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Rise of Online Learning Solutions in the Context of Obsolete Traditional Education

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Abstract— The employability of the students completing their graduation from various educational institutes in India is declining. There is a huge skill gap among these graduates, whereas those who are already employed need to enhance their skills every now and then due to high rate of obsolescence of the traditionally taught educational courses. In this context it is interesting to note the rise of online learning solutions offered through various platforms which not only offers on-the-go learning and high degree of flexibility but also cover wide arena of courses from various branches of education. The online learning solutions were deemed to be the supplementary for traditional methods but the advances in virtual technologies, penetration of information and communication technology, lower tariffs & high speed of internet has cumulatively resulted in rise of online learning as a viable option to the traditional learning. The online learning has encompassed not only the knowledge based subjects but also preparation for competitive examinations and coaching tutorials are now being offered through this mode.

This Paper makes an attempt to study the various aspects of online learning solutions like its gradual development, various modes of delivering the contents, recognition granted by various international universities, use by Indian universities to deliver their distance education courses, preferences for various categories of subjects by the learners, employability potential of online courses, leading online learning players like BYJU'S, KHAN ACADEMY, EDX, COURSERA SUPERPROFS etc. and the future of online learning in India. The paper also tries to evaluate the viability of online mode for traditional university syllabi and the role online learning solutions can play in imparting quality education to students from weaker, poorer sections and geographically remote areas.

Keywords— Online Learning, Employability Potential, Education, Internet

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no single definition of online learning. It includes learning with the assistance of a personal computer and internet. The term e-learning, or electronic learning, often is used interchangeably with online learning, e-learning is utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of traditional classroom [1]. The term "e-learning" has been in existence since 1999 when the word was first utilized at a CBT systems seminar. Other word such as "virtual learning" has also been assigned to e-learning. The growth of online learning was slow paced at first. Its roots can be found in the concept of Distance education. With the spread of internet and access to personal computers and smart phones its development became rapid. Nowadays the online learning is mostly used by people who are employed and want to enhance their skills or people who are working as freelancers working in specialised areas. But its popularity is increasing as a means for teaching traditional courses and competitive exam coaching. It can be utilised as a powerful

tool to take education at the doors of needy students who lacks resources.

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

- The rate of obsolescence in traditionally taught educational methods is very high which creates need for continuous upgradation.
- Online learning solutions have risen as viable option to fill this skill gap.
- Many reputed foreign universities are granting recognition to online courses offered in India.
- In future e-learning solution might prove to be a powerful tool to impart quality education to weaker sections of society and to increase outreach of education.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand gradual development of online learning
- To study various modes of delivering the subject contents through internet
- To assess the employability potential of online courses
- To identify preferences given to various categories of subjects offered by online learning solutions
- To study leading online learning service providers in India
- To evaluate viability of online learning solutions for traditional university syllabi

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study is descriptive analysis. It is based on secondary data collected from various books, prominent sites, research journals and other publications. Also websites of various online learning service providers are used to collect exclusive data.

V. GROWTH OF ONLINE LEARNING SOLUTIONS

The roots and principles of online learning can be well found in history. E-learning can be traced back as far as start of 19th century. Long before the internet was launched, distance courses were conducted to impart students with education on particular subjects or skills. In 1924, the first testing machine was invented. This device allowed students to test themselves. Then, in 1954, BF Skinner, a Harvard Professor, invented the "teaching machine", which enabled schools to administer programmed instruction to their students [2] [3]. In 1960 first CBT (Computer based Training) was introduced by the name Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations. Initially the focus of online learning was just to deliver the information but in the 1970s it started to become more interactive. E-learning methods further expanded in 20th century due to spread of Information & Communication Technology and digital devices. Especially in Britain & USA many schools were set up which provided online learning.

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Later in the 20th century business organisations started using e-learning to impart training to their employees [3]. India witnessed the IT boom which resulted in increased awareness of internet and communication technologies especially among the youth. The programming era, as it is named, facilitated widespread of computer education in the latter half of 20th century. As more and more people became computer literate the pathway for e-learning became easier in India. In the last decade the high speed internet access allowed high definition video content to be transmitted through widespread channels and made it easier to deliver learning content in highly complicated virtual and animated versions. The coming age of 5G will add more dimensions to the online learning solutions.

