The Adoption of Massive Open Online Courses: Challenges and Benefits

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the challenges and benefits of using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). It also tried to understand the issues that would influence students’ perceptions regarding MOOCs. The Study utilized the Theory of Reasoned Actions (TRA) to understand the factors influencing respondents’ adoption of such environment. An empirical research was conducted using a survey to probe subjects” opinions. Results significantly supported the TRA and predicted the intention to use MOOCs. Perceived usefulness and social influence were significant predictors of MOOCs adoption, but ease of use failed to predict the intentions to use MOOCs. Challenges related to infrastructure, control and assessment were important to sample. Subjects indicated that time and place convenience are important contributions of MOOCs. The adoption of MOOCs would increase the opportunities of benefiting people who are busy, disadvantaged, and geographically remote. It reduces the cost for educational institutions, and attracts more people to acquire degrees and training.

KEYWORDS

Adoption, cMOOCs, Jordan, Massive Open Online Courses, MOOCs, TRA, xMOOCs

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement in technology and the globalization facilitated by the Internet are influencing the educational sector. Technology is converging educational theories and new ICT applications; diverting the world from the dominance of traditional education. The new paradigm shifted from face to face classes to new communication methods like distance learning. Such new fashion of interaction includes correspondence, one or two-way audio and video communication, and many other Internet apps. The newly used learning management systems facilitated such paradigm shift and helped in making education easier (Coates et al., 2005; Abu-Shanab, 2014).

Distance learning (DL) is offering great opportunities for enthusiasts to learn and obtain degrees without conventional limitations imposed on the learner (Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Keegan, 1996). DL rises above limitations imposed by geographical remoteness, family and job commitments, and time constraints (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999; Jinxian & Ying, 2009). Building on correspondence

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concept that exist in DL, and with the facilitation of new tools and Internet apps, a new form of communication brought the term “Online Learning” (Moore et al., 2011). In the last few years, DL expanded into a new scope called Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which is the latest trend in education (Baturay, 2015).

MOOCs is commonly used in higher education; it started within elite institutions, and still limited to these institutions. They offer high quality courses with certain conditions and context. MOOCs are online courses offered through relatively short video lectures and related content (Liyanagunawardena et al., 2013). They also utilize feedback, collaboration, discussions, and assessment using peer review through social media and forums. They are an extension of online learning, but distinguished by their unique style characterized by openness. They are open for any participant with no prerequisites or limits, free or semi free of charge, and need very few requirements. If you have a device and Internet connection, you are able to take lectures in prestigious institutions; this is what MOOCs grant users.

MOOCs popularity is growing rapidly despite its novelty and age. Large numbers of participants are enrolling continuously in massive number of courses. MOOCs attracted attention quickly and acquired interest of academics. However, they suffer from various challenges due to the huge number of simultaneous participants for each course separately; some courses attracted millions of subscribers who are registered in them. Such situation calls for more research to understand this environment in developing countries and in public universities in Jordan in specific.

The objectives of this study are to understand the perceptions of students in developing countries concerning MOOCs methodology and the perceived benefits and challenges in implementing it. The second objective is to investigate the factors influencing its adoption. An empirical test was conducted, utilizing a survey, to understand this area and see if students will adopt such environment. The survey was distributed on students in a public university and collected data was analyzed to attain the objectives of research.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature and history of MOOCs, where we explain in 2.1 MOOCs pedagogy, characteristics of MOOCs in 2.2, and lastly review the challenges in 2.3. Section 3 described the research method and the model used. Section 4 discussed the analysis and results estimated. Section 5 provided our conclusions, implications and future work recommended.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

E-learning methods are utilized by many Jordanian universities (Harb & Abu-Shanab, 2009), but with simple and basic tasks. New methods are needed to enrich the educational sector and include more categories of society. MOOCs method is one of the recent and prominent trend in higher education. MOOCs have combined online learning and social media tools (Bassi et al., 2014) and focused on university level learning (Gillani & Eynon, 2014). The history of MOOCs is very short; this term first appeared in 2008 when Stephen Downes and George Siemens offered a free course for 25 students in Manitoba University. Then they followed that by taking the initiative and making courses open for everyone. 2200 persons, whom are not students, had joined and benefited from the courses offered.

According to Porter (2015), 2011 was the year of MOOCs; it is a year in which MOOCs had begun to be known globally. Professors from Stanford University offered many videos and lectures and made them open for audience with free web resources on Internet platforms. The number of these platforms is still increasing. Later in 2012, Coursera, the most popular MOOCs platform, was established as independent for-profit domain. In the same year, other independent learning platforms were established such as Udacity and Udemy (Baturay, 2015).

2.1. MOOCs Pedagogy and Related Models

MOOCs concept is based on two pedagogical foundations in education: connectivism and behaviorism. The concept is categorized mainly into cMOOCs and xMOOCs. The beginning was in 2008 with
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