



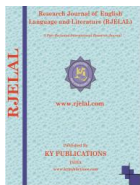
ENGLISH CURRICULUM AND ONLINE COURSES A STUDY ON LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract

Educational technology has enhanced the pleasure and pace of learning and teaching the students from rural and urban spaces. This helps them to expand the frontiers of their learning environment to the world through online education. This digital distance learning education are fervently sought by the autonomous learners who could receive the customized learning of their personal choices. SWAYAM courses introduced by MHRD, Government of India hold promises of up-scaling and expanding the educational scenario and hence it is imperative to check the dynamics of this platform. The study analyses the effectiveness of English curriculum and online courses in the SWAYAM platform through learners' perceptions

Keywords: Educational technology, learning environment, online education, autonomous learners, SWAYAM.

Abbreviations:

- SWAYAM: Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds.
- MHRD: Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- NPTEL: National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning.
- SPOC: Single Point of Contact.

INTRODUCTION

Technology has made a tremendous impact on the domain of education which is being used well by the z gen learners. The educational technology enhancement has shown exponential growth with computers and mobile devices in the distant mode. ICT for resource sharing and networking as well as adopting ICT enabled administrative processes has made higher educational institutions work with ease and with greater accountability. National assessment and accreditation council and MHRD have focused on the use of technology as the most significant factor in education. The distance educational domain has been reoriented,

redesigned and renewed to be creative, collaborative and communicative through the MOOC Courses.

India's digital distance education with proper structure started with the introduction of SWAYAM in MOOC platform under which there are 9 coordinators including UGC, AICTE and NPTEL. MOOC Courses are the popular modes of non conventional learning desired by the tech savvy younger generation. These asynchronous learning programmes are used as individual learning tool and also synchronously as a form of blended learning. These courses are created with the aim of helping the students and teachers for Academic

development, Professional development, Employability, Competence and capacity building.

SWAYAM, the condensed form of Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds is a programme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India that provides free online courses for students. Earlier the government started virtual university nomenclature as Ekalavya in 1999 and ran it with only video lectures for deep impact on the learners. Their primary effort on introducing ideal online education was well set but was not well realized. SWAYAM the online platform was started in the year 2013 connecting Indian universities of excellence and released 1659 structured programmes till now. The team SWAYAM worked with amazing pace and vision, inclusive of continuous evaluation and now the developments are at a steady pace now.

SWAYAM takes into its hold the courses conducted by 9 institutions and are delivered in four quadrants as course material, audio and video lectures, and evaluation through tests and quizzes and discussion threads .It could be run at the student’s convenient time and irrespective of their

geographic isolations bringing in learner community together. The agenda is to make the students adopt their self-styles of learning than the thrust one. The rerun courses also help in reinforcement of their learning. The popularity and benefit could be understood through the massive strength of 13.6 Lakh learners in this portal so far. India ranked second in the world in the number of online courses and its users. Nearly 13.6 lakh people are online learners though we find a pathetic score of completion percentage. Educational technology is scaling up education and facilitating connectedness with the world learning community.

Online education should not be understood as information but pedagogy. As MOOC primer advocates, it is an enabler of almost every aspect of life in the 21st century on our campuses, in our workplace and in our homes. But what is important for higher education is the transformation of teaching and learning. The techies are indeed backstage, making things happen but the stars on the stage are faculty and instructors. This revolution is not about IT. It is about teaching and learning. (1)

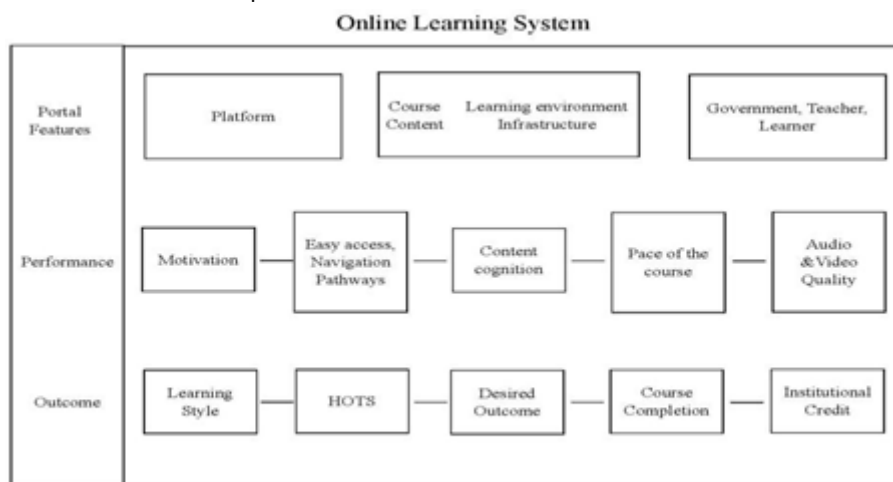


Illustration of the Structure & Stakeholders Engagement

NEED FOR STUDY:

