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MOBILE – A GADGET FOR MOOCS (MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES)

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Abstract:

Teaching is no longer constrained to the regular classrooms. Class beyond classroom is the avenue taken by many academicians in this era of digital pedagogy. Classroom has become flipped. It is no longer the teacher who decides on the content but the student who searches content as per his needs and wants. Schools, Colleges and Universities are no longer the only sanctum sanctorum of Education. Industries, Corporate entities and Skill Development Centres have started having a say in what is to be taught, how it should be taught, how long it should be taught etc. Teaching has become blended with industrial exposure, corporate needs and job requirements. It has become a process wherein the students become industry ready, employable and efficient in required skills and technology. Hence the expertise of the student should be in par with the job he is interested in doing, so that he becomes an asset to the work sector he wishes to join. So, every digital gadget or technical innovation becomes an instrument of instruction and learning not just technology but language skills as well because Language is the mother of all invention in communication.

Introduction:

Education is the manifestation of civilization. Indeed an educated community is seen to be more flexible to change, ready for innovation and willing to strive for better living conditions. So, civilization is evolved by education. Such being the power of education, it cannot be constrained into formal places of learning like Schools, Colleges, Universities etc. It has become a life experience. All constraints of age, religion, culture, place, language etc are being broken by a sophisticated tool called Technology. Yes, Technology has intruded upon every known barrier to information and surged ahead to people of all corners of the world. A person with basic literacy in any part of the world can access information and technology for a small price. We are living in the world of information boom where students use Google as their guide. Teaching is no longer constrained to the regular classrooms. Class beyond classroom is the avenue taken by many academicians in this era of digital pedagogy. Classroom teaching has come to mean limitations in time, content and experience. Now, the world is brought into the classroom in the form of smart classrooms. Students can experience technology and teaching has become an art of giving experience, creating an audio visual exposure and making students question the content and search for more. It has become a developer of skill rather than a presenter of ideas. It is making students innovate rather than memorize and write exams. The classroom has become student centred with emphasis on their needs to survive in this digital world.[(1)]

Flipped Classroom and Blended Learning:

Classroom has become flipped and learning is blended with technology. It is no longer the teacher who decides on the content but the student who searches content as per his needs and wants. A flipped classroom has become a special blended teaching entity like smart classrooms. It has set of requirements that help students in the process of self learning. According to Wikipedia[(3)]: "Flipped classroom is an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside the classroom. It moves activities, including those that may have traditionally been considered homework, into the classroom. In a flipped classroom, students watch online lectures, collaborate in online discussions, or carry out research at home and engage in concepts in the classroom with the guidance of a mentor." "Blended learning[(2)] is an education program (formal or informal) that combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods requiring the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace. While students still attend "brick-and-mortar" schools with a teacher present, face-to-face classroom practices are combined with computer-mediated activities regarding content and delivery. Blended learning is also used in professional development and training settings..... "Blended learning" is sometimes used in the same breath as "personalized learning" and differentiated instruction." Schools, Colleges and Universities are no longer the only sanctum sanctorum of Education. As mentioned above Flipped Classrooms and blended learning have broadened the classroom into a mini world. Students are able to experience the topics of study not just as printed material but as audio clippings, video segments and online browsing. Study content is not limited so knowledge is expanded and individualized[(6)]. Each student searches content based on his personal interest. Google becomes their guide and teachers become mentors. Teachers no longer need to have all the information. It is also practically impossible to memorize everything so they look after the activities of the student as mentors and make suggestions to satisfy the students' curiosity and interest. This, of course, is possible only with the higher classes in school level. The younger classes may not be able to handle technology without the basic reading and writing skills. Whereas, in the realms of Higher Education and on job training, technology can be used to its best.

Corporate Counsel:

The major aim of students pursuing Higher Education and on job training is to get a well paid job. So, they have to gain the skills required by the corporate. This obviously brings the industry into the academia. Industries, Corporate entities and Skill Development Centres have started having a say in what is to be taught, how it should be taught, how long it should be taught etc.

