A Report on AC4ODL MOOC

(Third Cycle)

(December 01, 2021 - January 15, 2022)

BY: MS. PRASHANSA DAS

Academic Consultant, OSOU

ODISHA STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

A REPORT ON

ACADEMIC COUNSELLING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (AC4ODL) MOOC

INTRODUCTION:

In the open and distance learning system, the academic counselling sessions are very important. The sessions are meant for Informing, Advising and Counselling. The academic counselling can cover both academic and non-academic components at the various stages like at pre-entry, during entry to the programme, during the course of study, at the time of examination and post- study. The academic counsellors are mostly drawn from the formal higher educational system and the exposure towards the ODL system, therefore, is minimal. However, the academic counsellors are the pivotal link between the ODL institution and isolated distance learners. Their role in handling face-to-face and online academic counselling sessions at the study centre is very important. The role of an Academic Counsellor is multifarious and requires both tutoring and counselling. For maintaining quality in academic counselling, the accumulation of multi- dimensional skills, attributes and information is essential on the part of the counsellor in ODL. Among these, possessing information at various levels about the ODL system is an enabling factor to effect support isolated distance learners.

Teachers/Students/Educational Leaders/ODL Practitioners who want to learn more about the Academic Counselling in ODL will find this Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), Academic Counselling for ODL Learners (AC4ODL), informative and engaging. Using up-to-date learning design and simple, accessible technology, the course runs on an easy-to-use learning platform available via the Internet. The course is designed for Teachers and ODL Practitioners who want to build on their knowledge and practice in teaching and learning. It ran over four weeks and participants were required to spend approximately three to five study hours of time each week. The MOOC is specifically designed to accommodate learners' busy schedules, the course offers flexibility with options for learning the content. The participants acquired knowledge from readings, videos, discussions with other participants and instructors, meaningful exercises, and quizzes. Certification is available for those who wish to complete all required exercises and quizzes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Participants will be able to:

- define the concept of ODL and discuss the development of Distance Education (DE) at national and international level.
- explain the nature, characteristics, and importance of Self-Learning Materials in Distance Education

- discuss the importance of learner support in distance education and differentiate between counselling and tutoring.
- organize student support using various modes (face-to-face, online, using audio-visual media, computer etc.).
- conduct academic counselling sessions and develop effective learning skills.
- write tutor comments on the assignment responses to enhance learning.
- organize support for differently abled learners.
- use appropriate technology for learner support and create, use OER for academic counselling.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT:

The AC4ODL MOOC had 8 modules and the course development team prepared text modules, presentations, and videos explaining the content of the module. Further quizzes were also prepared for evaluating the learners. Course development team underwent a lot of research and discussion with experts for finalising the topic of the modules. Once after the finalisation of the topics an outline for the module content was drawn and then the text material was prepared. Apart from videos created by the course team few videos from experts were also added for enhancing the learning.

COURSE TEAM:

The members of the team were experts in the Open and Distance Learning and come from different universities and institutions. The team members were Prof. (Dr.) Arka Kumar Das Mohapatra, Vice-Chancellor, Odisha State Open University (OSOU), Dr. Manas Ranjan Panigrahi, Senior Programme Officer (Education), CEMCA, New Delhi, Dr. Abhilash Nayak, Regional Director at Patna Regional Center, IGNOU and Dr. Monica Nagpal, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi. Apart from the course development team the operations team played an important role in the development and deployment of the course. Prof. (Dr.) Manas Ranjan Pujari - Odisha State Open University, Ms. Prashansa Das - Odisha State Open University, Mr. Aseem Kumar Patel - Odisha State Open University, and Ms. Subhra Saraf - Odisha State Open University India formed the operations team.

COURSE DURATION:

The course was developed in English and it is spanned over 4 weeks covering 2 modules and one live interactive session by experts each week. The course requires its learners to spend only 3-5 hours each week as it is an introductory course on Academic Counselling.

COURSE CONTENTS:

Course contents included 8 modules having text material, video, presentation and transcript for each module. Course contents are depicted in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Details of the Course Contents/Resources

Sl.No.	Module	Videos	Text	Presentations
1.	About the Course	Introductory Video	Introduction	
2.	Concepts of ODL, Changing Nature of ODL	• Introduction and Characteristics of ODL • Functions of ODL, Advantages of ODL and the changing nature of ODL • Different types of Open and Distance Learning and types of ODL systems • ODL Regulations in India • National Education Policy 2020 India	Concepts of ODL and the Changing Nature of ODL	• Introduction and Characteristics of ODL • Functions of ODL, Advantages of ODL and the changing nature of ODL • Different types of Open and Distance Learning and types of ODL systems
3.	21st Century ODL Learners	• Understanding the ODL learner and the Conventional Learner • Characteristics of 21st Century Learners • Evolution of the ODL System • Learners of the 21st Century	21st Century ODL Learners	• Understanding the ODL learner and the Conventional Learner • Characteristics of 21st Century Learners • Evolution of the ODL System
4.	Learning Skills	• Introduction to Learning Skills • Critical Thinking • Communication • Collaboration • Creativity	Learning Skills	• Introduction to Learning Skills • Critical Thinking • Communication • Collaboration • Creativity
5.	Characteristics of Self-Learning Materials (SLM)	• Nature and Characteristics of Self-Learning Materials • Designing and Developing a Self-Learning Unit • Approaches to Designing Self-Learning Materials	Characteristics of Self Learning Materials (SLM)	• Nature and Characteristics of Self-Learning Materials • Designing and Developing a Self- Learning Unit • Approaches to Designing Self-Learning Materials
6.	Academic Counsellor and Counselling in Distance Education	• Academic Counselling and its Activity • Stages of Academic Counselling • Media of Counselling • Role and Responsibilities of ACs	Academic Counsellor and Counselling in DE Part I Academic Counsellor and Counselling in DE Part II	Academic Counselling and its Activity • Stages of Academic Counselling • Media of Counselling

