



Massive Open Online Course: Opportunities and Challenges in State Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia

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Massive Open Online Course: Opportunities and Challenges in State Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia

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Bio Profile:

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Abstract

Online learning has become one of the most desirable learning media for the millennial generation, compared to offline options. This indicates a major change in current main learning media. This paper focuses on mapping the opportunities and challenges in Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) media for lecturers and students at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo (IAIN Palopo). This study applies qualitative research by interviewing lecturers and students from the English department, and observing the teaching and learning process in the classrooms. The findings of this study show that MOOC has not been applied extensively as a medium of learning in the department. The main constraint found was the lack of information about MOOC; the lecturer and students were not well trained in applying MOOC in teaching and learning. Several MOOC programmes likely to be followed by both lecturers and students in the IAIN Palopo English department include English for Islamic education departments, English for Islamic history and culture, and language testing and assessment. Finally, this research also recommends that state Islamic higher education should create a MOOC programme for any department that can support quality improvements in its graduates.

Introduction

A unique feature of educational institutions in Indonesia is the existence of universities under the guidance of the Ministry of Religion. Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo is one such campus, and it fosters several study programmes, including those in the English department. Lecturers and students in the language study programme are required to respond to the dynamics of education, including online learning. The rapid development of technology has encouraged the creation of various kinds of innovation in utilising technology in daily life; this pattern is increasingly widespread, including in the field of education. The use of technology in the education field allows virtual interaction between lecturers and students, eliminating the need for face-to-face contact (Yustim, 2010).

Nowadays the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is one of the important technological developments in the field of education (Mabuan et al, 2018). MOOC has become a facility that can be utilised by the academic community for virtual interaction. Education has only recently become increasingly accessible to various parties. MOOC is at the centre of paid and free online learning activities (Vera, 2018). It provides an opportunity

for students – including higher education students – to improve their ability. The advantages of MOOC are that it employs various forms of learning, such as presenting short videos or speeches, and evaluates repeatedly at each stage of learning (Hoy, 2014). The available topics in MOOC are varied, so that the students can be given topics based on their interests.

In Indonesia, MOOC is still not very widely used in the academic community. Only a few campuses in Indonesia have used it as a learning resource, including Institut Teknologi Bandung, Universitas Gajah Mada, Universitas Binus, Universitas Ciputra, and Universitas Terbuka. In fact, it has many benefits in educational activities. As stated by Jonan (2016: 203), MOOC can improve the information literacy skills of various groups, especially educators and education staff. Aydin (2017) also argued that higher education institutions in Turkey saw that MOOCs can provide flexible learning opportunities. According to him, the MOOC programme also attracts – and expands learning opportunities among – the younger generation. Higher education institutions in Turkey even offer courses in Turkish and few in English, which began in 2014 and 2015.

In the South Sulawesi region, specifically in Palopo City, the MOOC is still not familiar. The community of Palopo City still relies on conventional learning. The relationship between MOOC and conventional educational institutions is symbiotic mutualism. It develops with the support of conventional education, but will expand the reach of conventional education to the public, especially to those experiencing obstacles to accessing education. The aim to be achieved by this MOOC is to expand people's access to education and life skills.

Besides the various facilities offered by the MOOC, it also faces challenges. Zhu (2018) pointed out that the several diverse challenges to MOOC design included issues around pedagogy, resources, and logistics. The design of the MOOC requires in-depth analysis for it to be able to fulfil the needs of the community. Pedagogical challenges, especially, need to be solved with the involvement of educational, psychological, and educational technology experts.