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Teaching has become blended with industrial exposure, corporate needs and job requirements[7]. It has become a process wherein the students become industry ready, employable and efficient in required skills and technology. Hence the expertise of the student should be in par with the job he is interested in doing, so that he becomes an asset to the work sector he wishes to join. Each industry is willing to invest in their future employees by setting up Centres of Excellence, R & D centres, In Plant training, Internships and direct technical training in colleges and Universities. They are ready to send industry experts and share their technical expertise so that their demand for manpower is met by under graduate students. This trend is vastly seen in Engineering colleges or Centres of Technical Education. Besides all this input into the curriculum and syllabus the industry expects the students to work in the every growing and constantly changing corporate jungle which the students are not trained for. So Corporate Counsel has become an indispensible support to all institutions of Technical Education. They create awareness on industry needs and company specific requirements. The teaching learning process has become training for specific industry and its needs. Study content is added based on corporate requirement. Learning has become training for specific industries especially in the final year of study. Once the process of learning is so target specific it will be difficult for teaching staff to cater to the needs of individual students as their needs and requirements change drastically based in their area of interest. One student may be interested in Cloud Computing the other in Ethical Hacking and yet another in Big Data. So, every digital gadget or technical innovation becomes an instrument of instruction and learning. Herein come the latest innovation in learning i.e. Open Online Courses.

Online Certification Courses:

Short term free online certification courses have become very popular and a lot of world renowned universities and other private vendors are offering good quality study material online with value added certificate. These certificates are not part of regular curriculum but the industries are willing to value its worth and accept its credibility. Some of the most popular Online courses are offered by Coursera[5], edX, Alison, Udacity, Openculture and other MOOCs. not just on technology but language skills as well because language is the mother of all invention in communication. Definition of MOOCs in Wikipedia[4]: A massive open online course (MOOC /mu:k/) is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions among students, professors, and teaching assistants (TAs). MOOCs are a recent and widely researched development in distance education which were first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012

Some Interesting Statistics:

Notable Providers of MOOCs[4]

Provider	Type	Example institutional participants	Head Office/ Founded	Basic Information
Stanford Online	Non-profit	Stanford University	USA 2006	Free for registered users, personal/non-commercial usage
Coursera	Commercial	Stanford University, Princeton University, Arizona State University, University of Maryland College Park	USA 2012	Free for registered users, different course licenses
Khan Academy	Non-profit	n/a	USA 2006	Free, No registration needed, all rights reserved.
NPTEL	Non-profit	Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institute of Science	India 2006	Free, No registration, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license.
WizIQ	Commercial	IIT Delhi, Des Moines Area Community College	India / USA 2007	Not Free, all rights reserved.
Canvas Network	Commercial	Santa Clara University, University of Utah, Université Lille 1	USA 2008	All Rights Reserved, registration required.
Peer to Peer University	Non-profit	n/a	USA 2009	Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0
Academic Earth	Non-profit	UC Berkeley, UCLA, University of Michigan, Oxford University	USA 2009	All rights reserved. Links to other courses with different licenses.

