Scenario of Online Education in India

"Education is an insurance against poverty"

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"Online learning is not the next big thing; it is the now big thing."
- Donna J. Abernathy

Online education is a type of distance education whose curriculum or syllabi is delivered partly or completely via the Internet, an intranet or an extranet. It also an evolved forms of Correspondence or Distance Education because there is advancement in the method of transmitting the learning material. The method of examination and certification are also advanced. Online education is also synonymous with several terms viz. Virtual Education, Online Learning, E-Learning, Computer Based Training, Internet Based Training and Web Based Training.

Online courses in India cater to different ages of people and people with varying criteria. One can earn an online degree at various levels: associate degrees online, bachelor's degrees online, master's degrees online, even a Ph.D. degree online. Apart from the degree courses there are Certificate Courses, Diploma Courses, Non-Credit Programs and Appreciation Programs. Most popular online courses in India include those concerning with management and information technology.

Online Education in India is a recent phenomenon, till the end of the 90's, neither courses nor the relevant information was available. Obviously, internet itself was a recent phenomenon in India, then. Technology is a big changer and its productive outcome – online courses in India are very much existent. However, the lack of information about them is more or less is also existent in many parts of India.

Methods of Online Education

- E-mail
- Web Conferencing

- Video Conferencing
- Online Video/Audio/Textual Tutorials (webcasts, live lectures, pre-recorded lectures)
- CD/DVD
- Online Forums
- Printed Literature
- Voice Mail/fax

There are many advantages of online education. These advantages are also the driving force behind the spread of online education courses in India.

There are many *key factors leading to the interest amongst Indian students to pursue online education* as an option to the traditional brick and mortar kind. Some of them are as follows:

- Offers flexibility of doing the course at your convenience, on your terms as there is no rigid requirement like attending classes etc. You can work while you study, which is especially beneficial for students who need to be financially independent and support their family

- Offers access to leading universities and institutions which maybe geographically situated far away, but the student gets to still be associated with the school or college successfully

- One gets to opt for multi-faceted courses that may not always be easy to come by. The programs are versatile and one has a plethora of options to choose from across both developing subject matter knowledge or soft skills training or even basics in any category

- Students from smaller towns or cities get access and exposure when they enrol in an online program. They get access to leading tutors, online classmates in interactive sessions and if it's a global program-a worldwide outreach. This option offers training that is much better than the brick and mortar one.

- Select nationalized banks are offering student loans, especially to students who wish to enrol in international school via the online medium-this serves as a huge encouragement for those who may be financially unable to afford such courses

- These courses are being recognized by companies which helps the students to be more employable

- Leading schools globally and across India are offering online courses across some of their marquee programs, that helps the student to explore more opportunities in leading career options

- The above reasons are propelling an increasing number of students to pursue these courses.

The educational institutions too are taking giant leaps towards escalating adoption for the following reasons:

- There is always a limit on the number of applications one can have when it comes to physical presence of students. But, an online avatar does not have such limitations. Institutions are keen to reach as many students across the country to be more profitable and to be seen as a pioneer in new teaching methods

- Technology is an integral part of all educational institutions today and the level of deployment has improved with leading software and hardware companies providing education software to facilitate the increase in its popularity. Also many tech companies are entering this sector as tie-ins or technology partner.

- Leading corporate and other entities are encouraging this stream of education as an effort to include broader groups of students from across the country to pursue their dreams and achieve educational goals.

- The provision of the online medium helps the institutions save money as they do not have to invest in building new campuses or hiring new faculty but they can launch and manage this medium using the same resources-hence optimization is possible.

- Offers greater reach and awareness to places where earlier, they were not relevant or well known.

- Currently, one perceives a promising trend wherein angel investors and entrepreneurs are exploring this sector for investment opportunities. This brings in capital, attention as well as progress and growth.

- The institutions remain relevant and in keep with the new trends when they get on to the online bandwagon.

- The trend for students and universities opting for online education in India is definitely at an interesting stage. The positives score over the negatives, making it a sector to closely track and watch over the next few years. In conclusion, both the participating entities have only to gain from this trend.

Conclusion:

The changes in education that are propelling campuses toward more and more online courses will not be going away. The demand for online courses and programs will continue to grow. Students will continue to desire online courses for convenience and the ability to "stuff" education into their already busy lives. The social contact was a very important part of their learning. They also found the passive lecture format of the classroom to be easier. As more courses move toward being online, ways to provide this social interaction and individual contact with other students and professors must be found. Online courses must be evaluated to ensure that content is being learned. Research in the area of online learning needs to be a priority as this way of teaching and learning continues to grow. E-learning is becoming increasingly prominent in tertiary education. All available evidence points toward growing enrolments and provision albeit from a low starting point. However, after the hype of the new economy, growing disenchantment with e-learning has replaced over-enthusiasm. Failures of e-learning operations have, at least temporarily, overshadowed the prospects of widened and flexible access to tertiary education, pedagogic innovation, and decreased cost that was once embodied by e-learning.

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