MOOC serves as a supporting vehicle to face the global era and to increase self-potential. It is a model for learning that can be carried out online on a large scale, with participants widely spread over diverse and remote areas. The implementation of MOOC model learning activities is usually carried out through web resources that can be accessed through the internet network. Thus, there are two characteristics of the MOOC model: (1) utilisation of internet and web networks as a means of conducting distance learning activities;

(2) a large number of participants and large-scale learning. The development of the MOOC model learning programme is divided into six development steps:

- a) **Task Definition:** the first step is to teach learning participants the ability to describe what must be done, in descriptive, structured and directed language.
- b) **Information-Seeking Strategies:** the next step is providing learning participants the means to create alternative strategies in getting the information needed.
- c) **Location and Access:** in this step, learning participants are directed towards being able to find sources of information they need.
- d) **Use of Information:** after finding their sources, learning participants are taught to use the information so that it can be useful to the public.
- e) **Synthesis:** in this stage, learning participants are taught to develop problem-solving skills.
- f) **Evaluation:** this stage teaches learning participants “how to” make a decision and assess whether it is successful or not, and to gauge the quality of a developed programme.

In Indonesia, obstacles to accessing the MOOC are an unreliable internet network, low English skills, and heavy working hours for lecturers. Semenova and Rudakova (2017) outlined obstacles to implementing MOOC, including lack of knowledge of basic subjects, inadequate education levels, and lack of prior experience with MOOCs.

The presence of MOOC technology can be considered as a learning alternative; generally, it offers not only free courses, but also prepares certificates if a student takes a course to completion. To take part in an open course, participants are required to be literate in digital media, have capable foreign language skills, and to have substantial independence and learning discipline (Tsauri, 2013)

With all the conveniences and advantages offered by MOOC, students and lecturers in the English Department are required to be familiar with it in order to improve their abilities. Thus, this article focuses on studying the opportunities and challenges MOOC presents to Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palopo.

Methods

This study applied qualitative research methods through interviewing lecturers and students, and observing the teaching and learning process. Qualitative research focuses on process as well as on a product or outcome; researchers are particularly interested in understanding how things occur (Creswell, 1994).

According to Moleong (2013), qualitative research is intended to provide holistic insight into phenomena experienced by the research subject, such as behaviour, perception, motivation, action, etc. It should offer description in the form of words and language, in a specific, natural context, utilising various natural methods. The data was collected through interviews and observations. The subjects interviewed were the lecturers and students in the English Department of IAIN Palopo. The researcher also observed the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The researcher interviewed lecturers and students in order to find out whether they knew about the MOOC, and to witness their perceptions of the opportunities and challenges of the MOOC at Palopo IAIN.

Results

Massive Open Online Course is a learning system like other open online courses on a large scale, aimed at allowing unlimited participation and access through the web. In addition to providing traditional course materials such as videos, reading matter and discussions of problems, MOOCs also provide an interactive user forum that helps in building communities of students, teachers, and teaching assistants. It is the latest development in terms of e-learning.

According to Intan (2017), the MOOC Forum for Network Development of the Indonesian Online Learning System (SPADA) has been implemented by 51 higher education institutions and 116 partners of universities, involving 6,927 students. SPADA Indonesia, up to 2017, offered 253 online courses (online courses), 143 open courses (open courses), and 172 open materials (open content). The basic idea in implementing SPADA is to improve access to quality higher education through the application of MOOCs as a programme to increase credit transfers.

Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Palopo, as an Indonesian university, should be able to apply MOOC in the learning process. It will open students' horizons to exploring various materials and other experiences. In today's millennial era, it has become essential for a student to gain experience, materials, and learning beyond what they can absorb in the process of regular lectures on campus.

Based on research conducted on lecturers and students at IAIN Palopo, the results showed that in the current millennial era, only a handful of lecturers and students knew and had engaged with the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). From the results of observing classroom lectures, it was found that the learning process was still conventional, while

interviews revealed that most respondents knew nothing about the MOOC. Interviews were conducted for lecturers and students at IAIN Palopo to see how far they knew about the MOOC, and about the opportunities and challenges it presents to lecturers and students.

The first of two diagrams of interview data displayed below illustrates whether or not respondents were aware of the MOOC. Data was taken before the Massive Open Online Course was explained. In the second diagram, the data displayed was gathered after an explanation with examples of the form of the MOOC.