No.	Module	Sub-topics	Module	Sub-topics
		• Pre-requisites and Preparations for Academic Counselling • Organising Counselling Sessions I • Organising Counselling Sessions II		• Pre-requisites and Preparations for Academic Counselling • Organising Counselling Sessions I • Organising Counselling Sessions II
7.	Support for PWD Learners	• Support to Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning • Role of Tutors in Supporting Learners with Disabilities • Factors Responsible for the Disadvantageous Position of PWDs • Empowering PWDs through Open and Distance Learning	Support to People with Disabilities in ODL	• Support to Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning • Role of Tutors in Supporting Learners with Disabilities • Factors Responsible for the Disadvantageous Position of PWDs • Empowering PWDs through Open and Distance Learning
8.	Technology in Distance Education	• OER, Accessing OER and Quality Assurance of OER • Creative Commons Licensing • MOOCs, Moodle LMS and SWAYAM	Technology in Distance Education	• OER, Accessing OER and Quality Assurance of OER • Creative Commons Licensing • MOOCs, Moodle LMS and SWAYAM
9.	Assessment in Distance Education	• Academic Significance of Assignments • Significance of Tutors Comments in ODL System • Role of Assessors in Assessment of Assignment • Assessment and Evaluation in ODL System	Assessment in Distance Education	• Academic Significance of Assignments • Significance of Tutors Comments in ODL System • Role of Assessors in Assessment of Assignment

Apart from the course modules, it was planned to conduct live online sessions for providing an opportunity to participants to listen to and interact with experts of the ODL systems. Each week one live session was conducted based on the modules of the week. There were 4 online sessions which were organized during the MOOC and all the videos

of the sessions and their PPTs are available for future reference and use. The live sessions organized are listed out in the table 2 below:

Table 2: Live Sessions during the Course

Weeks	Live Session	Experts
Week 1	Live Virtual Session on Module I: Concepts of ODL, Changing Nature of ODL and Module II: 21st Century ODL Learners	Dr. Abhilash Nayak, Dr. Monica Nagpal and Ms Prashansa Das
Week 2	Live Virtual Session on Module III: Learning Skills and Module IV: Characteristics of Self Learning Materials (SLM) Materials	Dr. Abhilash Nayak, Dr. Monica Nagpal and Ms Prashansa Das
Week 3	Live Virtual Session on Module V: Academic Counsellor and Counselling in Distance Education and Module VI: Support to People with disabilities in ODL and Online teachers/ counsellors	Dr. Abhilash Nayak, Dr. Monica Nagpal and Ms Prashansa Das
Week 4	Live Virtual Session on Module VII: Technology in Distance Education and Module	Dr. Abhilash Nayak, Dr. Monica Nagpal and Ms Prashansa Das

Eligible Learners: MOOC on Academic Counselling for ODL Learners is designed for Teachers and ODL Practitioners in diverse contexts. The participants will benefit from this course if they are teaching face-to-face or in a distance/ online environment. Anyone interested in improving teaching and learning would enjoy participating in this MOOC.

Certification: The course provides two levels of certification which are available based on the level of participation and completion of tasks/activities:

• Certificate of Participation: requires participation in at least 3 discussion forums and completion of quizzes with 50%.

• Certificate of Completion: requires 60% in all quizzes, participation in at least 3 discussion forums.

COURSE LAUNCHING AND REGISTRATION

The Course was launched on mooKIT platform designed and developed by IIT Kanpur with support of Commonwealth of Learning. Odisha State Open University has launched the 3rd Cycle of MOOC, on Academic Counselling for ODL Learners (AC4ODL) on 1st December 2021. The inaugural launching of the AC4ODL MOOC - 3rd Cycle was attended by Prof. (Dr) A.K. Das Mohapatra, Vice-Chancellor, Odisha State Open University; Prof (Dr.) Ami Upadhayay, Vice-Chancellor, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University, Gujarat; Prof. (Dr.) Kamal Jeet Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Madhusudan Law University, Cuttack; Prof.(Dr.) Madhu Parhar, Director, CEMCA as the Chief Guest, Guest of Honor and Invited Guest.

The course was promoted through CEMCA official Facebook page, various WhatsApp groups of teachers and teacher educators, sending emails to different institutions and individuals. OSOU also invited its post graduate learners and academic counsellors for joining the course.

