

Role of MOOCs in the Cultural Exposure of Under Graduate Students

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Abstract

Massive Open Online Courses(MOOCs) have become a popular avenue for diverse learners to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Since 2011, MOOCs stand as an effective tool to foster student engagement and learning. The world is undergoing rapid changes in the knowledge landscape. With various technological advances, multidisciplinary abilities will be increasingly in greater demand. Yet, there are some social constraints that pull back the learners from their traditional method of learning.

In this study, the researcher put forth three research questions 1) Whether the online courses are important amidst in the unequal distribution of power and wealth in the society?. 2) How does the flexibility of online courses cater to the diverse cultural perspective rather than pre-determined content and 3) How do on-line courses act as a tool for self-development?The role of online courses as a tool for self-development. Here, we also combines the experiences of UG students who do parallel on-line courses. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's concept of social construction make it possible to complete the study. Quantitative research approach and questionnaire survey research designs are used for this study. Thiruvananthapuram Corporation is the study area, and 54 Under Graduate students who are doing online parallel courses in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation are the study samples. Structured Google form will be distributed among students, and percentage analysis to be used for findings and conclusions.

My research findings indicate that irrespective of wealth and power, everyone can acquire knowledge through online courses. Various countries' online courses platforms are available, and these can access with our own convenience. So we can know their culture and compare it with our culture. Massive Open Online Courses are one of the major tools that make culture exposure possible.

Keywords: Online learning, cultural exposure, socio-culture, constructivism.

Introduction

Today, there are different platforms that offer multiple options to study a ton of different topics. Some of them are free, while others require subscriptions to access the entire range of courses. The boost online platforms have received over the last few years has resulted in a widespread learning spree. Online courses allow anyone sitting anywhere to learn a new set of skills or hone their existing skills. Learning new skills adds to our repertoire and enhances our abilities to do a task effectively. Employers will also value us more if we take the time to hone our skills and keep ourselves updated. Learning from home via online courses comes with its own set of benefits.

MOOCs – [Massive Open Online Courses](#) – are a [new model](#) for online courses that have quickly gained interest and support among universities in recent months. We still find ourselves at the experimental stage, but it's not too early to think about what kind of long-term impact MOOCs might have in higher education. Some see MOOCs [up-ending the whole model of higher education](#), allowing students to complete full courses of study in a non-traditional format, particularly with international students, which have made up a large part of the [student body in early MOOC courses](#). Most universities have offered online courses for many years and the basic technologies involved – video lectures, discussion forums, tests, and the like – are the same we have used with on-campus and distance students. The only difference is the scale.

By their very nature – large numbers of students, no direct faculty interaction with individual students, a “pre-programmed” course of study and assessments – MOOCs would appear to have what some have called 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 the efficiency of scale, giving access to the teaching of a world-class professor to thousands of students at once. The lectures, assessments and activities for a course – especially an online course – and the expertise of the professor behind the content isn't cheap and, in many cases, is unique to a particular university. 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 (Riddle,2012).

The Casual Course

The most obvious use for a free open course is promoting the university itself, giving the public an idea of the current state of inquiry and research in a particular field. A MOOC, when offered for free or a minimal cost, can act as a “teaser” to let prospective students and parents see the type of teaching that goes on at a university and to reach out to alumni that might want to hear new ideas from a favorite professor or a topic they are following closely. The format of the MOOC lets students experience lectures from the professor, go through computer-graded tests or peer assessed essays or other work, and engage in discussion forums with others interested in the topic.

With these types of courses to promote the university’s work, the subject matter and syllabus used in a campus course might not be appropriate. The intended audience is not necessarily interested in a credit or certificate for taking the course, and a MOOC is not bound by the length of a semester or term or university departmental goals that dictate the material to be covered and the learning goals for the students. (Randy,2012)

Benefits of taking online courses to learn new skills

Flexible schedule:

Going to an actual school or college means devoting considerable time, money, and resources towards commuting to college. You have to consider the cost of transportation, and the time it takes as well. With online courses, you have the luxury of a flexible schedule that allows you to study at your convenience. You can watch videos or browse the educational material wherever and whenever you want to study.

Keep up with changing trends:

It is important in many industries to keep up with the changing trends. Take marketing, for example. Changes in traditional ways of marketing have brought digital marketing to the forefront. Knowing how social media advertising works is an important part of any marketing professional. You can take online courses to learn the ins and outs of digital marketing and stay updated with this particular industry.

Vast choice of courses:

A traditional college has its limitations. And for those wanting to pursue courses at unusual times, be it during school or after college, a college isn’t the easiest option. Therefore, online platforms offer unlimited paths. But with online platforms also comes a wide array of

choices. You can study anything you want at any level. You can learn a new language or how to bake a cake, or even how to build a website from scratch.

Considerably lower cost:

Online courses are considerably cheaper. So you might be learning the same thing as in the actual physical course, but for a lower cost. Many online platforms are free, and the paid ones have a small annual fee that allows you to access every single course available on that platform. Although you are spending time studying, you are saving on the time spent going to an actual classroom and the costs associated with it.

