

# MOOCs with special reference to SWAYAM: A study based on recent development

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## *Abstract*

*Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are one of the most prominent trends in higher education in recent years. India has started various projects for offering MOOC courses. SWAYAM plays a major role among them. SWAYAM is a programme initiated by Government of India. This paper discusses the different features of SWAYAM platform. The study also differentiates the concept of Swayam and Swayam Prabha. It also presents the different regulations issued from UGC from time to time. It correlates the importance of SWAYAM courses with the CBCS system. Further, the study identifies the recent development like ARPIT, National Testing Agency. The study identifies certain challenges and opportunities of using SWAYAM in Indian platform.*

**Keywords:** MOOC, SWAYAM, SWAYAM-PRABHA, National Testing Agency, ARPIT.

## **Introduction:**

Higher education (HE) has been re-engineered with many new developments. Today, the growing use of Computer, mobile and internet users in India have brought the nation into a common platform of digital connectivity. Technology has the power to connect but at the same time it is we who will decide to whom we have to connect and how. One of the major features of digital technology is accessibility of 365 days access to it. Now when we talk about the HE system in terms of technology and learning then

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some of the common name we generally hear are INFLIBNET since 1990's. Presently in addition to INFLIBNET, we come across of e-learning, digital learning, DIGILOCKER, NPTEL, MOOCs and so. Now, all this terms signifies different meaning in different context. But one thing we can extract from all these developments in Indian scenario is that the present education system wants to re-engineer or supplement all its existing resources from education to certification.

Today, every nation is trying their best to enhance the education system, so that education should not be a barrier of four wall rooms. The online education has seen emergence of the concept of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). Nowadays, MOOC is the most popular way used to offer online courses, globally. The term MOOC was coined in 2008 by Dave Cormier to describe the Connectivism and Connective Knowledge course. Present education sector of India has been boosted by the MOOCs courses and online education is the need of the hour. India is a multi lingual and multi cultural country with different geographical areas which cannot be over looked. Govt. of India is very fortunate to launch the SWAYAM- the online education system and it is the high time for the institutions and universities of India to use the SWAYAM platform. Therefore, based on all this things a study is required to know the different areas of development of SWAYAM. It is also required to understand the different challenges and opportunities behind different institutions in using the SWAYAM. And lastly the opportunities need to be identified to overcome the challenges.

**Research Questions:** Following are the research questions for the present study:

1. To understand and adopting MOOCs for a wider perspective towards education.
2. To study the challenges and opportunities towards MOOC.
3. To study the different recent developments in the field of SWAYAM.

**Research Methodology:**

The methodology adopted for the study is descriptive method. Data and facts are collected from the secondary source of information. Different facts have been collected from the literature on the MOOCs and SWAYAM in India as well as, articles published in various leading magazines and newspaper clippings.

**MOOCs in Indian perspective:**

E-pg Pathsala is a repository of e-content developed by INFLIBNET (UGC),

designed especially for post graduate courses and was launched in 2013 by Govt. of India. E-pg Pathshala was designed on the model of MOOCs but it was basically a repository of various e-sources. The emergence of SWAYAM in India can be treated as the first platform which truly shares all the features of a MOOCs.

### **SWAYAM:**

The soft launch of “SWAYAM MOOCs” Platform was held on 15th August, 2016 and after completion of first phase of the Project, the Platform has been declared “go live” w.e.f. 16th November, 2016. The courses under it supports the different subjects at different level school level to PG. The SWAYAM is developed by MHRD and AICTE with the help M/s. Microsoft Corporation India (Pvt.) Ltd. (MCIPL).

### **SWAYAM and SWAYAM PRABHA**

Many of us may hear the name SWAYAM. At the same time we may sometimes hear another word SWAYAM PRABHA. But these two names are although similar but are having different functions as far the MOOCs courses are concerned. One has to know and understand better both the term before taking the benefits of MOOCs platform. SWAYAM is the platform where students can register, enrolled for courses with proper certification. And the platform SWAYAM Prabha is another supplement to SWAYAM as it is a DTH Channels which telecast all the time the different contents of SWAYAM courses on daily basis. Certain channels are assigned for different subjects so that a learner can learn different topics related to his area by viewing the channels (INFLIBNET, 2018). The programme will be available through the DTH channels which telecast the contents of NPTEL, IITs, UGC, CEC, IGNOU, NCERT and NIOS.

### **SWAYAM and CBCS**

Understanding the importance of MOOCs courses in Indian context, Government of India through its Gazette Notification “The Gazette of India” has clearly notified for certain specific provision for SWAYAM through UGC regulation for Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through SWAYAM Regulation, 2016 dated 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2016 (UGC:2016). In CBCS system students can take courses of their own choices. The regulation also says that students can transfer the credits from any institutes within the domain of the country (India).

The notification further stressed that the SWAYAM courses will supplement the

institutions who lacks suitable teaching staff for a particular subject/course. It also reflects that students can opt for those elective subjects which are not available under the institutions.

### **UGC Regulation (Online courses and programmes) 2018.**

Higher education has got another shape with the new UGC regulation -Online courses and Programmes regulation-2018 which was published in the Gazette notification dated 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 (UGC: 2018). The regulation shall be applicable to those which are providing higher education/research by conducting regular classes or through online education system, resulting the Degree or Diploma or Certificate in various courses except few specific disciplines as define in the regulation.

