

Sultan Qaboos University between E-Learning and Massive Open Online Course: Future Vision

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Abstract— The appearing of Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) looked that, beyond the bounds of the e-learning communities and activities, commonly, little attention had been paid to how information technologies effected higher education teaching and learning. Most important, it has become clear that many critical issues concerning MOOCs are in the discussion with on e-learning and on changes in teaching and learning. MOOCs are used as options and complements to traditional university courses. Openness which is a characteristic of MOOC is becoming a value in terms of open content and open resources and that is how Free and Open Source Software(FOSS) get benefit from MOOC such us edx as one of the famous open source platform. The purpose of this study is to examine the future vision of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) between e-learning and MOOC in order to form a clear picture about whether the insertion of MOOC would be supportive e-learning.

Index Terms— MOOC, E-Learning, Collaborative Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

HIGHER educational institutions structure has changed partially as a result of the introduction of technological initiatives. Both MOOC and E-Learning became an essential mechanism in the higher education field, which makes student centered learning and educational practice, offering new more flexible learning methods [1]. From one side, the influence of e-learning initiatives will affect the structure of universities in the future on both strategic and tactical levels [2].

E-learning is generally use in universities in the world. It is become more and more popular and there are large number of institutions are working on creating better tools for e-learning [3]. From the other side, the original purpose of the implementation of MOOCs was to provide an educational opportunity for a mass audience. The MOOC has become a symbol of a larger modernization agenda for universities as it encourage scalability and sustainability of higher education [4]. MOOCs offer the opportunity for both educational and corporate sectors to provide a learning platform for a large amount of learners allowing them to educate with and from geographical and physical boundaries with minimal financial limitations [5].

SQU is the realization of the promise announced by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said during the 10th anniversary of Oman's National Day in 1980. Construction started in 1982 and the first SQU students were enrolled in 1986. The design and construction of the campus was carried out with great attention to the fulfillment of these objectives, with the overall appearance of the buildings carefully planned to accommodate the physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs of students, faculty and staff. During the design period, the university landscaping was carefully considered and the original plantings have since become verdant gardens and flower beds. The plantings include species, native to Oman and other Gulf regions that grow and flourish in an arid environment. The landscaping provides shade from the sun, shelter against the wind, and splendid display of color from flowers and foliage throughout the year [6].

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In this paper, the study of the future of SQU between E-learning and MOOC will be investigated and by examining the importance of MOOC in case if it is offer in SQU by solving the limitations in e-learning. Section I presents introduction. Section II introduces an overview about the E-learning and MOOC. Section III shows problem statement of the proposed solution. Section IV presents a solution of proposed approach. Section V provides some discussion and conclusion is presented in section VI.

II. E-LEARNING AND MOOC

E-learning is a common expression for all learning including the use of information and communication technologies to support both learning and teaching [7]. That support could be face-to-face settings, distance learning and individually or in grouping, in which case e-learning is commonly named blended learning.

MOOC course made available on the internet where large numbers of contributors participate in weekly activities with the aim to learn new things. MOOC is an education system that focuses on learning, reuse and share of resources. It offers different courses to the users from diverse suppliers and encourage the process of learning. To bring the mean of MOOC more closely, every contributor can refer the tutorial as many times as he/she wants to increase his or her skills. Added to that, there are numerous services offered by MOOC includes lectures, assignment, discussions, assessments and certification.

McAuley and colleagues put the definition of MOOC as "A MOOC merge the connectivity of social networking and a series of free available online resources. Most important, a MOOC builds on the active participation of numerous hundred to numerous thousands of students [8].

To find out the specific characteristics of MOOC which distinguishes it from E-learning. There are sequences of key differences between them.