Learn at our pace:

Being able to learn at your own pace is a joy in itself. Every person learns at a different pace and understands materials differently. Online courses are usually open year-round and allow the person to learn at his own pace. This means that you can go through a video ten times if you need to learn the material or skip them if you are familiar with the material.

Apart from the numerous advantages, one gets by studying via an online course, it is also important to note that these skill boosters can help you stand apart from your peers. In today's competitive world, it is incredibly important to stand apart from the crowd and make your mark. (<https://online.illinois.edu/articles/online-learning/item/2017/06/05/5>)

Without going outside, students can learn each and every subject through online classes, even sitting at home. *Online classes* save the time and money of travelling. Online classes offer the flexible schedule that permits students to study at their own convenience. Students can gain knowledge only by watching the videos of any subjects at any time.

Through online classes, each and every student can gain an education. When the students are not able to go outside due to some serious reasons, then they can easily study from the online classes. In such kind of cases, online classes help to eliminate the barriers and borders, and students can easily gain knowledge, even sitting at home. *Online classes* offer high-quality education to students at their own place. Online learning is a great solution for students to study effectively.

In every field, it is essential to keep up with changing trends. Whether it is the educational field or any other field, changes are required everywhere. In today's world, each and every person want digital life. Online classes can help students to learn things visually, and because

of this, they can easily remember the things that they have learnt. It means through online classes, students learn in more effective ways. Online classes are more beneficial than traditional education in some manner.

In traditional education, students have a limited syllabus, whereas, in *online education*, students have a vast choice of the syllabus. Through online classes, students can learn more things out of their syllabus, which becomes very useful for their future. Online platforms provide unlimited paths, and online education has a wide range of choices. Students can study anything that they want to study at any level. From learning a new language to build a website, students can learn each and everything from online classes.

Online classes permit students to learn anything or whatever they want. When students have their own choice, they can learn more efficiently. Through online classes, students can learn the subject in which they are interested. In online classes, students have numerous choices so that they can choose anything of their choice.

Through *online classes*, students can learn at their own swiftness, and being able to learn your own swiftness is a delight in itself. Each and every student learns at a different swiftness and understands things differently. Online classes are generally open year-round and permit the students to learn at their own swiftness. This means that students can go through a video 5 to 10 times if they require to learn the concept, or they can skip if they are familiar with the concept.

Online learning also improves the technical skills of students. The most of the online courses need the development of new computer skills because of this; students can learn to handle different learning management systems and programs. Some of the online platforms are describing below.

Coursera:

Coursera was founded by Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng with a vision of providing life-transforming learning experiences to anyone, anywhere. It is now a leading online learning platform for higher education, where 70 million learners from around the world come to learn skills of the future. More than 200 of the world's top universities and industry educators partner with Coursera to offer courses, Specializations, projects, certificates, and degree programs. Thousands of companies trust our enterprise platform Coursera for Business to

transform their talent. Coursera for Government equips government employees and citizens with in-demand skills to build a competitive workforce. Coursera for Campus empowers any university to offer high-quality, job-relevant online education to students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

SWAYAM Courses:

SWAYAM is India's national MOOC platform. It offers over 2,150 courses taught by close to 1,300 instructors from over 135 Indian universities. One aspect that sets it apart from other providers is that it allows students in India to earn academic credit online. Since the platform was launched in 2017, over 10 million learners have taken courses on SWAYAM. At the rate it's growing, in a few years, SWAYAM could become the world's largest MOOC provider.

Lynda/ LinkedIn Learning:

Lynda has one of the largest catalogs of online video courses, which is well over 13,000. Secondly, their courses are taught by vetted industry professionals, so students know they are getting relevant and reliable information.

Udemy (Great for Marketing/ Design):

- Price: Free
- Courses available: 823
- Certification: Free certificates included for 823 courses

provides courses for a fee, [Udemy](#) also has a great range of free video courses to choose from, 823 to be exact.

Google Digital Garage (Best for Digital Marketing):

- Price: Free
- Courses available: 100+
- Certification: Free certificates included for some courses
- Google also has a full-fledged course platform for online learning.

Openlearning (University Quality Learning):

- Price: Free + Paid

- Courses available: 1,300+
- Certification: Free certificates included in some courses.

Equality

The presence of unequal opportunities and incentives for varied social statuses in a community or a state sums up my definition, which is open to debate, of inequality. These include the unequal distribution of resources and the distribution that is based on already established patterns that have been socially defined. In this context, there are categories of people in a given society and resources are distributed based on the category into which the people fall.

Because of the inequalities in the society, the people at the upper classes would be always ahead of those in the lower-class. Those at the lower-class will therefore find it hard to abridge the wide gap between the classes. Some have said that education is the only way up the social ladder. A few however, refute the claim that no one needs to be educated to avoid poverty. That is, education is no guaranteed solution for the inequalities

They say we cannot run to education as the only solution to poverty. Going to institutions of higher learning to find a way out of poverty or social problems should be out of anyone's mind (Marsh, p12). However, such mentality is not in its entirety justifiable as the power of education cannot be underestimated. Education may not be the only way out, but at least it has a bearing on the overall call for equality. Having said this, my paper finds out, and its main purpose is to provide a justification that education may be in one way or another, a way out of inequality and poverty, as would be argued in the rest part of this paper.