### **Evaluation and Certifications in SWAYAM**

One of the unique features of the SWAYAM courses offered is that it not only provides the platform for e-learning but also it has the provision for certification. The important provision that has been reflected in the UGC regulation Credit Framework-2016.

After the completion of the evaluation, the scoring of the students has to be submitted to that institute from where the student has presently enrolled. Submitting the score of the students has a definite time period of four weeks duration. The institution after receiving the scoring of the students will finally award the students (diploma/degree, etc). The regulations also say that those courses where there are practical's/Lab assignments, the institute will declare the result of the courses only after evaluating the students in those areas.

### **Role of National Testing Agency in Evaluation and Assessment**

Government of India has already establish National Testing agency(NTA) to undertake different examinations be it entrance, regular degrees, refresher programmes, etc in online mode. For example today, National Eligibility Test (NET) is held through the platform of National Testing Agency in online mode. NTA will play a big role in evaluating and assessing the students/participants who are enrolled under the SWAYAM courses. Not only the formal education but also the continue education programme like ARPIT has already initiated the process of taking the online examinations of the participants through the NTA platform.

### **ARPIT and SWAYAM**

Today SWAYAM has not only covers the area of formal education but also it has too emerged as a platform for Continue education programme. For example the continue education programme for teachers of higher educational institutions ARPIT (Annual Refresher programme in Teaching) is being launched on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 through the SWAYAM platform. Even UGC has clearly notified that the courses completed under ARPIT will be equivalent to one Refresher course for the career Advancement Schemes (CAS) of the teachers and other academic staff of the higher educational institutions (UGC, 2018).

### **Challenges of Implementing SWAYAM**

Implementation of SWAYAM in the education sector in India is an important development in the field of MOOC's. There are certain challenges that need to overcome while proper implementing the SWAYAM.

- a. Infrastructural problem.
- b. High speed Internet Bandwidth is low
- c. Proper digital literacy and awareness programme.
- d. Courses in regional languages
- e. Content creation for MOOC's courses at every discipline.

### **Opportunities available for implementing SWAYAM**

SWAYAM is already been recognized by the Government of India as a basic supplement to the existing educational courses. UGC has already instructed the different universities of India regarding the credit transfer of the students who are pursuing courses under it. Some of the opportunities that are available in Indian context for the implementation of SWAYAM are

- a. Its recognition by the Government of India
- b. Proper guideline by the UGC.
- c. Flexibility in the credit transfer.
- d. Availability of different subject experts for digital content creation.
- e. Establishment of National Testing agency for online Examinations.
- f. Availability of wide variety of Multimedia contents.
- g. Concept of One India, One Nation in providing uniform education.

- h. Growing Internet and Mobile users.
- i. Affordable cost of Internet charges by the Internet Service providers (ISP).
- j. Availability of Library and Information Science professionals for information marketing regarding SWAYAM.
- k. Flagship programme of Govt. of India: Digital India programme for boosting National digital environment.

### **Results and Discussions:**

Following are some of the results of the study:

1. MOOC's in Indian context has been properly channelized with the SWAYAM courses.
2. SWAYAM Prabha telecast the educational course material of different bodies through the DTH channels.
3. SWAYAM has not only covers the formal education but also it has too penetrated into the Continue education programmes.
4. UGC has made certain new developments for proper implementation of SWAYAM courses through its different regulations.
5. For proper evaluation, National Examination Agencies i.e. National Testing Agencies has been established which will too benefit the different institutes to run and evaluate the programmes.
6. There are certain challenges and opportunities for proper implementing the Swayam courses.

The introduction of SWAYAM as MOOCs courses has brought a great revolution in the educational scenario of India. The SWAYAM is implemented after having a great mission, vision, aims and objectives. The different regulations which are notified from time to time by UGC further depicts that online education in Indian context is the need of the hour which cannot be deny. The challenges identified from the study can be easily overcome if we properly use the different opportunities which are identified in the study. Tracing the different development in the field of online education and examination, it is presumed that in future the SWAYAM will add many other new features which will further boost the entire educational scenario in Indian context.

**Suggestions:**

Following are the suggestions that are recommended after studying the different development in the field of MOOCs courses in India.

- a. All the education institutes who provide the online courses must adhere to the latest UGC regulation "Online courses and Programmes regulation-2018.
- b. Universities and Institutes should not only extract the content of the others but also it should equally contribute its contents towards the online education.
- c. In every higher educational institute there should be a Nodal Centre for online education. All the necessary facilities like Basic Information of SWAYAM and other online courses, digital infrastructure, Nodal officers, etc should be available. Institutes should also acquire the DTH box who telecast the SWAYAM-PRABHA Channels.
- d. Academic Libraries and the Library and Information Science professionals should be engaged as an Information hub.
- e. Awareness regarding the SWAYAM courses should be included in all the Institute websites, Institute's prospectus and bulletin.
- f. Institutes should start certain programme for proper Mobile Phone usage revolution. Students should be properly aware about the different academic benefit that can be achieved while using the smart phones.

**Conclusion:**

MOOCs in Indian platform has great future as per the study is concerned. There will be another milestone in the field of higher education if MOOCs courses are implemented properly with appropriate guidelines. Different educational institutions across the country should come together to work for a common goal for enhancing the online education. Today, Digital India is the power of nation which cannot be compromised at any sector. Although classroom education is the basis of the present education system but at the same time the world goes beyond the physical boundaries which demands for 24 X 7 hours education and MOOCs is the best opportunity.

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