DIGITAL EDUCATION THROUGH SWAYAM PLATFORM: A STUDY ON LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Shilpa S

HoD & Assistant Professor,
PG Department of Commerce, JSS College for Women (Autonomous)
Saraswathipuram, Mysuru

ABSTRACT

Digital education has become a powerful area of education with the use of technology and digital tools to support and enhance teaching, learning, and assessment. It encompasses various forms of education, including online courses, interactive platforms, virtual classrooms, and the integration of digital resources into traditional face-to-face settings. By leveraging technology, digital education aims to make learning more accessible, personalized, and effective, empowering students with the digital skills needed for the modern world. Digital learning offers advantages like flexibility, accessibility, and a wide range of resources. The SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-learning for Young Aspiring Minds) is an Indian government-initiated free online learning platform offering Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to provide access to quality educational resources for students. This platform hosts courses prepared by experienced teachers and faculty, covering various subjects and designed to bridge the digital divide by offering learning materials, video lectures, self-assessment tests, and discussion forums. The present study analysed the learning opportunities and benefits of online courses on Swayam to students in getting high quality education. The study found that students have enormous opportunities to gain knowledge in various subjects through online courses of SWAYAM Platform. These courses are associated with various benefits such as free registration, quality education by expert faculties, credit transfer, flexibility of timings and place, increased employability skills and also an opportunity of lifelong learning.

Key words: Digital Education, SWAYAM, Massive open online courses, learning opportunities and benefits of MOOC's

INTRODUCTION

Digital education offers numerous advantages to students like flexibility to learn anytime, anywhere, and at one's own pace, personalized learning tailored to individual needs, cost-effectiveness by reducing traditional expenses, increased accessibility to vast resources and global perspectives, and enhanced engagement through interactive content. It also improves students' digital literacy and provides immediate feedback, which fosters a better understanding and retention of information.

SWAYAM is an Indian government portal for a free open online course (MOOC) providing educational courses for university and college learners. SWAYAM operates MOOCs learning resources in different ways and structures. Learning is delivered in four ways; e-Tutorial, e-Content, discussion forums and, self-assessment. The University Grants Commission (UGC) considers that universities should play a key role in publicizing and popularizing SWAYAM courses among their learners and the university, enabling them to gain from MOOCs on a more extensive footing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sivakumar Ramaraj (2019) highlights that there is an insufficiency in awareness among student-teachers regarding MOOCs like SWAYAM. It reveals a lack of basic understanding and confusion about the role of MOOCs in teacher training, particularly regarding Indian initiatives such as SWAYAM. It concludes that there's an urgent necessity not only to enhance comprehension of MOOCs among student-teachers but also to offer resources enabling them to incorporate MOOCs into their everyday classroom practices. Despite these challenges, the future for MOOCs in India appears promising.

Rupali S., Ambadkar. (2020) analyzed that the advent of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has significantly driven the modernization of technical education in India. The Indian Government's indigenous MOOC platform, SWAYAM has been established to provide accessible, equitable, and high-quality education to all enrolled participants. The success of SWAYAM hinges on the self-learning capabilities of its students. A primary factor influencing the utilization of MOOCs as an educational tool was the lack of ICT skills among learners.

Dr.Kanakappa Pujar (2021), in his study opined that there is a need for awareness among students enrolling in MOOCs. It needs to be spread appropriately using social media sites, blogs along with traditional methods. Teachers have to motivate students to use SWAYAM-MOOCs appropriately in an extensive manner, basic digital education and familiarity of the students with the digital environment is an obvious pre-requisite. Initially providing digital literacy at the grass-root level at the departments would be the first step towards promoting digital literacy. Teachers being the chief part of conducting MOOCs should be tech-friendly and familiar with the online digital environment. On the other hand, introducing MOOCs in some regional languages will be a subtle initiative to preserve the regional culture and linguistic heritage of the nation. Thus, the online courses can incorporate Quality, Affordability, Scalability, Inclusion, and Employability in the Indian Educational Society.

Dr. M. Balasubramaniam (2021) in his study found that 45.46% of student-teachers possess a high level of awareness about SWAYAM-MOOCs, largely due to their active engagement in e-learning. However, 24.74% of student-teachers exhibit a low level of awareness owing to limited exposure to SWAYAM-MOOCs. Additionally, the research indicates that female student-teachers specifically lack adequate awareness regarding SWAYAM-MOOCs.