They are set out in the following table [9] [10] [11] [12] [13]:

Terms	E-learning	MOOC
Stand For	Electronic Learning	Massive Open Online Course
Concept	Used by a single institution with a limited number of enrolments.	Used by many institutions and tend to have enrolments in the tens of thousands.
Center	E-learning course which centers on content	MOOCs centers more on context
Inclusion	E-learning is not a MOOC	MOOCs include E-learning technology/architecture
What do they do?	-It is a course management tool and hosts close-ended courses. Management and monitoring can be quite detailed and programmed accordingly. - Online courses are close-ended with static content.	-It is an open-ended course, not overtly managed. - The content in a MOOC is dynamic through learner participation, creation of user-generated content and collaboration.
Networked	Less networked – wikis, forums, etc.	More networked – blogs, tweets, wikis, etc.
Size	Small sizes – limitations and slowness due to connectivity.	Large size – due to the availability of large servers and high internet speeds.
Course Hosting	Many courses simultaneously can be hosted, from various providers and publishers. Moreover, a catalogue of courses maybe offered to users to pick, choose and pay to start the course.	Coursera, edX, Udemy are platforms which host a MOOC. These platforms provide a place for course creators to host their content and manage their learning environment (forums, quizzes, exams, peer to peer assessment, etc.)
Credits	Most of courses can have credits	No, not yet
Examples	Moodle, Blackboard WebCT, Click2LearnLMS	Coursera, edX, Udemy

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 2014, Toha discuss the possibility of integrating MOOC as part of Universities Terbuka (UT) learning management system in Indonesia as an alternative mode of delivery for UT degree programs. He mentioned that when MOOC was joined to UT online and using the same LMS, the type of communications remains the same. The instructors are normal to play their significant roles in terms of posting, responding, facilitating and motivating the UT MOOC students. Integrating MOOC in UT LMS means students will have chance to experience using Moodle features in term of available activities (assignment, chat, forum, lesson, quiz and survey) and resources (book, folder, etc.) [14].

In order to embark on the Massive Open Online Courseware (MOOC) for the Malaysian Public Universities (MPU). In 2016, Azhan and colleagues describes a framework called ArmadaNet for a multi-institution collaborative MOOC platform. ArmadaNet framework will allow any student from any university to enroll in any courses available in any university. The authors use Moodle as the web platform to support this multi-institution MOOC collaboration [15].

One of the great advantages for SQU in using MOOCs is their global reach. Rather than restricting an online course to a small group of learners, MOOCs provide an opportunity for networking and social/peer learning that the closed e-learning structure does not. The massive nature of MOOC guarantees the advantage can be benefits not by the limited nature of students, but is extended to the thousands of number of students at the same time. That number of student's means get more gain from collaborative learning, in which students engage in a common task and in which each individual depends on each other. SQU can increasingly using MOOCs in a blended learning format for their campus-based courses where the students are required to follow a MOOC module for example prior to classroom discussion on the topic. This frees up an instructors time who can then spend less time lecturing and more time engaged in constructive discussion and teaching in the classroom. Besides, MOOCs can be an efficient and meaningful medium for research distribution and international recruitment because SQU can use MOOCs to build a meaningful relation to a great number of people who are sincerely interested in the core activities and output of the university. Most important, SQU cannot blindly follow the direction to develop MOOC. It should strengthen the research, especially on the basis of excellent courses and video open class. . It should be a plan to carry out MOOC step by step, based on the education idea and practice mode of MOOC.

IV. PROPOSED SOLUTION

In 2014, Hollands and Tirthali describe that colleges and universities have accepted different stances toward engaging with MOOCs. Some are actively developing MOOCs called "producers," some are using MOOCs developed by other institutions in their programs called "consumers". Others are adopting a wait-and-see approach that considered MOOCs and have decided against any form of official engagement or have not met with interest from faculty members to pursue them [16].

The initiative proposed by the researcher to emphasizes on the needs of higher education organizations towards the developments of MOOC in universities and colleges in Oman. SQU as one of the higher education institution needs to understand the concept of MOOCs and make strategic choices on how MOOCs to be adopted in its unique environment. Students at SQU use and support e-learning in their studies. To make the picture more clearly we provided the following two figures to differentiate between E-learning and MOOC (Fig.1& Fig.2). Fig.1 illustrates the concept of E-Learning. Fig.2 illustrates the concept of MOOC.