Forms of Inequality:

There are various categories of inequalities in the current society. Jobs are not available to everyone in the society. Not everyone that is employed is paid well or, rather, has a better pay. The system of taxation in itself promotes inequalities as taxation is not based on what anyone has but is the same for everyone, be it the rich or the poor (Aaron, Henry J. and Munnell, Alicia H., 1992, 120-125). The upper and lower classes are taxed equally, resulting in a much wider gap between the rich and the poor (Allingham, M., 1975; p365-367)

Those in poverty are thus to remain in poverty unless something is done to solve this increasing current day social injustice. In most states different classes of people are positioned differently to gain access to social resources such as the labor market, among other sources of income. Even education is strategized so as to be accessed differently by the different classes of society. Healthcare is also accessible to different classes differently.

In the health departments, for instance, the escalating death rates are directly linked to the significant difference in incomes for different social classes.

Political democracy and Social Inequality:

The main question here would be if the argument that political democracy has had any impact on social inequality is valid. What role has political democracy played in the battle for social equality? A recurring theme in comparative social analyzes has been that the growth of political democracy, with its emphasis on political equality, has resulted in more widespread social material balance (Bertram, Christopher, 1993, p 215).

This has a definite inclination to equality as some of the like-minded people in a given society would come together and have their pleas represented. "...in democracies, the right of organized political opposition is protected by law and custom. And such countries permit disadvantaged elements in the population to organize and engage in collective action on their own (Frank, Jill, 1998; p 791). With these, a neutral ground the same way their counterparts are given.

In the same way, there are a number of channels through which the less favored groups can use to redistribute resources more equitably. Thus such a provision gives each of the members of the society a chance to lead an equal life, thereby excluding any elements of inequity.

Some Measure of Equality is Necessary and Desirable:

As aforesaid, there is no doubt that some measure of equality is necessary and actually desirable. Coming up with a way to reduce and eradicate present-day inequalities would be necessary. Education, healthcare, satisfying jobs and political participation should be structured such that everyone can equally have access without prejudice. As one may see current inequality issues as just a passing cloud, we should brace ourselves for divisions based on economic inequalities (Neckerman, 2004).

Setting education aside in the inequality battle would be like trying to construct a ladder without rungs. Social mobility depends on steps that can only be likened to the rungs of a ladder that necessitate the upward movement of individuals in a society (Brown, 2010). Attaining a world-class education system has been said to be the key to reducing social inequality.

Most people believe, and I also think that education is the foundation for a satisfactory life. Education is the basis for a fulfilling life. For a society to be filled with enlightenment, it has to embrace education as it is the only guarantee for a strong economy and a safe nation (NCCE, 1983). This brings me to the crucial part, which is the importance of education. Education moulds boys into men and girls into responsible and hardworking women. The importance of such an educated and informed society would help nurture a nation that is working as one for the economic development of the entire society. Skilled workforce would be molded through education. Also of vital importance is the contribution of education towards the development of best economic policies (Brown, 2007).

The core purpose of going to school is to promote human flourishing (Brighouse, 2006, 42). The role education plays in children is one that helps them become self-governing individuals (Brighouse, 2006, 131). Through education, children who comprise majority of the world population would appreciate the importance of a world free from inequalities. Providing education to everyone would ensure that everyone utilizes the most important foundation stone to becoming who they want to be in life. Everyone would have a neutral starting ground to launch their future ambitions (Brown, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Many sociocultural theories focus on how identities are established through interaction in social groups and cultures. Sociocultural scholars thus focus on how identity is negotiated from one situation to another. Culture is also seen as a significant part of what gets made in social interaction. (John ,2008)

Social constructivism is a [sociological theory of knowledge](#) by Lev Vygotsky (1978, p. 57), who suggested that knowledge is co-constructed and that individuals learn from one another and according to which human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann developed a concept-the social construction of reality which discussed on how human knowledge is constructed through interaction.

As we know the world is fast becoming a global village, with many countries enjoying a multicultural environment. Understanding different cultures is not only critical, but it also promotes ample coexistence. As we learn about diverse cultures, it is worth noting that all of us are individuals. Rather than generalizing, we should treat each other as individuals. This will go a long way in creating a better environment where we can all thrive. (<https://leselfes.com/understanding-different-cultures>)

Now many countries offer online courses with different duration. If we go through these courses, we can understand that each course's content is partially related to that country's culture. For example, if we joined in a course provided by USA , learners can identify American culture as well as share our thoughts with Americans and other learners from various countries. As per the theory of Social constructivism , the researcher believes that MOOCs are the blessed opportunity to co- construct the learners' knowledge, and each learner, who is residing in any part of the world can develop their confidence by knowing others. MOOCs facilitate the learners to join in different courses offered by different parts of the world and there by creating a better environment.

Methodology

Quantitative research approach and statement based questionnaire survey research designs are used by researcher in this study.

Quantitative research is a systematic investigation of phenomena by gathering quantifiable data and performing statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. Quantitative research collects information from existing and potential customers using sampling methods and sending out online surveys, online polls, questionnaires, etc., the results of which can be depicted in the form of numerical. After careful understanding of these numbers to predict the future of a product or service and make changes accordingly(Wimmer , Dominick,2000).