The following is a diagram of the results of interviews with lecturers related to the MOOC before they were given an explanation of it:

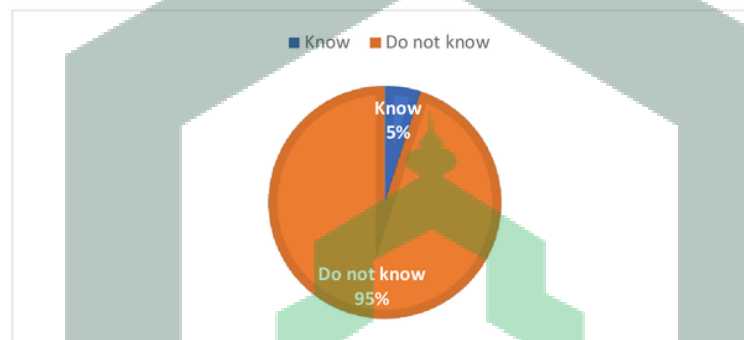


Diagram I: Lecturers awareness of MOOC before explanation.

The diagram above shows that many lecturers still do not know about the Massive Open Online Course, and in fact had never heard of it – they indicated that the researchers' questions were the first they had heard about it. The researcher asked each respondent about the MOOC, then offered an explanation about it, with examples of types of MOOC.

After an explanation of MOOC, the researcher again asked the respondents about it, and the following diagram shows results after interviewees had been given an explanation and examples:

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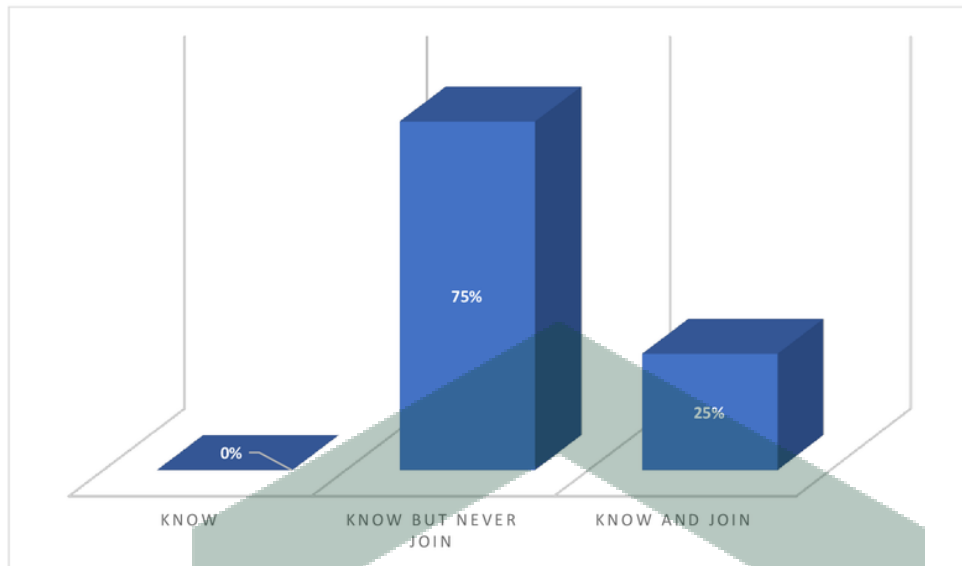


Diagram II: Lecturers' awareness about MOOC after explanation.

The diagram above shows that knowledge of MOOC among respondents, in this case the lecturers, was stronger after they were given an explanation and examples, but they still did not follow it. As many as 75% of respondents know about but have never participated in the MOOC. They knew of only some types of MOOC examples, but never followed or accessed the MOOC. In addition, 25% of respondents knew and had participated in the MOOC. Several MOOCs had been accessed by these respondents, such as future learning, Khan Academic, Udemi, Udacity, Coursera, Open Courseware, DuoLingo, Indonesia, Kelase, BangsaCerdas. Respondents admitted that they had opened these sites, but rarely joined the MOOC group. Meanwhile, data from students as respondents also found that the MOOC is still unknown, with the majority never having heard about it.