LEARNERS DETAILS

The registrations to the course were from across the globe having most learners from India. A total of 978 learners from 59 countries registered and participated in the course. It was found that 539 learners were from India and the remaining 814 participants were from 59 countries. From India also the participants were scattered throughout India. The distribution of participants from India can be seen in the Image 1
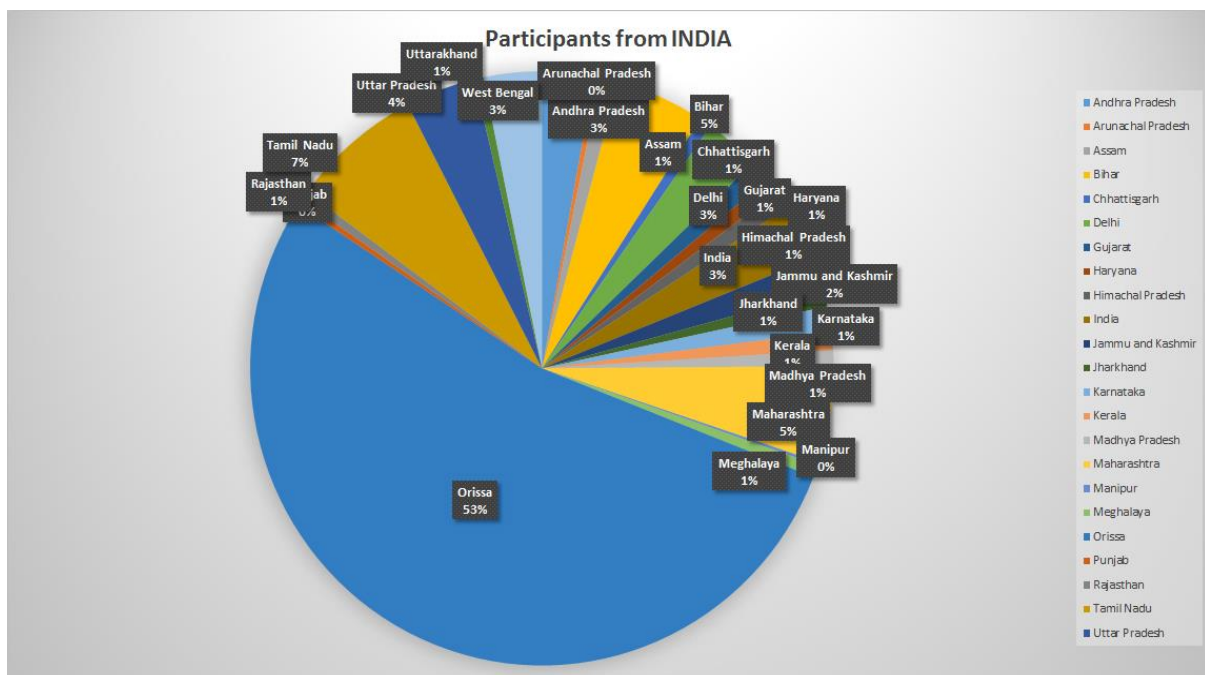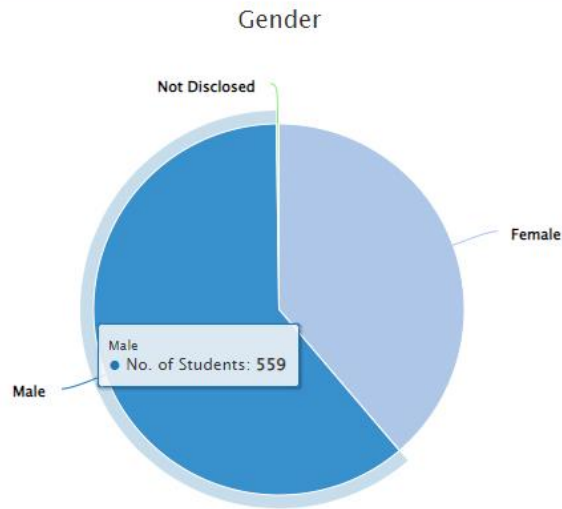

Figure 1: Distribution of Participants from India

The figure 1 shows that the greatest number of participants were from Odisha i.e. 359.

Gender

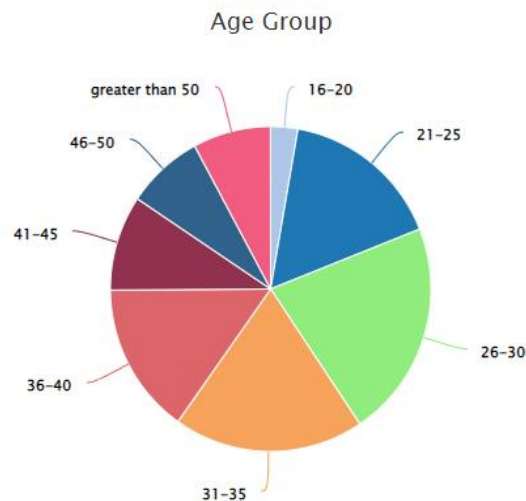The gender distribution of participants was properly distributed. It was found that 559 Male and

