

MOOCs: Exploring Motivation and Obstacles in a Developing Country

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Abstract

One of the innovations in education is the development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). MOOCs provide an opportunity for everyone to study anywhere, anytime, and free. In addition to having various advantages, MOOCs also have various shortcomings or obstacles, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia. Universitas Terbuka (UT) is one of the universities in Indonesia that offers MOOCs. The main problem in MOOCs is the low level of completion rate, including in UT, which only reaches 14.95%. For this reason, we need to know what problems faced by participants and their expectations so MOOCs program can be managed better. This article is an exploratory study by collecting data through survey to UT's MOOCs participants. The result shows that to get certificate and knowledge become the biggest motivation of participants. Another result shows that the biggest obstacle is participants don't have enough time to participate actively in MOOCs. Some practical implications will be discussed in this paper to answer to reach the objective of this study.

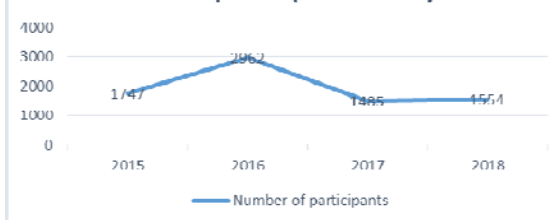
Key words: completion rate, MOOCs, motivation, online learning.

Introduction

MOOCs have received a great attention from the academicians and educational community over the past years (Gaebel, 2013). MOOCs provide alternative ways for people to gain new knowledge by utilizing information and communication technology. MOOCs are designed as open and free courses, meaning that anyone can utilize and access them to learn on the internet (Kay et al, 2013). Yuan and Powell (2013) stated that MOOCs will be able to solve many educational problems by providing free to access, cutting edge courses, thus reducing the cost of university level education and enabling learners in developing countries. Indonesia is a developing country in Southeast Asia with a total population is over 238 million people. However, the gross enrollment rate of higher education is only 31.75%, lower than other countries in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand (Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017).

UT is a public higher education institution that implements open and distance education so all Indonesian people can afford higher education. To disseminate knowledge to more Indonesian citizens all over Indonesia, UT offer MOOCs since 2014. The number of participants is quite large, ranging from 1.485 until 2.962 participants as in Figure 1. However, the completion rate is very low, only 14.95% (Harsasi *et al.*, 2017). In order to conduct better MOOCs so that the participants can really get advantage, it is important to explore motivation, obstacles, and expectations of the participants. This paper aims to explore motivation and obstacles of participants in participating MOOCs that will serve as input to improve UT's MOOCs.

Figure 1. Number of MOOCs Participants (2015-2018)



Literature Review

MOOCs is a way to offer world-class education to a (massive) number of students around the globe with Internet access (online) for low, or no fees (open) (Aboshady et al., 2015). Completion rate is a topic that some researchers have focused on MOOCs both in developed countries and in developing countries (Yuan & Powell, 2013; Alraimi *et al.*, 2015; Harsasi *et al.*, 2017). Those studies showed that the completion rate of MOOCs is very low, around 10%. Recently, there has been a small but growing literature looking at the factors which affect learner retention within MOOCs (Hone & El Said., 2016). Despite a great expectation of MOOCs as a new way to disseminate knowledge without any boundaries, there are still some obstacles in MOOCs. However, Yuan & Powell (2013) argued that dropout rates in MOOCs are not the main issue since the main goal of MOOCs is to provide the opportunity to anyone to learn from high-quality courses without incurring a charge. Flexibility of participants to learn is a major concern in this regard or in other words completion rate becomes a consequence of the system. However, as a learning system, MOOCs still need to be improved in order to spread more advantages to people. The system was build based on certain objectives, so, it is common for an institution to reach them by improving its MOOCs.

In Indonesia, MOOCs have adopted since 2007 by Zenius, which offer free courses through CD and internet. In 2014, The Government and six leading universities launched online courses but only for students to take free courses from other universities. In 2015, some universities started to offer MOOCs, including UT. However, dropout rate is the main problem that most of the participants failed to complete their learning through MOOCs.