The design of a questionnaire must always reflect the basic purpose of the research. Surveys can consist of two basic types of questions: open –ended and closed –ended . An open –ended question requires respondents to generate their own answers but in the case of closed-ended questions, respondents select an answer from a list provided by the researcher. These questions are popular because they provide greater uniformity of response and because the answers are easily quantified.

Population and Samples

The researcher applied stratified sampling in this study. Stratified sampling ensures that a sample is drawn from a homogeneous subset of the population – that is, from a population with similar characteristics. Homogeneity helps the researcher to reduce sampling error.

In this study, the researcher has selected Thiruvananthapuram Corporation as the population. The reasons for selecting this as a population are (1) availability of educational institutions (2) every govt colleges and aided colleges in this population have more than 2500 students and nearly more than 10 UG departments under Science, Arts and Commerce streams and (3) colleges in this area are maintaining high infrastructural facilities.

Selected samples are UG students who have done or doing parallel online courses with their regular UG course. For this study, the researcher depended on four regular colleges located in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation area.

These colleges are Mar Ivanios College (Autonomous), Mahatma Gandhi College, University College, and College for Women. The researcher has selected these colleges because they have high grades in NAAC accreditation and these colleges keep high rank in NIRF. Moreover, these colleges provide facilities for online learning. The students of these colleges are coming from different financial and spatial backgrounds. Students from the coastal area, from the underdeveloped tribal area, from the poor financial background are studying in these colleges. MOOCs are very much beneficial for these marginalized groups. The researcher strongly believes that to some extent, MOOCs help them to acquire a good job, and these courses make an opportunity to identify other countries and their cultures.

From the pilot study, the researcher has identified that students from these colleges are interested in doing online courses along with their regular UG courses. Aside from the demographic questions, the researcher has included 10 statements in the questionnaire for the survey. The researcher has set the questionnaire in google forms and sent it to 92 (23 students for each college) UG students- 46 boys and 46 girls. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the researcher was unable to contact students directly, and so an online survey is preferred. Unfortunately, only 54 students responded properly, and thus researcher had to do this study with 54 responses.

The Likert scaling method is used in this survey, and thus five levels of analysis were possible. Due to the lockdown difficulties, the researcher depended percentage analysis only for analysing the available data.

Analysis and Interpretations

RQ1:

Whether the online courses are important amidst in the unequal distribution of power and wealth in the society?

Education for social equality:

Every country strives daily to ensure that the national cake is equally divided among its citizen... Wealth is a resource used to exercise power and shape the social setting for the benefit of the wealthy. Moreover, wealth provides financial security, boosts social status and strengthens the power of an individual or a nation. Therefore, stringent measures should be put in place, such increasing tax rates on high-income earners in order to curb the inequalities existing. Nevertheless, inequality may remain a challenge because the rich tend to manipulate the regulations to amass a lot of wealth while others are not aware of the inequalities existing.

Despite the effects of power on the poor citizens, the rich become comfortable when they exploit the low-income people in a nation. They use their status and abuse power by even acquiring other resources. The wealthy prefer competition among themselves as they devise ways of amassing wealth while the poor are denied access to the resources. As we know, education significantly influences a person's life chances in terms of labour market success, preparation for democratic citizenship, and general human flourishing; and that people's life chances should not be fixed by certain morally arbitrary circumstances of their birth, such as their social class, race, and gender. (<https://plato.stanford.edu>)

Barriers to education

Increasing access to education can improve the overall [health and longevity of a society](#), [grow economies](#), and even [combat climate change](#). Yet, in many developing countries, children's access to education can be limited by numerous factors. Language barriers, gender roles, and reliance on child labour can all stall progress to provide quality education. The world's most vulnerable children from disadvantaged communities, including young girls and children with disabilities, are more likely to miss out on school.

Career Advancements

Employers today can take their pick from a vast pool of candidates. In this environment, it is essential to stand out from the crowd. Your extra certifications and online courses can help

you present yourself as one of the best options to a potential employer. You are also showing them that you are skilled and serious about your future since you took the time to learn.

Online courses, if chosen correctly, can allow you to offer a lucrative skill set to potential employers. This lucrative skill set can also help you become an entrepreneur. For a marketing graduate who wants to start his or her business, it is important to learn the basics of finance and accounting. An online course can help mitigate this problem by giving them access to the best material

A computer science graduate has just learned a new coding language. He or she wants to update their resume, and therefore, online courses present the perfect opportunity.

An updated skill set can offer you many career advancement opportunities. When you are able to differentiate yourself from your peers through education and skills, it always creates a good impression on your employers. You are in a position where you can now be given more responsibilities because you took the initiative to update yourself with the knowledge required for that particular field.

Another perk that most people don't realize comes from learning new skills is the ability to negotiate a better salary or a better package. When you prove yourself to be better armed with knowledge as compared to your peers, you stand out. These special abilities and special knowledge give you a boost when it comes to performance reviews and salary negotiations. Employers and organizations appreciate people who know their worth, especially if they are willing to do the work to stand out in the crowd.