355 Female participants declared their gender. Figure 2 displays the gender distribution.

Figure 2: Gender-Wise Distribution of Participants

Age Group

It was tried to understand that participants belonged to which age group and Figure 3 shows the distribution of age.
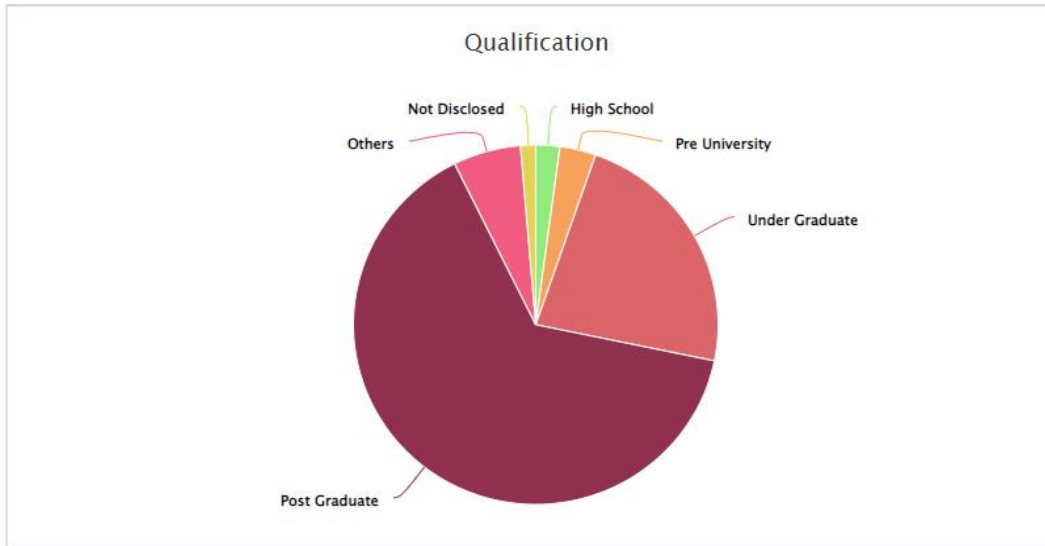

Figure 3: Age-Wise Distribution of Participants

It was observed that the least no of participants (25) were from age group 16-20 and a large no of participants (198) belonged to 26-30 years.

Qualification

The participants who joined the course belonged to different levels of qualifications. Figure 4 displays the qualification of the participants.
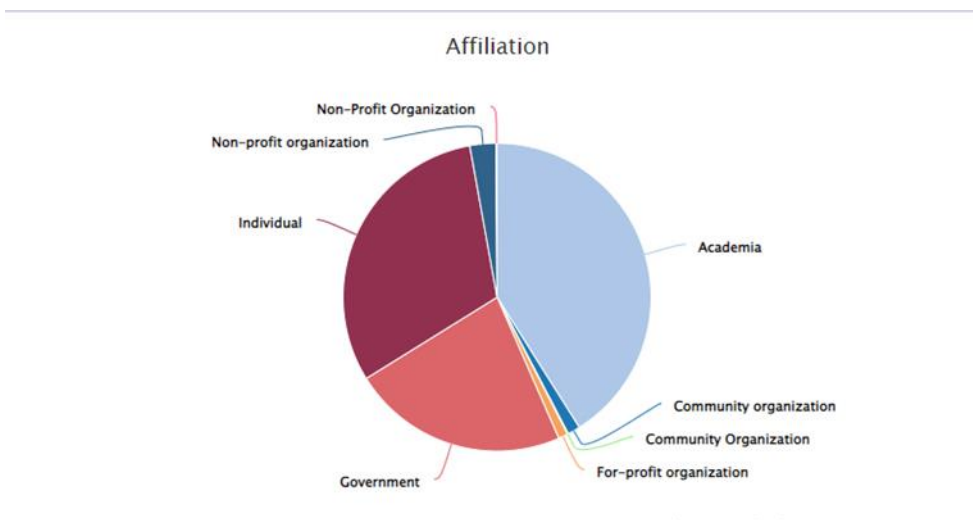
Figure 4: Distribution of Qualification

It can be observed from figure 4 that most of the participant's i.e more than 60 percent of participants were postgraduates and approximately 30% participants were graduates.

Affiliation

The participants were affiliated to different types of institutions and organisations. Figure 5 shows the affiliation.

Figure 5: Affiliation-wise distribution of Participants

It is visible in the figure that 376 students were from Academia and 208 of students were working in Government set ups and 284 of students were individually working and remaining rest of the students were from Non – Profit Organization, For Profit Organization and other Community Organizations.

COURSE OFFERING

The Course was launched on 1st December 2021 in the august presence of Prof. (Dr) A.K. Das Mohapatra, Vice-Chancellor, Odisha State Open University; Prof (Dr.) Ami Upadhayay, Vice-Chancellor, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Open University, Gujarat; Prof. (Dr.) Kamal Jeet Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Madhusudan Law University, Cuttack; Prof.(Dr.) Madhu Parhar, Director, CEMCA as the Chief Guest, Guest of Honor and Invited Guest..

