

# Provocation and Opportunities for Online-Learning in India

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## Abstract

Technology has made this world a global village because we are living in that era where nothing is impossible. The rapid change occurring in our society only due to technology. Considering the rapid change in technology, inevitable changes in education sector are going to happen. A lot of research is taking place to understand the pros and cons of online education in comparison to face to face education. In India, there are a lot of challenges and opportunities for online education. With a comprehensive literature review, in this paper, we have identified key factors which will boost online education in India. We have identified internet penetration; low cost of online education, ease of doing course, initiative by government, employer's recognition and bridging gap are the key factors the growth of online education.

**Keywords:** Online education; Face to face education; Challenges and opportunities; Digital infrastructure, Bihar, India.

## Introduction

The growth of technology has brought tremendous change in the almost every sphere of life. Technology has also impacted the process of education. The face to face education has experienced a remarkable change in the last 10 years. Although face to face education is still considered the norm, but acceptance of online courses is increasing in the field of management and engineering. Some of the reasons for the exponential growth of online education is that it is instant, online, anywhere accessible, self-driven and on the go.

The major reason for the phenomenal growth in online education is MOOCs (Massive Open online courses). According to Kaplan, Andreas M.; Haenlein, Michael (2016), MOOCs are online courses which are aimed at unlimited participation and offer open access through the web. MOOCs have gained lot of popularity since the time of its development in 2008. Over 800 universities around the

world have launched at least one MOOC till date. According to report by Class Central, there were 83 million students who had registered for MOOCs by December, 2017. The list of top five MOOC provider by registered users include Coursera, edX, Xuetang X, Udacity and Future Learn.

The government is supporting online education in India because of its potential to improve education quality and reach through the Digital India initiative. Government of India in Association with Ministry of HRD has initiated a programme named SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active –Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) that is designed to achieve the three fundamental objectives of Education Policy i.e., access, equity and quality. The main objectives of this effort are to take the quality teaching learning resources to all, including those who cannot afford. This program SWAYAM seeks to provide education to those students who are not yet aware of the digital revolution taking place and are still not able to join the mainstream of the knowledge economy. Nearly 2000+ online courses are offered through Swayam and approximately 150 million students across the globe are enrolled in different courses.

## **Review of Literature**

There are many definitions of online learning. Khan (1997) has defined online learning as the delivery of instruction to a remote audience using the web as an intermediary. Elaine Allen, Jeff Seaman (2011) have defined Online courses as those in which minimum 80 percent of the course content is delivered online and Face-to-face instruction are those courses in which less than 30 percent of the content is delivered online.

According to a report by Google and KPMG, the online education market in India at the end of December, 2016 was \$247 million and it will reach \$1.96 billion by 2021. Also India's online education market is the second largest market after US.

## **Drivers of online education growth in India**

Acceptability of online education in India is growing at an exponential rate because of the following factors:

### **1. Internet penetration in India**

According to a report by IAMA and Kantar IMRB, there were 481 million users of internet in India and this is growing at the rate of 11.34%. Also internet penetration in urban India was 64.84% while in rural India it was 20.26% till December, 2017. The main reason for the growth of internet users in India is the

increase in number of smart phone users.

## **2. Online education saves money and time**

As online education is through internet, so it can be easily accessed anywhere, anytime. You can access the content early morning, late evening, at home, in cafeteria, or on the train. As the content is generally preloaded, so you can download the lectures / videos and watch them at your convenience time and again. Also cost of online education is very low in comparison to face to face education.

## **3. Ease of doing courses for working professionals**

Online education offers great opportunity for working professionals as they cannot leave their jobs to pursue higher education. Online education offers them a variety of courses to choose from and this can help in finding new career options for them.

## **4. Initiative by Government of India**

Government of India is also taking initiatives to promote online education. They have started Swayam through which they are offering free education and certification courses to all. Main objective of this initiative is to provide quality education for which they have tied up with IITs, IIMs and NPTEL.

## **Challenges in Online education**

There are a lot of challenges faced by people in online education in India. Some of these challenges which need to be overcome are:

### **1. Insufficient digital infrastructure**

Although Government of India is taking initiative to develop digital infrastructure but a lot need to be done in this direction. High speed internet and stable power supply are the biggest problem. India stands 89<sup>th</sup> worldwide on internet speed and stability. According to the report of World Economic Forum, only 15 percent of the households have access to the Internet, and mobile broadband remains accessible to very few i.e. only 5.5 subscriptions for every 100 people. **Questionable credibility of degrees**

Although industry has started recognizing online degrees, there are still a lot of fraudulent and non-

accredited degrees being offered online. The number of scam operators is rising who are offering fake certificated which does not have any credentials.

## **2. Motivation towards study**

Some students need the push to get to the class. In case of self paced online programme, student may procrastinate. The dropout rate in online education is very high. Self motivation and discipline is required to complete the assignments and upload them timely. If you have difficulty working independently, staying organized and meeting deadlines, you might struggle in an online program.

## **Opportunities in Online Education**

Change in technology is offering many opportunities for all stakeholders in the online education sector which includes entrepreneurs, education providers and learners. Some of the factors offering different opportunities in this domain include:

### **1. Mobile Learning**

The surge in users is credited to availability of 4G internet and smart phones at very low price. Going forward, IAMAI hopes that the National Telecom Policy (NTP) 2018, which is focusing on new technologies like 5G, will promote better quality data services at more affordable prices and help address the digital divides that will promote internet penetration in the rural areas through mobile internet. According to report by Zenith, mobile devices will account for 73 per cent of time spent using the internet in 2018.

### **Investor's Interest**

A large number of entrepreneurs are venturing into online education as this is expected to see an uptrend in the next 5 years thanks to the Digital India campaign, the cultural importance given to education and falling mobile data prices. The Chang Zuckerberg Initiative has invested \$50 million in Byju's, Bertelsmann India has invested \$8.2 million in Eruditus, and Kaizen Management Advisors and DeVry Inc. have put in \$10 million in EduPristine. Khan Academy is a non profit organization which receives financial support from philanthropic organizations like The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Google

and Netflix founder Reed Hastings. Online learning platform Unacademy also raised \$11.5 million of funding led by Sequoia India and SAIF Partners; and Eruditus Executive Education, a provider of executive education programmes, had raised \$8 million funding from Bertelsmann India Investments. So, the online education sector will continue to spark more interest among entrepreneurs.

## **2. Blended Model**

There will be convergence of the offline education and online education in future. This concept of blended learning combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, but student has some control over time, place, path, or pace. This model will take advantage of both face-to-face classroom practices combined with computer-mediated activities.

## **Conclusion**

Online education is flexible instructional delivery system encompasses any kind of learning that take place via internet. It reduces Time, Energy and Money of students at every sphere of life.

Online education can change the whole future scenario in education if it can be implemented in joint collaboration with industry, universities and government. Drastic changes in course curriculum are required to bridge the gap so that students are industry ready after passing out. Education process needs to be changed by making it more practical with the use of technology. Also course should be designed in different language to increase their reach and more opportunities for youth of rural India. Innovations are required to design ways to increase the social skills of online learners.

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