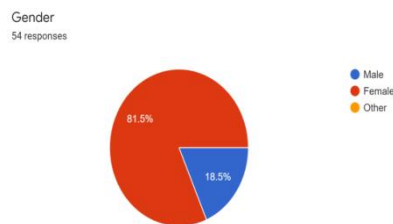
Online courses have manifold benefits. Whether it means turning your hobby into a profession or advancing in your profession due to better skills, these online courses offer something new for everyone. These courses take up less time and resources and are not limited to any age group or geographical location.

MOOCs would seem to have a logical role for professional development in the workplace, especially when teams in a workplace take a course together. The learning by the student and the benefit to the employer would come with engagement with colleagues in the workplace taking the same course and other online students involved in the same course experience. The goals of the MOOC are transformed from simple attainment of skills or knowledge to applying the insights and research of experts in your own workplace.

Again, an “off the shelf” course taught at a university might not be appropriate for a shorter MOOC experience aimed at working adults dealing with particular types of issues in their workplace. Designing a short-form course looking at a more focused area, free of departmental or programmatic goals, might be a refreshing break from the typical university teaching experience for most faculty and allow for more in-depth exploration than a conference presentation or short seminar. (Riddle Randy,2012)

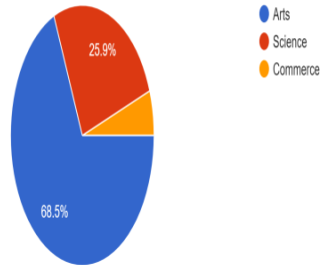
In this survey, all the participants are studying in regular UG courses. The participants are from 4 colleges which are located in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. Mar Ivanios College, Mahatma Gandhi College, University College and College for Women are the colleges selected for this study. 54 UG students; 44 girls and 10 boys those who have done or doing MOOCs were participated in this survey.

Gender	Male	Female	Other
	10	44	0



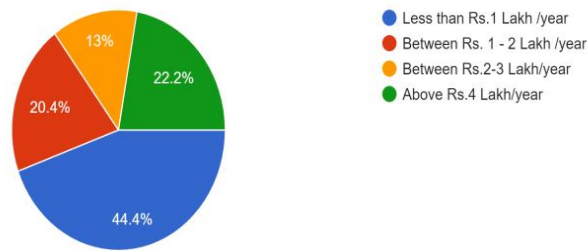
Programme	Arts	Science	Commerce
	37	14	3

Course
54 responses



Income	Less than 1 lakh/yr	Between 1-2 lakh/yr	Between 2-4 Lakh/yr	Greater than 4 lakh/ yr
	24	11	7	12

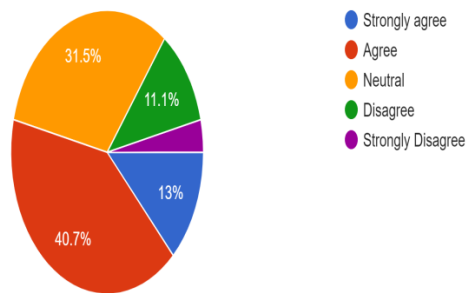
Your Family Income
54 responses



Online learning	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

mitigate financial inequalities	7	22	17	6	2
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Finance is one of the major factor in getting higher education. Online learning mitigates financial inequalities
54 responses



If we observe the students of those colleges, we can understand that they are coming from different financial and spatial backgrounds. They are choosing regular UG courses that is why they need not pay fee as tuition fee. From this survey we could identify that even though the participants are studying in the Corporation area, the family income of nearly 50% of the participants are lesser than Rs-One Lakh /year. If they wish to join or study another short-term course or skill-oriented course; finance will be the main villain of their dream. The appropriate time is also another limitation. Actually, MOOCs are blessings for such students. These free online courses make them to overcome their hurdles as financial problem and time issues. They can attain their parallel courses with regular UG study. As we know the financially sound students can acquire so many short-term courses parallel to their UG programme because money is not an issue for them. With the advent of MOOCs , financially poor students can fulfil their dreams like rich students. 29 students out of 54 have agreed and out of this seven students strongly agreed that online learning definitely mitigate the financial inequalities.

The main factors which create inequality in society are wealth and power. Education is the one and only solution for this social stigma. MOOCs some extent, help the people to attain equality, fraternity and peace.

RQ 2:

How do the flexibility of online courses cater to the diverse cultural perspective rather than pre-determined content...

Cultural diversity and its Importance

Culture is a broad term that encompasses beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and overall can be understood as our “way of being.” When you go out into the world, you will come into contact with people from different backgrounds and walks of life. It’s a good rule of thumb to honour cultural diversity with your actions. Cultural diversity is synonymous with multiculturalism.

