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# NEP 2020 & MOOCs in Higher Education:  Integration, Potential and Limitations

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## ABSTRACT

A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is a web-based platform which provides an unlimited number of students worldwide with a chance of distance education with the best institutes in the world. It was established back in 2008 but it gained momentum in 2012 as a popular learning tool. Many MOOCs have communities that have interactive sessions and forums between the student, professors and Teaching Assistants (TAs) along with the course material and video lectures. The Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) movement is playing a pivotal role in transforming higher education. Courses designed for large numbers of participants that can be accessed by anyone, anywhere as long as they have an internet connection, are open to everyone without entry qualifications, and offer a complete course experience online for free. As more initiatives are launched, millions of people around the world continue to participate in MOOCs through a small but growing diversity of courses and platforms. MOOCs continue to attract a high level of interest from reputed educational institutions, senior politicians, policy-makers and popular media houses. In this paper, the various challenges that are faced in Assam in implementing MOOC in higher education are discussed. Also, to revolutionize the current education sector in Assam, some prospects of MOOC's implementation are proposed here. The MOOC prospect in technical education is also discussed for future scope. Massive Open Online Courses have been recent in the field of online learning and it has the potential to transform learning and development in developing countries by providing learners with ready access to knowledge and Higher Education.

**Key Words:** MOOC, Challenges, Prospects, Online learning, MOOC platforms.

## INTRODUCTION

New Education Policy 2020 is a comprehensive framework that outlines the vision and roadmap for transforming India's education system. The policy was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29th July 2020 and replaces the previous education policy, which was formulated in 1986. NEP 2020 is a result of an extensive consultation process, which involved stakeholders from different levels of the education system, including policymakers, academics, students, parents, and civil society organizations. The policy aims to address the gaps and challenges in the existing education system and align it with the needs of the 21st-century knowledge economy. The key focus areas of NEP 2020 include early childhood care and education, school education, higher education, vocational education, and teacher education. The policy emphasizes the need for promoting multidisciplinary and holistic education, integrating technology in teaching and learning, and enhancing research and innovation in education. NEP 2020 also aims to make education more accessible, inclusive, and equitable, particularly for marginalized communities and students from economically weaker sections. The policy envisions a shift from rote learning to experiential learning, promoting critical thinking, and fostering creativity and innovation among students. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) have emerged as two critical factors that have the potential to transform the education landscape in India and around the world. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need to move away from rote learning and focus on developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students. MOOCs, on the other hand, offer an innovative and accessible platform for lifelong learning and upskilling.

This paper critically analyzes the intersection between the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in transforming higher education in India. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for accessible, flexible, and quality education that can cater to the diverse needs of learners and the changing job market. MOOCs offer a promising platform for delivering accessible and flexible education to a broader range of students. This topic delves into the potential benefits and limitations of integrating MOOCs into

higher education in India. On the one hand, MOOCs can widen access to education, offer opportunities for upskilling and lifelong learning, and provide a range of courses from top-notch universities and experts. MOOCs can also help address the shortage of skilled professionals in various fields. On the other hand, integrating MOOCs into higher education also poses some challenges and limitations that need to be addressed. These include concerns related to quality and credibility, limited interaction and feedback, technological infrastructure, and the need for robust accreditation and assessment mechanisms. This topic further explores how MOOCs can be integrated with formal education to provide students with a more comprehensive and flexible learning experience. This integration can involve recognizing MOOCs for credit transfer and incorporating MOOCs as a supplementary tool in traditional classroom-based courses. Overall, this topic provides a comprehensive examination of the potential, limitations, and challenges associated with integrating MOOCs into higher education in India under the NEP2020. It highlights the need to develop effective policies and frameworks that can maximize the potential of MOOCs while addressing the limitations and challenges associated with their integration.

**BASIC UNDERSTANDING ABOUT MOOC**

The term MOOC was first coined by Dave Cornier in the year 2008 from the University of Manitoba. The unique feature of MOOC is providing education to the public, at a minimum level of cost at world scale and to deliver an attestation of completion to those who fulfill their study. This makes it attractive especially for the developing countries. The major players like Cousera, Udacity and Edx witness high number of enrolments from India. A course is designed for a few weeks and imparted on the web. Assignments are given to be solved using collaborative learning. The students take up exams at the end and are given certificates. This is done to discourage non-serious participants. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC's) are witnessing a huge demand among the students, with the majority of Indian students enrolling into foreign universities. When elite colleges are offering courses free of cost to students, it is definitely an offer hard to resist. As Coursera, a major player in the MOOC sector gets second highest enrolments from India. The growth of the MOOC has potential to address the

problem of meeting increasing demand for higher education, particularly in developing countries where it is almost impossible to build enough traditional institutions to cope with the number of prospective students. Daniel (2012) believes the new openness movement is a real game changer, as it has potential to widen access to life-long learning, address key gaps in skill development, and ultimately enhance the quality of life for millions. There is even some hope in Assam that MOOC courses may be able to play an important role in closing the growing inequality gap of literacy and in reducing youth unemployment. The national institutes of India like IIMs and IITs also have started MOOC courses. The Government of India has also decided to start 350 online courses through SWAYAM (Budget 2017-18). There is a need to create a solid systematic structure for the validation and recognition of accomplishment of the courses from online sources such as Coursera, Edx and SWAYAM, UGC, and other educational authorities which seek cooperation between these institutions. The present paper describes needs and importance of MOOCs as an alternative platform in Higher Education, prospects and Challenges of MOOCs in Higher Education of Assam.

## NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF MOOCS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have emerged as a popular and accessible tool for higher education in recent years. While MOOCs have the potential to democratize education and promote lifelong learning, there are also limitations to their effectiveness and uptake. In this context, it is crucial to explore the potential and limitations of MOOCs as a learning tool in higher education. The integration of MOOCs in higher education aligns with the objectives of the NEP 2020 in several ways. Here are some examples:

● Flexibility in learning: MOOCs offer learners the flexibility to learn at their own pace and time, which aligns with the NEP 2020's focus on flexible and modular education.

● Lifelong learning: MOOCs can provide learners with opportunities for lifelong learning and upskilling, which is one of the key objectives of the NEP 2020.

- Diverse range of courses: MOOCs offer a diverse range of courses from renowned universities and experts, providing learners with access to a broader range of learning opportunities, as envisaged in the NEP 2020.

- Access to education: MOOCs can widen access to education for learners who face geographical, financial, or other barriers to traditional forms of higher education, which aligns with the NEP 2020's focus on equity and inclusivity in education.

- MOOCs can help in providing knowledge to students who may not have access to the formal education system.

- MOOCs can help in providing help to the learners who are not able to afford the costs of higher education.

- MOOC courses are very much flexible for the learners.

- Non-traditional education realized through MOOCs is a useful form of online learning and can complement traditional university learning

## POTENTIAL OF INTEGRATING MOOCS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Widening access: MOOCs can widen access to education for learners who face geographical, financial, or other barriers to traditional forms of higher education. MOOCs deliver high quality content from some of the world's best universities for free to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection.

- Self-paced learning: MOOCs allow learners to learn at their own pace, enabling them to take the time they need to fully grasp a concept.

- Flexibility: MOOCs offer learners flexibility in terms of time and place, allowing them to learn when and where it suits them.

- Diverse range of courses: MOOCs offer a diverse range of courses from renowned universities and experts, providing learners with access to a broader range of learning opportunities.

- MOOCs can be useful for opening access to high quality content, particularly in developing countries and to do it successfully, it will require a good deal of adaptation, and substantial investment.

- MOOCs are valuable for developing basic conceptual learning, and for creating large online communities of interest or practice.

- MOOCs are an extremely valuable form of lifelong learning and continuing education.

- MOOCs main value is to eliminate through computer automation and peer-to-peer communication the very large variable costs in higher education associated with providing learner support and quality assessment.

- Most universities have offered online MOOC courses for many years and the basic technologies involved are – video lectures, discussion forums, tests, etc.

- MOOCs have large numbers of students, no direct faculty interaction with individual students. MOOCs have some limitations when compared with a traditional face to face course or smaller online credit course with high faculty involvement. However, these aren't limitations as much as features that make MOOCs unique.

- MOOCs are built on efficiency of scale, giving access to the teaching of a world class professor to thousands of students at once. A MOOC throws open the door of the professor's classroom, allowing him to teach more than just a few dozen students at a time.

- As involvement by the faculty member is limited it shifts the responsibility for learning the material squarely on the shoulders of the individual student and their motivations to learn. It also shifts conversation about the content to a more diverse student population that could be worldwide – a community of learners.

- MOOC courses aren't fixed into traditional term and semester models of the university, so they can start at any time and can be of any length. That makes the MOOC compelling for short-term courses that are highly focused on a topic or a series of courses that might build towards a deeper understanding in a knowledge area.

- MOOCs aren't bound by traditional university credentialing – they can be offered with or without a certificate indicating that a student has completed the course. The credential can be separate from the class itself.

These features scale, learning communities, scheduling and credentialing flexibility make MOOCs unique. These types of online courses can solve certain problems in higher education that take advantage of the format, rather than trying to fit the MOOC into the more traditional university credit course box.

## LIMITATIONS OF MOOCS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

However, there are also challenges in integrating MOOCs into higher education that need to be addressed to realize their full potential. Some of the major challenges for MOOCs in Assam are as follows

- Quality and credibility: MOOCs may not be able to offer the same level of quality and credibility as traditional classroom-based courses, particularly in terms of assessment and accreditation, which can be a barrier for learners seeking recognized qualifications or degrees.