Figure 6: Launch of AC4ODL MOOC

PROCEDURE

A well-planned procedure was adopted for successfully offering the MOOC. Registration to the MOOC was opened a month ago and various social media platforms were used for promoting the same and reaching out to a maximum number of learners. Registration was kept open even after the course had started for keeping the lateral entry option open for participants to join.

One week prior to the course a welcome note was sent to the participants covering a brief about the course and criteria for certification. Pre course survey was also released 4 days prior to launching of the first week modules. The modules were released week wise on Monday morning and announcement was made simultaneously through mail to all the registered participants. Quiz of the related modules was also released every weekend with an announcement email. During the end of the course post course survey was also released for the timely feedback. The quizzes were closed on December 03, 2020 and post course survey was closed on December 07, 2020.

Figure 7: Announcements on mooKIT Platform

Apart from regular course content an online session was organised through zoom every week for making the course interactive. The announcement for the session was made well in advance on the portal and through emails. The online sessions were well received by the participants. The sessions were later posted on the platform as a resource.

LEARNERS INTERACTION THROUGH FORUMS

Discussion forums play an important role in an online course where forums are a medium for getting your queries answered and it also provides a platform to get along with new discussion threads. Participation in discussion forums is a criterion of certification in the AC4ODL MOOC. Participation in minimum three forums was

mandatory for successfully completing the course. The data shows that the participants were found enthusiastic while participating in the forums.
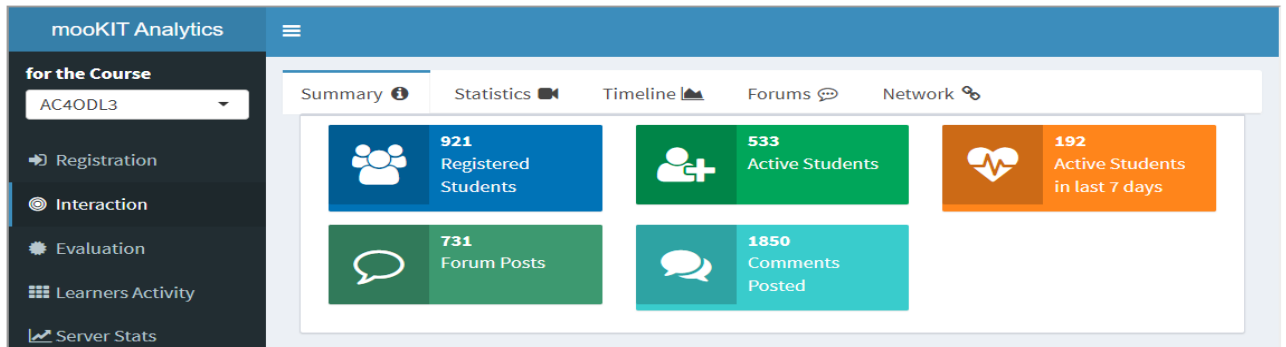

Figure 8: Forum Participation

Participants have created 731 discussion forums and 1850 comments were posted in the already created forums.

The Figure 9 below shows the distribution of participants who have either commented or created the forums.
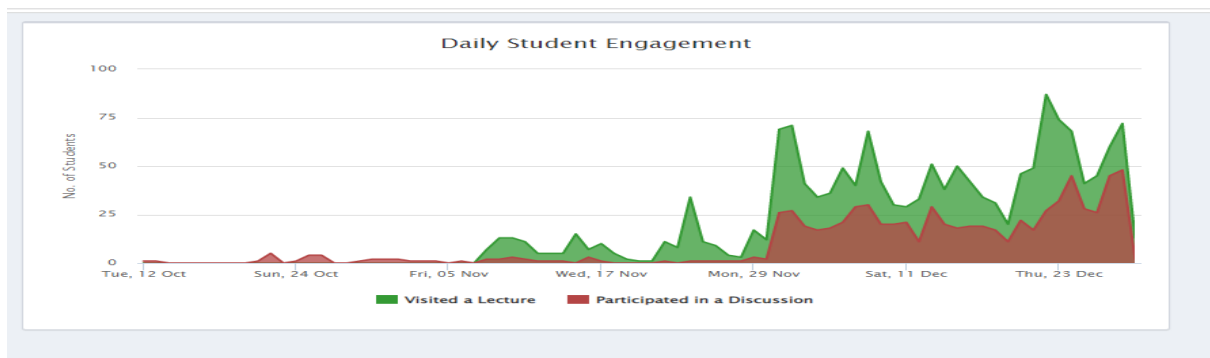

Figure 9: Participation in Forums across the Month

Participants have enthusiastically participated in the forums and it was found that they have replied to queries of the co-participants and discussed the topics covered in the week amongst each other. Forums created were general as well as content and module specific. Participants also recorded their forums discussions for ease of access as the feature has been provided by the platform.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of any kind of course or training and measuring it is necessary to understand the learners and the course content. The course was divided into 4 weeks and every week two modules were released and towards the end of the week a quiz related to the two modules was released. An opportunity to retake or re attempt the quiz was also given to the participants. There were four quizzes which were released during the MOOC.

