

Technology enabled education for working professionals

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Mumbai is the dream city for professionals and businessmen. The land of opportunities. The land where fortunes are made. The city of dreams. But alas, amidst all the hustle and bustle, the one thing that takes a back seat is the aspiration of the professional to improve upon his educational qualifications and thus improve his own knowledge and eventually his career options. The possibility of continuing and furthering his education suffocates under the huge work pressure and tiring work schedules. He rarely has the energy and time to pursue a classroom course after his grueling schedules. And finally he succumbs to the only alternative left to him and enrolls himself into one of the traditional correspondence style ODL programs available to him through multiple websites.



The ODL program came with its own set of woes. He is provided a set of printed self-study material to learn them all by himself. He was also provided an address of a study center of the University, which was located some 40 Kms away, and which would conduct a few query solving sessions. Days changed to weeks and weeks to months – the professional forgot all about the study material he had received until he received a letter posted to his address informing him about the examinations that were due in two weeks. He tried opening the packet of books now and struggled for a few hours but could fathom nothing. In utter frustration, he decided to give the exams a pass this time. Things weren't different the next time and he had no choice but to look the other way and skip exams again. Finally, the back log resembled his credit card statements and finally, he gives up on the course and drops out.

What went wrong with his aspiration to complete the course and take a shot at his promotion? It was lack of engagement, motivation and interactivity. A professional, who was deep into his work, needed a teacher to teach him, needed someone to prompt him to study, needed a solution where he could carry his classroom with him so that he could study anytime-anywhere. He had little patience to read and retain – he needed someone to read out the notes to him and explain the concepts. He needed flexibility, mobility and availability for his class. He needed to know his schedules well in advance so that he could plan for them.

Balancing a full-time job during the day and attending class at night can be overwhelming no matter how highly motivated a person may be. And the traditional ODL programs of the University aren't proving to be useful either. That's why many students are finding relief in the convenience of a degree program that provides an Online learning platform. According to a recent study from the Babson Survey Research Group, Pearson and the Sloan Consortium, an estimated 7.1 million students were enrolled in an online class this past year. E-learning is continuing to grow in popularity because of the many advantages and benefits that it provides to the working class.

Added convenience

Students can experience a great deal of pressure when juggling a career and pursuing a degree. Rushing home from work to go to class is stressful. Taking a course online helps to eliminate that stress. By taking a course online, students save the hassle of travel while learning from the comfort of their own home - a feature that can be extremely convenient after a long day at the office.

Better education

Several research reports of the US Dept of Education goes on to state that the learning outcome of the Online Programs are often found to be better than the classroom education. Though no clear reasons have been attributed to the same, but several factors such as lectures by some of the best quality faculty members, well researched content, several intuitive and collaborative tools, powerful analytics and high levels of interactivity and engagement could be responsible for the outcome.

Flexibility

Online courses provide the flexibility of time and space to the learner. Using the mobile apps that work on most of the android

phones, the student has an access to his classroom on demand. Most of the mobile apps available in the country, provided by several reputed Govt Universities, provide high quality analytics based support to the student providing him a personalized learning experience. Some Universities like SNDT Women's University, Yashwant Rao Chavan Maharashtra Open University and Tamil Nadu Open University even provide an app-loaded card to the students which works beautifully on all android smartphones. Using the hybrid app, the students get to access most of the content on his mobile phone without the need of any internet connection. The student can now switch-on his classroom while travelling in the local train, while waiting for a meeting or during lunch times.

Wide Choice and Affordable

Most of the universities today, provide wide range of choices to its students for their technology enabled programs. Apart from the traditional degree and post graduate degree programs, the universities also have a few other offerings:

Certification Programs

Administered mostly by universities, certification programs give employees specialized knowledge through a series of courses that may last only a few weeks or months.

Massive Open Online Courses

Free and open to everyone with an internet connection, MOOCs give employees the chance to take courses by some of the world's most famous professors with hundreds or thousands of other students. Courses can run from a semester long to just a few weeks.

Other Online Training Options

Various companies and organizations, such as Lynda.com, Udemy and Codecademy, offer online courses to learners who want to gain specific skills such as Web design or coding. The classes are taught by practitioners or others with expertise. Some are free, while others aren't. Unlike MOOCs, they don't follow a traditional academic model.

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