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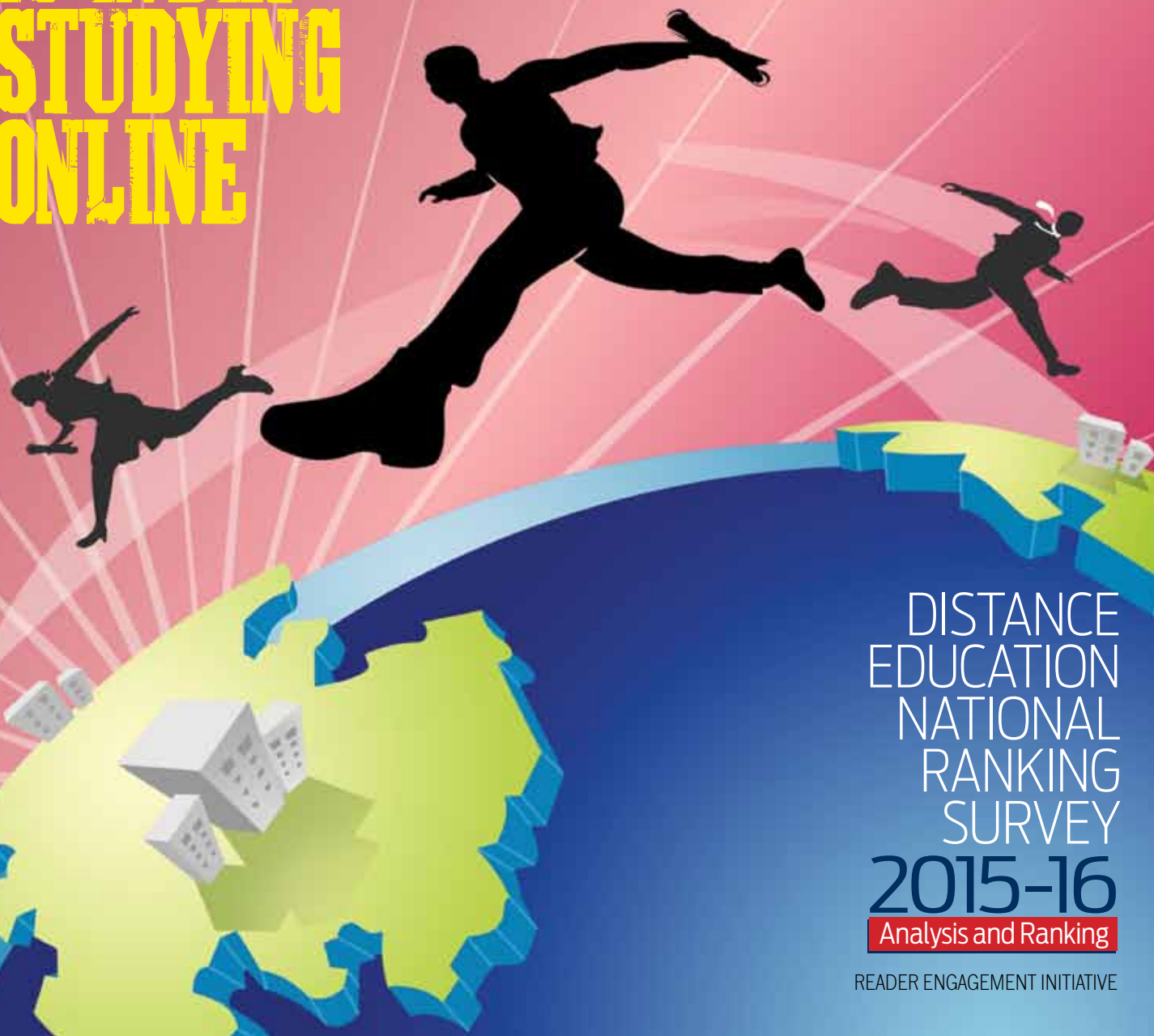
EDUCATION

dna March 2016 • Volume 05 Issue 7 • www.dnaindia.com • ₹ 50

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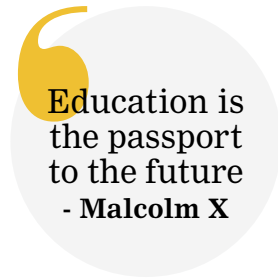
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FROM GROUP CEO'S DESK



Education is the passport to the future
- Malcolm X



“In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists”, notes social philosopher Eric Hoffer. But it’s not just the world that’s changing, it’s the educational landscape too. Technology and globalization are fuelling an educational revolution unlike any we’ve ever seen before.

With MOOCs mushrooming all over the place, Ivy League Universities sharing their curriculum ‘for free’ and even traditional learning institutes exploring the potential of blended learning systems, there’s no reason you can’t be a global citizen—equipped to work, live, earn and learn in practically any part of the globe.

Distance education is no longer the prerogative of those who didn’t score high enough to secure a seat in the mainstream education system. Young students who would like to be industry-ready when they graduate, working professionals looking to step up the corporate ladder and even great-grandparents who would like to keep pace with the ever-changing world are discovering that there’s no dearth of opportunity and scope to learn. So what’s stopping you?

Distance, Time, Age, Access—the advent of the internet had rendered practically all the excuses one could offer for being unable to continue learning, null and void. The sheer flexibility of self-paced courses makes them the perfect option for anyone, anywhere who wants to learn. But perhaps therein lies the trick question—do you really want to learn?

This Education Reckoner has been conceptualised to guide those with a desire to learn. It doesn’t matter who you are or where you come from. All that matters is that you are passionate about knowing more than you do right now.

The choice is yours... upskill or fade into obsolescence.

Dr. Bhaskar Das
Group CEO, ZMCL

EDITOR'S NOTE

Quality Education – Anytime, Anywhere

Technology is driving education faster, higher and further than it has ever gone before. What's more, it is levelling the playing field by enabling equal access to high quality education (albeit only to those with an internet connection) to people across social stratas, around the world. Distance is no longer an obstacle to learning, neither is age, nor for that matter is time (or the lack thereof). Learning never ends and the goal of this edition of the Education Reckoner is to open your mind to the many variations of distance education out there.

Get started with an *Overview* of the evolution of distance education, its benefits and challenges and the tremendous diversity it features—whether in terms of subjects, the potential for continuing education or its capacity to offer a blend of education that's just perfect for you, irrespective of your age, income or current level of education.

Then dive into the *Cover Story*, a survey on India's best distance-education institutes and what they have to offer. Here, you'll not only find a ranking of India's Top 25 distance education facilities overall, but also where they stand in terms of Quality of Study Material, Faculty and Resources, Examination and Result Calculation Processes, Interaction with Students/Alumni, Online Material, Learning and Information as well as Interaction/Response.

Then move on to the *Career* section, where experts in the fields of Design, Film Making and Finance offer insight into the potential and challenges of distance education. Follow this up with *Perspective* from some of the world's leading MOOC operators and a leading technology facilitator of distance education in India. Finally, get a glimpse of what people around the world and in India are studying online in the *Trends* segment, before winding down with *Students Speak*—student testimonials that reveal exactly what taking on a distance-education course involves.

Clearly, this is an issue that offers a lot of food for thought. Now, all you need to do is decide on the best way to keep learning and growing.

Amy Fernandes, Editor

EDUCATION RECKONER

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GOT TO SAY SOMETHING?

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Printed & Published by Diligent Media Corporation Ltd.

Published at 11th Floor, Tower 3, Indiabulls Finance Centre, Senapati Bapat Marg, Elphinstone (W),

Mumbai - 400 013, Phone No: 3988-8888

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AGE NO BAR/ SUBJECT NO BAR

Distance Learning has evolved considerably and now drives segments like management education, whilst offering the answer to continuing education, discovers **Vijay Pandya**

DIVERSE SCOPE

The concept of Distance Learning spans a wide range of stages and subjects, right from the facility to privately clear Class X, Class XII and graduation across all three streams (Arts, Commerce and Science) to post-graduate courses. Today, distance learning is ideal for a vast spectrum of age groups, from those just stepping into their teens to those who have children just stepping into their teens.

There are many private and public, non-profit and for-profit institutions worldwide offering distance education courses from the most basic instruction through to the highest levels of degree and doctoral programmes, with various levels of accreditation.

ANYONE CAN LEARN

So what makes Distance Learning universally attractive? There are various factors at play here.

The first and foremost is convenience, as witnessed in so many situations. It may be a child who has missed a crucial exam due to illness or an accident and

doesn't want to undergo the trauma of repeating a year in the same educational institution. It may be a junior-college student, who wants to have an additional course in his portfolio to gain an edge over his peers.

It may be a daughter whose conservative parents don't want her to attend college, but permit some level of qualification so that she can be a tele-caller, translator or beautician. It may be a differently abled student who doesn't want to feel out of place in a conventional college environment but is still hungry for knowledge.

It may be a college student, who wants to start working full time and jumpstart his career whilst completing a degree. It may be an intern or perhaps an executive who wants to rise up the corporate ladder faster by earning a Master's degree on the side.

It may be a Vice President, who wants to scale the final rungs of the compa-

ny's hierarchy that stretch above him. It may be a board member wanting to specialise in a particular function or field and become a director.

It may be the CEO who wants to upgrade his skills or a managing director who wants to chart new strategies and explore global markets for a local brand. Distance Learning has evolved to the extent that nobody, regardless of age or career stage, can afford to ignore its benefits.

KEY ADVANTAGES

There's a plethora of specializations that one can consider depending on one's aptitude and areas of interest. There are also courses for professionals in different fields.

Since distance learning provides much-needed and sought-after flexibility, the smart thing to do is to leverage that, whilst having a 'Plan B'. The scope for new-age careers in animation, gaming and visual effects grows wider with each passing day, which is good news for students who are passionate about any of these three fields.



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PARALLEL PROCESSING IT

Similarly, rather than graduate with a plain vanilla degree, parallel professional courses for sectors like IT offer better avenues for career growth. There's tremendous potential for networking professionals in almost every sector of the industry; they are needed for everything from infrastructure set-up to information security. Within India, there is a strong demand for these professionals with the growth of BFSI (banking, financial services and insurance), telecom and BPO/ITES verticals in the country.

FASHIONABLY YOURS

Similarly, the world of fashion offers a plethora of careers within India and abroad. Today, courses are being specifically designed to meet the national talent deficit of trained professionals in the apparel, fashion, retail and lifestyle industries. There is a huge demand for managers who can handle fashion-related businesses with a design orientation.

HOSPITALITY UPDATE

Even in the hospitality sector there are openings for business managers, finance managers and operational staff in larger restaurant chains. Pubs, bars and clubs offer opportunities in licensed retailing, management, promotions and event management.

FLEXIBILITY MATTERS

Being flexible about education can boost career prospects and this is where Distance Learning can be a lifesaver. If you have graduated from one field but find yourself drawn to career

“Being flexible about education can boost career prospects and this is where Distance Learning can be a lifesaver. If you have graduated from one field but find yourself drawn to career options in another, you don't need to feel bad about the wasted years.”

options in another, you don't need to feel bad about the wasted years. Instead, doing a parallel course that is in tune with your abilities can help you make the switch even at a later stage.

For instance, there are flight attendants in private airlines who studied engineering but shifted to a different path for better prospects. Before opting for a course, consider the number of years required for it and look at the demand in the job market.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Choosing a specialisation after Class XII was once a prerogative of science students, with engineering or medical being the preferred choices. However, nowadays even commerce and arts students are looking at graduating with a specialisation such as media or management, which can be easily done online via distance learning. These professional courses are ideal because they offer tremendous career opportunities and scope for rapid growth.

MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE!

Things to keep in mind before choosing an institute for distance learning:

- **Academic weight:** If you are seeking academic excellence, confirm the quality of the faculty and teaching methodology.
- **Subject options:** If the institute has a limited subjects to choose from in subsequent years, you may not be able to make choices that sync with your preferences and might have to 'compromise'.
- **Technology:** If the educational institution is just handing over DVDs (instead of printed notes), it is not going to be very helpful in the long term. Ensure there are online options like lecture libraries, backups of webinars, a help desk and so on.
- **Career prospects:** Unless you're looking to study further merely as a hobby or to broaden your knowledge in an area that fascinates you, you need to be clear about your goals and whether or not a specific course will help you attain your dream job. Foreign language courses give those aspiring for global assignments an edge. Distance-education institutes also provide special inputs in the area of cross-cultural mores and business etiquette, which can be very helpful. Your choice ultimately depends on your end-goal. ■

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GO THE DISTANCE

‘Look before you leap’ an old adage says. **Vijay Pandya** takes a closer look at the challenges and benefits of the distance-learning model and how parents can help their children make the right choice



Fans of the *Star Wars* movie franchise won't tire of repeating Jedi-master Yoda's motto, 'Do or do not; there is no try!' Distance learning is one field where this motto needs to be repeated by students, as many times as possible, each and every day. In fact, it ought to be conveyed as advice before giving them admission in the first place.

MOTIVATION MATTERS

'Why the need for this?', you ask. Well, the complete absence of 'regular' education infrastructure and systems means that a student needs to be highly self-motivated and disciplined to succeed. There is no campus to enter every day. No classroom with your favourite bench. No professor to look in the eye and explain why you didn't attend yesterday's seminar.

SIGNING UP AND DROPPING OUT

In fact, a high dropout rate (students who registered for courses, but didn't

submit assignments or attempt exams) was a major problem in the 'postal correspondence course' era. Today, with technology serving not just as a facilitator but a monitor as well, it's not so easy to avoid distance learning. Email and SMS reminders go out with painful regularity to parents and students, as do updates on pending assignment submissions, missed project deadlines and the like. But even these can go unheeded

“Distance Learning remains largely a question of 'will' power triumphing over 'won't' power. There is always the temptation to 'skip' an online lecture and watch a T20 match instead. Research into Sunny Gavaskar's strategy for sustaining his cricketing career can get sidetracked when a link to Sunny Leone's new movie trailer pops up on the computer screen.”

by someone whose heart or head are not really into a course they have signed up for.

DISTRACTION CENTRAL

Distance Learning remains largely a question of 'will' power triumphing over 'won't' power. There is always the temptation to 'skip' an online lecture and watch a T20 match instead. Research into Sunny Gavaskar's strategy for sustaining his cricketing career can get sidetracked when a link to Sunny Leone's new movie trailer pops up on the computer screen.

DUAL PURPOSE

So then, why do students still opt for distance learning? The first reason is obviously need based—students pursuing a career, who wish to complete a course at the same time, but cannot take time off to attend a regular course.

UNDER PRESSURE?

Then there is peer pressure. Everyone they know has a child who is studying something, so parents feel that their child needs to be doing some course as well. They assume distance learning will be hassle-free compared to a regular course. The next thing you know, another child has been enrolled for a distance education course, without so much as questioning whether distance education is suitable for the child or not.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

It is important for parents to make sure that they have 'done their homework' before taking any decisions as far as Distance Learning for their children is concerned. This 'homework' literally begins at home itself.

Is your child cut out for distance education? How does your child relate to education? Does he or she have the ability to study without the presence of a professor or a group of friends?

If you feel confident that he or she can manage the distance-learning format, there are multiple benefits to be reaped. From being able to 'earn while you learn' to doing multiple courses within the same time frame, to saving expenses on commuting and avoiding the fatigue of travelling to an educational institution every day, the advantages are many.



Above all, Distance Learning gives students a sense of independence and helps them develop the confidence to take charge of their future, which will hold them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

STRATEGIZING SUCCESS

Prepare a presentation on your child, from an academic perspective. Highlight his or her strengths and weaknesses and how these could impact future performance.

Once you have some idea of your children's attitude and aptitude, consider the opportunities that each vocation presents and the threats to their chances of success.

