MOOC for Training: How Far It Benefits Employees?

Karmila Rafiqah M. Rafiq¹, Harwati Hashim¹, and Melor Md Yunus¹*

¹Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

* melor@ukm.edu.my

Abstract. As the term 4th Industrial Revolution emerges globally, various industries are moving rapidly towards it. Malaysia, one of the developing countries, is also embracing the 4th Industrial Revolution. However, with the rapid development of industries to catch up to the ever-expanding world, the English proficiency of non-native speakers is worrying, especially in the working field. Certain industries provide training for their employees to improve their English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), but traditional training is time-consuming and could not cater to individuals’ needs. This paper aims to identify the benefits of MOOC for employees’ training. The findings discussed the benefits of MOOC. MOOC is indeed beneficial for employees in terms of providing the opportunity for self-paced learning, lifelong learning and professional development at zero cost. However, there is also an interesting finding whereby employers do not want their employees to use MOOC for training because the former does not want private and confidential information of the organization to be publicized. Overall, the benefits will be able to guide and provide insight for educators and researchers as it is important to know what motivates learners to use MOOC for training.

1. Introduction

As the term 4th Industrial Revolution emerges globally, various industries are moving rapidly towards it. One of the elements in the revolution is the Internet of Things (IoT), which is more familiarized by cloud-based technology. A diversity of industries are not exempted from this revolution, including the education industry. Undoubtedly, various technologies are introduced to assist lessons in the educational field as well [1]. Being one of the developing countries, Malaysia is also embracing the 4th Industrial Revolution. The focus of the Ministry of Education is to produce a holistic individual, not only in terms of soft skills but also in English language proficiency. As English is the second language in Malaysia, more employers demand graduates with good proficiency in English [2]. This is because employers wish to expand their business globally, which requires employees to communicate with other speakers of other languages using the international language, English [3].

However, with the rapid development of industries to catch up to the ever-expanding world, the English proficiency of non-native speakers is worrying [4]. Certain industries provide training for their employees to improve their English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) for the workplace, but not all traditional training is proven to be effective. This is because some training needs more time and could not cater to all individuals’ needs [4]. Some training is too short and expensive, whereby employers are not willing to pay for their employees. Not to mention that some employees also have a bunch of workloads which inhibit their intention to go for traditional training.

In relation to the problem of traditional training for EOP, learning virtually can address to most of the problems mentioned, whereby there is a variety of open learning platforms for learners to join and learn for free. Open learning or Open Educational Resources (OER) as mentioned by [5]...
provides an essential learning environment, which can assist learners in lifelong learning. Sharing and contributing ideas are some of the elements in open education, which is governed by the Internet, for people around the world to come together [6], [7]. Another element in the OER is in terms of its cost-free nature, which means that courses offered are relatively free to be used and can be modified according to the context and learners’ needs, to ensure the effectiveness of a particular course is maximized [5], [8]. Plus, OER allows learners to access the content anywhere, as long as there is an Internet connection because it is an online resource [8]. One of the well-known open learning platforms, which is expanding exponentially is the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) [9], [10]. Hence, it is important to look into the benefits of MOOC, especially for training. This paper aims to identify the benefits of MOOC for workplace training.

2. Self-paced Learning Environment

Self-paced learning brings the meaning that learners are given the opportunity to learn by themselves in their own momentum, without feeling obliged or tied to complete a course within a time frame given. One of the most important elements in MOOC, which benefits learners is to allow learners to take their time completing a course without feeling pressured. Self-paced learning is more towards independent learning, whereby minimal interaction is required in learning [11]. Learners who are bound to a working environment has a lesser opportunity to get a formal education. Hence, working learners can gain benefits from MOOC.

A study by [12] claimed that learners’ dropout rates from MOOC can be reduced when the content of a particular course is not too lengthy, as voluntary learners are focusing on learning independently. This shows that learners who use MOOC for their own personal gain are more prone to complete a shorter and relevant course because they are learning at their own pace. Concurrently, in another study by [13] argued that MOOC is indeed the best platform for self-paced learning, but it will not be successful if learners are not committed to complete a course. Relating to the working environment, it was also mentioned that learners with working pressure, such as tight working schedules will affect their commitment in taking up and completing a course in MOOC. Due to that, as suggested by the same researcher, employers play an equally important role in ensuring their employees can be proactive in working and independently taking up online courses. The role of employers in ensuring the success rate of course completion in MOOC is also emphasized in other studies. An employee with the support of his employer tends to learn more skills by themselves to promote their own professional development [8], [14]. In other studies, learners are more engaged towards self-paced learning through MOOC because of its openness and flexibility, which renders to accessibility anywhere and anytime without restrictions [15], [16].