- Limited interaction and feedback: MOOCs typically have limited interaction between instructors and learners, and among learners themselves, which can limit the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, and can also limit the feedback and assessment mechanisms. MOOCs often have limited feedback and assessment mechanisms, which can limit the ability of learners to monitor their progress and receive constructive feedback.

- Technology infrastructure: MOOCs rely heavily on technology, and learners require access to reliable and high-speed internet connections, as well as the necessary hardware and software to participate effectively, which can be a challenge in India and other developing countries. MOOC needs the high speed internet connections for accessing the content delivered in their courses. In a developing country like India, Internet and computers come under luxury and their availability is confined mainly to the urban areas. Limited availability of requisite infrastructure to access MOOCs has confined the extensive spread of MOOCs. India needs to work towards providing a better Internet access for the country's population and providing worldwide connectivity. MOOCs require learners to have access to reliable internet connections and the necessary technology, which can be a barrier for learners who do not have access to these resources.

- Investment: Offering the MOOC is a costly affair that includes the cost of infrastructure, platforms, content creation, human resources and many more. In India, the institutions do not have many capitals to invest in such events so it is not easy for an individual institution to offer such services. The Indian government needs to liberalize conventional regulations and restrictions and encourage public private partnership for creating MOOCs in this country.

- Diversified Needs: India is a widely diversified country having multicultural societies and different languages spoken. For acceptance of MOOC among the huge domain of audience, they need to agree upon a common language of speaking. The courses should also be offered in some regional languages, which may be a loss of uniformity and quality. Therefore, language is one of the barriers for learners from Indian origin that need to be addressed by the MOOC providers in a more realistic way. Moreover, the challenge is to deliver the lecture, designing of the course material, and the platform itself, in a way that can be understood by all.

- Low completion rates: MOOCs have lower completion rates compared to traditional forms of higher education, indicating that learners may lack the motivation or support to complete the course.

## ADOPTION OF MOOC AMONG LEARNERS

Generally in MOOC courses the communication between a teacher and learner and among learner as well is in written form. It results in the lack of oral communication skills among the learners and to improve this they need to undergo a traditional program. Also, watching the course videos of other content on a computer screen can make the learner feel isolated. Due to this, motivation of learners falls resulting in dropping out from the course. Therefore, the challenge faced by MOOC could be adoption of technology by learners.

## QUALITY

To create and deliver quality content in MOOC, quality of teachers and technical staff is required. India has huge vacancies of teachers not filled, compounded by infrastructure deficit as the absence of laboratories. Also, it may be possible that teachers are not technically sound to create course content using

the tools. adoption policies of their country or organization India should also need to leverage these initiatives as a readily available, economically viable source of quality content or adoption. Thus, improvement is needed to meet the present demand and address the challenges that India is facing in offering MOOCs.

## CONCLUSION

India is a developing country, and the Indian education system is still developing in the field of technical infrastructure, resources, and quality of education. Adopting change in the education system is very much important for the growth of the nation. MOOC connects learners not only locally or regionally but globally as well. So for this, it is very important to develop awareness in the learners to enroll in the various MOOC courses. MHRD has made available many online platforms such as NPTEL, mooKIT, IITBX, and SWAYAM for learners. The need is to develop awareness & interest in the learners. Many universities are accepting MOOC certification courses. Also, making available resources for it. In spite of many challenges for the MOOC implementation in Assam, such as technological infrastructure, awareness among learners, quality of education, diversified population, there are many scopes for MOOC future development. Prospects like conceptual and basic learning, student-centric modules, personalized learning approach, etc., cannot be ignored. Overall, the integration of MOOCs in higher education can offer significant benefits in line with the objectives of the NEP 2020. However, there are also challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that MOOCs realize their full potential in transforming higher education.

In the future studies, researchers should focus more on MOOCs' educational value and switch their research from the individual course to the comparison among different learning situations, from the after-event analysis to more effective teaching design. On the other hand, studies on MOOCs' application and practical patterns are not sufficient. MOOC can provide the Indian students an edge required to compete in the global market. It may be regarded as contributing to the democratization of Higher Education, not only locally or regionally but globally as well. MOOCs can help to democratize content and make knowledge reachable for everyone. To combat the challenges of reducing

drop-out in higher education in Assam, MOOCs may be introduced as an alternative platform. Therefore, all stakeholders of higher education should be very much adaptive and cooperative to make the MOOCs friendly for all.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the shift of teaching, learning methods towards the online method, creating space for more flexible learning possibilities, exploring blended learning. The pandemic has led to the capacity building of staff and faculty, compelling them to learn and test new tools and systems, like MOOCs, for online teaching and learning. This apparently will lead to an increase in innovation in teaching pedagogies. The pandemic has worked as a wake-up call and demonstrated the importance of technology in teaching, learning, and research.

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