“Prepare a presentation on your child from an academic perspective. Highlight his or her strengths and weaknesses and how these could impact future performance.”

Then, and only then, should you start shortlisting courses. There have been several instances when institutions have faced the ludicrous situation of the parent and student having completely different ideas about what the course involves and the prospects it opens up on completion.

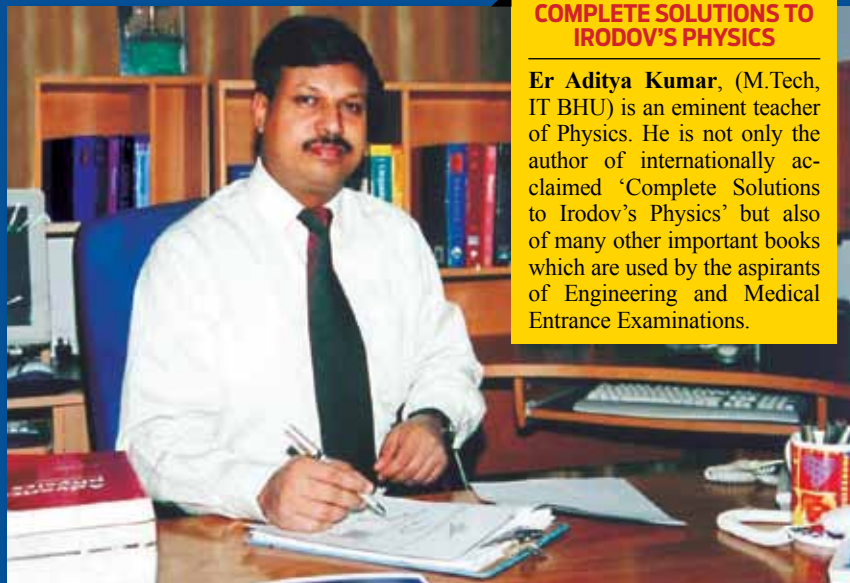
You will have a choice of varying programme levels, institutions, part-time or correspondence courses, and so on. Think these over carefully. For instance, if you are planning to have your 'young adult' work while learning, a distance-learning programme may be easier to manage than a full-time course. Consider the pros and cons of every facet of the course before finalizing it. Don't see it as an end in itself, but rather as a means to an end.

Figure out whether the course will play a role in preparing your offspring for further studies or directly open the doors to a potential career. Then consider the implications of choosing that particular course and institution over the others available.

Someday in the future, both of you will look back and be grateful for having made an informed decision instead of playing Russian roulette. ■



Getting prepared for JEE 2016



COMPLETE SOLUTIONS TO IRODOV'S PHYSICS

Er Aditya Kumar, (M.Tech, IT BHU) is an eminent teacher of Physics. He is not only the author of internationally acclaimed 'Complete Solutions to Irodov's Physics' but also of many other important books which are used by the aspirants of Engineering and Medical Entrance Examinations.

Students often find themselves in a mess over preparation for JEE along with other top engineering entrance exams. This year also the exams JEE Main, JEE Advanced, UPSEAT and BITSAT are lined up one after another with very little gap in between. While some prefer to give full-fledged priority to JEE, some try to maintain a balance. It is very crucial for them to know, how to keep the preparation for JEE 2016 rolling along with other examinations. To assist all the students who are confused with this issue, we spoke to a well-known teacher and CMD of Rubic's Rostrum, Aditya Kumar, (M.Tech, IT BHU), who is an eminent teacher of Physics. He is also the author of the book, Complete Solutions to Irodov's Physics, along with many other books used by the aspirants of engineering and medical entrance examinations. Here are the excerpts from the interview:

How should a student prepare for all these exams in one go?

JEE Main, JEE Advanced, UPSEAT and BITSAT are the four major exams which we are dealing with. In my opinion, one should prepare focusing on JEE exam as other exams are just sub-sets of it. It is true that the format of all these examinations are different but the syllabus to be covered is almost similar. There is only about one-two per cent extra topics that need to be covered for BITSAT and UPSEAT, rest is same.

So what should be the strategy that would be applicable for all the exams?

As the format of all these exams is quite different from each other, a lot of practice questions based on every topic should be dealt with first. Then individual simulated tests should be taken so as to give you the feel of the exam that will give you the confidence to crack these exams.

What is your advice to students for JEE Advanced in particular?

As it is simply the most coveted and toughest exam for engineering students, the paper has always been tricky. It is kind of an elimination process to shortlist the best ones from among lakhs of aspirants. So one should prepare the whole syllabus to be fully prepared. The pattern and the number of questions along with the fact that how difficult the paper is, may vary. Like the format of the past year contained integer type (single digit answer), single correct, multiple correct, match the column (multiple matchings), paragraph based questions (comprehension type), reasoning and assertion etc. For students, I would suggest that they should solve at least past five year's papers to understand the format of the exam. While if one really wants to understand the depth of the problems, then one should practice papers of the last 30 years.

FACILITIES AT RUBIC'S ROSTRUM

FACULTY

(A) Er Aditya kumar: (M.Tech, IT BHU) is an eminent teacher of Physics.

(B) Er Tarun kumar: (B.Tech., VREC) is an Author of 'Mathematics Competition Master' and many other important books, used by the aspirants of IIT-JEE and other Engineering Entrance Examinations.

(C) Er Rakesh kumar: is a very popular teacher of chemistry at Rubic's Rostrum's. According to him, "Chemistry can provide you with the extra edge you require to score over others."

CLASS-ROOMS

It has air conditioned classrooms. These classrooms are quite spacious and fitted with high quality interactive audio system. The classrooms are equipped with the latest electronic audio and visual equipments which minimize time delay and make the explanation of concepts much easier.

COUNSELLING

Preparation for IIT-JEE requires rigorous hard work in long hours of self study apart from the studies in coaching classes. Sometimes it becomes tiresome and monotonous. So to keep the students charged up they conduct counselling sessions by calling experts from IITs. Students are ignorant about the pattern, standard and format of Engineering Entrance Examinations. They hold special counselling sessions to make students aware about these facts so that they can give their best in the examinations and achieve desired rank.

HOSTEL

The Hostel is located in close proximity to the coaching institute. The hostel is backed up 24 hours electricity and water supply. There are separate hostels for boys and girls with strict discipline and security arrangements.

The Institution has on campus and off campus hostel facilities. This has been facilitated keeping in view the diverse requirement of students coming from different sections of the society. There is no compromise with the basic standards of living in any of their accommodations.

LIBRARY

Library facility is provided to all the students of Rubic's Rostrum. About four thousand books on various subjects (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Zoology and Botany) of world famous authors are available to cater to the need of the aspirants in Engineering/Medical Entrance Examinations. AC study hall is available for the students. State of the Art Library is extremely efficient in fulfilling the incessant demands of young minds.

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THE EVOLUTION OF DISTANCE LEARNING

With technology playing protagonist, distance learning has evolved considerably, finds **Vijay Pandya**



THE WAY THINGS WERE

A few decades ago, Distance Learning was comparable to a visit to the dentist. You had a small spasm of pain that gradually grew into a throbbing, unbearable constant ache. The dentist would look at you, smile reassuringly and say, 'looks like a small cavity, we'll clean and fill it up in no time'. Twenty minutes later, you'd be frowning as the words 'root canal' echoed in your ears, implying more agony than you were ready to bear.

Similarly, most distance-learning courses were once an exercise in patience and endurance. You wanted a degree, but couldn't attend college full time and so you opted for the 'outsider' mode. Despite all the best intentions and telephonic assurances, nothing happened as quickly

Students who cleared post-graduate management courses from IGNOU in the late nineties claimed that their abilities to handle crisis, multi-task, avert disasters and deliver in the face of extreme situations were sharpened considerably without ever entering a classroom or meeting a professor face-to-face. An added bonus was learning the art of motivating people and developing networks; basically the local post office became their unofficial hangout and every postman working there was their temporary 'best friend'.

as initially promised. From waiting anxiously for notes to be delivered and sometimes receiving them barely a week before the exams to being apprehensive about finding out that one had 'missed the bus', because revisions in the syllabus were all par for the course.

Students who cleared post-graduate management courses from IGNOU in the late 90's claimed that their ability to handle crisis, multi task, avert disasters and deliver in the face of extreme situations were sharpened considerably without ever entering a classroom or meeting a professor face-to-face. An added bonus was learning the art of motivating people and developing networks; basically, the local post office became their unofficial hangout and every postman working there was their temporary 'best friend'.

Thankfully, those days are a distant memory, which only parents recalling their distance-learning endeavours can relate to in the current scenario. So what has changed and how has it transformed Distance Learning in India?

THE SCENARIO TODAY

The answer is simple. During the past two decades, technology has touched and transformed all the facets of our lives, including education. Instead of only increasing brick-and-mortar campuses, institutions have also been incorporating technology into their teaching methodology and enhancing the process of imparting education to distance learners as well.

Quite understandably, students are all for this rising trend and consider technology as one of the key parameters while selecting an institute for distance learning.

Lectures, assignments and projects being done using DVDs and the internet; extensive use of webcams for attending online lectures; notes and references being shared via online portals, and the utilization of social media and online forums for more effective communication, discussion, debates and updates—the applications and possibilities are constantly expanding.

Today, students are virtually attending lectures online, posting queries midway and getting them resolved before the session ends. Those who miss scheduled lectures can access them later on the portal where they are linked, along with Power Point presentations and even detailed notes (segregated by topic).

Technology has transformed the hitherto 'restricted access' concept of Distance Education with its accompanying time delays into a tech-driven roller-coaster ride that encompasses everything from graduation to post-graduation degrees and even executive refresher programmes.

This technological advancement is the much needed fuel that enables Distance Learning institutions to speed up the learning curve on the information superhighway. Along with the theoretical base that students are provided with, when colleges adopt blended learning and employ e-learning with 3D visuals and graphics, it proves to be extremely beneficial for understanding complex concepts and diagrammatic representations. For instance, subjects such as economics or communications, if taught using the latest technological methods, help students grasp concepts in a systematic and more understandable manner.

A REVOLUTION IS UNDERWAY

The internet has revolutionized the field of education and created an amazing base for students and teachers alike to communicate on an equal platform, more commonly known as social media. Colleges are constantly posting important notices, timetables for 'weekend webinars'



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lectures, examination schedules and more online.

Most importantly, there is the instant 'backup' facility. During the era of distance learning via post, misplacing notes was a disaster and expecting a replacement before exams was like asking for the moon. Today, a corrupted file or folder on a damaged hard disk can be replaced without much ado or unnecessary stress.

Distance learning, which has its fair share of pros and cons was considered only a last resort earlier; but technol-

ogy has changed that. The Internet has been a key driver for the adoption of distance learning. Special sessions are conducted online, where students can express their doubts and problems freely on a one-to-one basis, which is not possible in a class with many students. This also helps students put a face to the notes they are studying and helps establish a rapport—albeit virtual—with the professor.

Many experts feel that students who are exposed to high levels of technological development have an edge over the rest. Your mind becomes attuned

to creativity and innovation, sharpening your professional skills and talents. While teachers or 'gurus' are undoubtedly irreplaceable, they become much more effective when supported by technology.

Advances in technology have other advantages. For instance, research-based learning (via the Internet) often teaches students a whole lot more than what their syllabus comprises. It also helps them get comfortable with technology during the student phase of their lives, so they are able to use it as required during the crucial career phase.

THE LIGHTER SIDE

Jokes surrounding the term 'Distance Learning' are aplenty amongst educational institutions. Here, Distance Learning can be a highly subjective term, which literally means different things to different people.

Students who tend to be highly belligerent are often asked to leave the classroom so that the studious ones are not disturbed. Another section of students bunk college all through the year and hang out in the canteen instead. Such students often declare (in jest) that clearing the course without actually attending classes makes it 'distance learning'.

Permanent back benchers in the classrooms ('lords of the last bench' is the preferred nomenclature) who can barely see the blackboard or hear the lecturer claim to be engaged in 'distance learning' as well!



ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

Technically speaking, distance learning can be defined as a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering knowledge—often on an individual basis—to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting, such as a classroom. It has been described as 'a process to create and provide access to learning, when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both'.

Modern distance education initially relied on the development of postal services in the 19th century and has been practised at least since Isaac Pitman taught shorthand in Great Britain via correspondence in the 1840s.

Over the years, the development of computers and the Internet has made distance-learning distribution easier and faster and given rise to the 'virtual university'—the entire educational offerings of which are online. ■

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DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE



Mookesh Patel, Dean, Indian School of Design & Innovation, Mumbai talks to us about the distance-learning potential of a course in design

There are huge numbers of students, in India and internationally, who secure jobs as designers without going to a design school. They hack together their own design education in six months while working a full-time job. However, I believe these students are nowhere near as good as those design prodigies produced by a four-year education at an elite design centric school. Nonetheless, for those who choose to educate themselves through distance learning, there are options aplenty—from free coaching sites to distance-learning programmes that charge for access to design courses with a good curriculum.

STUDENT SATISFACTION: 91%

Graphic, Web, Multimedia Design and Game Art are increasingly available to be learned online, both with

and without instructors. One school has been doing it the longest: Sessions College for Professional Design — USA. Sessions College, which opened its doors in 1999, was the first fully-online school of design.

The depth of curriculum has grown as it continues to challenge the limits of teaching in what is still a relatively new medium. What is perhaps most surprising is the remarkable student satisfaction levels, which sit at 91%, as the most recent third-party poll of students conducted by respected education research group Eduventures revealed. Other good programmes include Skillshare, General Assembly, Treehouse, Kadenze and TutsPlus.

OF GREAT TEACHERS AND ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY

These institutions providing online design education also manage to ap-

peal to an amazing faculty of instructors, many of whom have published best-selling books in their respective fields of design in addition to teaching at other more traditional and renowned brick-and-mortar colleges.

In a volatile technological environment, online resources seem to lead design educators into unknown territory. Often, instructors attempt to merge online media and studio instruction in an effort to accomplish a single task. Most times this does not work. Online design instructors have a better rate of success when they consider the resources they use and the strategy they employ before attempting to combine traditional strategies with online technologies.

Choosing the correct technology can be difficult. More and more universities and colleges are investing in devices intended to facilitate communication and interaction, store data for instant retrieval, and provide access for all users. This means that there are an increasing number of options for delivering instruction in the classroom and across networks in environments that have yet to catch up with yesterday's technology.

REPLICATING THE REAL WORLD

Online courses and traditional studio time are two different environments. It's not possible to replace the experience of a traditional studio. The key is figuring out how to take the good things about in-person studio time, like real-time interaction, meeting classmates, completing hands-on projects... and create an experience around it, in the digital world.

INTERACTIVITY IS ESSENTIAL

Further, the current trend in resource investment seems to be moving toward higher bandwidth and higher interactivity. This poses a great challenge, because there is no particular standard for choosing the best technology and the best strategy. More importantly, not all students possess compatible machinery or software to interface with higher-tech equipment. Therefore, the instructional designer must choose what methods will maximize learning for particular students or groups. Scholars feel that it is not enough to merely provide a platform for them to collaborate, but their constructions, understanding

and meanings have to be supported by face-to-face interactions. Becoming a good designer requires more than just mastering the tools. Students also need to build social skills. Working with people is something design students must do. Long critiques help prepare students to separate themselves from their work as they are not artists but service providers.

EVERYTHING AT A PRICE

Design is becoming a prerequisite for business success, but with a year at a top-flight school in the US like Parsons or Rhode Island School of Design easily costs more than \$53,000, as good learning does not necessarily come cheap. Schools in India can cost between ₹1 lakh and ₹15 lakh. On the other hand, education marketplace Skillshare has created a new online school of design with world-class teachers that only cost \$20 per class.