Methodology

This study is an exploratory study. The aim of this study is to explore motivation and obstacles of MOOCs' participants in UT so we can improve our MOOCs. Data collection was conducted through online survey to all participants who participated in MOOCs from 2016 - 2017. We chose participants from 2016 - 2017 assuming the participants still remembered well the MOOCs they were following. We did not include participants in 2018 because at the beginning of 2019 the MOOCs program in 2018 was still in the scoring process. The questionnaire were developed based on Onah *et al.* (2014). The questionnaire were divided into four parts. The first part consist of questions regarding respondents' demographics, such as age, gender, occupation, and educational background. The second part is the question about factors that motivate participants to join MOOCs. The third part is questions about why participants failed to complete MOOCs (only for those who failed to complete MOOCs). And the last part of questionnaire is the questions about their expectation for better MOOCs in the future.

Results

There are 66 respondents who have given feed back to the survey. First part of the questionnaires is about respondents' demographic. The result showed that 67.7% of respondents are male and 32.3% are female. Most respondents are working in as employee in private sector (44%), civil servant (24%), lecturer and teacher (17%), entrepreneur (11%), and others (4%). Age range of respondents are as follows: 24-30 years old (32%), 31-40 years old (27 %), 42-50 years old (24%), 17-23 years old (12%), and over 50 years old (5%). In terms of education, 47% were high school graduates, 40% were undergraduates, 12% were postgraduates, and 1% were doctoral graduates. The second part of the questionnaires is about factors that motivate participants to join MOOCs. Result shows that most respondents are motivated to join MOOCs because they want to get the certificate, followed by to have knowledge, want to know about MOOCs, and want to know about online learning. The third

part of the questionnaires is about the reason why they failed or obstacles they have faced. Most answer is they don't have enough time to keep on learning through MOOCs, difficulties in internet access, tutors are not active, the content is difficult, less skill to run an online learning application, and MOOCs are below their expectation.

Regarding the result, we can conclude the implication as follows. First, most of our participants are male, between 24-30 years old, they have worked (most are in private sector), and high school graduates. What motivate them most is to get certificate and knowledge, why they failed is because they don't have enough time to learn through online learning. This result become the basis for us to improve the MOOCs. First, the MOOCs participants are young and already working who are motivated to gain new knowledge. This is a confirmation for us that MOOCs still have a hope to be developed regarding the fact that youth are becoming increasingly competent and knowledgeable about technology in all its various forms (Hannum & McCombs, 2008). They are displaying a range of creative and problem-solving skills in their use of technology tools. Clem and Simpson (2007) report that today's digital learners are different in many ways that require teachers and other educators working with these students to design new kinds of lessons that engage students with new technologies, including simulation-style games. Therefore, we need to increase the activity and appearance of MOOCs to become more interesting. At present, we only offer MOOCs in the form of text and audio videos. In the future, it will be more interesting if we are able to offer learning programs that are not only text based, but are also based on simulation, or even games. We also found that the cause of participants' failure was because they did not have enough time to study online. To overcome this, in the future, we must strive to develop a system that can remind participants to carry out online learning activities, such as systems connected to e-mail or telephone contacts. Participant activity can be identified through a learning analytic system that can quickly detect if there are participants who are inactive and must be reminded. In addition, the difficulty of internet access also becomes an obstacle to the success of online learning. This situation mostly faced by our participants in remote areas. However, the government also continues to develop internet access that is evenly distributed throughout Indonesia. This is the government's commitment to improve national competitiveness including in the education sector. In addition, tutor activity is also the main key to the success of MOOCs. In the future, it is necessary for us to design a better recruitment process by involving tutors who have a high interested in developing online learning.

Behind all the shortcomings of existing MOOCs, we still have a great hope that MOOCs can be developed in Indonesia. The high number of participants every year become the basis for us to be confident that online learning has an opportunity as a way to disseminate knowledge freely. In order to achieve this goal, we have to make so many improvements, starting from developing a better display of the MOOCs site, designing MOOCs participant activities, developing a better recruitment system of tutors, and designing the whole MOOCs in a better way.

Conclusion and Limitation of the Study

This study aims to determine the motivations and obstacles of MOOCs participants. The results show that the motivation of participants were to obtain certificates and also knowledge. While the biggest obstacle for participants is that they do not have enough time to participate in MOOCs actively, difficulties in internet access and inactive tutors. Therefore, a number of steps that we have to take including developing system that can remind participants to carry out activities, design more interesting material more than just text and audio videos, and also plan a better recruitment system of tutors. This study has weakness of not having in-depth interviews with respondents. Data collection only relies on respondents'

answers to the questionnaire, so we couldn't get more complete information. We hope that future research will be conducted to reveal more clearly what and how MOOCs are desired by participants so we can develop a better and suitable system based on participants' needs.

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