

Abstract

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become a significant influence in the global field of education, providing flexible and easily accessible learning options for students throughout the world. The Indian government initiated the SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) platform to utilize the potential of MOOCs in order to improve the quality of higher education. This program is especially pertinent for Assam, where physical and socio-economic obstacles frequently restrict the availability of high-quality education. Despite the potential of SWAYAM, there has been a lack of comprehensive research on its effective application and acceptance in higher education institutions in Assam; therefore, the present study focused on providing a comprehensive description of the institutional practices of SWAYAM MOOCs' implementation in these institutions and examining Students attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs. The study also aimed to evaluate the problems related to the implementation of SWAYAM from the viewpoints of students, SWAYAM coordinators, and SWAYAM course coordinators.

In the first chapter, the researcher briefly explained the background of the study, including the philosophical bases of MOOCs, Open educational resources, and sustainable development. This chapter also highlights the historical development of MOOCs, the development of MOOCs in India. Further, the chapter provides a detailed explanation of the concept of SWAYAM and its unique attributes, as well as the structure of SWAYAM, the scope of SWAYAM, and the different national coordinators of SWAYAM. This chapter sets the stage with institutional practices of SWAYAM MOOCs and Students attitudes towards SWAYAM MOOCs. It outlines the potential benefits of integration of SWAYAM MOOCs, and the challenges associated with SWAYAM MOOCs implementation. It describes an overview of the SWAYAM MOOCs followed by a conceptual framework of the study. Special emphasis is given to the significance and rationale of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, hypotheses of the study, operational definitions of the terms used, and delimitations of the study.

The second chapter provides an extensive review of the existing literature on MOOCs in both international and Indian contexts. Lastly, the chapter elucidates the research gaps in the available literature, particularly in the context of North-East India.

In the third chapter of the thesis, the researcher unfolds the methodological underpinnings of this research. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design for conducting the

research study. For this study, researcher selected ten higher education institutions in Assam where SWAYAM MOOCs courses are adopted, including Assam Don Bosco University, Dibrugarh University, Gauhati University, Royal Global University, Cotton University, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Assam University, Tezpur University, and Krishnaguru Adhyatmik Viswavidyalaya which constitutes the population of the study. The study sample consisted of 424 students, 10 SWAYAM coordinators, and 14 SWAYAM course coordinators belonging to these institutions that were selected as the final sample of the study. Different tools, such as an attitude scale and questionnaire, have been used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The collected data were analysed using various statistical techniques such as frequency count, percentage, mean, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and thematic analysis.

The fourth chapter of the study focused on the analysis and interpretation of the research data. The findings of this study revealed that mentioned universities were actively participating and utilizing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) through the SWAYAM portal. They had specific policies and guidelines for the practice of MOOC programs in their institution. The data also revealed that the majority of the institutions (70%) are not involved in the development of MOOCs due to resource constraints, lack of technological infrastructure, financial limitations, or readiness to shift pedagogically from traditional to online education. It was found that the majority of students (60%) at the university had requested the adoption of SWAYAM MOOCs. The study also revealed that 90% of SWAYAM coordinators were aware of the UGC Amendment 2021 related to SWAYAM MOOCs, highlighting the significant outreach and impact of the amendment within the academic community. Findings also suggested that 100% of SWAYAM course coordinators were aware of different SWAYAM national coordinators, indicating a high level of knowledge and awareness among the SWAYAM course coordinators. The finding revealed that the majority of the (92.86%) SWAYAM course coordinators received technical support; 71.43% of the SWAYAM course coordinators received administrator support or encouragement; 85.71% of the SWAYAM course coordinators received monetary benefit; 42.86% of the SWAYAM course coordinators received colleague support or encouragement; and 28.57% of the SWAYAM course coordinators received teaching or service recognition when teaching MOOCs. The result also showed that all the SWAYAM course coordinators had positive views regarding MOOCs significantly impacting their

teaching philosophy. The result indicated that 78.57% of the SWAYAM course coordinators actively participated in different workshops related to MOOCs. The finding revealed that most of the students (41.75%) students had an extremely unfavourable attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs. Following this, 18.16% of students had a highly unfavourable attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs, 21.46% of students had a below moderately unfavourable attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs, 13.44% of students had a moderate attitude towards SWAYAM MOOCs, 3.77% students had above moderately favourable attitude of towards SWAYAM MOOCs, 1.41% students had a highly favourable attitude of towards SWAYAM MOOCs.

The study finding also suggested that there was no significant difference between male and female postgraduate student's attitudes towards the SWAYAM MOOCs with regard to gender ($U=18514.000$, $P>.05$), and no significant difference in Students attitude scores towards SWAYAM MOOCs according to their locality [$\chi^2(2)=1.968$, $p>.05$]. The finding of this study also revealed that there was no significant difference between the attitude of students towards the SWAYAM MOOCs with regard to stream [$\chi^2(2)=4.483$, $p>.05$]. After evaluating the mean rankings of pertinent demographic variables the study had a similar attitude of students toward the SWAYAM MOOCs. This study outlines several challenges, including course content, assessment and discussion forum, assessment learning strategies, and challenges related to the relevance of SWAYAM MOOCs.

In the fifth chapter, the researcher analyzed and explained the findings in relation to the current study of literature. This chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the study's results in relation to past studies, along with the researcher's rationale.

Finally, the sixth chapter concluded the study by providing a concise overview of significant findings and offering practical suggestions for teachers, educational administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in a broader sense. The chapter also suggested potential areas for future exploration.

Keywords: MOOCs, SWAYAM, Higher education institution, Stakeholders, Attitude, Institutional practices