

Are Malaysian University Students “MOOCs-Ready”?

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Abstract

Recently, the use of technology in teaching and learning session has had a considerable impact. Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is one of the platforms and mediums for online learning practiced by most universities and colleges. There have been many researches on the usefulness of MOOC in teaching and learning. However, there is a lack of literature on Malaysian students' readiness towards the use and application of MOOC. Due to this, this study intended to investigate Malaysian students' readiness towards the use of MOOC in tertiary level of education. The respondents of this study involved twenty university students from various public and private universities. The findings have gathered that students are prepared and able to utilize MOOC in their learning. They are efficient in using internet, computers and online technologies to communicate, work and perform tasks. This paper aims to assist current and future educators to manage a productive educational setting.

Keywords

Digital Native, Gen Z, Malaysian Higher Institution, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), Online Learning

1. Introduction

With the rise of technological and globalisation era, more universities are stepping up their education system by adopting an online course as part of the teaching and learning process (Gunuc & Babacan, 2018). Technological environment has now been making its waves into the education field replacing the traditional method. The existence of digital native students who prefer technological environment has driven educators to make use of technology as part of their teaching and learning session. Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is an online platform where everyone can enroll because the courses offered are free.

MOOC has also gained popularity as a tool of learning language (Yunus, 2018). Due to this, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are well known by most universities and colleges nowadays. In line with the revolution of 4th Industrial Revolution and 21st Century Learning, the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia has launched the Malaysia MOOC initiative with another 20 public universities (Yunus et al., 2019). Past researches have gathered on the usefulness of MOOC and its relations to today's education. There have also been many researches done on the use of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) among top universities all over the world. However, researchers believed that there is a lack of literature on the readiness of the use of MOOC among students in tertiary level of education. In conjunction with this, researchers intend to investigate and measure tertiary level of students' readiness towards the use of Massive Open Online Courses or which is also known as MOOC.

2. Literature Review

This study is supported by the transactional distance learning theory. The transactional distance learning theory was first found by Moore (1991) and has been viewed as a major contributor in the distance education field. This theory believed that distance is seen as a pedagogical concept between the learners, their peers and the educators or instructors. This theory is believed to be closely related to the use of MOOC as an online platform and medium for teaching and learning. The theory believes that the structure of materials and the course itself plays an important role as it has relation to the learners' autonomy.

Today's digital native students are born with the ability to become a tech-savvy. Today's generation of students is to be considered as generation Z where they are so used to the existence of technology in their environment making them be very tech-friendly. Tech-savvy is defined as knowing a lot about modern technology, especially computer by Cambridge Dictionary. On the other hand, MOOC-savvy is in simpler words when a student or a person knows a lot about MOOC and the use of MOOC. Gunuc and Babacan (2018) in their study believed that the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as mobile phones, tablets and laptops help to increase students' engagement, make the lessons to be more interesting and meaningful, learning becomes more effective and students tend to be more motivated. Yunus et al. (2019) have figured that the use of MOOC as part of the teaching and learning session somehow helped learners developing their communication skills due to the characteristics of MOOC that enable learners to interact with other people and to be more autonomous with their learning. They also figured out that MOOC in a way acts as a booster for learners' self-esteem and critical thinking skills.

Badusah et al. (2016) previously conducted a study on the design of learning materials and tasks of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) using trans-disciplinary learning where they figured out that most learners preferred the use of live action videos and animations, also humor elements in learning mate-

rials. They have also revealed that most learners preferred collaborative learning tasks rather than individual ones when it comes to online learning platform involving Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). The findings have proven that in a way, there are many factors needed to be considered in constructing a course in the Massive Open Online Courses. The findings are then later agreed by Nordin et al. (2016) in their study on the factors for development of learning content and tasks for MOOCs in an Asian context. The same findings have been gathered and a few factors such as the type of learning materials provided, the social settings of learning tasks and also the communication style in video lectures are as equally important in affecting learners' engagement towards the particular course in MOOC.

3. Methodology

This study is a mixed method type of study. Questionnaire was used as the instrument in this study. The questionnaire was adopted from "MOOC Readiness Questionnaire" by Prof. Dr. Mohammad Amin Embi for National Higher Education Strategic Plan. The questionnaire was divided into two sections namely; section A which is the demographic and background of the respondents, and section B which is the respondents' readiness towards Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). The questionnaire was then distributed using random sampling. The samples of this study were the students from public and private universities in Malaysia. The data are collected and analyzed with descriptive statistic using frequency and percentage counts.