Singh T. et.al., (2022) in their study found that more than 70% of those surveyed dedicate time to SWAYAM courses and believe they contribute positively to their knowledge acquisition. Findings suggest that while SWAYAM courses are seen as flexible, innovative, and interactive tools, they may not significantly enhance employability and could pose usability challenges.

Mishel Elizabeth Jacob (2022), his study shows that Students express that participating in online courses through SWAYAM allows them flexibility in managing their time effectively. The primary appeal of SWAYAM courses lies in this flexibility, which students highly value. Additionally, the credibility of the programs offered by esteemed institutions such as IITs, NITs, etc., serves as a compelling factor that attracts enrollments in SWAYAM courses.

Sakil Mahaldar (2023) in his study concluded that SWAYAM platform serves as a valuable opportunity for individuals who lack access to traditional education. It enables students to cultivate their skills effectively, offering a pathway to transfer credits within the platform.

Objectives

1. To study the concept of SWAYAM-MOOC's

2. To evaluate the learning opportunities of SWAYAM-MOOC's to Students

3. To examine the benefits of SWAYAM-MOOC's to Students

4. To provide suggestions to students in planning to get their online courses under SWAYAM.

Scope

Due to advancement of technology, students are getting enormous opportunities to get digital education though various online platforms. The present study analyses the learning opportunities and benefits of SWAYAM-MOOC's to Students. The study has also provided some suggestions to students to get their online courses under SWAYAM.

Research Methodology

The present study is a conceptual study based on secondary survey. Secondary data has been collected from various secondary sources like books, articles from various journals, websites etc.

SWAYAM Platform for MOOC's

SWAYAM was launched by the Ministry of Education to address the three cardinal principles of India's education policy: access, equity, and quality. It aims to bridge the digital divide for learners who have limited access to educational resources by providing them with high-quality, interactive e-learning material. The platform can be accessed anytime, anywhere, and on any device connected to the internet. SWAYAM hosts courses across a wide range of disciplines, including science, engineering, technology, humanities, social sciences, law, and management. The content is curated by subject matter experts from top educational institutions in India, such as IITs and IIMs. Each course is structured with four components to enrich the learning experience such as Video lectures, specially prepared reading material that can be downloaded or printed, Self-assessment tests and quizzes and online discussion forum for clearing doubts.

The SWAYAM-MOOC's are completely free to learn courses, but students must pay a nominal fee to register for and take the final proctored exam if they wish to receive a certificate. The University Grants Commission (UGC) allows for the transfer of credits earned through SWAYAM courses to a student's academic record in their home institution, making online learning more integrated with formal education. In an effort to be more inclusive, course materials on the platform are being translated into several Indian languages.

The platform offers a diverse array of courses across disciplines like Science, Engineering, Humanities, Law, and Management, catering to students from school to post-graduate levels. A core objective of SWAYAM is to ensure that the best educational resources reach even the most disadvantaged students, helping to reduce the digital gap. University and college students can transfer credits earned from SWAYAM courses to their academic records, up to a certain percentage as specified by the UGC and AICTE's Credit Framework Regulation. The platform aims to provide opportunities for life-long learning and self-actualization for anyone in the world interested in learning a new subject. A significant initiative has involved translating courses into various regional languages to further improve accessibility for learners across India.

The SWAYAM platform offers accessible, affordable, high-quality education to students across India, providing a diverse range of courses from top institutions with flexible learning options, interactive content like quizzes and forums, and government-recognized certification for skill development and career advancement.

SWAYAM aims to connect students who have been left out of the digital revolution to mainstream knowledge, providing access to top-tier resources. By providing access to lectures by top faculty, the platform helps maintain a higher standard of education nationally, which helps standardize outcomes. SWAYAM aligns with the National Education Policy 2020 by promoting digital learning and lifelong education, making it a valuable tool for schools and institutions.

All the courses offered by SWAYAM are recognized by the government of India. All the courses are valid in the country. UGC announced a "Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through SWAYAM" regulation where credit transfer was defined. The UGC regulation requires Universities to make changes in their rules to incorporate provisions for credit mobility and MOOC courses under the SWAYAM platform. Certificates will be given upon completing the criteria of the course taken, and that certificate can be used for credit mobility for academic credits.

SWAYAM PRABHA is an education learning platform initiated by the Ministry of Education (MoE) available through 40 DTH channels. This initiative provides an educational program on television.