The following diagram shows results of interviews with students related to the MOOC before an explanation of it:

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Diagram III: Students' awareness of MOOC before explanation.

The diagram above illustrates how none of the students knew about the Massive Open Online Course. This was the first time they had heard the word "MOOC"; they had absolutely no prior knowledge of MOOC.

After being given an explanation of the MOOC, most of the students finally knew about it, and some had already joined in one of the forms of the MOOC. Most students of IAIN Palopo come from rural areas, which led to a lack of information regarding MOOC. Those who knew the MOOC said that the information came from various sources, including friends and lecturers, and from their own constant curiosity about internet sites.

After they were given an explanation and example related to the MOOC), the following data on students was obtained:

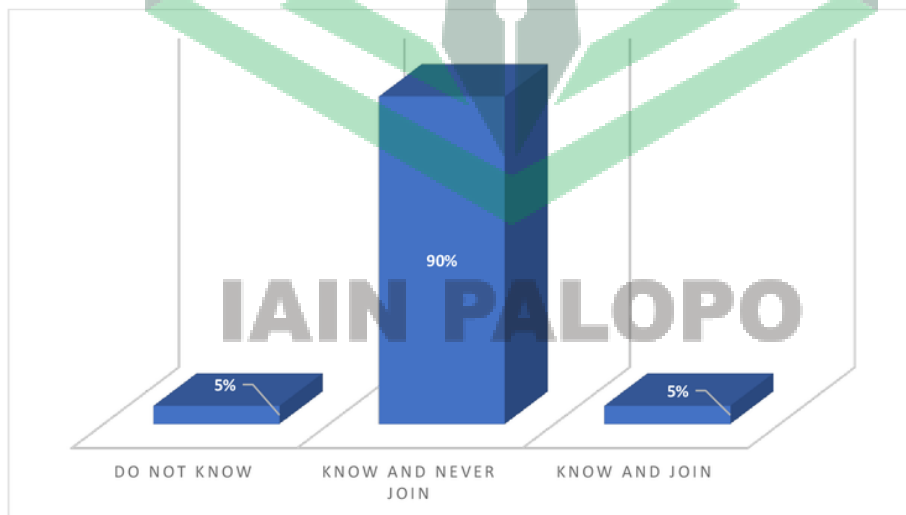


Diagram IV: Students' awareness of MOOC after explanation.

The diagram above suggests that the majority of respondents – about 90% – already knew about the MOOC but they never participated in it. They knew only a few examples of existing MOOCs, and only 5% had participated in one of its forms. It has not become popular among the students and lecturers of Palopo.

In this millennial era of global competition, online education will reach and meet the needs of the wider community, especially among developing countries such as Indonesia, where it will continue to grow into all corners of the country. This will be an advantage for the regions ready for this era; education will not be hampered because it can be carried out online, and not limited by time and place, so students can participate in learning classes as they do for general, face-to-face situations. However, it will be different for remote areas where facilities to implement the MOOC are inadequate.

The English lecturers and students taking part in the research at IAIN Palopo identified several opportunities and challenges presented by MOOC at their institution. Opportunities include:

1. They can access the MOOC freely by using the internet facilities available at the office or campus.
2. The MOOC can be accessed wherever and whenever needed through the mobile media they already use.
3. They can access various MOOCs on the internet because they can use English well, and most of the MOOCs use English.
4. There are many free MOOCs.

Respondents also reported the challenges of the MOOC as follows:

1. Most respondents have never taken an orientation course about the MOOC.
2. There is a lack of interest in joining the MOOC.
3. There is an absence of groups on their campuses specially formed for joining the MOOC.
4. Respondents are aware of a lack of MOOCs on religious aspects.
5. The MOOC requires high-speed internet access, but internet access on Palopo is still slow.