The assessment of SWAYAM courses also registered difficulties in the completion of the programme. This study would focus on the detailed Assessment of MOOC courses related to the English curriculum of language and literature between July to December 2019 in SWAYAM platform and its effectiveness to the learners with the survey

conducted based on student’s perceptions. The students who have enrolled in courses related to English curriculum in the SWAYAM portal were taken up for the survey. Oral Interaction and questionnaires related to the student’s assumptions about online courses, their experience of digital learning on the SWAYAM portal, their ease with site functionality, e-content and other logistics were

used as primary data to make this pilot study. This pilot study enables the researcher to gain adequate knowledge about the dynamics of SWAYAM courses for the intended ICSSR project. This study facilitates understanding of the teachers, policy makers, content creators and site developers about SWAYAM courses in order to make the digital education more successful.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the reasons behind the motivation for continuing SWAYAM.
- To know about the content effectiveness
- To find the reasons for non-completion of SWAYAM courses.
- To provide suggestions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study consists of 30 respondents but valid feedback received from 25 respondents was taken up for analysis which is randomly selected and the entire respondents were freshers to SWAYAM. The questionnaires were categorized into three divisions as feedback regarding course content, motivating factors for SWAYAM and as observed the reasons for non-completion of SWAYAM.

ANALYSIS

Motivation for joining/Continuing SWAYAM	YES %	NO%
Teacher's Insistence	64%	36%
Online activity is exciting	64%	36%
To Improve Knowledge	100%	0
Diverse topics attraction	92%	8%
Peer challenge	12%	88%
To experience the difference from F2F learning	80%	20%
Get certificate	100%	0
Credit transfer	0	100%
Employment	16%	84%
No intervention from the teacher	100%	0
Can repeat the class by rewinding videos	100%	0

From the above data 100% motivating factors are identified for joining SWAYAM. The students join courses to improve knowledge, to get certificate, and were feeling autonomous that there was no intervention from the teacher and also can repeat

For this analysis likert scale has been used and the feedback is ranked by degree of 1 to 5. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. According to scale, mean is calculated to see the variables effectiveness. The statistical expression was made simple for more clarity about the study. Oral discussions were also administered for open discussions and suggestions.

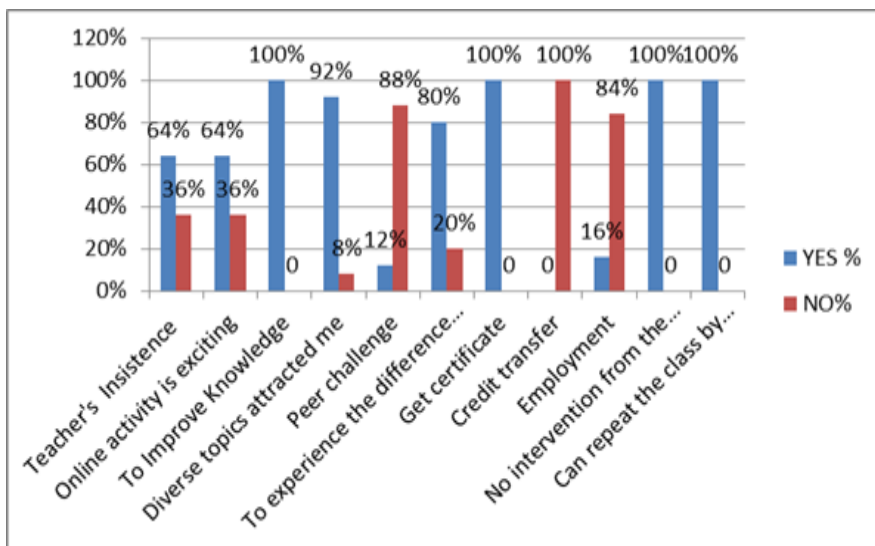
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Van Merriënboer and Kirschner (2001) distinguished between a world of knowledge and a world of learning and they suggest that designers focus on methods enhancing deep level learning, intrinsic motivation, and collaborative argumentation” (p. 430). Wanstreet (2006) found that online interaction both between learners and between learner and instructor addresses learning-style preferences of students. According to Rena Palloff and Keith Pratt the instructor supports the process of learning through the use of collaborative assignments, facilitation of active discussion, and promotion of the development of critical thinking and research skills. (1)

the class by rewinding videos. The Average above 60% to 90% motivating factors are teachers’ Insistence, online activity is exciting, diverse topics attraction and to experience the difference from F2F learning. Least motivating factors are employment,

credit transfer and peer challenge. Least motivating factors are the areas where SWAYAM need to concentrate.