3. Lifelong Learning Opportunities

Learning a skill which can be useful for life is the aim of many learners. As [17] mentioned, MOOCs demolish the barrier of formal learning as learning can also be done informally in an online platform. In the same study, it was mentioned that there are certain circumstances whereby lifelong learning is not emphasized, such as in social and cultural contexts. In terms of the working environment, developing lifelong learning activities is crucial because a more holistic employee is much valued by an employer [6], [14]. A study by [17] reported that some employees took up MOOC to learn a skill such as an entrepreneur skill to suit the current demands of their organizations and countries. With support from employers, these employees will also benefit the organization.

In another study, which reported a similar finding was done by [13]. This study mentioned that MOOC is not only able to provide content-based training, where learners gain knowledge from joining a course, but also able to provide an online-based learning experience. It was stated that effective online instruction can enhance the learning of a learner, especially employees in acquiring a new skill usable in their own organizations. By taking up a course in MOOC, an employee will also be able to apply the skills in the real world. On another note, [16] stated that MOOCs for lifelong learning is dominated by unemployed people as they have more time and motivation to learn a skill in order to
be employed. This shows that employed people have either lesser time to use MOOC or not being supported by employers. Nevertheless, MOOC is still a valuable tool for learners to learn regardless of being employed or not. That is one of the benefits of MOOC, which is promoting lifelong learning opportunities for everyone.

4. Professional Development
Undoubtedly, in an organization, professional development activities are carried out to ensure the efficiency of the employees. Employers invest more in traditional training for professional development, which is why resorting to MOOC is a better solution [14]. MOOCs can be used to replace traditional training, to equip employees with necessary skills for development. Due to its open-access nature, MOOC is said to be able to ensure active participation of learners, especially employees who are required to complete a course in MOOC as required by their employers. Similarly, [8] claimed that most employers demand professional employees, whereby the former felt the need to provide essential training to improve the latter. However, in the same study, employers of certain confidential organizations tend to not use MOOC as a training platform because they are afraid that their employees will disseminate private or sensitive information of the company in MOOC, which is an online open platform.

On the other hand, [12] in their study mentioned that employers support the use of MOOC as a tool which is deemed valuable to promote the professional development of their employees. This is because, MOOC is an open-access technology, which is always up-to-date. However, [18] disagreed that MOOC can help to promote professional development skills. This is because, professional skills such as collaboration and teamwork are vital for an organization, in which MOOC could not offer real-time team-building training. The employees stated in their study mentioned that learning and acquiring skills can be done online, but to apply it requires their colleagues’ support, which can bring an impact to their working environment.

However [13] claimed that there is a team-based element in MOOC which can foster interactions among learners. In the same study, it was mentioned that MOOCs are also able to train communicative skills such as public speaking, which empowers an organization as well. MOOC offers a variety of courses, which could cater to learners’ desires and the courses’ theoretical foundations can also be applied practically in the real world. Supporting the statement, [5] agreed that OER such as MOOC will be able to promote an individual’s development, which could contribute to the aspirations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

5. Cost-free Training
The most important element of MOOC, which could bring benefits for both the employees and employers is that it is entirely free of charge. OER is a free to use platform, where users do not have to pay to access the content [5]. Relating to the working environment, a company or an organization needs to provide training for employees to suit the current demands of the world. MOOC is irrefutably a potential platform for training purposes, which can benefit the organization [15]. They also mentioned that organizations want their employees to be able to compete globally, thus training them is essential. Clearly, MOOC can adhere to various challenges in training. This is because, [13] mentioned that most of the MOOCs are free to be accessed, although there are a few MOOCs which charge for certification purposes. Additionally, he emphasized in his study by stating that MOOC is cost-effective in terms of monetary and time-wise. The training can be done massively at zero cost. This benefits the organizations because providing traditional training takes up time and also involves money, which is the total opposite of using MOOC. MOOC is cost-free and also adheres to self-paced and lifelong learning.