4. Findings

4.1. Demographic Profile

This study was involved by 60% of undergraduate students and 40% of the post-graduate students. A dominant number of participants with 60% of rate are females and 40% of them are males. A sum of twenty students was associated in this research and they are from 5 public and one private institution. The rates of participants involved as per their institutions are IIUM (10%), UKM (35%), UM (10%), UNISEL (20%), UPSI (15%) and UITM (10%).

4.2. MOOCs Readiness

Q1: *I have the basic skills for finding my way around the Internet (e.g., using search engines).*

Based on **Figure 1**, it is clearly seen that 100% of the participants agreed to have the basic skills in using the Internet.

Q2: *I think that I would be comfortable using a computer several times a week to participate in a course.*

Based on **Figure 2**, we can see that 90% of the participants are comfortable in using computer several times a week to participate in an online course. There are only 10% of the participants who stated differently.

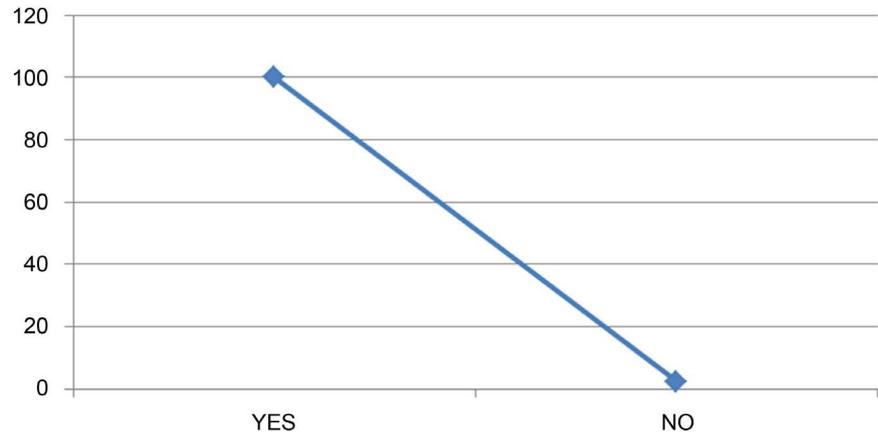


Figure 1. Q1: I have the basic skills for finding my way around the Internet (e.g., using search engines).

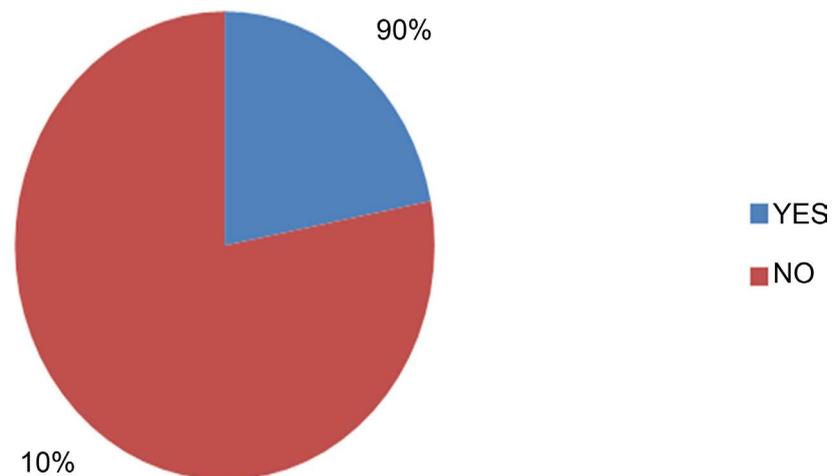


Figure 2. Q2: I think that I would be comfortable using a computer several times a week to participate in a course.

Q3: I think that I would be able to communicate effectively with others using online technologies (e.g., chat).

Based on **Figure 3**, we can see all the participants agreed to have the ability to communicate effectively with others using online technologies.

Q4: I think that I would be able to express myself clearly through my writing (e.g., emotions, humor).

Based on **Figure 4**, it is clearly seen that all participants agreed that they can express themselves such as their emotions, humor and expressions clearly through their writing.

Q5: I think that I would be able to ask questions and make comments in clear writing.