The importance of cultural diversity can be interpreted on the basis of these related actions:

- Recognizing that there is a large amount of cultures that exist
- Respecting each other’s differences
- Acknowledging that all cultural expressions are valid
- Valuing what cultures have to bring to the table
- Empowering diverse groups to contribute
- Celebrating differences, not just tolerating them

Cultural diversity is important in every setting in life, but it can be even more pivotal when it happens within education. Students around the world have the right to [equal access of quality education](#), and as such, there are many upsides that come along with it when institutions believe in the power of diversity. Cultural diversity in education helps to support: Deep Learning, Confidence And Growth, Preparation For The Future and More Empathy. (<https://www.uopeople.edu/blog/>)

Cultures play an important role in the social behavior, communication, cognitive processes, and pedagogical technologies (Yang, Olesova, & Richardson, 2010) and correspondingly, cultural differences in online learning incorporate different worldviews. The increasing multicultural nature within the online learning has made it a necessity for instructors to be

aware of the role cultural factors play in students’ interaction and academic performance in online environments (Gómez-Ray, Barbera, & Fernández-Navarro, 2016).

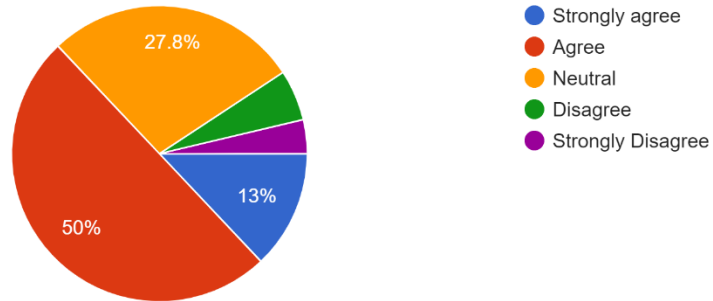
Mittelmeier, Héliot, Rienties, and Whitelock (2016) stated that sociocultural factors like cultural background and social network diversity influenced participation when students worked online with peers from other countries, and diverse academic content is an important component of a successful ‘internationalized’ curriculum. The previous studies on cultural diversity and dimensions in online education usually examined the phenomenon within a single online course or program. Few studies have conducted empirical studies from multiple online courses of different academic disciplines (Ke&Kwak, 2013). A study to explore minority graduate students’ perceptions on cultural diversity in online learning environments is warranted to identify how minority student’ ethnicity-related cultural backgrounds relate to their online learning processes and perceptions in an online environment (Ke&Kwak, 2013). We also investigated the instructional practices students perceive to promote cultural diversity in online environments.

In this survey the researcher used some questions to clarify this research question.

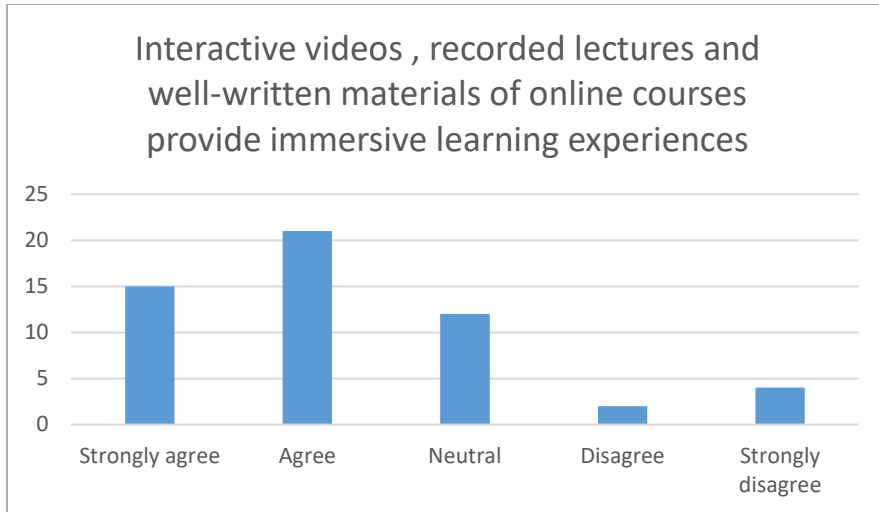
On-line courses narrow down the gap based on geographic restraints	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	7	27	15	3	2

On-line learning/ course is a potential solution to narrow down the gap based on geographic restraints

54 responses

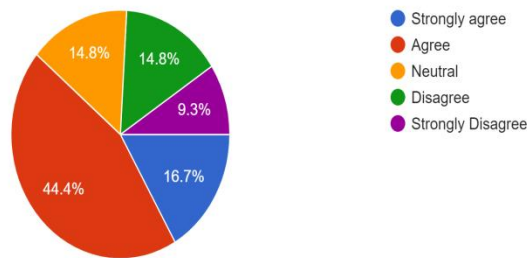


On-line courses provide immersive learning experiences	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	15	21	12	2	4



On-line courses does not require more energy and time as traditional classroom	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	9	24	8	8	5

Online learning does not require more energy and time as traditional class rooms
54 responses



The above three questions point out the importance of MOOCs. Definitely, the free online courses help students from poor financial background to develop their career opportunities. In the first question 34 students agreed that On-line courses is a potential solution to narrow down the gap based on geographic restraints. As we know if the students have ample facilities and time, definitely they will acquire knowledge. Without going outside, students can learn each and every subject through online classes, even sitting at home. *Online classes* save the time and money of travelling. Online classes offer the flexible schedule that permits students to study at their own convenience. Interactive videos, recorded lectures and well-written materials of online courses provide immersive learning experiences. 36 students agreed and 15 out of this strongly agreed that MOOCs provide wonderful learning experiences.

