The authors present the strategies used in design, development and implementation of the TEL MOOC that is quite popular among the teacher- educators and other professionals from Global South. Chapter 15 narrates another story of design, development and implementation of MOOCS this time from South Africa grounded in African philosophy of education and pedagogical approaches. The authors feel that the MOOC is unique in a sense that it has provided an ample space for flexible incubation for professional learning. The MOOC provided scope for experimentation in different dimensions ranging from pedagogy, technological Infrastructure, collaborations among professionals, and creating supportive ecosystems. The organisational resilience and sustainability are highlighted to be the long-term gains of this initiative by the authors.

Section 4 focuses on multi-country collaborations and collections which is spread over three chapters. Chapter 16 narrates a journey that shows how a MOOC conceptualized to provide Universal access to high quality educational resources culminated into collaborative effort in development of MOOC for change. The initiative led to major contributions by the participants to best practices for local sustainability. The project of development describes how a MOOC can play an important role in impacting practices and actions at local level. Chapter 17 traverses through the historical development of MOOCS inflected by members of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. The authors try to seek answers to two different key questions as to commencement of MOOCS in APEC countries. There are different phases of development and their support. The chapter started with the review of phasic growth of MOOCS in the selected countries. Chapter 18 examines the impact of MOOCS in economic, professional and social development of learning communities in Latin America and The Caribbean. The assistance of the Inter American Development Bank for development of MOOCS with the perspective of social and economic improvement in the above mentioned regions is highlighted. The authors find that such MOOCS provide learning opportunities to the aspirants and also empower them with improvement in their lives.

Section 5 delves deep into the government policies and strategies for development of MOOCS. It houses four different chapters widely covering broad topics connected with the theme. Chapter 19 puts forth the significant developments made in Latin American Region - Brazilian Open University in the recent decade. The open licence policy under the initiative has been adopted by Open University of Brazil which is a consortium of more than 100 higher educational institutions. The chapter presents the findings of a survey reviewing the

open educational resources projects and policy implementation. The authors find that significant developments have started taking place of late in the region towards policy adoption and its implementation under the local conditions. The economic challenges in the development of MOOCS and their sustainability in the context of Malaysia are prominently discussed by the authors in chapter 20. Universities in Malaysian context have started focusing on MOOCS as the country believes that the e-Learning market has been growing at a fast pace during recent times. However, the initiative is facing its challenge to sustain ongoing efforts. The authors feel that influence of government, elicited strategies on institutional policies, and practices needs to be clearly understood for sustainability of MOOC development and implementation.

Chapter 21 provides a case study in Philippians contact where a sizable number of MOOCS and open educational resources were developed and offered under the framework of OERs for Development. The chapter also focuses on the procedures and practices adopted for local contextualization of these digital resources for local use. This contextualisation was able to overcome the challenge of ensuring sustainability for these eResources; though the initial implementation of OERs for Development worked well and laid emphasis on certain areas which needed development.

The authors in Chapter 22 find that the Middle East has ample scope of development of open education resources and MOOCS, of course with specific challenges which can be overcome. The better technological connectivity in the Middle East region comes handy for such initiatives. If developed in local language, the MOOCS have a promising future ahead for the Middle East which would promote participation at a broader level with public and private support. The authors recommend the development of Arab MOOCS with cooperative initiatives on the part of government, business houses and public educational institutions.

Section 6 on "Organisational Innovations" houses 5 chapters on a range of themes. Chapter 23 is the narration of insights gained into the process of design, development and delivery of MOOCS for audiences at global level as part of the Open Learning Campus initiative promoted by the World Bank Group. The author finds that the MOOCS are the major catalyst of democratization of knowledge and changes at societal level keeping in view their Global reach. The African Virtual University has been making all out efforts for use of open educational resources. Chapter 24 revisits one of the experiments of the university in providing a teacher education degree programme in Mathematics and Science which makes extensive use of open educational resources. The author also delves into the practices of adoption, creation, repurposing and sharing of resources as also the challenges faced by different African countries in adoption of open educational resources for offering academic programmes at different levels.

Chapter 25 puts forth findings of a case study on development of MOOCS on food and agriculture in the Indian subcontinent. The authors find a great potential in the use of virtual educational resources in creating MOOCS in the area connected with agriculture. They feel that the availability of content offline keeping in view the inadequacy of the bandwidth will go a long way in engaging the students and faculty in agricultural universities in the region. The MOOCS need to be developed in such a way so as to help the farmers and fisherman etc. in their conventional vocations. The author in Chapter 26 presents a workable model to solve educational problems such as the lack of technological skills for learning online. A face to face program helped the authors in overcoming this problem that helped the participants to acquire necessary skills for use of OER and MOOCS. The authors feel that the model can be replicated to reach the unreached in different parts of the globe as well.

Section 7 presents a way forward and focuses on the future of MOOCS and open education. It contains two chapters which are very important for the book. Chapter 27 presents an

overview of the recent advancements in the area of education with extensive use of Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence. These technologies are deployed to overcome the technological constraints and provide pedagogical solutions at different educational levels. The authors find that these technologies can best be used for providing personalized learning support and assessment in education. Chapter 28 takes the discussion on use of new digital technologies in educational context a step father. The authors feel that educators now have started focusing their attention on uses and application of Big Data, Data Analytics, and Artificial Intelligence for enhancing the analytical capacities and capabilities of the educational ecosystem and overcoming different challenges thereby leading to more and more innovations and experiments in use of digital contents and devices for reaching the students with customised education.

Educational planners, policy makers, instructional designers and education providers have been experimenting with different technologies for enriching the educational experiences of the students at different levels. The MOOCS and Open Educational Resources have caught the attention of these functionaries of the educational ecosystem during the past decade or so. However, the documentation of the experiments, their impacts and success stories of design, development and implementation of MOOCS are not visible in a desired number. The volume in hand is one such effort and initiative on the part of the authors. It not only documents the experiments of the authors in development of MOOCS at different levels and different geographical backgrounds, it also put forth the ways and means to overcome the challenges that creep in during the course of this voyage. The authors of different chapters need to be complemented for their efforts in making use of their narrative techniques while presenting their personal experiences for this volume. I am sure the book is a must read for the educational functionaries involved in launching digital initiatives at different levels so as to get an insight of the Best Practices being followed by the authors, tools and techniques used for overcoming the challenges, and transforming their efforts into memorable experiences for all.

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