Based on the pie chart above (**Figure 5**), 90% of the participants agreed to have the ability to ask questions and make comments in clear writing. Only 10% of them stated differently.

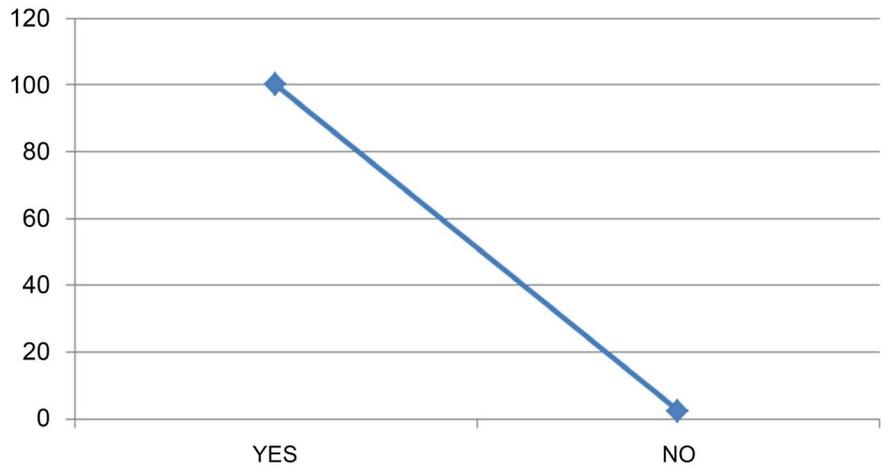


Figure 3. Q3: I think that I would be able to communicate effectively with others using online technologies (e.g., chat).

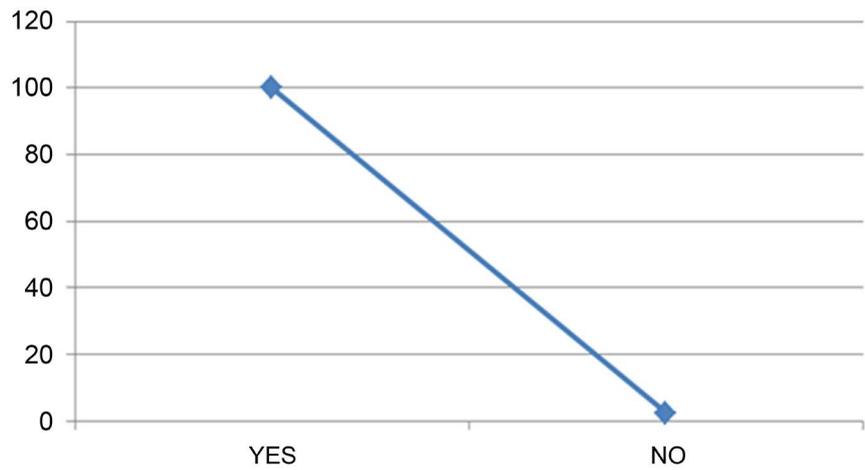


Figure 4. Q4: I think that I would be able to express myself clearly through my writing (e.g., emotions, humor).

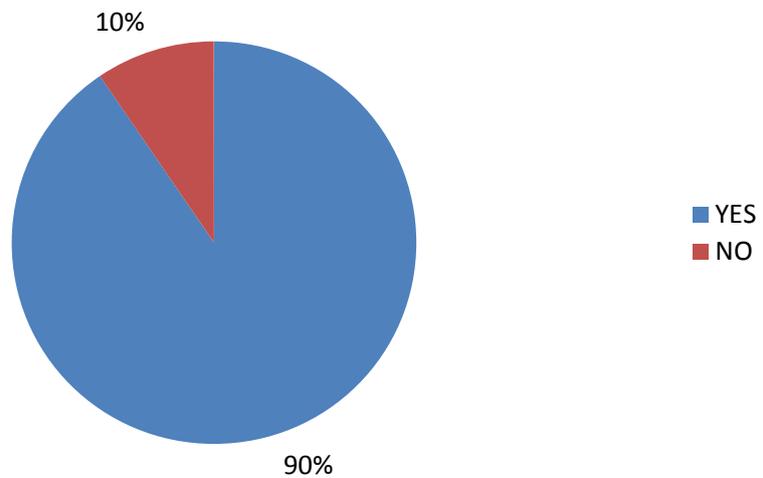


Figure 5. Q 5: I think that I would be able to ask questions and make comments in clear writing.