VI. EMPLOYABILITY POTENTIAL OF ONLINE LEARNING

Reference [4] highlights the case studies which are representatives of success of online learning solutions. Those who were already employed have pursued post-graduation through foreign universities offered via online learning platforms. Fresh graduate students have enrolled into niche skills programmes like financial planning, financial restructuring, human rights, intellectual property rights, technical & non-technical content writing etc. which are not taught in traditional university syllabi. These specifically acquired skill sets have enabled them to pursue jobs of their choice. Many people have switched careers midway when they found resources to learn topics of their interests. Online learning also helped employees working in the information technology sector specifically those who are working in software programming, database management, data mining, big data and other allied fields. These fields are highly dynamic in nature and to survive and progress in such fields continuous upgradation of knowledge and skills is required. Online learning solutions have provided the flexibility and means to achieve these skills. The Learners outcome Survey conducted by Coursera reveals that 89 per cent of Indian online learners who identified career advancement as a primary motivation reported benefits like improving their job performance or starting a new career as compared to 84 per cent globally. In India, 39 per cent reported to have improved their candidacy for a new job while 46 per cent of career builders reported to have become better in their jobs by usage of online learning platforms [4]. Online learning also brought the world class universities at the door step of learners. These universities have created systems through which eminent professors conduct time bound courses which can be enrolled by anyone in the world through respective online learning service providers. This mechanism has helped a lot to the students in Asian countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia etc.

Preferred Fields through Online Learning

1. Financial Modelling, Valuation & Restructuring
2. Financial Planning
3. Programming Languages
4. Data Mining & Data Analytics
5. Digital Marketing
6. Business Communication Skills
7. Content, Script & Creative writing skills
8. Intellectual Property Rights & Cyber Laws
9. International Laws
10. Human Rights
11. Artificial Intelligence
12. Web Designing
13. Advance Excel skills
14. Project Management
15. Advanced Engineering & Designing

Various Modes of Delivering Subject Contents for Online Learning

1. Websites
2. Uploaded Videos
3. Mobile Phone Applications based on Android & Apple i-store platforms
4. Interactive dashboards
5. Virtual Classrooms
6. Audio Recordings
7. Scanned copies of written material
8. Discussion forums
9. Television Channels
10. Webinars

VII. LEADING ONLINE LEARNING SERVICE PROVIDERS

1. edX: edX is MOOC provider and online learning destination founded by Harvard University & Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the year 2012. It is a non-profit and open source online learning service with over 120 global institutional partners which includes prestigious names like Berkley University of California, University of Texas Systems, Australian National University, Dartmouth College, Columbia University, Cornell University, Princeton University, and University of Hong Kong etc. It offers 2200+ courses in fields of data science, engineering, humanities, language, and business management. Over 18 million learners all over the world use edX [5].

2. Coursera: It is founded in 2012 by Prof. Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng of Computer Science Department, Stanford University. It offers top universities' degrees through online mode all over the world at comparatively cheaper costs. Coursera is known for wide array of courses available through its platform. These courses include prerecorded video lectures, community discussion forums and peer-reviewed assignments [6].

3. Khan Academy: With the mission of providing free world class education to anyone, anywhere in world Khan Academy has become a pioneer in basic education online platforms. Through their practice exercises, instructional videos and personalized learning dashboards they have empowered the learner to study at his/her pace outside the classrooms. They claim that students who complete 60% of their grade level math on khan academy experience 1.8 times their expected growth on the NWEA MAP test, also students see substantial improvements in their SAT Scores when prepared through their official SAT Practice Sets. Khan academy has revolutionized basic education through their easy to learn and convenient platform [7].

4. BYJU'S: Founded in 2011 with a focus on building a strong team of experts across content, media and technology and K 12 segment, they developed online learning solutions for 6th to 12th grade. In 2015 they have officially launched the BYJU'S app which received immense response from all over India. In 2016 BYJU'S became first Asian company to receive investment from Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. Now BYJU'S have also ventured into competitive exam coaching via online mode. The popularity of their UPSC Exam Preparation course is increasing day by day [8].

5. Superprofs: Superprofs was founded in year 2010 as technology startup which is a product of Aurus network. Its founder is Piyush Agrawal. Superprofs enables private coaching through usage of internet. Coaching is provided for preparation of professional exams like CA, CMA, CS and competitive exams like Banking, SSC, and Railway Recruitment. Various teachers register themselves and upload



their video lectures on the portal. Students many choose a particular teacher after going through demo lectures by various faculties. It gives flexibility to students to choose the faculty and learn on the go by downloading these videos. Comprehensive coverage and personalized delivery of these programmes makes them superior to traditional online learning [9].