CLASS STRUCTURE

Each class is a little different, but they all share the same basic structure. The teacher provides the assignment and reference materials; students start working on their projects and get feedback from the teacher and their classmates on the project website or through virtual 'office hours' handled via video chat and a final review. There are no grades—the student's portfolio is the only record of quality.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

While students with online learning portfolios may earn anything between ₹1,00,000 and ₹3,00,000. Students with four-year studio-based learning portfolios could earn between ₹3,00,000 and ₹6,00,000.

DESIGNED TO SUCCEED?

The courses that students opt for are based on the skills they think they need to procure better-paying jobs and that allow them to carve out decent careers in design. Students interested in communication design usually have a high rate of success learning web design, user interface design, experience design, and interaction design.

However, students interested in product design, retail and experience design, interior design, and fashion design, might find it difficult to master the skills necessary for these disciplines through distance/online courses. ■

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REEL DREAMS



Chaitanya Chinchlikar, Vice President, Business Development, Whistling Woods International, talks about the pros and cons of an online course in film-making

Film-making can be divided in three broad parts. Film theories and film studies are one aspect—much of this can be taught through an online course. Another part is arts, literature and culture studies; some of this can be learnt online, some of it has to be experienced. Unless the student listens to live music, sees art coming together and is exposed to the basic concepts of design, production and so on, it is not possible to learn it just via the web. Third and quite crucial, is the hands-on training, which includes working under supervision and application of all theories that one learns—this it is not possible to learn through a distance or online course. However, online courses can offer a basic foundation and grounding in film-making.

COST CONSIDERATIONS

The cost of an online film-making course completely depends on the quality of curriculum and the faculty. It can cost anywhere between ₹10,000-20,000 an hour. A 50-hour quality online film-making course would cost ₹1 lakh. If the course cost is higher, one needs to take a call, based on whether the faculty involved and the experience they bring to the table are worth the extra charge.

CONTENT COUNTS

A key part of online/distance courses is content delivery. Content has to be prepared in a user-friendly manner. It has to have a classroom-like set-up, but should be produced like it's not in a classroom. There must be one-on-one communication and enough flexibility to cater to students from different backgrounds.

There are two ways of delivering such a course, pre-recorded or live; both have their pros and cons. If it is pre-recorded, it can be produced better. The quality of the course is also better and there is scope to enhance it to ensure that the message is conveyed in the best possible way. A live course has the scope of being more interactive. However, given the expansive nature of the subject and the plethora of areas that have to be covered, it is preferable to have something pre-created and perfected. Additionally, pre-production offers the possibility of demonstrating practical aspects of film, which are crucial to online education.

When choosing an online course, try to pick one that offers the best balance between interactivity and high-quality production value. ■

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Financially Sound



Sajith Kumar PK, MD & CEO, IBMC, Dubai and alumni of the BSE Institute Ltd., Executive Program in Investment Management, talks to us about the distance-learning courses in the financial sector



Distance Education as a system to provide learning opportunities has been in existence for a considerable period of time now. There was a time when institutes and colleges that provided quality education and specialization in a specific subject were limited to certain cities, but with the march of technology, education is no longer constrained by geographical considerations.

VAST POTENTIAL, NOT ENOUGH TRACTION

Finance is a vast subject and just about any aspect of it that you can think of, is available online nowadays—right from very basic courses on understanding stock markets, commodity markets, banking and insurance to technically advanced courses

like financial engineering and actuarial science. Although institutes like BSE, through its online arm, www.bsevarsity.com, are tying up with global universities to offer advanced courses, the concept of online studying still hasn't got adequate traction.

GET CLARITY, CHOOSE WISELY

Depending on what one aspires to be, one should choose courses carefully. A student who is not very clear on what he or she would like to do in the future, should begin with basic courses like 'fundamentals of equity research', 'fundamentals of corporate finance' and similar simpler financial market courses. Once there is clarity on what one finds interesting and challenging, one can specialize. For instance, I did the Executive Program in Investment Management (EPIM) course once I had a sound footing on the basics of what is investment management.

The objectives behind me taking up EPIM was to get a head start in finance by implementing the concepts taught in this course and to gain hands-on practical financial experience. This programme provided me with immense knowledge about investing, personal finance and the overall fundamentals of the economy. Irrespective of whether you are a working professional or self-employed, it is always beneficial to learn how to manage your personal finance. It gives you an edge, while enabling you to invest your money to yield maximum result.

ALIVE AND THRIVING

There are segments of people who believe that the human/personal touch is missing in online courses and that they are not very interactive. However, my experience has been completely

different. Millennials, be it from cities or from towns, are fast getting used to e-commerce and WhatsApp, so why not education online. It's just a matter of time before mindsets change; in fact, they are already changing—given the increase in the number of online courses and a young working population that wants to simultaneously gain work experience and an education. Online financial courses nowadays offer mock trading, simulated financial set-ups and more for practical education. Doubts are also cleared through live webinars.

OF COST AND EXPERIENCE

As far as the cost for doing such courses is concerned, it varies with the type and duration of the course. A one-week intensive course could cost as much as a three-month periodic course, based on the institute that is conducting it. One should always look at the course content and the reputation of the institute and compare it to other options, before making a decision. One may not find much difference in fees, but the expertise of the institute and its faculty can make a world of a difference.

DIVERSIFIED AUDIENCE, ADDED VALUE

Online courses work well for students as well as professionals looking for career advancement as they address the major challenge of knowledge acquired from conventional sources that is not only outdated, but also not aligned to application in the workplace. They certainly add value to your existing knowledge and allow you to specialize in subjects of your interest. Besides, an added degree, certification or skill will reflect well on your resume and distance education is one of the most convenient ways to achieve that. Financial courses from reputed institutes could be just the beginning of a lucrative journey in the financial world. From being an insurance or mutual fund agent/distributor to a trader or fund manager—the scope is unlimited. If you are an investment banker, a course on investment management can definitely give you an upper hand in your peer group. Even if these courses don't have the same reputation as the IIMs, one only needs to look around to realise that traders/fund managers probably earn much more than IIM graduates over the years. ■

Coordinated by Averil Nunes

PRESIDENT, ICSI INVOKES 'LET COMPANY SECRETARY BE PARTNERING START- UP, STAND UP INITIATIVE OF THE HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER'

On the sidelines of the conclusion of the grand event, CS Mamta Binani, President, Institute of Company Secretaries of India informed that the Company Secretary is 'The Professional' who acts as a marathon runner from the Start to the Finish line for a Start-Up. A Company Secretary is responsible for beginning the Start-Up business in terms of incorporation, advising the right outfit for the Business and then taking the Business to the next level. The role of a Company Secretary in a Start-up can be equated to a mentor responsible for developing a sapling into a tree, she added. President, ICSI Ms. Binani expressed deep gratitude to Shri Arun Jaitley, the Honourable Union Minister of Corporate Affairs and I&B for his kind visit to the Pavilion.

The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) course is such that the Members are well equipped with the knowledge of laws and are experts in compliances and have acquired the role of a business manager because of their acumen to understand business and the framework of doing business.

In this dynamic environment, no learnings can remain fresh unless unlearning, relearning is done on an almost daily basis. Institute has a very robust mechanism to continuously provide capacity building workshops and programmes which further hones their skills. This enables our professionals to remain ever contemporary and maintain pace.

President, Ms. Binani stated that ICSI played a pivotal role in the Government of India's mega event 'Make in India' Week held at Mumbai from 13-18 February, 2016 at the MMRDA Grounds, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Mumbai. The members of ICSI played an important role at the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) Pavilion. She took pride in mentioning that as a contribution to the Nation, the senior company secretaries provided the services at zero professional fee. She also mentioned that MCA has taken very bold initiatives to serve its stakeholders, the recent one being the Central Registry System for name approvals at Maneswar.

At the MCA Pavilion, Company Secretaries helped the stakeholders to form their companies on the spot and guided them with their business outfits and were consulted by angel

investors, joint venture partners, investors from abroad on varied subjects like Companies Act, Corporate Restructuring, LLP, FEMA, Listing Regulations, Agreements like Joint Venture, Scheme of Arrangements and Compromise etc.

ICSI takes pride in Germany and UK, who showed keen interest on setting up of Business in India, various Business models available and formalities required.

The President ICSI, Mamta Binani stated that ICSI has always been and are partners in Nation Building. Company Secretaries are always there to offer whole hearted active support to the Government of India in its endeavours. Her message to the stakeholders for success of Make in India is "Together We Can..... Together We Will!"



Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's esteemed visit to the Pavilions just after the inauguration ceremony at the 'MAKE IN INDIA' week at Mumbai. Seen with his honoured gracious self outside the Ministry of Corporate Affairs Pavilion are Shri Tapan Ray, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, CS Mamta Binani, President, The Institute of Company Secretaries of India amongst other dignitaries.

The MCA Pavilion also witnessed the gracious presence of Shri Arun Jaitley, Hon'ble Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs and I&B, Shri Tapan Ray, Secretary, MCA, and Shri P.K Malhotra Secretary, Law & Justice and many more dignitaries.

Just after this event, a week later, on her maiden visit as a President to the function of the Northern India Regional Office, President, ICSI launched e-Library for its members to provide free access to Online e-library to provide knowledge resources to its members and to keep them abreast with the latest happenings in the field of Corporate Laws. This digital initiative particularly assumes

a lot of significance keeping in mind the changes in Company Law and the Digital India drive made by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

President, ICSI informed that the ICSI e-library available on www.icsi.edu consists of Case Laws (with head notes), Wealth of intellectual knowledge in the shape of Articles by experts, Procedures under Company Law, Resolutions, Queries and their Replies by experts, Notifications and Circulars of various Ministries / Departments, Updated legislations etc. The e-library is updated on daily basis with facility of daily updates.

President ICSI emphasized the use of technology to upgrade the skills of its members. ICSI aims to map the technology with the vision of ICSI to give value to all the stakeholders.



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Secrets of SUCCESS

As someone who has been through both the distance learning and the conventional education systems, let me be honest about one thing; it's basically the same game with the same rules. Only there's nobody watching to make sure you follow them, so being systematic and tracking your own progress is the key to success in the distance-learning format.

Since studying for a distance-learning course mostly happens at home, it is important to ensure that the atmosphere is conducive to study. You need to move beyond the stray efforts at homework and revision that happen after returning from an academic institution to a focused effort with the same level of seriousness that a college provides.

For this, rather than overburdening children with unreasonably high expectations, parents should instead try to help them find a path that is in consonance with their natural abilities. These are some of the stress triggers that should be either avoided or dealt with firmly to reduce the pressure on students who have opted for distance education.

DEAL WITH PARENTAL CONFLICT

Children generally soak up their parents' moods and tension. Parents must ensure that they develop their own stress-reduction strategies and be alert about not passing on their stress to their children. Also, parents must refrain from pressurizing their children; they must try to understand the skills

In order to ace a distance-learning course, it is advisable for students to be systematic in their approach and utilize time constructively, advises **Sheetal Shelar**



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and abilities of their child and set their expectations accordingly.

SET ROUTINES

It is important for students to follow a regular schedule for daily meals, course study, bedtime, assignments and leisure activities. Setting up a structured routine for the day provides them with a set pattern to follow and provides much-needed stability. Some amount of flexibility is fine and even necessary at times, but distance-learning students will feel more secure with regularity and routine. Additionally, you will be helping to develop your skills in future planning and preparation.

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is the key to managing and reducing stress. For truly effective communication, there has to be a regular exchange of thoughts, ideas and feelings. Students who opt for distance education should feel free to share their problems with family, friends or other people who make up their support system to have peace of mind and avoid stress.

BALANCE THINGS OUT

Managing work and a distance-education course can be tricky. Working out a good study schedule can be like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. You need to identify the specific lectures and webinars you want to attend online, figure out which days and timings fit best with your office hours and avoid overlaps. Make sure you have a reasonable study schedule subject to your office workload, spread out somewhat evenly over the week.

GET REFRESHED

Sound sleep is essential to refresh and recharge your mind. However, there are situations like exams, which may force you to stay up late and complete your studies. While it's natural for owls to stay awake at night, some students may find it difficult to manage extended study sessions and still give the exam their best shot the next day. An inability to concentrate is a very real problem that could affect both the revision process and the actual exam itself. Presenting simple guidelines to help your mind and body cope with staying up late the night before the exams:

Consume more liquids: Drink plenty of water to keep your body hydrated.



Since studying for a distance-learning course mostly happens at home, it is important to ensure that the atmosphere is conducive to study. You need to move beyond the stray efforts at homework and revision that happen after returning from an academic institution to a focused effort with the same level of seriousness that a college provides



Dehydration can make you sleepy and may cause you to lose focus or feel sick during the exam. Keeping your body hydrated will ward off these symptoms. Plus, water helps reduce fatigue. Also, if you are really sleepy, a glass of water can help you stay up by breaking the monotony of studying.

Splash cold water: At regular intervals, splash some cold water on your face and the pulse area of your wrist. Increase the fan speed, the fresh breeze on your wet skin is sure to make you feel more alert and lively. Moreover, splashing cold water on your face and eyes will help you get rid of the red-eyed half-asleep look that makes you want to doze off whenever you glance at the mirror.

Light nutritious food: If you know you have to stay awake, avoid a heavy dinner. Opt for light meals, as a full dinner will make your digestive system do extra work, making you feel more tired and drowsy. Consume fresh juices or salads instead. Skip dessert if possible; the sugar high will wear off soon, leaving you feeling lethargic.

Avoid experimenting with new food items or surviving on nutrition supplements before exams. Anything out of the ordinary, may cause adverse reactions, so stick to foods that your digestive system is comfortable with. This is a good time to avoid any food items that have caused stomach upsets in the past.

Be active: Don't sit in one place all the time; walk around the room with your books. The movement will keep your adrenaline flowing and ward off sleepiness. Similarly, chewing sugar-free gum will generate just enough physical activity to keep you awake; and the

best part is that it won't affect your teeth. In fact, the chewing exercise is thought to help increase your memory power. Chewing gum can also improve your digestion, as long as you chew gum after meals. Notice how you frequently swallow while chewing your gum, because of excess saliva production? This helps keep digestive acids down in your stomach.

Listen to music: If it's not too much of a distraction, listening to fast music can be a great way to keep your mind awake. It helps your mind freshen up, so that you can remember more. Music also increases self-esteem and self-confidence, and can help you face the exams with a more positive state of mind.

CONSIDER IMPLICATIONS

There are situations in which students set themselves extremely high targets and create even higher levels of stress for themselves. If they succeed the first time, they feel compelled to regenerate the high level of stress for each examination, convinced that it is the only way they can replicate the high rank achieved.

This is why it is important for parents to try and keep things in perspective. They need to monitor their child's behaviour and find ways to reduce the examination-related stress. They should try to maintain a cheerful and loving atmosphere in the house and avoid constantly nagging children about the need to score high marks or comparing them with others who top the class.

Given the highly competitive scenario, there is definitely nothing wrong in trying to encourage distance-education students to achieve their potential and get good results in examinations. The problem starts when results become the most important thing in life and students feel compelled to overachieve all the time.