5. Discussion

Students nowadays, generation Z students are advanced in technology usage. They know how to utilize mobile phones since the very young age. In fact, these students have never observed the world without the internet, so they can explore online application and platforms without having a formal introduction. They also have been using the internet to access much information online and they are capable to ingest huge amounts of new data consistently (Roseberry, 2017). In addition, Gen Z students can spend a few hours every day online. The implementation of MOOC in Malaysia has been an easier step to be conducted day by day as the education field has been constantly moving towards technological advances in classrooms especially at using online mediums to deliver information to the students.

In order to build an effective educational setting, novice and veteran educators must consider the necessities of their students in this age. Successful educators regularly contribute new ways to comprehend, instruct, and bolster their students' growth. Thus, "keeping it new" and "creative" by applying MOOC platform is a progressing attempt. The on-going development and growth of technology has brought new patterns and application in the education field (Rusli & Hashim, 2018). Instead of avoiding generation z students' characteristics in learning, all the faculty members in higher institutions ought to think about the generational contrasts that may impede or help the teaching and learning to be dynamic and motivational (Mohr, 2017).

Moreover, these students are so used to utilizing their gadgets to assist their assignments and tasks and they always use web indexes to look for data. These students have their own mobile phones, computer-based devices such as laptops or tablets to be used and almost all of them have their own social media accounts especially Facebook. The students are also comfortable in using online resources or platforms that are designed to improve their learning skills. These students are happy with utilizing the technological devices as they have sufficient exposure on ICT apparatuses which drove them to flawlessly explore through the assets given to them (Ganapathy & Seetharam, 2016). Thus, the utilization of MOOC in higher institution will not be an issue for the students as they are already on par with the technological tools needed.

Apart from that, ever since the turning of 21st century, the Malaysian higher institutions have been changing in accordance to their issues and needs. They redesign the teaching and learning approaches, install WiFi availability and update the educational plan with experiential learning and capstone courses. Generation Z students experienced many skills through their online skills such as delegating and collaborating with their peers on group tasks and discussions. They are comfortable in using online mediums through online video talk, chat rooms, comments, statuses and posts. For them, learning does not occur in libraries and lecture halls but also through online sites and pages (Hashim et al., 2017). Implementing MOOC would be a perfect way to embrace the objective of

collaborative teaching and learning in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, in reality, many students do not like to write. Writing tasks in conventional classroom tend to be boring and uninteresting. The fun aspect in learning is absent. But, in using technology like MOOC to instill the love of writing, students can use the textual communication to practice. The number of text messages, status update and instant messaging used by the students are massive and limitless. Thus, the teachers' challenge is to empower that same interest in formal writing. MOOCs utilization can prepare students to write in shorter texts and promote writing collaborations. Students can make associations with other writers online. MOOCs can provide writing projects with huge writing opportunities. Even if the students may only enroll in the course for only a short amount of time, they still may have accomplished more writing than they generally would have in usual basis (Comer & White, 2016).

Besides that, there are so many online applications that can be used to help students to express themselves clearly in writing such as using spell checker apps, grammar apps, online dictionaries and plagiarism checker. These applications not only help the students to acquire basic knowledge but also enabling them to channel their thoughts creatively, inner emotions and humor in their writings. Learning in this age cannot be separated, for example, learning writing skills will always implement reading skills or speaking and listening skills (Blake, 2016). Using technology platforms like MOOC can enable teachers to guarantee the positive learning outcomes for their students.

6. Conclusion

MOOC is an open based online platform that offers free courses for students. It allows universities, colleges, educators to design their preferable content to ease their teaching processes. In this paper, the researchers investigated the readiness of Malaysian higher institutions students in using MOOC. Based on the findings, it can be seen that these students are able and ready to utilize MOOC in their learning. These students are able to use internet effectively, comfortable in using computer, able to communicate using online technologies, and able to express themselves in writings. Future research could enrich the current knowledge in investigating the factors contributing to MOOC readiness in Malaysia. In sum, MOOC can be a great solution for educators to boost and vary their teaching techniques. All public and private institutions should find a way to implement MOOC in their curriculum in order to create desired learning goals.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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