Through online classes, each and every student can gain an education. When the students are not able to go outside due to some serious reasons, then they can easily study from the online classes. In such kind of cases, online classes help to eliminate the barriers and borders, and students can easily gain knowledge, even sitting at home. *Online classes* offer high-quality education to students at their own place. MOOCs is a great solution for students to study effectively. 33 students agreed that on-line courses do not require more energy and time as traditional class rooms. Due to the advancement of technology and the low cost of internet and communication gadgets, every student, even students from poor families can afford and attain online courses. Governments and NGOs support students by providing free smart phones and laptops. Majority of the students who have participated in this survey selected Coursera platform for their on-line courses. Coursera is an on-line learning platform of USA and the content of these courses is based on American culture. When Keralites with different cultures than western culture, use this platform, they are fortunate to mingle with and experienced with American culture. This is one of the major advantages of on-line courses. MOOCs facilitate the students to familiarise the different culture

RQ 3:

How do On-line courses act as a tool for self- development?

Much more than a New Age fashion, personal development can become an extremely effective aid within the professional world. MOOCs offer practical cases to become aware of our inner resources and develop positive automatisms. By relying on real-life situations to

gain self-confidence, we will quickly become comfortable in speaking out or in managing our emotions when interacting with our interlocutors. Since the Internet has made communication possible at all distances, we have access to training delivered by the most prestigious universities and organizations in the areas of personal improvement, regardless of their geographical location. The MOOCs allow us to acquire advanced knowledge from teachers recognized for their respective skills. The exceptional quality of the courses taught is accompanied by a certification that greatly values our course. Finally, most of the courses are completely free. Self-development means acquiring the skills in inter personal communication, organizational communication, skills in problem solving, adaptability skill and integrity. .

Personal Development is about taking the time and making a commitment to investing in ourself so we can become the best version of ourself. When we put the right kind of effort in self-improvement, we will be surprised by the amazing positive results that we can get. (code spaces,2020). With the right skills and knowledge in place, we will become more confident, fulfilled, effective and empowered not just at work but in overall life. Learning design involves a wide set of instructional decisions, knowledge, skills, and competencies. Online teaching and learning design involves, in addition, wide opportunities to innovate.(Bartolettii,2016)

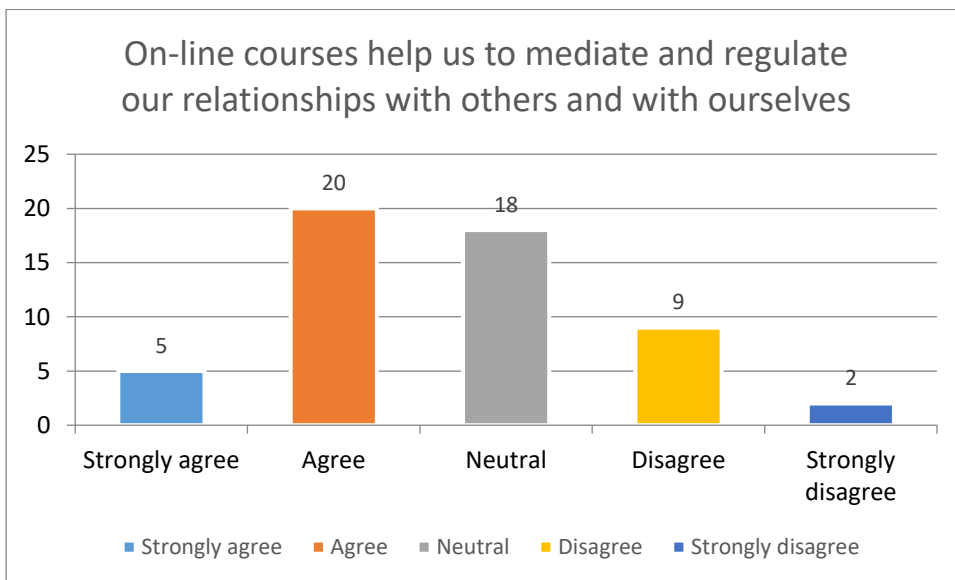
When we were young, we probably thought learning was something that happened only in school. Now that we're an adult, we may be looking for ways to improve not only our knowledge base but ourself as well. Enter personal development. Personal growth is what keeps us relevant. We spend all our lives learning about the world around us, and knowing how that relates to our personal well-being can help create resilience and strength. Self-improvement is always a good strategy, and with the internet, we have access to more personal and professional development than ever before.(www.edx.org/learn/personal-development)

Self-awareness is key to building the self-confidence to pursue your goals and dreams. It helps with nurturing interpersonal relationships and could be the key difference between people who are happy and those who aren't. Successful people have a range of tools that allow them to discover their strengths and weaknesses. It may also play a key role in mental health. The personal development process is lifelong, but sometimes, we need coaching along the way. Personal development courses help us to understand ourselves and our potential as