What needs to be understood is that the world doesn't end if you don't get high marks in a particular examination. Results do shape the entry point of a career, but what matters even more is the ability to understand concepts and respond to situations after analyzing them. Some top-scoring students have been unable to leverage their academic achievements in their careers, while average students have risen fast in the real world. ■



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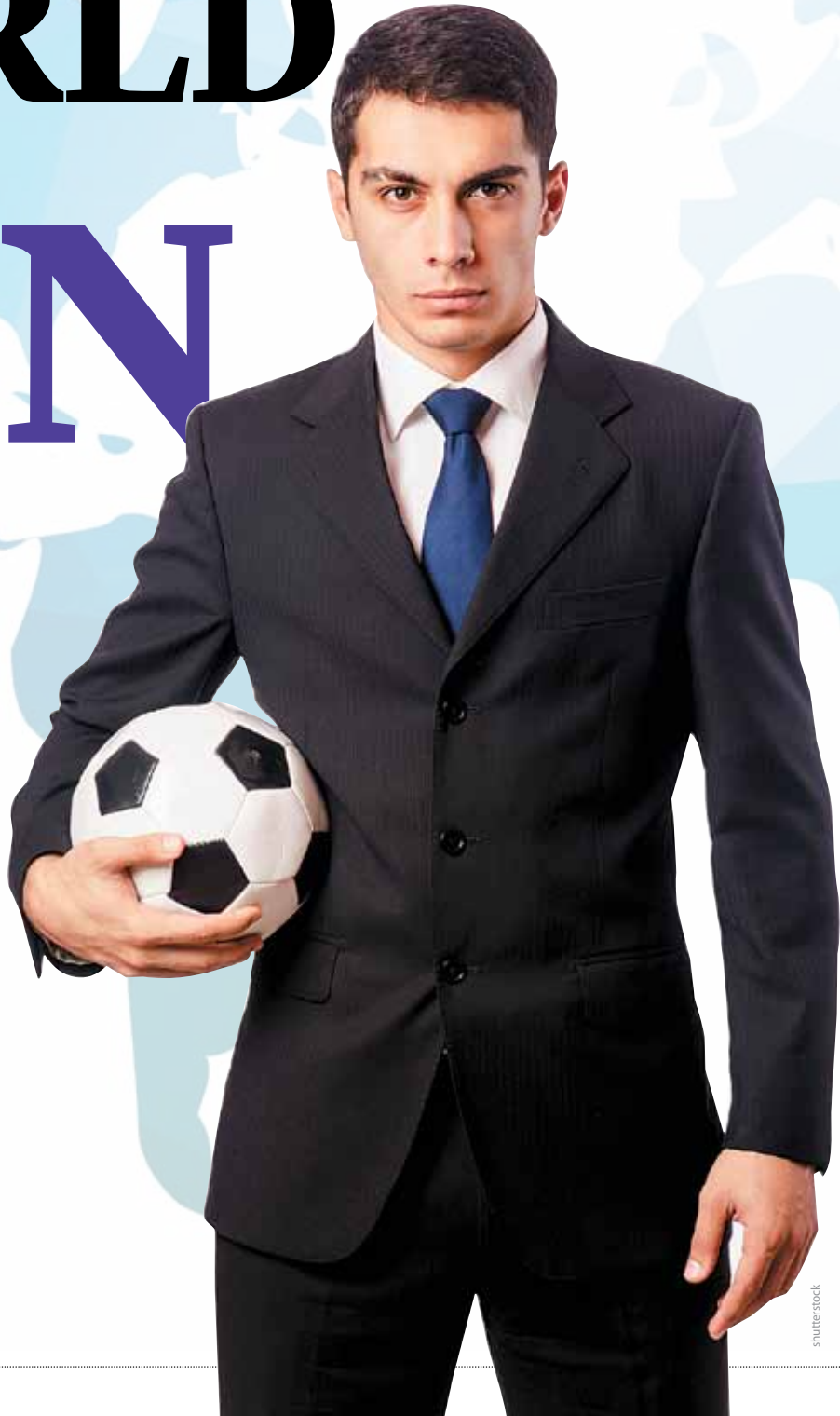
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TAKE ON THE WORLD AND WIN

Distance learning enables management students to respond to the changing global scenario, notes **Vijay Pandya**

A television advertisement likens a corporate office to a chess match. Every executive is compared to a pawn with just one objective, namely to become a king or queen, which essentially means gaining access to the manager's office and occupying that position. While most of the staff expects to achieve this via sheer luck or destiny, one of them constantly bolsters his resume by doing online courses on specialised aspects like data analytics, which helps speed up his career growth. He makes the transition from cubicle to cabin



quite rapidly (just about 15-20 seconds on air, since it is for a television audience after all), donning a smart jacket to indicate his new status.

Seriously though, distance education has grown beyond education for education's sake. Today, it is a strategic tool utilized for multiple purposes. It is not just about preparing for, launching or jump-starting a career. It is about taking a career to heights previously only dreamt of.

GLOBALLY RELEVANT

The bottom line is that management education these days is considered an essential qualification to gain entry into the corporate world. The competition is so intense that without a professional qualification, a candidate may be left behind. As a result, the demand for management courses has increased enormously in the last few years.

Distance-learning management programmes are made more comprehensive with research assignments related to industries all over the world, business plans, quizzes and industry interactions through webinars. Due to this, a student is equipped with the necessary skills to serve as a manager in any office across the globe.

Management education in India is undergoing a phenomenal change. With the rapid pace of globalization and the increasing number of mergers and acquisitions, a greater number of management graduates from India are pursuing careers abroad. Therefore, the emphasis is now on preparing them to be global managers, without compromising on the inherent strengths of an Indian education. Consequently, the cross-cultural dimensions of business are assuming greater importance.

One of the advantages of distance education—if one signs up with the right institution—is that it enables students to respond to the changing global scenario. This is why many believe that an industry-relevant distance-education management course offered by a dynamic institution can sometimes be more useful than a classroom format in another institution that offers an outdated curriculum and no industry linkages whatsoever.

Today, we stand on the threshold of a changing world order. Technology has broken down business barriers, while globalization has blurred boundaries. Outsourcing has reached major proportions and it is rare to find a major brand that has not set up facilities across the world as part of its business strategy.

Before joining an institute of distance learning, one needs to consider whether it equips one with the knowledge, competence, critical thinking and analytical skills necessary to help one metamorphose into a corporate leader in the future.

A NEW WORLD ORDER

Today, we stand on the threshold of a changing world order. Technology has broken down business barriers, while globalization has blurred boundaries. Outsourcing has reached major proportions and it is rare to find a major brand that has not set up facilities across the world as part of its business strategy. Countries once dismissed as third world nations have become economic drivers.

In such a scenario, with the recent recession still fresh in our minds, there are two ways to approach the future. The first is to look at the glass as half-empty, by focusing on what we have lost. The second is to look at the glass as half-full and focus on the opportunities that exist today and those, which will come up in future.

The bottom line is that, in today's dynamic and challenging business world, only the fittest can and will survive. In the past, employees may have had singular responsibilities and hardly any performance appraisal which evaluated their value as a 'team player', but today they have to multitask and work in tandem with their colleagues.

Organizations today, expect their management graduates to not just handle their assigned responsibilities, but to add value to the organization in many different ways; be it improving systems, building brand image, developing business or rep-

resenting the company at various forums. This requires them to have all-round knowledge of the business environment and not just a specific area of expertise. And this broad-based knowledge is exactly what distance-learning management courses are expected to provide.

Look at the competitive scenario today. Every country is trying to position itself as a hub for finance, services, manufacturing... Companies from certain industries keep shifting to the countries that offer a cost advantage. There exists intense competition within each country too. Depending on land prices and infrastructure availability, companies are setting up new units in emerging towns and cities. Distance-learning courses equip students to adapt and deliver, so they can survive in this challenging world.

DECISION TIME

The question students often ask is whether they should go in for management education in an economic slowdown and whether it makes sense to do an online course instead of a full-time one? The answer, quite simply, is that while pessimists see 'O' as the last letter in the word 'zero', optimists see it as the first letter of the word 'opportunity.' Given the prevailing economic scenario, management aspirants are obviously concerned about their future careers and therefore, confused about the path to take. Well, the good news is that the scope for management careers seems quite bright, as long as one approaches the stepping stones, namely the choice of management institutes and courses, with the right attitude.

There is normally an inverse relationship between recession in an economy and the demand for business schools. There is a greater rush for higher learning, particularly management education, whenever there is a crisis in job markets. The reason is twofold: one is the propensity to keep busy in education whilst waiting for the crisis to be over and the second is to equip oneself with better skills and competencies through higher education for facing turbulent times.

The right institution can enhance or destroy your career prospects. It can mean the difference between riding

on the fast track to future growth and struggling to get ahead. While the rising number of institutions offering professional courses and management programmes online has substantially increased the options available to aspirants, the flipside is that students are spoilt for choice and get utterly confused.

It's crucial for aspirants of management education to make thoughtful decisions about the type of institution, the specialization and the vertical they will be opting for. This requires a careful evaluation of one's future goals (both personal and professional) for the next five to ten years; an assessment of the opportunities available in the external environment in terms of anticipated growth of certain industrial sectors, jobs and specializations; and finding out the skill sets and competencies needed for the above as well as understanding whether one is in fact cut out for a career in management.

Managers of tomorrow need to have an entrepreneurial mindset. There is a call for entrepreneurial performers in the corporate corridors of multinational firms. Those who constantly upgrade themselves will have the

wherewithal to ascend the corporate ladder quickly. They can find themselves working in different cities across the globe with enviable job profiles. If the attitude of students while pursuing courses is positive, the rest will fall in place.

BENEFITS GALORE

While the biggest advantage of distance learning is that one does not have



It's crucial for aspirants of management education to make thoughtful decisions about the type of institution, the specialization and the vertical they will be opting for. This requires a careful evaluation of one's future goals (both personal and professional) for the next five to ten years; an assessment of the opportunities available in the external environment in terms of anticipated growth of certain industrial sectors, jobs and specializations; and finding out the skill sets and competencies needed for the above as well as understanding whether one is in fact cut out for a career in management



to give up a job with good prospects to develop additional skills. Of course, one does have to pull off a balancing act between earning and learning.

While conventional management programmes are bound by innumerable limitations, the value addition provided through distance-learning programmes enhances the quality of preparedness for real-life situations. The curriculum, teaching and learning process are constantly upgraded to cater to industry needs.

International business, banking and finance, biotech management, shipping and logistics, forex management, SEZ operations, trade policies, global sourcing and globalization...—there's clearly tremendous scope for learning. Specialized courses have high market demand. To ensure relevance, a distance-learning curriculum-framing team interacts with industry experts on a regular basis and introduces relevant subjects such as cost-cutting techniques, sourcing strategies, corporate social responsibility, environment management, sectoral analysis, competitiveness, supply-chain management and so on conducted by experts who have functional experience in these areas.

A CAREER UPGRADE

Everybody wants a dream career, but few have the desire, the confidence and the courage to pursue their dreams. Many students stray in their pursuit of a livelihood and end up with a mundane career. There are several institutes that offer specific distance-education courses, which can make dream careers a reality, no matter how late in the day it is. Virtual classrooms enable students to interact with professors online and even measure their own progress after each topic, through real-time tests with instant feedback.

The learning process has to elevate a student's skill, knowledge and positivity levels. If training in these three areas is focused on and students are groomed by participative learning, they will become super performers, who companies will rely on in the future.

THE PROCESS

Distance education could involve synchronous or asynchronous learning or both.

Synchronous learning technology requires all participants to be 'present' at the same time. It resembles traditional classroom teaching methods despite the participants being located remotely and requires a timetable. Web conferencing, video conferencing, educational and instructional television are examples of synchronous technology, as are direct-broadcast satellite, internet radio, live streaming, telephone and web-based VoIP.

In asynchronous learning, participants access course materials on their own schedule and so have greater flexibility. Students are not required to be together at the same time. Mail correspondence, which is the oldest form of distance education, is an asynchronous delivery technology. Others include message board forums, e-mail, video and audio recordings, print materials, voicemail and fax.

The two methods can be combined in the delivery of one course. For example, some courses use weekend classroom teaching to supplement the remote teaching. ■



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And the **TOP 10** Distance Learning Institutes in India are...



The Distance Education Survey 2015-16 by DNA and Daksha, evaluates leading distance education institutes on seven key parameters and ranks the Top 10

“It does not matter how slowly you go, just that you do not stop,” says Chinese philosopher Confucius. With technology driving education faster and further than it has ever gone before, there’s no dearth of opportunity or choice for students and professionals who would like to upskill.

This is where *dna* plays a key role; by analyzing the existing opportunities, it equips anyone who would like to study further with the data that’s necessary to make informed decisions. This year’s survey was conducted by Daksha Skill Development Pvt. Ltd., with the objective of identifying the top distance learning institutes in India for UG/PG Programme based on the following parameters:

1. Quality of Study Material
2. Faculty and Resources
3. Examination and Result Process
4. Interaction with Students/Alumni
5. Online Material, Learning and Information
6. Teaching/Mentoring
7. Interaction/Response

The criteria laid down here bears much significance when it comes to selecting a Distance Education institute.

KEY FINDINGS

IMT CDL, Ghaziabad is perceived to be the best distance learning institute, followed by Symbiosis CDL, Pune and Sikkim Manipal University, DLC.

Sikkim Manipal University, Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS) and Mumbai Univer-

sity are perceived as top institutes and rank in Top 5 list across attributes.

While Indira Gandhi National Open University ranks 10 consistently across attributes; other institutes, such as Amity School of Distance Learning, All India Management Association (AIMA), Prin, L.N. Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research and Annamalai University occupy the spots 6-9, with slight variances across parameters.

COMPETITIVE SCENARIO

Distance education is no longer just the purview of those who happened to fall off the mainstream education bandwagon. From students who’d like to ‘learn whilst they earn’ to ‘executives bent on climbing the corporate ladder’, the quest to upskill is apparent across the globe and within India as well. Over the years, this country’s distance education institutes have been constantly raising the bar and the competition continues to intensify with MOOCs and Ivy League Universities offering high-quality education for “free” and certifications at affordable prices.

DECISION DRIVERS

So which distance education institute is the best for you? A lot depends on what your future goals are and whether the institute in question offers the subjects that will contribute to building the career of your dreams. And of course, the relevance of the curriculum offered to the requirements of potential employers.

Flexibility is another factor that you need to take into consideration when signing up for a distance education course. And then there are the crucial parameters that this study has evaluated: Quality of Study Material, Faculty and Resources, Examination and Result Process, Interaction with Students/Alumni, Online Material, Learning and Information,

Teaching/Mentoring and Interaction/Response.

The most important factor that needs to be considered, however, is what makes the institute that you have chosen stand out? A strong reputation in the market? Collaborations with multinational firms or leading corporates? Something else altogether? Answering this question is all you need to confirm that you have chosen the right place to help you get a job, climb the corporate ladder (quickly) or simply stand out in a crowd.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Out of a shortlist of 20 institutes based on secondary research, 10 screened institutes became part of the main survey.

The research is based on a ‘Quantitative Field Survey’ of the stakeholders, namely — students seeking to join this/ next year, alumni, recruiters (especially HR Managers) and faculty teaching at distance learning / management institutes.

The field survey was conducted across a stratified random sample across stakeholders in six cities namely: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Pune and Chandigarh.

The total sample size (convenience sampling) across the six cities was 300; of which potential students, faculty and alumni numbered 240; and HR Managers/ Recruiters numbered 60 (figures in the survey may be at some variance with the figures cited here). HR Managers/ Recruiters represent the key industry verticals, namely — FMCG/ Durables (Manufacturing), Telecom, Retail, IT/ ITES, Consultancy, Professional Services, Real Estate, etc.

The sample distribution of all the stakeholders considered across cities is as shown in the table below:

STAKEHOLDERS - CITY	MUMBAI	DELHI	BANGALORE	CHENNAI	PUNE	CHANDIGARH	TOTAL
POTENTIAL STUDENTS	20	20	20	20	20	20	120
ALUMNI	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
HR MANAGERS*	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
FACULTY	10	10	10	10	10	10	60
TOTAL	50	50	50	50	50	50	300

*HR Managers/ Recruiters would represent the key industry verticals, namely — FMCG/ Durables (Manufacturing), Telecom, Retail, IT/ ITES, Consultancy, Professional Services, Real Estate etc.