Facing the challenges above, the MOOC still cannot be maximally followed and applied on Palopo. For example, online courses or online classes are not yet popular in Palopo City.

Conventional learning is still a culture of lecturers and students. Correspondingly, Jeremy Knox (2014) stated that in open courses, participants often felt “overwhelmed”; most of them could not focus because of the large number of participants, and the discussions were too large in scale for them to understand.

In addition, the absence of training for lecturers in the use of online classes is another obstacle to applying the MOOC at IAIN Palopo. Lecturers and students have still not maximised their use of e-learning, which can improve the quality of their learning. According to Caporarello and Sarchioni (2014), e-learning is very important for reasons of flexibility, interactivity, and efficiency. More broadly, important factors of e-learning include: flexibility in managing time to learn; active participation of each member; the existence of a control mechanism that ensures the learning process takes place; the quality and structure of teaching materials; use of standardised and developing technology; instructor’s teaching style and learner’s learning style; learning motivation of students; student technical competence; and organisational support for e-learning activities.

Massive open online courses provide flexibility in the time and place of learning, as well as quality learning material/content provided by various well-known universities that partner with service providers of massive open online courses. The use of web-based media also allows the use of more varied content, ranging from electronic books (e-books), learning videos, and podcasts, to the use of interactive multimedia.

The results of Silvana and Fajar’s research (2016) revealed that the challenges to using MOOCs in Indonesia were internal and external. The internal factor is minimal learning, where many users of the MOOC stop before completing the MOOC course followed. Another factor is the ability to speak English well enough to make the most of the facilities available in the MOOC. External factors are the availability of MOOC access for mobile devices, convenience in loading MOOC learning materials such as videos, and the existence of several websites that request payment for allowing access to a number of menus in MOOCs.

Under current conditions at IAIN Palopo, the use of e-learning or MOOC is very difficult to maximise. Lecturers have limited ability in MOOC, and learning activity is still conventional – the use of teaching materials has still not led to MOOC. This affects their students, who have not been maximally directed to apply the MOOC.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the authors conclude that MOOCs are not well known to lecturers or students. They have yet to receive MOOC orientation, so are not familiar with online learning. In addition, the MOOC cannot be maximised if applied at IAIN Palopo, because of the “being overwhelmed” factor which is still an obstacle to the MOOC running effectively. Internet connectivity in IAIN Palopo is not yet adequate for maximising participation in the MOOC. In addition, higher education institutions must be able to design curriculum and learning methods that are very different from what they are now. Undeniably, the presence of MOOC can improve the quality of education. However, without preparation, qualified technology, and the availability of an adequate internet network, delivering MOOC at IAIN Palopo will be very difficult. Besides that, the orientation of the MOOC to lecturers and students must be carried out in order to apply the MOOC in this institution.

Pedagogical Implications

From the results of these studies, researchers expect that IAIN Palopo will prepare itself to try applying the MOOC, so that students and lecturers can further improve the quality of their learning process, offering alumni the qualities needed to compete nationally and internationally. In addition, MOOC may in the future provide alternative learning that makes education more evenly distributed. Indonesian programmers might be able to emulate MOOC from Europe and make open courses that are more local in taste, so that they can be followed by all Indonesian people without fear of their being hindered by language constraints.

MOOC development in the future must pay attention to several things. First, the contents of the MOOC must fulfil the community expectations. Second, the MOOC manager must cooperate with more educational institutions and private institutions. Third, the MOOC still lacks religious and Islamic education content, and that can be improved. Fourth, specifically in Indonesia, MOOC needs to look at mass organisations, because several mass organisations manage very large private educational institutions, such as Muhammadiyah, NU, al-Wasliyah, Nahdhatul Wathan, based in NTB, Mathlaul Anwar, based in Banten, Hidayatullah, based in East Kalimantan, Wahdah Islamiyah, based in Makassar, and others.

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