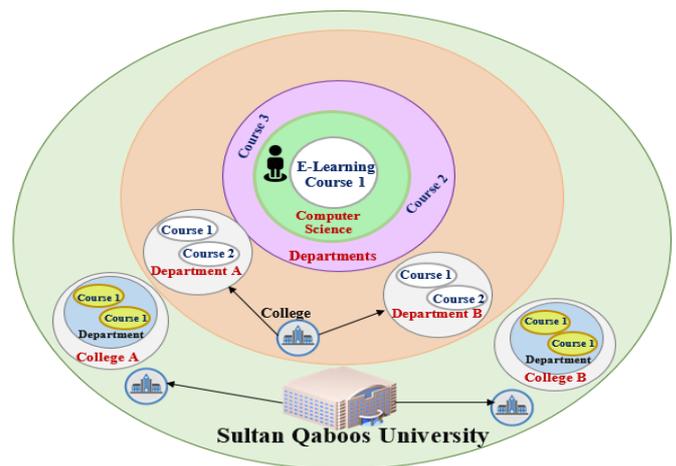


Fig.1 Concept of E-Learning "SQU as example"

In fig.1, SQU has many colleges. Such as college A and B, each college has its departments. The concept of e-learning in SQU could mean that, college A with its department allow only its students to access the courses and not allow for the other students from other colleges to access and share resources of the courses. Overall, it means that there is some kind of restrictions in using e-learning in each college or department in SQU, students only allow to take specific courses depend on the degree requirements not take into consideration providing students opportunities to expand their knowledge and interests by select courses from any college offering them.

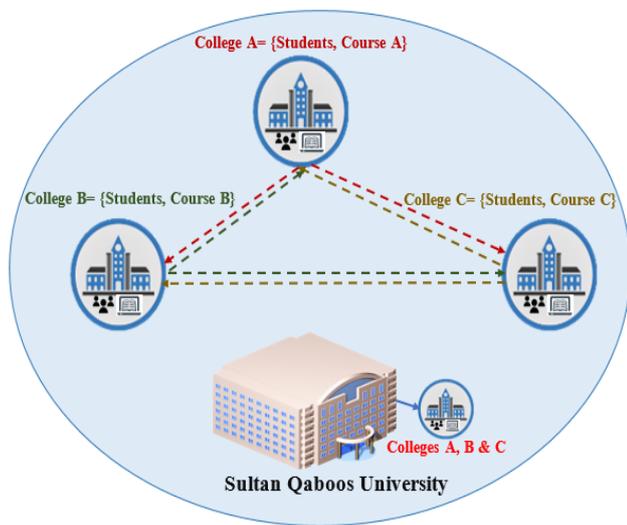


Fig. 2 Concept of MOOC “SQU as example”

In fig.2, if we implement the concept of MOOC between the colleges in SQU. What we want is allow students to enroll and access courses from other colleges. For example, students of college A can now access and enroll the courses from colleges B & C. Same scenario for students of colleges B & C. By this way all students in SQU can share resources easily without any restriction they face as in e-learning system. MOOC as online learning technique will prepared the courses to be available on internet. Therefore, students can watch the lectures online which are more useful than classroom lectures. As a result, SQU can give credit score to students who completed a course in MOOC.

V. DISCUSSION

MOOC earn its popularity in the latest years. MOOCs system brings higher education institution opportunities to improve their services to students with more easy and cheap. The presents of MOOC will make instructors or lectures in SQU to modify their way of thinking in conducting their teaching method. Essentially, SQU needs to follow the phenomenon of MOOCs and make strategic decisions on how MOOCs to be adopted in their unique environment. we can see that implementing MOOC in SQU without eliminate the role of e-learning has the chance to transform and upgrading the educational process in reality.

VI. CONCLUSION

For students, MOOC besides e-learning can offer an educationally excellent alternative to traditional lectures, in which learning process can take place outside classroom. Furthermore, they can also offer a paradigm for students on how to be self-independent students, which may benefit them to become lifelong learners. The approach of education via distance learning is becoming more well-known and sufficient. The other use of e-learning, with traditional classroom and face to face can affect the students learning process [3]. MOOCs offer SQU the potential to create communities of enquiry; however there is still a need for face-to-face discussion too. MOOC may have brought significant drivers of education innovation, it is still too early to assure that MOOC will replace e-learning and become the future of world education. That MOOC is just one of a number of e-learning, adequate for a certain group learners at a certain time for a certain aim [17]. The future in SQU from the virtual educational environment can depend on e-learning and MOOC at the same time.

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