Name of the Institution	Quality of Study material	Faculty & resources	Examination & Result Process
IMT CDL, Ghaziabad	85.40	87.20	86.35
Symbiosis CDL, Pune	83.50	86.25	84.80
Sikkim Manipal University - DLC	84.10	82.45	86.10
Narsee Monjee (NMIMS) School of Distance Education, Mumbai	81.80	81.40	81.10
Mumbai University (Institute of Distance and Open Learning), Mumbai	82.25	81.35	80.80
Amity School of Distance Learning, Noida	80.20	80.50	80.50
All India Management Association, Delhi	81.15	81.35	79.50
Prin. L. N. Welingkar Institute of Management Development & Research, Mumbai	79.60	78.60	78.80
Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar	78.90	80.50	78.70
IGNOU, Delhi	77.70	78.55	78.10

Interaction with Students / Alumni	Online material, learning & information	Teaching / Mentoring	Interaction / response	Overall	Rank
88.65	85.45	84.85	85.90	86.26	1
84.90	85.90	82.80	84.45	84.66	2
82.50	84.75	80.90	83.20	83.43	3
86.90	83.20	82.30	84.75	82.78	4
81.50	81.90	81.68	81.90	81.63	5
82.90	81.20	80.50	81.20	81.00	6
81.90	81.45	79.90	81.45	80.96	7
79.60	80.10	80.50	80.10	79.61	8
78.90	78.20	79.50	78.20	78.99	9
78.90	77.90	78.75	77.90	78.26	10

Findings of Distance Education National Ranking Survey 2015-16. ■



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WHAT ARE EDX'S USPS?

edX's Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and initiatives engage learners around the world. Currently, edX has more than 7 million students from every country around the globe, with more than 23 million course enrolments. The size of edX's user base illustrates the huge appetite for high-quality, rigorous online courses and our learners' response helps drive our commitment to providing online education for anyone, anywhere with a desire to learn.

We partner with some of the best universities across the globe, such as MIT, Harvard, Georgetown, Tsinghua and others, to offer courses that learners can take for free no matter where they are in the world.

What distinguishes edX from other platforms is that we are the only one found-

ed as a non-profit that offers courses of this high quality and with the backing of the world's greatest institutions. Because of this status, we're able to create and grow in ways that for-profit companies can't. This ensures that we never need to deviate from our three-fold mission to increase access to high-quality education, enhance teaching and learning on campus and online, and to make new discoveries about the process of learning through research.

We want to enable educational experts to experiment with how best to teach online and on campus. Many professors teaching MOOCs are interested not just in teaching their course, but in studying the process of online learning. They have experience with the earliest online education providers and understand their limitations. They want to try out new teaching techniques and need a platform that will let them. Additionally, we

are working with our partners to develop high-quality education through a series of courses that carry valuable credentials for our learners, for employers and for academic institutions.

HOW DO YOU CONSISTENTLY ENSURE HIGH QUALITY IN THE CONTENT THAT YOU OFFER?

On what basis do you select courses or universities to work with? We select partners based on a number of criteria, including their histories of academic excellence. We partner with the best universities in the world such as IIT Bombay, IIM Bangalore, Harvard, MIT and UC Berkeley, to name a few.

Given the reputations of these institutions, we are always confident of the content and courses they create. The rigour of edX course material equals that of on-campus coursework, and our institutional partners hold their edX courses to the same standards as their physical classrooms.

We also select partners based on their willingness to innovate and expand the reach and power of online education. Online education itself has been around for several decades. But online degrees and credentials were previously not as highly regarded as those obtained through campus education. That is now changing. As we continue to develop sequences of courses that offer pathways to credit, like our Micro Master's program and our Global Freshman Academy program with Arizona State University, we create new opportunities to change learners' lives through the effectiveness of MOOCs.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE DIVERSITY OF YOUR USER BASE? DOES THIS DIVERSITY ADD TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION ON OFFER?

edX's reach extends around the world, with representation from every country



Learning Never Ends

Anant Agarwal,
CEO, edX, talks to
Averil Nunes about
the innovative world
of online education



The big strength of Open and Distance Education is that it provides greater access to higher education for working people and persons residing in inaccessible and remote areas. It executes the concept of participant centered learning and enable students to learn at their own pace and convenience and is extremely cost effective and reasonably affordable.

Use of technology further enhances the learning experience. Technology Based Learning platforms allow students to engage with the institution, faculty and Peers in a highly convenient manner. These Platforms also enable On Demand Learning and enable the students to access interactive digital learning material from anywhere and 24X7. We offer digital content that's not just comprehensive but also makes the learning experience enjoyable. Strides in the e learning design have also created possibilities that help bring real life situations to the learning experience of students of Distance Learning Programs. Enabled by electronic simulations, video based real life scenarios, recorded lectures of eminent faculty, a new age Distance Learning experience in many ways can be superior to traditional campus based learning.

IMT, Centre for Distance Learning, Ghaziabad (IMT-CDL) is located on a lush green 6 campus and is just an hour's drive from Delhi. The Institute boasts of world-class infrastructure consisting of a fully networked Wi-Fi campus, well-equipped classrooms, a modern auditorium and a well-stocked library. In addition to conventional class rooms, IMT-CDL headquarters also house state of the art studio facilities that beams live class room lectures to its centers and learners. The studios connect you to IMT's illustrious Faculty Members in an interactive online Class room environment. In addition to a physical campus, IMT-CDL also has a virtual campus called Edu-Genie. **Edu-Genie** gets busy working executives to access highly interactive learning courseware, participate in enjoyable learning activities, watch insightful Learning videos, practice mock tests, and collaborate with peers on the Go and 24X7.

We provide a range of 1 Year and 2 Year Post Graduate UGC Recognized programs in management . With an Industry relevant curriculum that constitute the most vital core subjects and multiple specialization tracks, a student is assured of the most comprehensive management education experience at IMT-CDL

2 Year PGDM

The Two year Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) aims to provide students an opportunity to develop management skills and to compete successfully in the global business environment. The program provides an intensive , stimulating and challenging learning experience in the management discipline. The curriculum covers all the important areas of management enabling executives to assume strategic role in their organization.

The Student can choose to specialize in any of the following- Finance, Marketing, Information Systems, Operations, Human resource or International Business.

1 Year PGDM (Executive)

This program is specially designed for individuals looking to take on larger critical roles in their organizations and businesses. This program differentiates itself in focusing on experiential learning through real business cases, experience sharing, role plays etc. program content has been designed keeping Industry insights on requirements of Working Executives.

The Student can choose to specialize in any of the following- Finance, Marketing, Information Systems, Operations or Human resource management.

Admissions are done twice a year - January and July.

Selection

- The selection to the various programmes of IMT-Centre for Distance Learning is based on screening by the selection committee.
- Minimum eligibility criteria for admission in Two Year PGDM is Graduate in any discipline
- Admission to Two-Year (PGDM) Programme is through admission test to be conducted online and at IMT-CDL (Head Office).
- For One Year PGDM (Executive) Programmes, minimum 3 years work experience is required.

Admission Procedure

Admission Forms are available from IMT-CDL Head Office and Information Centres. Online Application Form can be filled at IMT-CDL website, www.imtcdl.ac.in

The duly filled forms along with the draft for the fee may also be submitted to the Head Office or Information Centres of IMT-CDL.

Best Management Programs are designed to prepare students to be tomorrow's Business Leaders. LEAD which stands for Learn, Engage, Apply and Develop, it is a great way to prepare students to be tomorrow's business leaders. LEAD is IMT's unique Learning Methodology and is perhaps the best blend of activities to learn on your own, Learn by engaging with experts and Peers, learning by Doing and Continuously Developing and Build your capabilities. Let's describe the methodology and its components:

- **Learn:** Students Learn from IMT's vast and continuously enhanced repository of Self Learning Courseware. The Self Learning is both as per a prescribed time lines and anytime access to learning resources. Each Courseware meets the following Criteria:
- **Self-Explanatory:** Learner should understand content with No External Support
- **Self-Contained:** Learner may not need any additional Material
- **Self-Directed & Motivating:** Guided Learning with hints, suggestions at each stage of learning.

Engage with Experts: This provides an opportunity to connect with IMT's illustrious faculty members to further build on your understanding and clarify all doubts to gain confidence.

Apply: Students are provided ample opportunity to apply their knowledge in simulated real life scenarios. This is achieved by Guided Demonstrations, Mentored Discussions and **Action Case Studies** during Expert Connect session. Additionally IMT's **Action Assessments** which constitute of smartly designed assignments and projects that hone your abilities to put knowledge into action.

Develop: Learning should be a continuous spiral going upwards. New Concepts and topics learnt today should build on the knowledge gained earlier. IMT programs follow this approach beautifully as students' progress from one topic to the other and one subject to the next. Many learning activities in the program compel learners to draw from earlier learnt topics and synthesize them to develop new and greater understanding of business situations.

With its primary focus on working executives IMT-CDL has made series of major pedagogical innovations to enable busy executives to pursue their careers along with their pursuit of higher education. For working executives looking to climb up the corporate ladder or those seeking better career opportunities or Young Graduates aspiring to be spotted by recruiters or Business Owners who wish to infuse modern management practices into their organizations, a quality management education experience from IMT, Centre for Distance Learning, Ghaziabad (IMT-CDL) continues to be a great investment to reach one's career goals.

Today IMT, Centre for Distance Learning is the Quality Leader .We are the most preferred choice in the Nation for the students aspiring to pursue management qualification via distance learning. We see ourselves as a formidable Global Player with both technology & curriculum innovations as well as global alliances and become the most preferred choice of International students.

on every continent. Approximately 70% of edX students come from outside the US. India alone accounts for 10% (the second-largest base of learners on edX after the US), followed by the UK (4%), Brazil (4%) and China (4%).

We believe in fostering collaboration everywhere. Learning tools on edX such as discussion forums, cohorts, and teams, help learners work together from anywhere in the world and enrich the learning experience. Our learners can take courses provided by top universities from around the world, irrespective of what country they live in and work with people in other countries as if they were neighbors. It's a truly global experience.

ARE THERE TEACHING STRATEGIES BUILT IN TO YOUR COURSES THAT ENHANCE LEARNING IN ANYWAY?

Unlike a traditional classroom, which follows a set lecture schedule, with MOOC, lectures are delivered online, in easily viewable video segments. Students have the flexibility to watch these lectures at their convenience and pause professors' lectures or go back to review difficult concepts they may have missed.

The edX platform also offers many different teaching tools and features for instructors to design a course that best fits their subject. The courses are designed to be highly interactive, with exercises woven into the video snippets, and online homework, labs, assessments, discussion forums and more.

At edX, we can also grade open-ended responses like essays using peer assessment and artificial intelligence (AI) assessment. With peer assessment, students grade each other's work online. With AI assessment, we use machine learning technology to grade student work. We are also able to create cohorts in online discussion forums, where small groups of students can have more meaningful interactions.

Additionally, online learning is helping us learn more about learning. With each course, we are able to gather millions of clicks and bits of data to analyze how learners learn best and how to enhance our teaching methods.

WHAT'S THE PRICE-SPECTRUM OF CERTIFICATIONS ON EDX? HOW MUCH VALUE DO EDX CER-

TIFICATIONS HAVE IN THE REAL WORLD? CAN THEY HELP SECURE A JOB OR HELP CLIMB THE CORPORATE LADDER?

On average, edX's certificates cost between \$50 to \$150.

In India and around the globe, skilled workforce populations are on the rise; MOOCs and other online courses can offer a competitive edge in any market. One way employers measure the potential value of a candidate is, of course, their educational background.

Education and self-development have been promoted in our society as the key to a better job. While the lifecycle of learning ideally culminates in a job, learning can be a continuous process; it does not need to stop once a student is gainfully employed. Additionally, the skills needed for employment are changing faster today than ever before. The jobs people will have five years from now may not even exist today, which is why continuous education is exceptionally important in today's job market. MOOCs continue to offer great opportunities for continuous, career-focused education.

Collaborations between educational providers and job trainers have also helped yield new opportunities for online learners. Partnerships with organizations such as Aspiring Minds in India help students translate their MOOC credentials into jobs. For example, we recently spoke to a Computer Engineering student in Rajasthan who wanted a leg up in the job market. With more than 3,000 engineering colleges in India graduating engineers, he wanted to make his application stand out. By successfully completing the 'Introduction to Computer Science and Programming' course on edX, among other courses, he was able to share his certificate with Aspiring Minds and eventually secured a Software Trainee job, putting him on the path to becoming an iOS developer or PHP developer.

Another example is Akshay Kulkarni, a software engineer at Microsoft India who credits his edX courses as being instrumental in helping him secure his current job. Akshay, who is 22 years old, told us that edX courses not only helped him rediscover his passion for programming, but also lead him to his job at Microsoft.

WHAT SORT OF COURSES CURRENTLY WITNESS THE GREATEST DEMAND?

The courses listed below have witnessed the highest enrolments:

1. Harvard's CS50x
2. MIT's Intro to Computer Science Using Python
3. Linux Foundation's Intro to Linux
4. UC Berkeley's Science of Happiness
5. UC Berkeley's English Grammar and Essay Writing
6. University of Queensland's Science of Everyday Thinking

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND MOOCs?

When edX first launched, we had no idea what to expect. And even today—with dozens of global institutions and millions of participating learners—we still have so much more to learn as we continue to develop online education.

As colleges and universities increasingly recognize the value of MOOCs in learning, we'll see more blended classrooms. We'll see student satisfaction levels rise with that of professors, who will be freed up to spend more time on one-on-one and group interactions with students, as well as on research. We'll see the educational system become more efficient and deliver better outcomes for the investment that students make. I believe we will also see new online credentials emerge that will offer pathways to on-campus programmes and credits.

The blended model will continue to rise in popularity. College campus coursework will combine in-person and online learning; a shift driven by student demand for the convenience and effectiveness of online learning. Growing institutions, especially in India, will aggregate existing MOOC offerings into synthesized programs. These 'digital dormitories' may augment online learning by providing students with a campus-like experience, perhaps with tutoring support. However, the majority of educational content in these programmes will be delivered via MOOCs.

Success will lie in experimenting with these new concepts and continuously innovating. ■



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Learning: ACTIVE, SOCIAL, VISUAL

Martin Schmucker, Public Relations Manager, Iversity talks to Averil Nunes about the organization's focus on active social learning



WHAT DISTINGUISHES IVERSITY FROM OTHER MOOCS?

Iversity's USP is active social learning. On our platform, you're not a consumer of content, but become an active co-creator of knowledge. With our 'Journals' feature, we add a strong social dimension to build virtual learning communities. Each of our users gets a 'Learning Journal', comparable to a small personal blog. Learners can post their learning results, homework assignments and other thoughts to the journal—and other users can comment on, share and evaluate these. Think of it as a Facebook feed of learning. Also, learners get the opportunity to selectively follow each other and thereby build learning peer groups. No other provider has such strong social features so far!

Posting and giving mutual feedback on assignments is especially successful in our course 'Visual Thinking', where participants learn to doodle and develop a basic graphic vocabulary. This is very useful for presentations, meetings and other business contexts.

We're currently planning a platform relaunch that underlines active social learning.

ON WHAT BASIS DO YOU SELECT COURSES OR UNIVERSITIES TO WORK WITH?

We work with instructors—universities and pioneers from the business world—who have lots of experience. We choose topics that our clients ask for and have compiled a 'Digital Transformation Curriculum', because our society and the economy is undergoing a massive change. Knowledge about how to deal with change is in high demand.

HOW DO YOU ASCERTAIN THE AUTHENTICITY OF STUDENTS?

We use online proctoring technology, where participants have to confirm their identity with their passport.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR USER BASE AND ITS DIVERSITY?

Diversity is one of the factors that makes the online learning experience so unique. Including so many different perspectives from people with completely different cultural back-

grounds is very special about online education platforms.