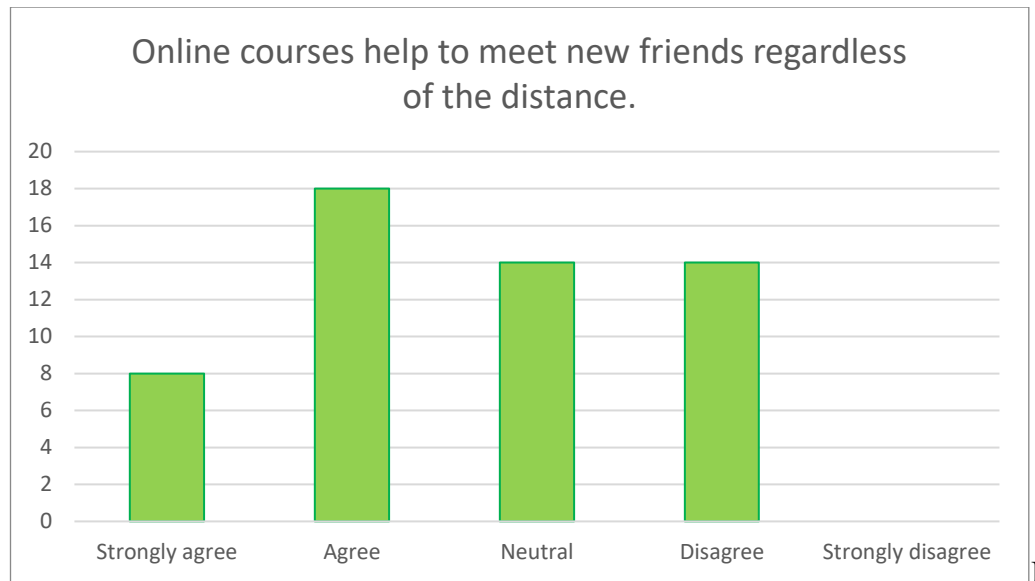
human beings. They may help us reach our full potential and get us out of our comfort zones.

(/www.edx.org/learn/personal-development)

Online courses mediate our relationships with others	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	5	20	18	9	2



Online courses help to meet new friends regardless of the distance	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	8	18	14	14	0



In this study researcher put a statement ‘ On-line courses help us to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves’. 25 students agreed this statement and 18 students keep neutral. But 11 students disagreed this statement. From this study, the researcher could find out MOOCs are one of major sources to develop ourselves and motivate others. In the second statement, ‘Online courses help to meet new friends regardless of the distance’, 26 students agreed that online courses help to gain friends from different region. Responds from 14 students that online courses do not offer an opportunity to set friendship and 14 students keep neutral. No gain, no loss.

The researcher has talked directly with Mar Ivanios online learners, got some information from them. All the Online Learning Management Systems provide an option of discussion box/comment box. Learners can put their comments, views, suggestions and queries in the discussion box. If the learners use it wisely, they can attain friends and experience the experiences of others. Nearly half of the participants from Mar Ivanios College haven’t used this opportunity. They just go through the content, do the assignment and so on. Both the above questions, a few students disagreed that ‘online courses help us to mediate and regulate our relationships with others’ and ‘online courses help to meet new friends regardless of the distance’, respectively.

As long as we are learning, we have the potential to improve our circumstances. No matter where we are in life, a personal development plan can put us on track to grow. Our job and

the important people in our life will appreciate the effort that goes into our self-development, and we may find ourselves happier and more content than ever.

Conclusion

Covid-19 Lockdown helped a lot of students to master in Massive Open Online Courses(MOOCs). In India and abroad, almost all universities and educational institutions offer online platform courses. These courses help the students in schools, colleges, and households to explore new areas of knowledge and skills. Regular college students and current students can take online courses in parallel with their regular courses. The platforms such as Coursera, SWAYAM, Udemy, Open learning etc, are helping youngsters to meet their emerging learning and job opportunities. From this study, the researcher found that MOOCs offer UG students an opportunity to explore new areas of interest which are not available in their regular curriculum. According to K.A Abdul Nazeer (NIT, Calicut, Kerala), “We are living in an era in which multidisciplinary learning and research are gaining momentum more than ever before. Quite a lot of milestone achievements have been made possible with the harmonious collaboration of researchers from different disciplines,” The researcher wishes to add the benefits of MOOCs that who could find from studies. Multidisciplinary knowledge and skills are a potential solution to narrow down the gap based on geographic restraints. Developing countries like India, money is one of the major hurdles to attain higher education. Researchers found that online courses alleviated economic inequality to a certain extent. MOOCs provide interactive videos, recorded lectures and well-written materials, which facilitate immersive learning experiences. We never forget the flexibility and convenience of MOOCs. It does not require more energy and time as traditional classrooms, and if we use the comment box in MOOCs wisely, definitely MOOCs will help us to mediate and regulate our relationships with others and with ourselves. Even though MOOCs have some disadvantages like; poor internet connection can't use MOOCs, Language can be a barrier, difficult to track of students' assignation and involvement etc., Researcher found one important thing- the multidisciplinary knowledge and skillset provided by MOOCs, help students to solve a real-world problem more efficiently and effectively. Celeste Hughey, an LA-based TV Writer who has a lot of experience being creative in a vacuum, is quick to point out that "creativity is a practice — if you want to be productive, be gentle with yourself and set small, achievable goals." Keeping this sage advice in mind, read these online courses you can take on your own terms and at your own pace, so you can scale up or down depending on your mental state.

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