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION:



(Source: primary data)

COURSE CONTENT:

Course Content	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Easy access and navigation pathways clear	0	24	1	0	0	3.96
Content is educative	5	17	3	0	0	4.08
Course materials for study is provided in detail	12	2	3	3	5	3.52
Assignments are easier	14	6	1	2	2	4.12
Participation in Discussion threads	0	4	2	15	4	2.24
Self-assessment is possible	22	2	1	0	0	4.84
Audio and video content is helpful	18	6	1	0	0	4.68
Self-reflection of progress	18	4	1	1	1	4.48
Course progress provides motivation	2	14	1	8	0	3.4
Monotony in delivery	5	2	0	16	2	2.68
F2F is relaxing	0	18	2	5	0	3.52
Creates own learning styles	23	2	0	0	0	4.92

(Source: Primary Source)

From the above table it is shown that factors which are not supporting the quality of the content of the course is monotony in delivery because 2.68 is close to disagree so the study can say that most of the

respondents disagreed by monotony teaching which is not encouraging them to continue. 2.24 is also close to disagreed and strongly disagreed so the study can say the most of the respondent disagreed

and strongly disagreed in the participation in discussion threads. This shows most of them never participated in discussion threads.

The factors like easy access and navigation pathways clear, course materials for study provided in detail, course progress provides motivation and F2F is relaxing registered 3.96, 3.4 and 3.52 respectively and is close to neutral and agree so the study can say the most of the respondents agree with the given factors.

REASONS FOR NON-COMPLETION

Reasons For Non- Completion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Lack of time	5	11	0	5	3	3.68
Lack of discipline	8	14		2	0	4.04
Fast pace of the course	0	23	0	2	0	4
In campus work	5	15	0	5	0	3.8
F2F environment clears doubts instantly	12	10	0	2	1	4.2
Late enrolment but not allowed to take exam	0	15	0	8	2	3.44
Annoyed by time Rigidity	10	10	0	2	3	3.84
Heavy content	11	14	0	0	0	4.44
Retention was not up to that level	2	12	2	6	3	3.16
Short term courses are convenient	10	7	3	2	3	3.76
Grading metrics is not encouraging	4	14	0	5	2	4.52

(Source: Primary Data)

From the above table, major reason for non-completion is lack of discipline, fast pace of the course, F2F environment clears doubts instantly, heavy content and also Grading metrics is not encouraging by looking at the mean 4.0, 4, 4.2, 4.44 and 4.52 respectively which are close to strongly agree and agree. This exactly shows the reasons for non-completion.

All other factors such as lack of time, in campus work, late enrolment but not allowed to take exam, annoyed by time rigidity, retention was not up to that level and short term courses are convenient are 3.68, 3.8, 3.44, 3.84, 3.16, and 3.76 respectively and are close to neutral and agree so the respondents are neutral and agree about the given factors.

As there is very minimum response with strongly disagree or disagree, it is concluded that all these factors contribute to the non completion of the course.

The content is educative, assignments are easier, self-assessment is possible, audio and video content is helpful, there is self-reflection of progress and creates own learning styles 4.08, 4.12, 4.84, 4.68, 4.48, 4.92 respectively are close to agree and strongly agree so that most of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the following factors. This attracts the SWAYAM course content agreed by the respondents to be good in many ways.

SWAYAM recorded lot of dropouts and hence only a few completed the course. The analysis of the reasons is that grading metrics was not encouraging. It also exhibited lack of time and discipline as the major discouraging factors. The fast pace of the course also added to stress and gradual withdrawal. As students felt that there are other activities like their own college assignments and entertainment, they felt the difficulty. Further as these are not promotion based and many universities have also not added this for credits yet, the drive is less. Students were disappointed that they cannot exchange their difficulties instantly or cannot get their redressal immediately.

FINDINGS:

- Most of the respondents are motivated to join SWAYAM.
- Most of the respondents are comfortable with the course content.

- Most of the respondents feel grading metrics is not encouraging in completion of the course and credit transfer was not accepted by many universities.

SUGGESTIONS

The open oral discussion with the students also shared some suggestions. The English curriculum focuses on the three major objectives: to understand humanity, the psychology of the characters in literature and to envision the future of humanity. The program is always characterized by multidisciplinary approach, a background of arts, diverse cultures and history of nations, and personal and societal values and its perspectives. So the study of English language and literature involves creativity and critical discussions which requires encyclopedic knowledge about different domains. Students expressed apprehension that such expectations are not satisfied by online forums now. They observed that it is possible through discussion forum in the online portals.

Unfortunately, they could not feel that liveliness of F2F in the dynamics of the online classroom as the discussion threads in SWAYAM are not very active. Also, they shared that online platforms like Coursera, Future Learn are rich with diverse interpretations and related links provided by the participants too. These sharing demands a lot of time to create and read, yet very worthy of learning and brings in a greater sense of achievement. Programmes on English language and literature must adopt a different pedagogy which must be of concern in the stage of conceptual framework.

CONCLUSION

SWAYAM courses have a greater pedagogical orientation but it must also be inclusive of the diverse levels of competency of the students. But one observes that the SWAYAM programs on English curriculum come up with a lot of information and customized for the fruitful learning. We could

witness in the up gradation of SWAYAM website, that excellent up-scaling has been made by SWAYAM. Also, the team SWAYAM conducts a series of focused workshops with the NPTEL SPOCS and mentors to understand the credits and pitfalls of the system. With such laudable efforts, online education will be forged to include several other dimensions which would make MHRD vision meaningful. As SWAYAM courses are evolving with greater quality consistently, no doubt it will emerge as a rich learning platform for the younger generation.

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