WHAT IS YOUR COURSE COMPLETION PERCENTAGE?

Our course completion percentage lies within the industry standards —between 7 and 15 percent. But, this is a metric that is not very suitable to measure learning progress.

Many people seem to mix and match knowledge that they need at a certain point, e.g. for a certain project. If someone already knows the basics of, let's say, Digital Marketing, there's no problem if he skips the chapters he already understands. If someone enrolls in Political Philosophy because she wants to learn specifically about, let's say, Aristotle, why not let her skip the part about Hegel? Who can judge if this is successful learning or not? We at Iversity think that it should be up to individual learners to decide what they need when, and how much of it.

HOW DO YOU COMPENSATE FOR THE LACK OF AN INTERACTIVE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT?

We encourage the use of 'journals' and ask our instructors to foster interaction by giving their online students assignments that require interacting with their fellow learners.

Another strategy is peer-to-peer evaluation. Every learner writes an essay that is reviewed by other course participants, and in turn corrects three essays from his peers, along criteria that the instruc-

tor has provided. We hear that this has a great impact on learning outcomes.

WHAT SHOULD POTENTIAL STUDENTS SHOULD LOOK OUT FOR BEFORE SIGNING UP FOR AN ONLINE COURSE?

Keep in mind that taking online courses is not like watching TV or YouTube. Learning is not a passive thing, but something that requires active involvement—usually, between two and four hours a week. Learners should reserve one or more fixed weekly slots in their calendar. Keeping at it really pays off!

WHAT'S THE PRICE-SPECTRUM OF IVERSITY CERTIFICATIONS? CAN THEY HELP SECURE A JOB OR CLIMB THE CORPORATE LADDER?

We offer two types of online courses with different topics and pricing. Iversity's MOOC branch covers topics from humanities and sciences that are of general interest. In our MOOCs, everyone can enrol for free. You pay for a certificate only if you want to document your learning success. Prices range between €29 and €149.

Our PRO branch is focused on business topics. If you want to learn skills to succeed in your job—such as Presentation Skills, Networking, or Digital Marketing—we charge €399.

We see a huge demand in both sections of our business. Whenever we ask our users, a lot of them say they find a certificate a valuable thing. After all, they can use it as an argument in their next salary

negotiations. The key benefit of learning at Iversity is the flexibility to study anytime and anywhere, about subjects that really improve business skills.

WHAT SORT OF COURSES CURRENTLY WITNESS THE GREATEST DEMAND? WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STREAMS/ COURSES THAT WILL EXPERIENCE THE MOST DEMAND IN THE FUTURE AND WHY?

We think that digitization will occupy us for quite some time. It is crucial that every employee, but also every corporation in the world learns what that means. Such as: What can we do with data? How do digital developments impact delivery chains, accounting or innovation mechanisms?

That's why we focus on educating people and companies about digital trends right now. But we will certainly come up with more and other innovative topics and curricula moving forward.

FROM WHERE YOU'RE STANDING WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND MOOCs LOOK LIKE? ARE THERE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES THAT ARE LIKELY TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE ONLINE/DISTANCE LEARNING LANDSCAPE?

Learning will become even more personalized. So far, flexibility is offered to a great extent on an individual level. In the future, we will see algorithms that automatically group people with similar interests and learning styles, so that in effect, the social layer becomes even stronger. ■

The advertisement features a yellow background. On the left, there is a rolled-up newspaper with the DNA logo and some text visible on its surface. To the right of the newspaper, the text reads: 'INDIA'S MOST ATTRACTIVE PRINT BRAND'*' in large, bold, purple letters. Below this, a purple banner contains the text 'NOT JUST BREAKING NEWS' in white, and another banner below that contains 'WAKING NEWS!' in purple. In the top left corner, the DNA logo is displayed with the tagline 'YOUR CODE OF THOUGHT'. In the top right corner, there is a small red logo with the number '2' and the text '2014'. In the bottom right corner, there is a small text '*Source: TRA'.



EDUCATION: WHAT YOU NEED VS WHAT IS NICE!

ALISON's Founder and CEO, Mike Feerick explains to Averil Nunes why a “free” education may be all you really need

We have momentum! We signed up 300,000 new learners in Feb 2016 with next to no advertising. Our reputation is growing by word of mouth more than anything—not expensive TV advertising and the like.

WHAT DO YOU REGARD AS ALISON'S USPS?

Entirely Free—everything that a learner ‘needs’ to have on ALISON is free, including learning and certification. Everything that is a ‘nice’ to have (such as a physical parchment) is a paid service. This ensures that anyone, regardless of income but with web access, can educate themselves for free.

We are a for-profit social enterprise. Our goal is to drive all costs of education to zero—including the cost of online learning, certification, learning management and publishing. We endeavour to drive all costs to zero, but still make enough to be sustainable and scalable. If we were a large company or venture-capital controlled, and not led by a social entrepreneur, we could not do this. Because we are self-funding, it means we don't need to continue raising money from donors to expand our services.

We have strong participation from developing countries—with over 1.5 million learners in Africa and 700,000 in India. The fact that you can learn and be tested on anything you learn on ALISON anywhere you can access the web is a powerful validation of the quality of service we offer.

We focus on the ‘bottom of the pyramid’—in that our audience is the people in developing countries or marginalized in developed countries. Yet, the quality of our content is very high and competes well with offerings in the most advanced online learning markets such as the US and the UK.

We have a strong vision of what we want to do. We also have a committed and talented multinational team driving our offering. We have over 15 nationalities at our headquarters in Galway, Ireland and are very internationally focused.

thing—not expensive TV advertising and the like.

We focus on the workplace; we are about empowering people to better their skills—enabling them to improve economic circumstances for themselves, their families and communities. So you'll find business, health and safety, language and personal development courses on ALISON. You'll also find courses on areas such as teaching training and a complete high-school curriculum—particularly relating to math and statistics, which are being used more and more in the modern workplace.

WHO ARE YOUR PRIMARY COMPETITORS?

We are not aware of any competitor with exactly the same business model, but in various ways competitors with partially similar offerings would be:

Lynda.com/Linkedin (Technical & IT Training)
Udemy.com (Technical and General Knowledge)
EDX/Coursera/Udacity – Third Level Focus (We have lots of university-level courses too, though it's not our main focus.
YouTube (Probably the biggest learning platform in the world. But on it you can rarely tell the overall quality, level, duration, depth of the content or publisher—whereas on ALISON, such attributes are clearly stated).

Many providers who started off as free are edging away from that. However, we are thriving with our free offerings and it will remain core to our mission and to how we do business.

HOW DO YOU CONSISTENTLY ENSURE HIGH QUALITY IN THE CONTENT THAT YOU OFFER?

We have a growing team of specialists, with traditional Masters Degrees in Pedagogy, who review all courses and pro-

spective courses for a high standard of structure. We are not subject-matter experts on every subject, but as we have such a large platform, with millions of learners, we hear back in minutes if we have something wrong in one of our new courses!

ON WHAT BASIS DO YOU SELECT COURSES OR UNIVERSITIES TO WORK WITH?

We work with publishers with an undoubted reputation and subject-matter-expertise. We carefully select the publishers we work with to ensure the courses meet the needs of our learners. We are also constantly looking ahead to identify future skill gaps and focus on developing programmes to meet these gaps. For instance, we have developed a suite of up-to-date new HTML5, CSS3 and JavaScript courses.

HOW DO YOU ASCERTAIN THE AUTHENTICITY OF STUDENTS BEFORE PROVIDING CERTIFICATIONS?

ALISON certification requires learners to achieve an 80% pass rate to graduate. However, the tough part of being an ALISON graduate is that you can be tested again on that course anytime, anywhere, once you can get access to the web. We are teaching basic workplace skills – not neuroscience. If someone says they can work with MS EXCEL to a certain level, or have a basic knowledge of carpentry, they can be given a quick 20- or 30-question test on the spot. This is because of the ubiquity of the web!

WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR USER BASE AND ITS DIVERSITY?

Our user base is certainly very diverse—but frankly, we don't allow them to interact very much to date. As an education site, we have been careful to make sure that the narrative on the website is education related and appropriate. We have grown a lot and are now in a position to allow learners to communicate and socialize more; we still have a strong degree of moderation present.

All learning on ALISON is self-paced. That means it is flexible in terms of when you study and how much you study at a time. This makes our learning solutions very popular with women at home—minding kids, working part-time or perhaps house-bound because of cultural issues. We have many inspiring stories on the community section of our website.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT STANDS OUT ABOUT INDIAN USERS?

Yes. As opposed to other cultures, Indian people like to get a certificate for the purpose of attaining a job. In other countries, learners are often more interested in more basic self-development.

Also, ALISON has advertising as a revenue source—and the Indian population on the whole do not click on adverts like other nations. It seems to be a cultural issue. Advertising income is important to us—but what is more important is that people are learning and improving their circumstances for themselves and their families.

There is a lot of interest in business courses in India—and lots

of budding entrepreneurs preparing to start businesses—an encouraging sign! Finally, the number of learners we sign up in India always amazes us. Everyone who has never been to India knows that there are a great many people there—but when you see them study online, you see the reality of it. We know that many people in India have no access to formal or informal learning of the type we provide; hence, we are conscious of the responsibility we have of broadening the number of courses we have and the subjects we teach.

In a recent survey of our graduates, 88% declared that learning online had improved their confidence. More importantly, 90% said it encouraged them to learn further. While we do have some school-curriculum-based courses, the majority of our courses are aimed at helping learners develop practical workplace skills—the kind of skills that will help them land a well-paid job or a promotion. Courses in coding, design, English language skills, human resources, project management, hospitality management, customer service and business management are in demand among Indian learners.

WHAT IS YOUR COURSE-COMPLETION PERCENTAGE? HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN USER INTEREST?

ALISON has a much higher completion rate than the 5% or so figure we see mentioned for American MOOCs. Firstly, our courses are shorter (which helps completion) and they are self-paced (so you study when you wish and for as short or as long a time as you want to).

The fact is, when learning is free, many people sign on to have a look, just as you might walk into a shop and look around to see what there is to buy. A shopper who looks around but does not buy is hardly a customer. We have an average completion rate in the high teens. However, if you eliminate those who study 10 minutes or less, we have completion rates of 30 and 40%—and it's all free.

We are learning more and more about our learners and how to encourage them, not only to complete, but to begin other courses. It's simple—learners who finish one course are more likely to start another. People like to learn—that's why learning should be free!!

WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS SHOULD LOOK FOR BEFORE SIGNING UP FOR AN ONLINE COURSE?

Students should definitely seek out free versions of courses before they pay for a course. New courses are being published every day. Before you pay a deposit or fee, do a smaller shorter course on the subject for free to find out if the subject actually matches you preconceived notions.

We often get this 'testing' with highly popular courses on ALISON such as Diploma in Psychology and Diploma in Project Management. The rule is, check it out for free first—maybe free has all you want!

The size of the platform matters too. If you register and study with ALISON, you can print out your Learner Record—a list of all the courses you have completed, on one sheet. Hence, it's useful to learn on a platform with a broad array of courses. You'll also be more comfortable once you get used to the same trusted interface.

WHAT'S THE PRICE-SPECTRUM OF CERTIFICATIONS ON ALISON?

Firstly, buying a PDF or diploma parchment on ALISON is a choice. You don't have to buy any PDF or parchment to prove you have completed a course and graduated on ALISON—that is our social enterprise commitment. If you wish to purchase a PDF or parchment, we are mindful of the countries—and the relative development of same. For countries such as India and Pakistan, our PDFs can cost as little as €4 each. A Diploma will be 50% of our global price, which is on average about €60. Learners buy PDFs and parchments not just to present to employers or hang on a wall, but 30% tell us they do so to support ALISON's free-learning mission—something we greatly appreciate from our learners.

HOW MUCH VALUE DO ALISON CERTIFICATIONS HAVE IN THE REAL WORLD?

By 2014, we had estimated through our own research that over 100,000 of our learners around the world got a job or got promoted by having completed an ALISON course.

Informal learning—and non-traditionally accredited learning, which is what we offer—is especially useful to show a prospective employer that a candidate or employee in line for a promotion is still learning, is keeping up-to-date and remains curious. Where competition is tight, being able to prove or show that you have completed independent learning is often the difference between getting that job you want, or allowing someone else to get it ahead of you. This is especially so for older workers.

Increasingly, employers are more concerned that you have the necessary skills, not where you got those skills or how much you paid to acquire them. A recent open university survey in the UK revealed that informal certification from free online courses were the third most important factor employers considered when recruiting new staff.

WHAT SORT OF COURSES ARE CURRENTLY WITNESSING THE GREATEST DEMAND?

In India our most popular courses are English language related—particular spoken English. IT and business courses are also particularly popular.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND MOOCS LOOK LIKE?

We believe that online education and publishing will be largely free—with free learning and certification available on every subject, free learner management available to trainers and training organizations. We are pioneering a world where everyone is a not only learner but also a teacher.

ARE THERE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES WAITING IN THE WINGS THAT ARE LIKELY TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE ONLINE/DISTANCE LEARNING LANDSCAPE?

Yes, keep an eye out for the release of our publishing platform this summer and the release of our upgrade free LMS. It will change the world as we know it. ■

OF DISTANCE AND OPPORTUNITY

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE DISTANCE EDUCATION SPACE IN INDIA, AS IT IS TODAY?

The distance education scenario in India has grown in many ways. The latest trends have changed the view point of many educationists who once considered distance education an ineffective training platform. Today, distance education looks beyond the traditional reference books and course-end assessments. In fact, you will find that collaborative learning and interactive environments are integral parts of the teaching-learning pedagogy at leading distance education universities or institutes in India.

Large government universities have built their capacities with the help of information and communication technology (ICT), to offer their courses to a larger student base. The Internet has been a great opportunity and leveller for educational institutions in India.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE CHALLENGES IN THE DISTANCE EDUCATION SPACE?

India has faced infrastructural bottlenecks in education in general, and higher education in particular, for many decades. Shortage of quality teachers, lack of buildings and space, unavailability of funds to procure supplies and equipment, are some of the fundamental challenges that higher education in India is besieged with. To address this problem, higher education in distance mode was introduced with much hope in the 70s. Today, it has grown to a massive size with an annual intake of over 3.3 million learners. However, poor quality learning material and the near total absence of student guidance and support has reduced these programmes to a last recourse of inferior quality for the not-so-bright students.

Shantanu Rooj,
CEO and Founder,
Schoolguru
Eduserve, discusses
the distance
learning landscape
in India with
Averil Nunes



WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE REACH OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA AND THE CAPACITY OF INDIGENOUS DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVIDERS?

There are about 220 universities in India providing distance education. Some of these universities are Central Universities, whereas the majority are State Universities. These universities, through a network of their study centres, spread within the state, have been doing a commendable job of ensuring higher education reaches the remotest parts of the country. Since this education format does not need significant physical infrastructure, there is practically no limit to the number of students that these universities can serve.

COULD YOU LIST THE TOP 10 DISTANCE EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN INDIA AT PRESENT?

The top distance-learning institutions are IGNOU, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, Dr BR Ambedkar Open University, Netaji Subhas Open University, Tamil Nadu Open University, Karnataka State Open University, Acharya Nagarjuna University, MP Bhoj Open University, the University Of Burdwan, Uttarakhand Open University and Mumbai University.

WHAT'S THE NEXT BIG STEP FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA?

The next big step will require universities across India to start engaging in meaningful partnerships with the private sector as service provider to enhance the quality of distance education and the employability of the graduates of these programmes. The private sector, as a service provider, plays a significant role in assisting universities in building technology-enabled platforms, creating audio-visual and other electronic content as well as a sustainable student support system. A public-private partner-

ship (PPP) model with experienced service providers, where the risks and fruit are equitably shared, may be a viable option.