Figure 10, 11, 12 and 13 shows the quiz attempts and average scores achieved by the participants.

Figure 10: Quiz 1 Status

Quiz 1 was attempted by 208 participants and the average marks received were 87 out of 100. A distribution of marks for Quiz 2 is also shown in the Figure 11.
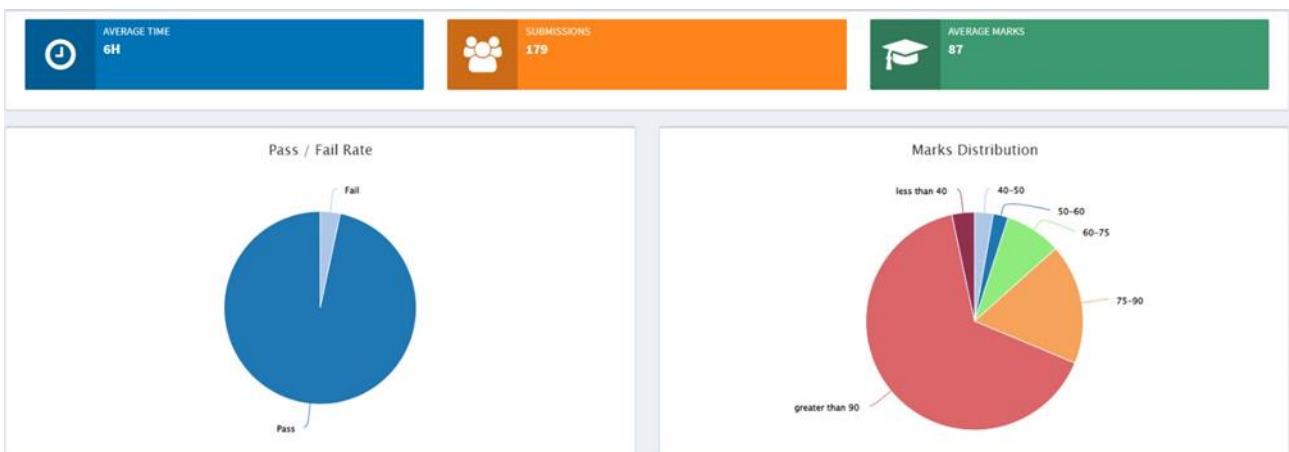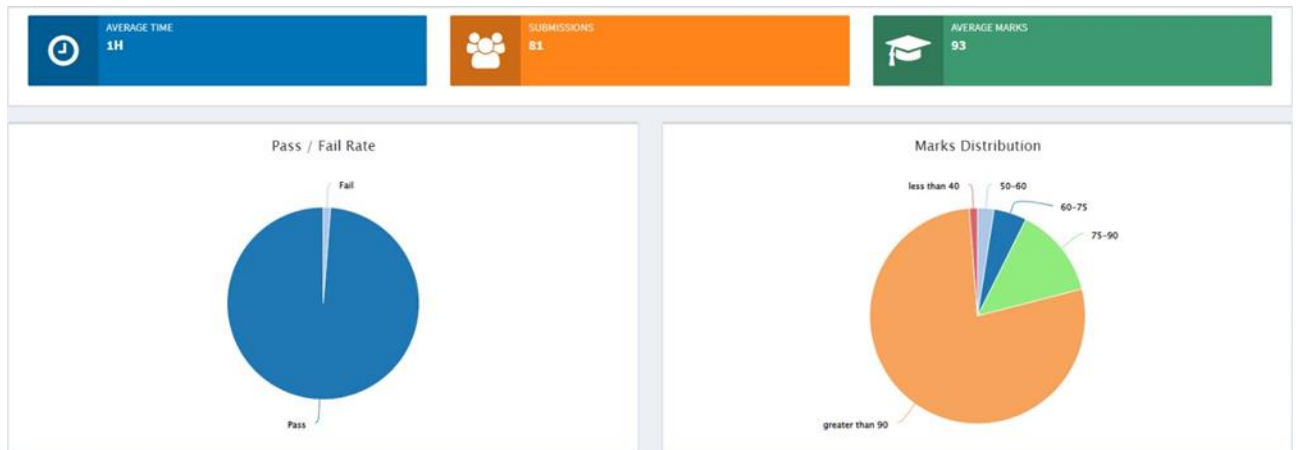

Figure 11: Quiz 2 Status

Figure 11 shows that Quiz 2 was attempted by 179 participants and more than 50% participants got marks greater than 90. The average marks received were 87.

Figure 12: Quiz 3 Status

Figure 12 displays the result of quiz 3, it is visible that 139 participants attempted the quiz and the average marks achieved were 89.


Figure 13: Quiz 4 Status

Figure 13 shows that quiz 4 was attempted by 81 learners and the average marks achieved were 93.

Participation in quizzes and average scores shows that learners have been actively involved in the course and have attempted quizzes.