National Coordinators for SWAYAM Courses

Ten national coordinators are appointed to manage the course content and each coordinator is assigned a particular area for maintenance

1. **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for self-paced and international courses.

2. **National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for engineering sector courses.

3. **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for non-technical post-graduate education.

4. **Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for undergraduate education.

5. **National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for school education.

6. **National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for school education.

7. **Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for out-of-school students.

8. **Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for management studies.

9. **National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research (NITTTR)** has been appointed as a National coordinator by MoE for Teacher training program.

10. **INI-Institute of National Importance** has been appointed as a National Coordinator by MoE for Teacher training program.

Benefits of the SWAYAM Platform to Students

- **Affordable Certification Options:** Many courses are offered for free to Indian learners, with affordable certification options available for those who wish to obtain it. It helps the students to gain knowledge on various areas of their interest at littlt/free of cost.

- **Wide Array of Subjects:** SWAYAM features a wide array of subjects, including science, arts, engineering, management, and vocational training, catering to both academic and skill-based needs. Hence the students of different streams are able to gain knowledge on various subjects through online courses as well as to obtain the certificates.

- **High Standards of Education:** Courses are designed and taught by experienced faculty from prestigious Indian institutions like IITs and IIMs, ensuring high standards of education. Hence the students can get quality education at free of cost.

- **Flexibility:** Learners can access courses anytime, anywhere, allowing them to study at their own place and manage their schedules effectively.

- **E-Learning Materials:** The platform includes various learning materials, such as video lectures, reading materials, quizzes, and discussion forums for peer-to-peer engagement. It helps the students in effectively understanding the course contents.

- **Skill-Based Courses:** SWAYAM offers skill-based courses tailored to industry needs, helping to enhance the employability of learners.

- **Credit Transfer:** A significant benefit is the ability for students to transfer credits earned from approved SWAYAM courses into their university degrees, as permitted by UGC guidelines.

- **Certification:** Completion of courses and passing the final exam can lead to government-recognized certificates, which add credibility to a learner's resume.

- **Reducing the disparity between urban and rural learning opportunities:** By providing online educational resources, SWAYAM aims to make quality education accessible to students in rural and remote areas, reducing the disparity between urban and rural learning opportunities.

- **Lifelong Learning:** The platform supports lifelong learning by offering courses in various formats, from school level to postgraduate and professional development.

Opportunities from the SWAYAM Platform to Students

The SWAYAM platform offers significant opportunities for learners, educators, and the Indian education system by providing free access to high-quality education from top institutions. With the introduction of SWAYAM Plus, the focus has expanded to include industry-relevant skills and professional development to improve employability.

The SWAYAM platform offers students a wide range of academic and career opportunities to opportunities to enhance their knowledge, develop new skills, and gain academic advantages at little to no cost. It is a government initiative designed to provide high-quality educational resources to all, bridging the digital divide. Students can avail the the following benefits from SWAYAM-MOOC's

- **Transferable academic credits:** Universities and colleges can accept and transfer up to 40% of credits earned from SWAYAM courses towards a student's degree

program, as per UGC regulations. This allows students to gain credits for a diverse range of courses outside of their standard curriculum.

- **Access content from top institutions:** Students can learn from high-quality courses developed and taught by faculty from premier institutions, including IITs, IIMs, and other central universities. This provides access to a standard of education that might otherwise be out of reach.

- **Receive recognized certification:** Upon successful completion of a course and passing the proctored exam, students receive a government-recognized certificate. These certifications enhance a student's resume and are valued by employers, providing a competitive edge in the job market.

- **Enhance professional skills:** SWAYAM offers career-oriented courses that help students gain specific skills that are in high demand by employers. This focus on practical, industry-relevant knowledge helps improve employability and career prospects.

- **Prepare for competitive exams:** The platform offers courses that can assist students preparing for various competitive examinations like UGC-NET and UPSC.

SWAYAM Plus for professional development

A newer initiative, SWAYAM Plus, focuses specifically on providing employment-focused and professional development courses. It offers programs in sectors such as Manufacturing, Energy, Healthcare, and Information Technology, with an emphasis on imparting future skills. SWAYAM Plus works with strategic partners from both industry and academia to offer high-quality, relevant learning programs. SWAYAM Plus is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform for professional development, launched by the Indian Ministry of Education and operated by IIT Madras. It provides high-quality, employment-oriented courses in various sectors like IT, manufacturing, and healthcare, offering multilingual content, credit recognition, and career-focused learning to enhance employability and support the professional journeys of learners across India.