Universities should also look at bundling skill enhancement and competency building for the students of these programmes. Several universities are evaluating the PPP model to introduce supplementary industry-relevant programmes for their existing students. Through this partnership, these universities would be able to raise the employability quotient of their distance education students.

Another important step could be internationalization of higher education, where Indian universities are allowed to offer online courses that do not require the creation of physical infrastructure on foreign soil and can enrol students irrespective of geographic boundaries.

These courses can be targeted at the Indian diaspora across the world and could help them improve their qualifications. In many countries, such as the Middle East, there are no avenues available for Indians to study further. There are also vast opportunities in neighboring SAARC countries and Africa, where Indian education is highly regarded and Indian universities could offer cost-effective education.

Schoolguru (SG), an Edutech startup organization based in Mumbai, is a distance education academic services organization, which is running courses in partnership with 13 state and central universities in India.

The company claims that their PPP model is currently benefitting approximately 1.5 lakh students in rural and urban areas across the country.

In Maharashtra, SG is working with Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University and Centre For Distance Education, SNDT Women's University. ■

COURSERA

Presenting the Top 10 courses on Coursera globally at the moment, based on the highest average daily enrolments over the past six months. We're told that some of these courses, such as 'Learning How to Learn' and 'Machine Learning', have over 1 million enrolments.

1. Seeing through Photographs

This course aims to address the gap between seeing and truly understanding photographs, by introducing a diversity of ideas, approaches and technologies that inform their making. In this course, the learner will look closely at photographs from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art and hear a variety of perspectives on what a photograph is and the ways that photography has been used, throughout its nearly 180 year history.

Course provider: Museum of Modern Art

Duration: 6 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/photography

WHAT'S THE WORLD LEARNING ONLINE?

Coursera, edX, ALISON and iversity—four globally popular MOOC platforms—shed some light on which of their courses are witnessing the most demand

2. Learning How to Learn: Powerful mental tools to help you master tough subjects

This course gives the learner easy access to the invaluable learning techniques used by experts in art, music, literature, math, science, sports and other disciplines. You can learn how the brain uses two very different learning modes and how it encapsulates ('chunks') information. This course also covers illusions of learning, memory techniques, dealing with procrastination and the practices that research shows are most effective in helping master difficult subjects.

Course provider: University of California, San Diego

Duration: 4 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/learning-how-to-learn

3. R Programming

In this course, you will learn how to program in R and how to use R for effective data analysis. You will also learn how to install and configure the software necessary for a statistical programming environment and describe generic programming language concepts as they are implemented in a high-level statistical language. The course covers practical issues in statistical computing, including programming in R, reading data into R, accessing R packages, writing R functions, debugging, profiling R code as well as organizing and commenting R code.

Course provider: John Hopkins University

Duration: 4 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/r-programming

4. Programming for Everybody (Getting Started with Python)

This course aims to teach everyone the basics of programming computers using Python. It covers the basics of how one constructs a program from a series of simple instructions in Python. The course has no pre-requisites and avoids all but the simplest mathematics. Anyone with moderate computer experience should be able to master the material in this course.

Course provider: University of Michigan

Duration: 7 weeks, 2-4 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/python

5. Machine Learning

This six-course specialization provides a case-based introduction to the exciting, high-demand field of machine learning. You will learn to analyze large and complex data sets, build applications that can make predictions from data and create systems that adapt and improve over time. In the final project, you'll apply your skills to solve an original, real-world problem through the implementation of machine-learning algorithms.

Course Provider: University of Washington

Link: www.coursera.org/specializations/machine-learning

6. Robotics

Robotics offers an introduction to how robots sense and reason about the world they live in, how they plan three-dimensional movements in a dynamic environment and how they fly or run while adapting to uncertainties in the environment. Students will be exposed to real-world examples with drones, legged robots and driverless cars. The courses build towards teaching

students how to program robots to perform a variety of tasks in unstructured, dynamic environments.

Course Provider: University of Pennsylvania

Link: www.coursera.org/specializations/robotics

7. Mastering Data Analysis in Excel

In business, data and algorithms create economic value when they reduce uncertainty about financially important outcomes. This course teaches the concepts and mathematical methods behind the most powerful and universal metrics used by data scientists to evaluate the uncertainty-reduction, or information gain that predictive models provide. Coursera focuses on the two most common types of predictive models—binary classification and linear regression—and students will learn metrics to quantify the exact reduction in uncertainty that each can offer.

Course Provider: Duke University

Duration: 6 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/analytics-excel

8. The Data Scientist's Toolbox

This course offers an introduction to the main tools and ideas in the data scientist's toolbox. It gives an overview of the data, questions and tools that data analysts and data scientists work with. There are two components to this course. The first is a conceptual introduction to the ideas behind turning data into actionable knowledge. The second is a practical introduction to the tools that will be used in the program, like version control, markdown, git, GitHub, R, and Rstudio.

Course provider: Johns Hopkins University

Duration: 4 weeks, 1-4 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/data-scientists-tools

9. Grammar and Punctuation

The skills taught in this specialization will empower students to succeed in any college-level course or professional field. You'll learn to conduct rigorous academic research and to express your ideas clearly in an academic format. In the final project, all the knowledge that you have gained over the span of these courses will culminate in an academic research paper on an issue of your choice.

Course Provider: University of California, Irvine

Duration: 4 weeks, 4-5 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/grammar-punctuation

10. Stanford Introduction to Food and Health

Learners will gain the information and practical skills they require to begin optimizing the way they eat. This course will shift the focus away from reductionist discussions about nutrients and move, instead, towards practical discussions about real food and the environment in which we consume it. By the end of this course, learners should have the tools they need to distinguish between foods that will support their health and those that threaten it. In addition, the course will present a compelling rationale for a return to simple home-cooking, an integral part of our efforts to live longer and healthier lives.

Course Provider: Stanford University

Duration: 5 weeks, 1 hour/week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/food-and-health

EDX

The 10 most popular courses on edX, globally, as listed below, have a user base ranging from hundreds of thousands to over a million. Anyone, anywhere in the world, can take these courses free of cost. If it's a certificate you're after, you'll have a pay a minimal charge, that varies with each course.

1. Introduction to Computer Science

This is CS50x, Harvard University's introduction to the intellectual enterprises of computer science and the art of programming for majors and non-majors alike, with or without prior programming experience.

Course Provider: Harvard

Duration: 9 problem sets (10 to 20 hours each),

1 final project

Link: www.edx.org/course/introduction-computer-science-harvardx-cs50x

2. Introduction to Programming with Python

This course is the first of a two-course sequence: Introduction to Computer Science and Programming Using Python, and an Introduction to Computational Thinking and Data Science.

Course Provider: MIT

Duration: 9 weeks, 15 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/introduction-computer-science-mitx-6-00-1x-6

3. Introduction to Linux

This course explores the various tools and techniques commonly used by Linux system administrators and end users to accomplish their day-to-day work.

Course Provider: Linux Foundation

Duration: 8 weeks

Link: www.edx.org/course/introduction-linux-linux-foundationx-lfs101x-2

4. The Science of Happiness

The Huffington Post describes this as, "a free eight-week course that will offer practical, research-backed tips on living a happy and meaningful life".

Course Provider: UC Berkeley

Duration: 8 weeks, 4-5 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/science-happiness-uc-berkeleyx-gg101x-2

5. English Grammar and Essay Writing

This introduction to academic writing for English Language Learners, focuses on essay development, grammatical correctness and self-editing.

Course Provider: UC Berkeley Certification

Duration: 5 weeks, 4-5 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/english-grammar-essay-writing-uc-berkeleyx-colwri2-2x

6. The Science of Everyday Thinking

In this course you will explore the psychology of everyday thinking, such as why people believe weird things, how we form and change our opinions, why our expectations skew our judgments and how we can make better decisions.



Course Provider: The University of Queensland

Duration: 12 weeks, 2 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/science-everyday-thinking-uqx-think101x-2

7. English Grammar and Style

WRITE101x aims to introduce users to key concepts and strategies related to grammar and style. Absorbing and applying these in your writing will help you confidently respond to the unprecedented and accelerating demand for high levels of literacy in the 21st century.

Course Provider: The University of Queensland

Duration: 8 weeks, 4 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/english-grammar-style-uqx-write101x-1

8. How to Write an Essay

This introduction to academic writing for English Language Learners, focuses on essay development, grammatical correctness and self-editing.

Course Provider: UC Berkeley

Duration: 5 weeks, 5-6 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/how-write-essay-uc-berkeleyx-colwri2-1x

9. Analyzing and Visualizing Data with Excel

Explore data analysis and visualization in Excel, the cloud benefits of Power BI and Power Pivot, pivot tables and tools previously known as Power Query.

Course Provider: Microsoft

Duration: 4 weeks, 2-4 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/analyzing-visualizing-data-excel-microsoft-dat206x-0

10. Science and Cooking

During each week of this course, chefs reveal the secrets behind some of their most famous culinary creations—often right in their own restaurants. Inspired by such cooking mastery, the Harvard team will then explain the science behind the recipe.

Course Provider: Harvard University Certification

Duration: 14 weeks, 3-6 hours/week

Link: www.edx.org/course/science-cooking-haute-cuisine-soft-harvardx-spu27x-0

Madhya Pradesh Tourism



FOR - STUDENTS GROUPS

(Educational / Industrial Visit) - with Heavy Discounted Rates

- **Business Conferences/Meetings**
- **Wedding Package**
- **Family Package Tours also available (with Special Discount)**

Water falls, Jungle & Hills/Rocks, Historical & Religious Places

VISIT PLACES

Religious

- Mahakal (Ujjain)
- Omkareshwar
- Maihar Devi
- Chitrakoot
- Amarkantak, Maheshwar

Historical

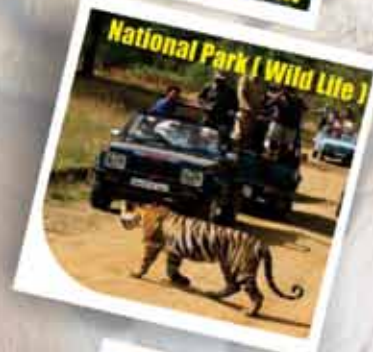
- Gwalior
- Orcha
- Datia
- Khajuraho
- Mandu
- Sanchi, Bhimbetka

Wild Life

- Kanha
- Bandhavgarh
- Panna
- Pench

Resort & Adventure / Water Sports

- Pachmarhi
- Hanuwantiya
- Bhopal
- Bargi
- Choral
- Water Sports



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ALISON

Here are the top courses amongst ALISON's 6 million-strong online learning community worldwide.

1. Digital Photography

This course will show you how to use a digital camera, what exposure settings to use and the best practices for processing photographs.

Course Provider: Harvard

Duration: 10-15 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Digital-Photography

2. Diploma in Project Management

This is one of those subjects that can be utilized in just about every area of your life, from managing your home to managing a large team project.

Course Provider: XSIQ

Duration: 6-10 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Project-Management

3. Introduction to Conversational English

With English being among the three mostly widely spoken languages in the world, it's no surprise that this is a popular course. It will help you develop the basic vocabulary and grammar to carry on a conversation in English

Course Provider: Advance Learning

Duration: 1-2 Hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Introduction-to-Conversational-English

4. Diploma in Basic English Grammar

This course introduces the fundamentals of English grammar and explains how they should be applied in written and spoken English.

Course Provider: XSIQ

Duration: 10-15 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Basic-English-Grammar

5. Basic French Language Skills for Everyday Life

Did you know that French is spoken in 29 countries in the world? On top of being possibly the most beautiful language in the world, it is also the third most spoken language in Europe. Not surprising then that this course is rather popular.

Course Provider: Joella Andriantsivohony

Duration: 6-10 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Basic-French-Language-For-Everyday-Life

6. Diploma in Customer Service

This course covers the fundamentals of good customer service and how to develop and implement a customer-care programme as well as developing procedures to ensure continuous customer feedback. It is ideal for those interested in a career in India's international customer-care sector.

Course Provider: Connexions

Duration: 6-10 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Customer-Service

7. Basic Study Skills

This is a really good course to kick-start your online learning endeavours. Basic Study Skills is particularly useful for those learners who have been out of training and education for a while and want to ease their way back into learning.

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/learn/study-skills

8. Diploma in Human Resources

Human resources is concerned with managing the most important resource of any organisation—its people. This comprehensive online course covers how to recruit, select, train, retain and motivate staff. This is a great course for anyone with management ambitions.

Course Provider: OpenLearn

Duration: 10-15 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Human-Resources

9. Introduction to Time Management

Good time management is one of the top skills employers look for when recruiting staff. Adding this course to your resume is going to grab any prospective employer's attention. The course looks at how to prioritize projects, how to get organized and how to stay focused.

Course Provider: Global Text Project

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Introduction-to-Time-Management

10. Diploma in Psychology

This course is ideal for those who want a good understanding of the main elements of psychology. It covers classical conditioning, learning theory, visual perception, memory and cognition. It could prove beneficial when learning how to write references from journals, books, the internet and CD-ROMS.

Course Provider: XSIQ

Duration: 6-10 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Psychology



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IVERSITY

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PRO COURSES – BUILD PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (FOR A PRICE)

1. Visual Thinking for Business

Learning to communicate visually will help you clearly communicate complex ideas and project plans, generate interest and captivate your audience.

Course Provider: WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management

Duration: Self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/visual-thinking-for-business-make-your-point

2. Networking

(in German) Learning to build sustainable personal networks appears to be a subject that many are keen on mastering.

Course Provider: DICTYO NOMIE

Duration: Self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/die-neue-kunst-des-networking

3. Digital Marketing Leadership

This course teaches all the skills that a marketer needs in the digital world, from engaging customers online, to driving profit and accelerating growth.

Course Provider: Hochschule Der Medien

Duration: Self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/digital-marketing-leadership

4. Presentation Skills for Business

This course provides you with the techniques and resources you need to prepare and deliver convincing, persuasive and effective presentations.

Course Provider: Homuork

Duration: self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/presentation-skills-for-business

5. Predictive Analytics in Commerce

Use data to target customers by learning how to use predictive modelling and its applications in commerce. This course will enable you to maximise marketing effectiveness and drive revenue.

Course Provider: VODW

Duration: Self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/predictive-analytics-in-commerce

MOOCS – LEARN OUT OF INTEREST (FREE)

1. Corporate Digital Learning

This is an introduction to corporate digital learning strategies to help HR personnel as well as learning and development managers to optimize a company's education processes in order to improve engagement, knowledge transfer and job performance with a global community of social learning professionals.



Course Provider: KPMG

Duration: Self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/corporate-digital-learning

2. Design 101 Redux, Part 3

In this introduction to contemporary design you learn by doing and transform your world through projects.

Duration: 8 weeks, 4-7 hours/week

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/design-101-redux-part-3-my-world

3. Why do people migrate?

Facts and theories about migration from irregular migration to asylum seeking. You'll learn the basic terminology as well as what happens at the global level through case studies and expert interviews.

Course Provider: European University Institute

Duration: Self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/why-do-people-migrate-part-1-facts/

4. Changemaker MOOC – Social Entrepreneurship

(in German) Social entrepreneurs with ideas to change the world learn to develop sustainable business models.

Course Provider: CAU

Duration: Self-paced – start anytime

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/changemaker-mooc-social-entrepreneurship-november-2015

5. Modelling and Simulation using MATLAB®

You'll learn how to model technical systems and processes in a wide range of applications, from image processing via machine learning to face recognition.

Course Provider: RheinMain University of Applied Sciences, Wiesbaden

Duration: 10 weeks, 4-6 hours/week

Link: iversity.org/en/courses/2015-modelling-and-simulation-using-matlab-october-2015 ■



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WHAT'S INDIA STUDYING ONLINE?