LEARNERS ACHIEVEMENT (CERTIFICATE AWARDED)

Learners have been involved actively with the AC4ODL MOOC and the activity was seen on the platform. Figure 14 shows the interaction of the participants.
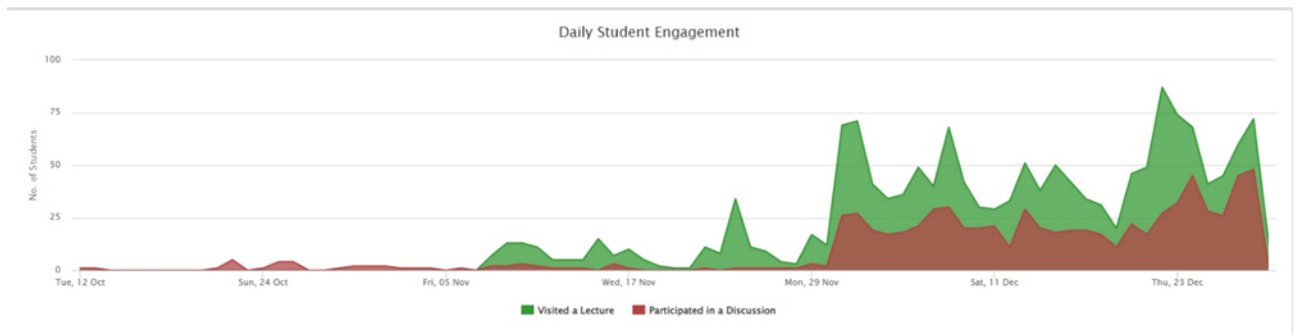
Figure 14: Learners Engagement

Figure 14 shows the participation of learners in lecture and forums both. It is visible that all the students who landed on the platform had participated in both the activities. The course has two opportunities for certification, and it was found that competency certificate was attained by 370 participants whereas participation certificates was attained by 74 participants. So, in totality 444 certificates were awarded to participants.

FEEDBACK

PARTICIPANTS DISTRIBUTION

There was a mix participation of the participants from various sectors, from College, University, Government Education Agency, Online Instructor, Open and Virtual Universities and Unemployed

Current Job Sector
260 responses

- College
- University
- Govt Education Agency
- Online instructor
- Open University/ Virtual University
- Unemployed

11.5%
13.5%
20.4%
21.5%
28.1%
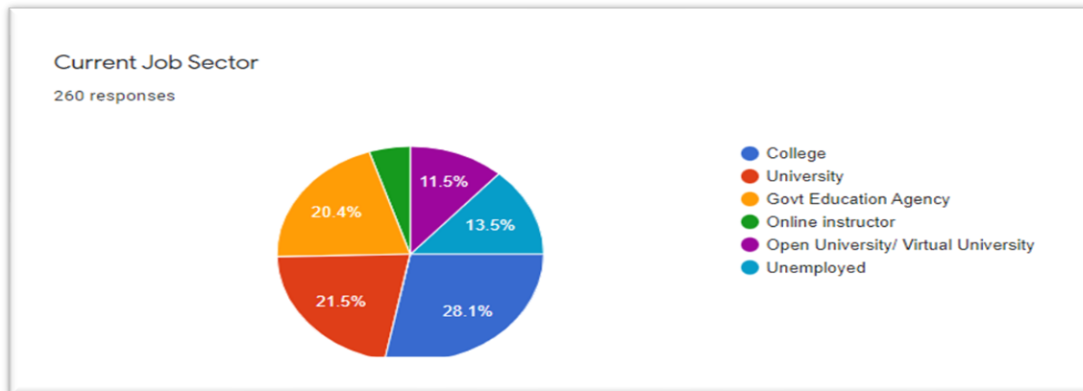
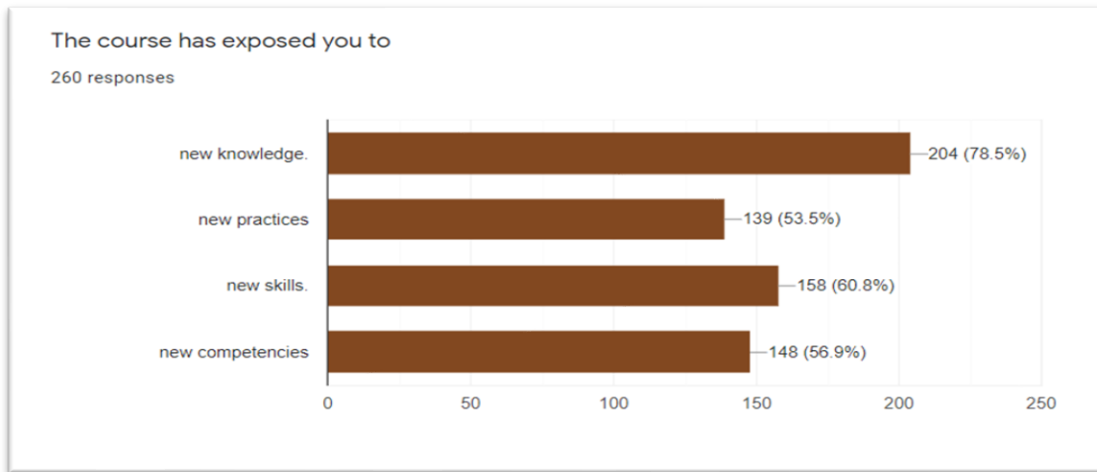EXPERIENCE REGARDING THE COMMUNICATION MECHANISM DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE COURSE:

Following questions were asked to the participants regarding the communication mechanism during the administration of the course:

1. Information about the commencement of the course
2. Release of announcements
3. Reminders for the submission of quizzes and participation in the forums
4. Response to the queries by the technical team
5. Response to the queries/posts by the academic team
6. Information about the live sessions.

