Critical Reflections on MOOCs in India and China

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MOOCs in the Developing World
State of MOOCs in India
State of MOOCs in China
Reflections on MOOCs in India and China
Nothing has more potential to lift more people out of poverty — by providing them an affordable education to get a job or improve in the job they have. Nothing has more potential to unlock a billion more brains to solve the world’s biggest problems. And nothing has more potential to enable us to reimagine higher education than the massive open online course, or MOOC, platforms that are being developed by the likes of Stanford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and companies like Coursera and Udacity.

Thomas Friedman, January 2013

Source: The New York Times
The MOOCs for Development Narrative

- Coursera MOOCs can benefit learners in the developing world who currently lack access to higher education (Koller 2012)
- MOOCs can give underprivileged learners in the developing world access to ‘top courses from top professors’ (Agarwal 2013)
- Anecdotal accounts of learners in the developing world taking MOOCs and finding employment, or gaining admission into universities.

Source: David Kernohan
The Reality

- Most MOOC participants, highly educated, Western (Christensen et al. 2013)
- Single digit completion rates (Jordan 2014)
- Move away from ‘open’

- Research and voice of non-Western MOOC users currently lacking
- According to Veletsianos and Sheperdson (2016), only 8% of empirical MOOC research came out of Asia – 5.4% from China, and less than 1% from India
MOOCs in India

- Significant enrolments from Indians on the three major US MOOC platforms (Coursera, edX, Udacity)
- Between 10-15% of all total enrolments (Bhattacharyya 2013)
- Largest cohort of learners outside of the US
NPTEL

- National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning – Started as an OER repository along the lines of MIT-OCW
- 922 Courses, mostly in Engineering and Technology – All under Open License
- NPTEL MOOCs - 225 Courses
- Using Google Coursebuilder platform
Envisioned in 2014, launched in 2016
All Public universities across India can deliver courses
Uses indigenous LMS
High School – Post Grad Level Courses
Test-Prep
Reflections on MOOCs in India and China

Supply and Demand: Lack of physical infrastructure to deal with demand

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics
Reflections on MOOCs in India and China

- Improving Quality within existing University system
  - MOOCs positioned as outside disruption to formal higher education – particularly as a response to the rising cost of education.
  - In India and China, MOOCs are positioned as an internal development in order to improve the quality of education for the large number of students who are not in the few elite institutions.
  - The use of Blended MOOCs in both India and China, as well as supplementing learning at second and third tier colleges.
Reflections on MOOCs in India and China

- **Credentialing**
  - While Coursera, edX, Udacity have attempted creating formal credentials with their ‘nano-degrees’ – recognized credentialing is still a major issue concerning MOOCs in the West.
  - XuetangX partner universities can recognize MOOCs for formal credit. So far over 24,000 students have taken formal credit courses from XuetangX.
  - Indian Government has passed a resolution that up to 20% of all credit towards a degree can come from its MOOC platform SWAYAM.
Reflections on MOOCs in India and China

- MOOCs as neo-colonialism
  - Within the broader OER movement, there have been arguments that the notion of delivering content from “high quality” Western universities to the passive Global South suggests a form of neo-colonialism (Glennie, Harley, Butcher & Wyk 2012)
  - Early notions of MOOCs bringing about a democratization of learning assumes that knowledge is neutral (Altbach 2014)
  - MOOCs reinforce the academic traditions, methodological orientations and teaching philosophies of specific academic systems. This may be more pronounced in some disciplines than others.
  - ‘neo-colonialism of the willing’ (Altbach 2014)
Research has shown that MOOC learners that can self-regulate their learning are most successful. Further, a set of digital literacies, capabilities and behaviours are required to be successful in MOOCs.
Conclusions

- Despite stagnating interest in MOOCs in the West, particularly in the US, both Indian and Chinese Governments are optimistic about the potential of MOOCs to improve the quality of their higher education.

- The use of SPOCs and Blended MOOCs are gaining in popularity, particularly in China.

- However, MOOCs and other technology enhanced learning initiatives are yet to reach the lower stratum of society.

- There is a need for innovative, frugal and contextually beneficial courses for low socio-economic groups in both countries.
The Future Role of MOOCs in China

CECILIA (CHENXI) LI
2ND YEAR PHD AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY
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Thank You!

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