Coursera, edX and ALISON tell us which of their courses are getting the most attention from Indian knowledge seekers

COURSERA

Presenting the most popular courses amongst Indians in 2015 (based on average daily enrolments)

1. Mastering Data Analysis in Excel

In business, data and algorithms create economic value when they reduce uncertainty about financially important outcomes. This course teaches the concepts and mathematical methods behind the most powerful and universal metrics used by data scientists to evaluate the uncertainty-reduction or the information-gain that predictive models provide.

Course Provider: Duke University

Duration: 6 weeks, 3-5 hours per week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/analytics-excel

2. Programming for Everybody (Getting Started with Python)

This course aims to teach everyone the basics of programming computers using Python. It covers the basics of how one constructs a program from a series of simple instructions in Python. The course has no pre-requisites and avoids all but the simplest mathematics. Anyone with moderate computer experience should be able to master it.

Course Provider: University of Michigan

Duration: 7 weeks, 2-4 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/python

3. Machine Learning

In this class, you will learn about the most effective machine learning techniques, and gain practice implementing them and getting them to work for yourself. More importantly, you'll study not only the theoretical underpinnings of learning, but also gain

the practical know-how needed to quickly and powerfully apply these techniques to new problems. Finally, you'll learn about some of Silicon Valley's best practices in innovation as they pertain to machine learning and AI.

Course Provider: Stanford University

Duration: 11 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/machine-learning

4. R Programming

You will learn how to install and configure the software necessary for a statistical programming environment and describe generic programming language concepts as they are implemented in a high-level statistical language. The course covers practical issues in statistical computing, including programming in R, reading data into R, accessing R packages, writing R functions, debugging, profiling R code, as well as organizing and commenting R code. Topics in statistical data analysis will provide working examples.

Course Provider: Johns Hopkins University

Duration: 4 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/r-programming

5. Learning How to Learn: Powerful mental tools to help you master tough subjects

This course provides access to invaluable learning techniques used by experts in art, music, literature, math, science, sports and many other disciplines. You'll learn how the brain uses two very different learning modes and how it encapsulates ('chunks') information. You'll also cover illusions of learning, memory techniques, dealing with procrastination and the practices shown by research to be the most effective in mastering difficult subjects.

Course Provider: University of California, San Diego

Duration: 4 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/learning-how-to-learn

6. Programming Mobile Applications for Android Handheld Systems: Part 1

This course features design and implementation of Android applications for mobile devices. You will develop an app from scratch, assuming a basic knowledge of Java, and learn to set up Android Studio, work with various activities and create simple user interfaces for your apps to run smoothly.

Course Provider: University of Maryland, College Park

Duration: 4 weeks, 5-10 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/course/androidpart1

7. The Data Scientist's Toolbox

This course provides an introduction to the main tools and ideas in the data scientist's toolbox. It offers an overview of the data, questions and tools that data analysts and data scientists work with. There are two components to this course. The first is a conceptual introduction to the ideas behind turning data into actionable knowledge. The second is a practical introduction to the tools that will be used in the program like version control, markdown, git, GitHub, R, and RStudio.

Course Provider: Johns Hopkins University

Duration: 4 weeks, 1-4 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/data-scientists-tools

8. An Introduction to Interactive Programming in Python (Part 1)

This course is designed to help students with little or no computing background learn the basics of building simple interactive applications. It introduces the basic elements of programming (such as expressions, conditionals and functions) and then uses these elements to create simple interactive applications such as a digital stopwatch. This class will culminate in building a version of the classic arcade game "Pong".

Course Provider: Rice University

Duration: 5 weeks

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/interactive-python-1

9. Introduction to Programming with MATLAB

This course teaches computer programming to those with little to no previous experience. It uses the programming system and language called MATLAB to do so because it is easy to learn, versatile and very useful for engineers and other professionals. Nevertheless, this course is not a MATLAB tutorial. It is an introductory programming course that happens to use MATLAB to illustrate general concepts in computer science and programming. Students who successfully complete this course will: become familiar with general concepts in computer science, gain an understanding of the general concepts of programming and obtain a solid foundation in the use of MATLAB

Course Provider: Vanderbilt University

Duration: 9 weeks, 4-6 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/course/matlab

10. Using Python to Access Web Data

This course will show how one can treat the Internet as a source of data. You will learn how to scrape, parse and read web data as well as access data using web APIs. You will work with HTML, XML and JSON data formats in Python.

Course Provider: University of Michigan

Duration: 6 weeks, 2-4 hours/week

Link: www.coursera.org/learn/python-network-data

And these are India's Most Coveted Online Course Certificates from Coursera in 2015 (i.e. specializations with the highest rate of learners sharing certificates on LinkedIn)

1. Data Science (**Johns Hopkins University**)
2. Introduction to Project Management Principles and Practices (**University of California, Irvine**)
3. Social Media Marketing (**Northwestern University**)
4. Business Analytics (**University of Pennsylvania**)
5. Big Data (**University of California, San Diego**)
6. Strategic Management and Innovation (**Copenhagen Business School**)
7. An Introduction to Programming the Internet of Things (**University of California, Irvine**)
8. Machine Learning (**University of Washington**)
9. Executive Data Science (**Johns Hopkins University**)
10. Software Product Management (**University of Alberta**)



EDX

Listing the 10 most popular courses on edX amongst Indian learners. We're told these courses have enrolments ranging from hundreds of thousands of users to over a million.

1. Introduction to Computer Science

This is CS50x, Harvard University's introduction to the intellectual enterprises of computer science and the art of programming for majors and non-majors alike, with or without prior programming experience.

Course Provider: Harvard University
Duration: 9 problem sets (10 to 20 hours each), 1 final project
Link: www.edx.org/course/introduction-computer-science-harvardx-cs50x

2. Introduction to Programming with Python

This course is the first of a two-course sequence: Introduction to Computer Science and Programming Using Python, and Introduction to Computational Thinking and Data Science.

Course Provider: MIT
Duration: 9 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/introduction-computer-science-mitx-6-00-1x-6

3. Introduction to Linux

This course explores the various tools and techniques commonly used by Linux system administrators and end users to accomplish their day-to-day work.

Course Provider: Linux Foundation
Duration: 8 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/introduction-linux-linux-foundationx-lfs101x-2

4. Introduction to Computational Thinking

This course will teach you how to use computation to accomplish a variety of goals and provides you with a brief introduction to a variety of topics in computational problem solving. This course is aimed at students with some prior programming experience in Python and a rudimentary knowledge of computational complexity.

Course Provider: MIT
Duration: 10 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/introduction-computational-thinking-data-mitx-6-00-2x-3

5. Programming Basics

In this course, you will learn basic computer programming skills and master the art of writing C/C++ programs to solve real world problems

Course Provider: IIT Bombay
Duration: 9 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/programming-basics-iitbombayx-cs101-1x

6. English Grammar and Essay Writing

This introduction to academic writing for English Language Learners, focuses on essay development, grammatical correctness and self-editing.

Course Provider: UC Berkeley
Duration: 5 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/english-grammar-essay-writing-uc-berkeleyx-colwri2-2x

7. Analyzing and Visualizing Data with Excel

Explore data analysis and visualization in Excel, the cloud benefits of Power BI and Power Pivot, pivot tables and tools previously known as Power Query.

Course Provider: Microsoft
Duration: 4 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/analyzing-visualizing-data-excel-microsoft-dat206x-0

8. Introduction to Programming with Java, Part 1

Learn basic programming skills and master the art of writing C/C++ programs to solve practical problems.

Course Provider: IIT Bombay
Duration: 9 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/programming-basics-iitbombayx-cs101-1x

9. Embedded Systems

Learn how electronic gadgets are designed, developed, and built as embedded systems. This hands-on, learn-by-doing course shows you how to build solutions to real-world problems with embedded systems.

Course Provider: UT Austin
Duration: 16 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/embedded-systems-shape-world-utaustinx-ut-6-03x

10. HTML5, Part 1

Learn HTML5 and core web technologies directly from the organization creating them! Learn to code web pages and websites the right way.

Course Provider: W3C
Duration: 6 weeks
Link: www.edx.org/course/html5-part-1-html5-coding-essentials-w3cx-html5-1x-0



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8 OUT OF 10 DENTISTS RECOMMEND SENSODYNE*

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*As per TNS Dentist Toothpaste Research, December'15. Use as directed on pack. Visit your dentist regularly. SENSODYNE is a trade mark of the GSK group of companies.



ALISON

India is reportedly one of ALISON's fastest growing markets, with well over 700,000 registered learners. Here's what Indians are learning on this popular platform.

1. Introduction to Conversational English

With English being amongst the three most widely spoken languages in the world, it's no surprise that 'Introduction to Conversational English' is a very popular course. It will help you develop the basic vocabulary and grammar to carry out a conversation in English.

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Introduction-to-Conversational-English

2. Diploma in Customer Service

This course covers the fundamentals of good customer service and how to develop and implement a customer-care programme as well as procedures to ensure continuous customer feedback. It is ideal for those interested in a career in India's international customer-care sector.

Duration: 10-12 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Customer-Service

3. Diploma in Project Management

Qualified project managers are in big demand among employers worldwide. The 'Diploma in Project Management' will give you the skills and tools you need to successfully manage a project from development to completion.

Duration: 10-12 hours

Link: alison.com/search/result/?q=Diploma+in+Project+Management

4. Basic Study Skills

This is a really good course to kick-start your online learning endeavours. It is particularly useful for those learners who have been out of training and education for a while and want to ease their way back into learning.

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/learn/study-skills

5. Diploma in Human Resources

This course will teach you about the responsibilities of a human resource manager. It will help you understand the recruitment,

selection and appraisal processes. You will also gain an understanding of different cultures and ethics.

Duration: 10-12 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Human-Resources

6. Achieving Personal Success

This course will show you the importance of implementing good, healthy mental habits in order to achieve success. The course suggests that we treat life as an experiment, allow ourselves to make mistakes and learn from them.

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Achieving-Personal-Success

7. Introduction to Cloud Computing

With the phrase 'cloud computing' being used more and more in business today, it is important for any professional to understand what it is all about. Introduction to Cloud Computing is an ideal way to learn more about it and what services it offers to individuals and businesses alike.

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Introduction-to-Cloud-Computing

8. Adobe Photoshop

The ALISON free online Adobe Photoshop course is an introduction to the skills and techniques needed to excel in graphic design and is ideal for the small business owner or home-based entrepreneur keen on building their web presence.

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Adobe-Photoshop

9. Introduction to Time Management

Time management is one of the top skills employers look for when recruiting staff, so this course on your resume is going to grab any prospective employer's attention. The course will teach you how to get organised and prioritise your work load.

Duration: 1-2 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Introduction-to-Time-Management

10. Diploma in Operations Management

This course will give you a great foundation in all the different components required to run a successful business or organization. Overall, this course will help you understand the important responsibilities that an operations manager must deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Duration: 10-12 hours

Link: alison.com/courses/Diploma-in-Operations-Management

TO GO THE DISTANCE, OR NOT TO?



EARN AND LEARN

NIHARIKA SALVI, 24

Currently working as a content writer with IL&FS Education and Technology Services Ltd. (IETS) in Saki Naka, Andheri, I am also pursuing a Master's in English Literature through the University of Mumbai's Institute of Distance & Open Learning (IDOL). My parents funded my basic education, but I was keen on funding my own higher education; hence I opted for a distance-education course, so that I could work and study simultaneously.

When I decided to take up the course, I found two interesting options: Mumbai University and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). Although, the course syllabi of both universities was equally appealing, I ended up choosing Mumbai University, because somehow I had built a certain level of trust with it.

Getting through the online admission process is a rather tedious procedure. Uploading documents was the most time-consuming task, because we were supposed to resize JPEG images of the documents as per specific measurements. That done, we had to head to Mumbai University's Kalina campus to collect notes. The exam timetable and centre names are announced on the university website and so are the results. However, results have to be collected from the university.

Now in my second year, of the two-year course, an obvious benefit of doing a correspondence course has been that I can continue to earn. Had I opted to do the course through a college, I would have had to invest more time. Nonetheless, I have to admit that having already started the 'working phase' of my life, when I took up this course, I found it a little difficult to get back to studying.

A few students tell **Avril-Ann Braganza** why they opted for online or distance-education courses and describe the pros and cons of their choices



SAVES TIME
MARC BULLEY, 26

I am in my second year of a full-time PGDM (Business Design) at the Welingkar Institute of Management, Development & Research. I am also pursuing an MA in Economics (first year) through Mumbai University's Institute of Open and Distance Learning. I began my MA whilst in the final year of my MBA; by the time I have to appear for my MA exams this year, I will have finished the final semester of the Business Design course.

The MA exams are at the end of the first and second years. At the beginning of the course, the university provided us with physical notes for the four subjects. Furthermore, the matter for the course is available on the website.

Doing a correspondence course saves a lot of time, as it can be done alongside working or pursuing another course. However, I did miss interacting with fellow students, sitting for lectures and clarifying doubts with professors.



CONVENIENT AND FLEXIBLE
NATASHA D'SOUZA, 25

I work as a lecturer (visiting faculty) at the Tolani College of Commerce, but I'm simultaneously studying International Business from Welingkar Institute. Convenient and quite flexible—the course is conducted online and through personal lectures, which are scheduled thrice every semester.

As I teach International Business to final-year students, I opted for a two-year course in International Business, as it's related to globalization. We learn about the recent trends and scope of growth for an entrepreneur inclined toward export/import.

The best part about doing a correspondence course is that you can use a laptop or tablet to study as per your convenience—at any time of day, and even while travelling—provided you have a strong internet connection. Sessions are conducted via a virtual class on specified dates. A personal contact class was scheduled thrice in each semester, although only for the first year. We have our own student login IDs through which we receive study material.

Pros notwithstanding, I miss the personal attention that I would have received in a traditional classroom environment.



AT YOUR OWN PACE
SIMONE FERNANDES, 28

Having been in the teaching field for five years, I decided to take up several English language and Literature courses to enhance my linguistic skills—an MA in English Literature (two years) from Mumbai University through the Institute of Distance and Open Learning; as well as an MA in Sociology and another in Education (two years each). I also signed up for the three-month 'My English' course, an online course by the British Council; and the six-month TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) from the International TEFL Academy (ITA), Chicago, USA.

I chose Mumbai University because I had completed my Bachelor's degree from the same university. I chose British Council because it is the best organization that teaches fluency in English and guarantees an enhancement in your language structure. I wanted to be a cut above the other conventional teachers and hence chose ITA.

For the MA courses, we received notes, but had to do our own research. There were also tutoring classes provided to us at certain times. With the My English course, we never had formal examinations. There were weekly online assignments (reading and writing) and assessments. We had virtual classes every week and three face-to-face classes during the whole course. Like My English, TEFL was also an online course and had several virtual classes. We had reading assignments every week, followed by a Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) test and a lesson-planning activity. At times, there were essay-writing activities. This course had students from all over the world; however, there were no face-to-face interactions.

I chose to do the three courses through correspondence or online because of the time factor; if I had to attend regular classes, I would need eight (or more) years to complete them. However, with distance education, six years is enough. That was one advantage. It also saved a lot of time and allowed me to manage chores; I could study and work at my own pace; and being informal in nature, there are no rules and regulations to bind us.

But of course, as with all things, there are cons as well—these courses are not the best idea for someone who procrastinates; there are no reminders or extensions, you receive all you need at the beginning of the course and you are expected to do it on time, although you may do it at your own pace throughout the course. There is no form external motivation; you must be self-driven to complete your course. Anybody can complete an online or a correspondence course with ease; the only thing required is some amount of perseverance, zeal, time management and enthusiasm to get yourself certified. ■

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