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Provider	Type	Example institutional participants	Head Office/ Founded	Basic Information
Udacity	Commercial	Georgia Institute of Technology, San Jose State University, Google, Salesforce.com, Facebook, Cloudera, Nvidia, Autodesk, Cadence	USA 2012	
FutureLearn	Non-profit	University of Birmingham, University of Edinburgh, King's College London, University of Leicester, University of Reading, Open University, Monash University, Trinity College Dublin, Warwick University, University of Bath, University of Southampton	UK 2012	All rights reserved.
OpenClassrooms	Commercial	Google, Microsoft, IBM, Zendesk, École Polytechnique, CentraleSupélec	France 2007	Creative Commons licence, type BY-NC-SA
OpenLearning	Commercial	University of New South Wales, Taylor's University, University of Canberra	Australia 2012	
edX	Non-profit	MIT, Harvard University, Boston University, UC Berkeley, Kyoto University, Australian National University, University of Adelaide, University of Queensland, IIT Bombay, IIM Bangalore, Dartmouth College, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid	USA 2012	All rights reserved
iversity	Commercial	Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, University of Florence, University of Hamburg	EU 2013	
One Month	Commercial	School of Visual Arts	USA 2013	
NovoEd	Commercial	Stanford University, Wharton, Princeton, Darden, Comcast, Carnegie Foundation, Universidad Católica de Chile	USA 2013	
Coursmos	Commercial	Stanford University, Draper University, MIT	USA 2014	
Open2Study	Commercial	James Cook University, Griffith University, University of Wollongong, Flinders University, RMIT University, Central Institute of Technology, Sydney Institute, University of Western Sydney, Polytechnic West, Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Swinburne University of Technology, University of Newcastle, Jordan University of Science and Technology, University of Tasmania, International College of Management, Sydney, Massey University, Macquarie University, South China University of Technology, TAFE SA, Curtin University	Australia 2013	
Kadenze	Commercial	Stanford University, Princeton University, UCLA, California Institute of the Arts, School of Art Institute of Chicago, Maryland Institute College of Art, California College of Art,Goldsmiths College, MassArt, Seoul Institute of the Arts, Paris College of Art, National University of Singapore, Cornish College of Art, University of Texas at Austin	USA 2015	Free for registered users, different course licenses.

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Provider	Type	Example institutional participants	Head Office/ Founded	Basic Information
POLHN	Non-profit	WHO, Pacific Ministries of Health	Western Pacific Region 2005	Free courses, free software

This is not an exhaustive list but only a sample of the more popular providers of MOOCs.

MOOCs in Mobiles:

The advent of MOOCs has made learning content easily available through internet connectivity and smart phones have brought internet connectivity to our pockets. This present generation of students are connected 24 x 7 and have easy access to information. So, it has become much more challenging for the teacher to capture the interest of the students. They have too many entertainment options and are fixated on their mobiles for all sorts of information and social connectivity[(8)]. Do not try to change them but connect with them. It's easier to be a part of their life and guide them rather than find fault with them and try to change their world. If the smart phones are holding their interest enter their smart phones and interact with them. A teacher with a little ingenuity can make students think about their subjects even while browsing on the phone. This can be done for all subjects. Let us take English Language teaching as a sample. It can be used to enhance the learning experience for all four language skills i.e. Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. Reading content can be sent as Whatsapp messages, SMS, links, mail attachments etc. Listening content can be created regularly as podcasts and published in Whatsapp or blogs. Online tests can be conducted without time constraint through Google Forms to test the students' writing skills. Finally, students can be asked to record speeches and publish it over exclusive private portals set by the educational institutions so that their speaking skills are toned. Most of international Universities have their own web portals and student logins that can be used to share content and interact with students. Actually the possibilities are limitless, on how these portals can be used for the teaching learning process. Mobiles will no longer be the best companions for students alone but for the teaching fraternity as well. Since the students are already using mobiles for their pleasure it will not drain their pockets to use it for pursuing academic excellence. The teaching process becomes simplified and easily monitored and the onus of gaining knowledge lies on the students. Hence the educational institutions are definitely willing to invest on setting the framework for such learning processes. Since both sides are happy and it is a mutually beneficial process there is no great disadvantage to mention in this system of education. But any system will work efficiently only if it is used properly. The same applies for mobile learning. The teachers must have a very clear syllabus and testing schedule so that content is delivered with purpose and learning happens as per academic plan. The students must be monitored and tested to check their level of learning. On the part of the students they should realize the value of this additional academic input and make use of it diligently. It should also be very clear to the educators at all levels that mobile learning and MOOCs will only support classroom teaching. It cannot be a standalone educational gadget.

Conclusion:

As generations cross and digital era becomes more advanced and sophisticated the educational scenario must also change and adapt to suit the student community. Mobile learning is one such adjustment by the academia to make learning interesting and efficient. The internet has been blamed for many things unsavoury that is spoiling the present youth but it is time we as responsible adults realize that internet is just a toll like a knife. It can be used for development as well as detrimental activities. It is the user who decides the purpose and not the tool. Let us teach our wards to use internet and its various products in a sensible and positive manner. Let the latest technology be used for knowledge sharing and betterment of life for the common man.

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