SWAYAM Plus is an expansion of the existing SWAYAM online learning platform, with a new focus on professional development and enhancing learners' employability through industry collaborations. The original SWAYAM platform was primarily focused on academic courses offered by educational institutions, while SWAYAM Plus adds job-centric, skill-based programs. Operated by the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, this Ministry of Education initiative partners with leading companies like L&T, Microsoft, and Cisco to ensure the courses meet industry needs and standards.

Findings

Enrolling in and learning from SWAYAM courses is completely free. A minimal fee is only charged for those who wish to register for the proctored certification exam. This removes financial barriers to accessing quality education. SWAYAM courses are structured into four quadrants, providing a comprehensive learning experience. Such as Video lectures taught by expert educators, Reading materials which are downloadable and printable e-content, Self-assessment Quizzes and tests to reinforce learning, Online Discussion forums to clarify doubts with peers and instructors.

Students can access course materials 24/7 and learn at their own pace, from anywhere with an internet connection. This flexibility is especially beneficial for students with busy schedules or those living in remote areas. SWAYAM content can be accessed through a mobile app,

making it more convenient for on-the-go learning. Additionally, the SWAYAM Prabha initiative broadcasts educational programs through dedicated DTH channels, further increasing accessibility. To ensure wider inclusivity, many SWAYAM courses have been translated into major Indian languages. The platform hosts thousands of courses across various disciplines, from school-level subjects to engineering, management, humanities, and social sciences. Completing a course and passing the optional proctored exam can lead to a certificate that adds value to a learner's professional credentials. Courses completed on SWAYAM can be used for credit transfer at affiliated universities, as per UGC regulations. This offers flexibility and can reduce the overall academic workload.

Courses are developed by expert faculty from premier Indian institutions like IITs, IIMs, and other leading universities, ensuring a high standard of content. Through initiatives like SWAYAM Plus, learners can acquire job-ready skills in growing sectors like manufacturing, IT, and healthcare, enhancing their career prospects. SWAYAM Plus offers industry partnerships to provide relevant, real-world expertise.

Suggestions to students

As SWAYAM platform is an initiative of Indian Government to provide high quality online education to learners at free of cost, students can avail the various benefits from this platform by properly planning their schedule and requirement.

To effectively plan for SWAYAM courses, students should strategically select courses, manage their time, understand the assessment process, and actively engage with the material. Planning is crucial because SWAYAM courses, while free to enroll, require dedication to complete weekly assignments and pass a proctored final exam to earn a certificate. If students want to transfer SWAYAM credits to their college or university, first they should check its policy and get approval from the academic department or SWAYAM Nodal Officer.

Students should pay attention to select the right course by considering its duration, credit and course details. Even though students can enroll in multiple courses, it is recommended not to take on more than they can handle. Generally, one can appear for exams for a maximum of four courses per semester. Time and study management should be properly planned in advance to avoid over burden on oneself. Weekly module structure of SWAYAM courses can be used to plan dedicated time for video lectures and assignments.

Students need to create an Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) account by Registering at abc.gov.in to ensure your earned credits and certificates are stored digitally and can be easily transferred. They can add their SWAYAM certification to their resume to showcase the newly acquired skills and dedication to potential employers.

Students studying at schools and colleges can take the guidance of their teachers with regard to SWAYAM-MOOC's which helps them in understanding the working of SWAYAM platform and its advantages. Teachers can help the students in proper channelisation of student's interest and time.

CONCLUSION

The SWAYAM platform offers opportunities to various learners including students towards free, accessible, and high-quality education across various disciplines, with courses from top institutions and a focus on skill development and career advancement which emphasizes employable skills and industry-focused learning. SWAYAM-MOOC's provide Affordable skill-based learning with credit recognition, access to content in multiple Indian languages, flexibility for working professionals and students, and enhanced employability and

entrepreneurship prospects, especially for those in rural areas. Even though this platform is not completely free from technological issues and problems, the future for MOOCs in India appears promising. Students can make optimum utilization of the benefits offered by SWAYAM-MOOC's by properly managing their schedule for SWAYAM-MOOC's along with their regular traditional courses.

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