Almost 90% of the participants rated that the communication mechanism during the administration of the Course was timely.
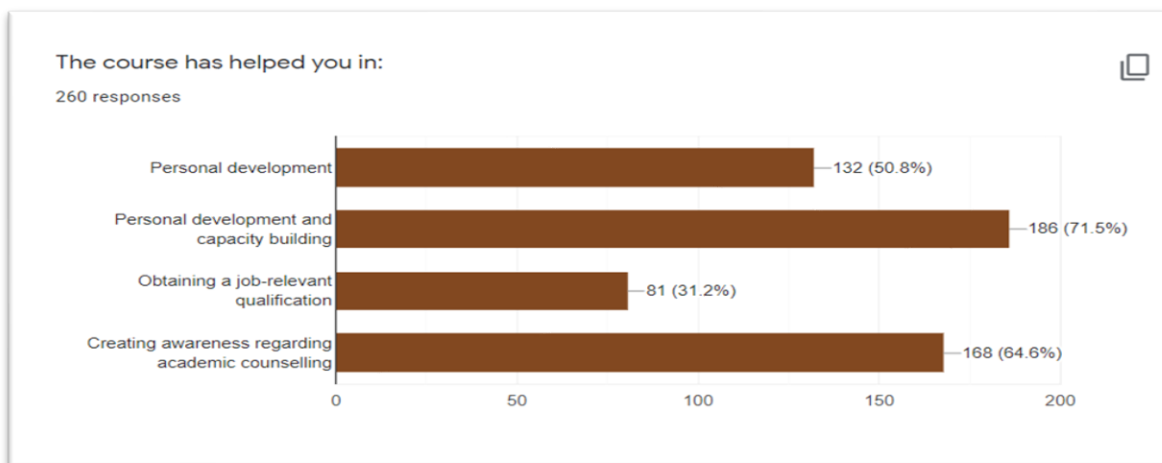
PARTICIPANTS VIEW AFTER COMPLETION OF THE COURSE:

78.5% Participants believed that the Course has exposed them to new knowledge, 53,5% believed that the Course has exposed them to new practices and 60.8% believes that the Course has exposed them to new skills and 56.9% participants believes that the participants were exposed to new competencies

The course has exposed you to
260 responses

new knowledge.	204 (78.5%)
new practices	139 (53.5%)
new skills.	158 (60.8%)
new competencies	148 (56.9%)

COURSE OUTCOME FOR THE PARTICIPANTS:

Maximum participants around 71.5% believed that the course has helped them for personality development and capacity building and around 64.6% participants believed that the course helped them to create awareness regarding academic counselling.

The course has helped you in:
260 responses

Personal development	132 (50.8%)
Personal development and capacity building	186 (71.5%)
Obtaining a job-relevant qualification	81 (31.2%)
Creating awareness regarding academic counselling	168 (64.6%)

OVERALL RATING OF THE COURSE

When asked about the overall rating of the Course from 1-10 where 1 was minimum and 10 was maximum, around 87% rated the course between 8-10 points, among these 43.8% rated the Course with maximum rating of 10 points.

CONCLUSION

The AC4ODL MOOC was a timely and well-planned MOOC which was spanned over 4 weeks and ran from November 15, 2021 to December 15, 2021. Participants from across the globe showed their interest by participating in the same. Forums and the discussions in the forums showed an active engagement of participants in the course. Online live session making the MOOC blended was taken positively by the learners.

Further it was added as a resource for all the participants who could not join during the live session. Live session gave an opportunity to learners to interact with their instructors.

DIFFICULTIES/CHALLENGES LESSON LEARNT

MOOC always have a chance that participants either loose interest or register and forget about the course. The similar problem was faced in AC4ODL MOOC, as the number of people who registered for the course and who finally received the certificates showed a gap. Blended approach helped up to some extent but still there existed a gap.

RECOMMENDATION

The AC4ODL MOOC implemented the Blended approach by adding one live session every week on the concerned modules of the week by ODL experts. This session provided an opportunity to learners for interaction. This was also appreciated by the learners. The similar approach can be adopted as per the needs and possibilities on the platform for learners.

Secondly to make learners active and participative case studies can be planned where participants can create and share best practices of their institutions, state or country. Which can be added as a resource or showcased during the course for further spread.

Interaction is the key to the success of teaching learning process. MOOC is one such idea where participants have almost no interaction with their learners, bringing in the opportunities for interaction or personal touch can help make it successful.

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