6. SWAYAM: The Ministry of Human Resource Development under Government of India has launched SWAYAM platform available in website and mobile app form. It aims to provide interactive courses from certificate to post-graduation level designed by the best faculties. These courses are made available free of cost to the Indian residents. The courses are taught through video lectures and digital reading material and the learners can judge their progress through self-assessment tests and quizzes. SWAYAM is slowly gaining popularity as it is free of cost and recognised by government.

VIII. ONLINE COMPETITIVE EXAM COACHING

In recent years a new dimension is added to online learning, specifically in India. Many students prepare for various competitive exams through coaching classes, readymade notes and various other means. But nowadays use of online learning solutions is increasing in providing such coaching to masses. Various start-ups have been established under this boom and even the well-established coaching classes are utilizing this mode to take their business on multi-city level. The same modes which are used in e-learning are being used here. To illustrate a few cases: Those students who are preparing for competitive exams like banking, SSC, Railway Recruitments, Public Service Commission or Entrance exams for Engineering, MBA, Medical, Law are highly relying on online coaching providers such as Adda247, JagranJosh, Banking4U, GradeUp, testbook, BYJU'S, NEETprep, Askiitian, Topper, Edurev etc. Famous coaching centers such as Rao's IIT, Aakash Coaching institute, Pace IIT, Allen, FIITJEE, Mahendar's etc. have either launched mobile apps or their own YouTube channels to reach to masses and to supplement their coaching for entrance/competitive exams. Those who are preparing for UGC-NET or SET exams are subscribing to various YouTube coaching channels. This dimension is quite unique and highly India specific.

IX. FUTURE OF ONLINE LEARNING IN INDIA & IT'S VIABILITY FOR TRADITIONAL SYLLABI

In India the pioneer in distance education- Indira Gandhi National Open University had been using television channel DD Gyan Darshan to impart education. Now they have also launched their own app IGNOU e-content which provides digital copies of the study materials of all the courses conducted by the university. IGNOU is soon planning to launch a comprehensive online learning platform [10]. NCERT has also launched mobile app e-pathshala which provides all the CBSE text books in digital form. In contemporary sense e-learning is utilised by traditional universities and education boards to provide digital study material but in near future the university syllabi especially the one which is offered through distance education mode may see greater use of virtual and e-learning technologies. India, having second largest population in the world, have greater need of quality primary, secondary and higher education apart from skill based education. Traditional educational infrastructure is not sufficient to cope with this growing demand. On the other hand India has growing outreach of internet and mobile phones. So it is quite evident that online learning is the key to address the future need of quality education.

Reference [11] shows that from Commercial point of view also the future of online learning is quite optimistic. The following growth driving factors illustrates it further:

- (i) Affordability: Online education is much affordable (almost 53%) as compared to offline education
- (ii) Availability: 10 million enrollments are expected by 2021 as it is beneficial for areas where quality of offline education is lower
- (iii) Employability: Industry relevant training can be acquired
- (iv) Government Initiatives: The Digital India and other initiatives by government are promoting the required infrastructure
- (v) Smartphone Usage: 180 million new smartphone users are expected by 2021
- (vi) Internet Penetration: Nearly 735 million internet users are projected by 2021
- (vii) Young population: 46% of the population is younger which has higher acceptability for online channels
- (viii) Disposable Income: is expected to grow by 55% by 2021

Based on these parameters it is projected that the current 1.6 million users are expected to be 9.6 million by 2021 and the current market of \$247 million is expected to grow up to \$1.96 billion by 2021 [11].

X. CONCLUSION

The online learning solutions is a key to address the future need of employment oriented quality education. Anytime, anywhere accessibility and affordability granted by these solutions can prove to be boon for the learners from remote areas or from marginalized sections of society. From the commercial point of view also, the future is bright. It may result into establishment of newer starts-ups and in a way might generate newer employment avenues. But there is also a need to address some challenges such as regulation, recognition by concerned authorities, usage by traditional universities, modes of assessment of learners, utility for research fields etc. There is an inherent problem that online learning might develop into parallel education system. Therefore the proactive role of government in this regard will be beneficial.

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