6. Conclusion
This paper has discussed the benefits of MOOC for working learners. With the swift advancement of technology and open education, MOOC can be a boon instead of a ban. The open online platform still
emits advantages not only for working learners but also to the employers and organizations too, as many organizations are beginning to recognize MOOC as a flexible training platform for lifelong learning and professional development. This paper will be able to provide an insight to researchers and educators in designing and developing a course in MOOC. In order to ensure effective instructional design, it is vital to look into the benefits of MOOC, especially in terms of the length of course, which could motivate learners in self-paced learning. Overall, exploring MOOC for educational purposes can bridge the gap between formal and informal education all over the world.

Acknowledgement

This research is supported by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia under research scheme no. (i) GG-2018-001; (ii) KRA-2018-044.

References

[1] H. Hashim, “Application of Technology in the Digital Era Education,” *Int. J. Res. Couns. Educ.*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 1–5, 2018.
[2] R. R. Rasalingam and M. A. Embi, “The Use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the Teaching of English Courses among Malaysian Polytechnics Lecturers,” *Int. J. Soc. Sci. Humanit. Res.*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 254–264, 2018.
[3] N. Nordin and H. Norman, “Mapping the Fourth Industrial Revolution Global Transformations on 21st Century Education on the Context of Sustainable Development,” *J. Sustain. Dev. Educ. Res.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1–7, 2018.
[4] N. Mustafa, N. Nordin, and M. A. Embi, “A Need Analysis for a Communicative English Mobile Learning Module for Healthcare Professionals,” *Int. J. E-Learning High. Educ.*, vol. 6, pp. 13–24, 2017.
[5] R. McGreal, “Special report on the role of open educational resources in supporting the sustainable development goal 4: Quality education challenges and opportunities,” *Int. Rev. Res. Open Distance Learn.*, vol. 18, no. 7, pp. 292–305, 2017.
[6] A. Nobre, E. M. Mallmann, V. Nobre, and M. D. Mazzardo, “MOOC and OER,” in *Emerging Trends, Techniques, and Tools for Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Management*, IGI Global, 2018, pp. 1–23.
[7] M. Y. Melor, “Innovation in Education and Language Learning in 21st Century,” *J. Sustain. Dev. Educ. Res.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 33–34, 2018.
[8] U. Olsson, “Open courses and MOOCs as professional development – is the openness a hindrance?,” *Educ. Train.*, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 229–243, 2016.
[9] A. Anders, “Theories and Applications of Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs): The Case for Hybrid Design,” *Int. Rev. Res. Open Distance Learn.*, vol. 16, no. 6, pp. 39–61, 2015.
[10] R. Godwin-Jones, “Global reach and local practice: The promise of MOOCS,” *Lang. Learn. Technol.*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 5–15, 2014.
[11] A. G. Picciano, “Theories and Frameworks for Online Education: Seeking an Integrated Model,” *Online Learn.*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 166–190, 2017.
[12] F. Schwerer and M. Egloffstein, “Participation and Achievement in Enterprise MOOCs for Professional Learning,” in *13th International Conference on Cognition and Exploratory Learning in Digital Age (CELed 2016)*, 2016, pp. 269–276.
[13] S. Karnouskos, “Massive open online courses (MOOCS) as an enabler for competent employees and innovation in industry,” *Comput. Ind.*, vol. 91, no. October, pp. 1–10, 2017.
[14] J. Castaño Muñoz, M. Kalz, K. Kreijns, and Y. Punie, “Influence of employer support for professional development on MOOCs enrolment and completion: Results from a cross-course survey,” in *Proceedings of the European MOOC Stakeholder Summit on experiences and best
practices in and around MOOCs - EMOOOCs 2016, 2016, pp. 251–263.

[15] D. Petronzi and M. Hadi, “Exploring the Factors Associated with MOOC Engagement, Retention and the Wider Benefits for Learners,” Eur. J. Open, Distance e-Learning, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 112–129, 2016.

[16] J. Castaño-Muñoz, K. Kreijns, M. Kalz, and Y. Punie, “Does digital competence and occupational setting influence MOOC participation? Evidence from a cross-course survey,” J. Comput. High. Educ., vol. 29, pp. 28–46, 2017.

[17] C. Maitland and E. Obeysekare, “The Creation of CapitalThrough an ICT-based Learning Program: A Case Study of MOOC Camp,” ICTD, pp. 1–10, 2015.

[18] F. A. C. Junior et al., “Motivation to Learn and Distance Learning Programs: What Brazilian Workers Think about?,” Creat. Educ., vol. 07, pp. 2576–2596, 2016.