Project Proposal

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The popularity of online learning/education and MOOCs it's quite booming now days. Not all the MOOCs are the same in the sense some of them don't have any credentials. The perception of these new type of courses has been improving year after year; however, there is always the concern how they are seen through the eyes of employers, admission offices, etc. compared to traditional courses. There are many journal articles which have been focused on the engagement overall of MOOCs; however, there are very few articles which are focusing on the impact of credentials in the online learning community. Credentials does play a big role on MOOCs since it involves all the players in the community from students, faculty to employers.

Several online education provider such as Udacity and Coursera have been creating a new brand of degrees such as nanodegrees and certifications. The intent behind such degrees/certifications is to give MOOC's being offered some kind of accreditation. These offerings those bring up several concerns/questions from the admissions officers and employers perspective as well as the students itself taking these courses. Some of the questions that arise are:

- Are these nanodegrees/certifications bring value to students pursuing them?
- Are these nanodegrees/certifications sufficient as educational background when applying to a job?

There several supporters including recruiters, admission officers and employers that do believe these certified MOOC bring really value and benefits to someone education and professional background.

"A credential is validated evidence of achievement. It is confirmation that a set of skills has been mastered, an array of challenges has been met, and a suite of projects has been completed. As a provider of skills-based, project-oriented curricula, Udacity is a credentialing authority, and we confer upon graduates of our Nanodegree programs a credential that affirms the skills they've mastered and the projects they've completed." – (Jayaraman,2018)

There also several recruiters, admission officers and employers which think that they only add value on top of a traditional degree.

To admissions officers and employers, MOOC certificates can validate your knowledge base. However, depending on the university or employer, MOOC course credentials may not provide enough validation as the courses do not typically lead to college or graduate school credits.(Leggat, 2017)

Based on the research done up to this point it seems that a nanodegree or certificate alone by itself are not sufficient for both employers and admission officers. It is important to take into account that this doesn't mean that they don't add value but rather they do add value in top of an accredited degree. Accreditation is one of the key aspects that still is pending resolution in the online learning community.

"Accreditation has two aspects in MOOCland. The first is its ability to open the door to secure revenue from course fees. Second (and less discussed for the moment) is the issue of how the learning is assessed, authenticated and valued by employers. " – (BIS,2013)

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Accreditation has been one of the concerns of online education contributors, the impact of such accreditation is still inconclusive.

> "It is difficult to understand how MOOCs can change higher education if they do not award credits, whether in blended or in distance-learning mode – unless they involve new ways of validation which either complement or compete with existing credit systems" – (Daniel, Vázquez & Gisbert, 2015)

RESEARCH QUESTION

As a project for CS6460 I will like to conduct a research study trying to answer the following question "**What is the impact of accreditation on online learning and MOOCs**". I will like to take OMSCS program as example, I would like to gather more information about what were the reasons why students in this program decided to pick this one versus other ones. Having answered this question could boost the OMSCS program as well as to get feedback what can be done to make it even better. The research will be based on survey with questions focused on the impact of credentials in the online learning community. I will like to tie the success of the OMSCS program with the credentials being offered as part of this online degree.

RESEARCH METHOD

A will create a survey that will be distributed along the OMSCS students. The survey will be composed of ten questions and it will be created using google forms. The questions will focus on the accreditation aspect of the OMSCS program and at the same time will give an idea on what were the reasons behind why students pick this program versus other ones offered online.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

I believe the survey will give a lot of insight on why do students of OMSCS prefer this type of program instead of a nanodegree or a certificate and what is the impact of accreditation on their decision. This would help the community understand what is the impact of accreditation (based upon it comes from a prestigious university and same rigor as a traditional degree offered in-campus) in a MOOC/online degree. The outcome of this research project will provide a good insight how the credentials impact the online learning community and how the play a key role not only in the educational aspect but also in the corporate aspect.

DELIVERABLES

Week Ending	Tasks / Deliverables
06/11	Tasks ● Complete and submit Project Proposal ● Start working on project paper
06/18	Tasks ● Work Project Proposal feedback ● Setup week-by-week progress ● Start working on Intermediate Milestone 1 and its deliverables

	● Continue working on project paper Milestone 1 Deliverables ● A narrated PowerPoint presentation ● A draft of research survey ● Use feedback on the survey before sending it out to participants
06/25	Tasks ● Complete and submit Milestone 1 ● Fill out Weekly Status Check 1
07/02	Tasks ● Deliver survey to audience ● Work on Milestone 1 feedback ● Fill out Weekly Status Check 2
07/09	Tasks ● Start working on Intermediate Milestone 2 and its deliverables. ● Fill out Weekly Status Check 3 Milestone 2 Deliverables ● A narrated PowerPoint presentation ● Share some preliminary data. ● Share some early conclusions and observations ● Show remaining deliverables leading to the final project
07/16	Tasks ● Analyze survey feedback ● Work on Milestone 2 feedback ● Fill out Weekly Status Check 4
07/23	Tasks ● Prepare the project presentation, paper and final project deliverable ● Fill out Weekly Status Check 5

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