

Education

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● ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT Self-reliant universities

RL RAINA

PM NARENDRA MODI-LED government started the initiative of Atmanirbhar Bharat with a motive to address the basic issue of abysmally low market demand and economic slowdown induced by the Covid-19 crisis. The thrust is to make India self-reliant and resilient in both normal and crises times. Educational institutes started focusing on thinking out of the box to meet the challenges of the digital revolution and embracing entrepreneurship, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills as part of the academic experience as well as creating cultures where innovative thinking is nurtured.

The challenge didn't end here. Universities are also planning adequate steps to prepare all students for a rapidly changing job market and to make them industry-ready and self-reliant. They must ensure that talent from the diverse, global community has access to opportunities in the new era of digitisation. Since Atmanirbhar Bharat has become a mantra for everyone, universities are urging students to showcase their talent by developing Indian apps in different categories under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Innovate Challenge.

Here's how educational institutes in India are becoming self-reliant:

Adding new dimension to the incubator and entrepreneurship model: In the pre-Covid-19 era, academic institutions had put attention on training their students in skills that are required in larger



companies. But with Atmanirbhar Bharat the initiative has brought the country's focus to MSMEs, one of the key driving forces towards self-sufficiency. MSMEs constitute 80% of the workforce. Ignoring this sector would be a lost opportunity. In developing nations, MSMEs have engaged with academia by investing in research and innovation—a relationship that benefits both institutions and industry. Students need to be trained accordingly for jobs that will be in demand in the future.

Innovation as the objective: Universities have taken up the challenge of finding innovative solutions to the problems raised by Covid-19. With the help of AI and IoT, universities are working to transform a village into a smart city so that the resi-

dents of the village can also avail of all the facilities that will enable them to grow.

Making employment sustainable: It is inevitable for the industry to rely on academia to access and train the kind of talent required to thrive in the future workplace and to ensure life-long learning. It has been estimated that over 1.2 million Indians get job-ready every year, but the sad part is that not everyone is well acquainted with the needs of the company. Our institutes must follow the 'experiential university' model, which might be one of the answers to the challenge of a highly developed education system.

The author is vice-chancellor, JK Lakshmiipat University, Jaipur

EXPERT VIEW

We thought if students are not allowed to come to campus and access labs, why not help them set it up in their homes. We realised that a home studio is a great way to enable them to learn at their own pace and practice as much as they want even after the reopening of campuses.

—Nandita Abraham, President, Pearl Academy

Non-metros, smaller towns show higher inclination towards reskilling

UpGrad's Free 101 Program initiative is offering 10 programmes free of cost to college students and working professionals

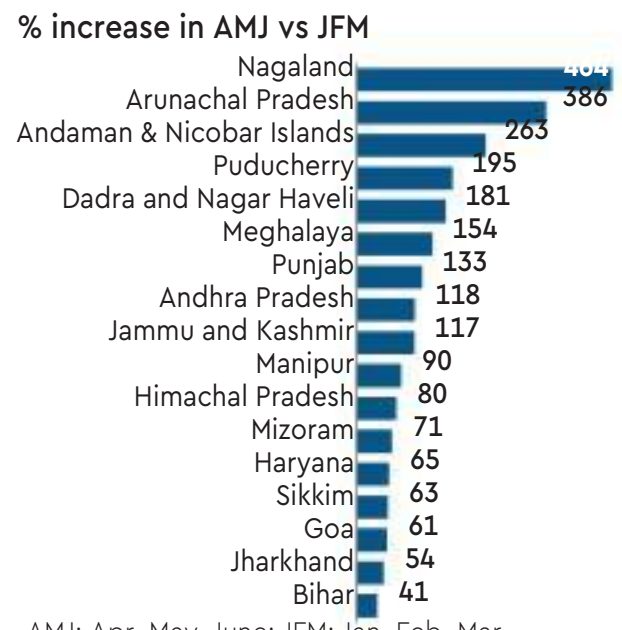
VIKRAM CHAUDHARY

DURING THE GLOBAL Financial Crisis of the last decade, there was a surge in online learning and reskilling; that was also the time when massive open online courses (MOOCs) started to happen. But in India we have never had a crisis that redefined skilling—the current Covid-19 crisis is that period. This is the time when anybody who wants to seriously learn is learning.

Mayank Kumar, co-founder & MD of upGrad, the online higher education platform, says that non-metros and small towns in India have shown a higher inclination towards upskilling during Covid-19. "From Jammu, we used to get around 3,000 users in a quarter. Post-Covid-19 the number went up to more than 6,000 in a quarter. Similarly, from Srinagar, we used to get around 1,000 users, which went up to 4,500 in the last quarter," he says.

Northeast India, similarly, has grown significantly on the platform. "Imphal, the capital city of Manipur, saw more than 10,000 seekers of online courses," Kumar says. "Baddi, a small town in Himachal

User traffic on upGrad courses



AMJ: Apr, May, June: JFM: Jan, Feb, Mar

Pradesh that has a population of less than 30,000, drove around 1,400 learners to upGrad—which is about 5% of the population of the entire town."

UpGrad recently launched the Free 101

The current Covid-19 crisis is that period when anybody who wants to seriously learn is learning. The website of upGrad saw 42% increase for the 45-54 age-group in the April-June quarter, which is the highest amongst all other age groups, followed by the 18-24 age-group that grew by 40%

● NEP Breaking free from the rigid learning model

Most students think NEP will bring positive changes

FE BUREAU

THE INDIAN EDUCATION system is ready to embrace a change if we go by the latest Brainly survey. The world's largest online learning platform for students, parents and teachers, Brainly surveyed its Indian user base on the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The findings (based on responses from 4,036 Brainly users belonging to various academic levels) indicate the students look forward to the NEP.

Realising the long-term impact of Covid-19 and the active role of technology in reducing its effect, the government of India recently announced NEP 2020. The policy broadly focuses on multidisciplinary and multilingual approach, skill development, and ramp-up of digital learning. The intent is to prepare students by promoting value-based education for real-world challenges.

It seems the concept is already popular amongst the students as 66.8% are aware of the announcement. In fact, a majority of respondents believe the technology can play a role in learning at the school level, and 65.6% students think apps, satellite TV channels, online courses, etc, can help understand the subject better while only less than one-fifth could not say for sure.

In the survey, only one-fifth of the Brainly users (20.4%) would like to stick to the prevalent stream-based curriculum. However, a majority (58.7%) of students

Most respondents believe tech plays a role in learning at school level, and 65.6% kids think apps, satellite TV, online courses can help understand the subject better

temporary subjects like artificial intelligence, design thinking, organic living, etc, at school level (middle and secondary stage). It is worth noting that the introduction to new-age subjects has been planned to make the students future-ready. The forward-looking policy has received overwhelming support from Brainly users. A whopping 87.7% of students expect it to bring a positive change and reduce the pressure for academic excellence. This shows learners are willing to adopt a culture that is more progressive and beyond the bookish knowledge.

Commenting on survey findings, Rajesh Bysani, CPO of Brainly, said, "The learner wants to break-free from the learning model that has been rigid, rote and focuses solely on grades. Instead, a more impactful education system is needed today that focuses on the overall development of students, ultimately preparing them for a lifetime. At Brainly, we enable students to do the same by bringing them together with our model of community-based learning. It wouldn't be wrong to say that today Brainly has built a global community that reflects this basic approach in all walks of its life."

Science & tech

● EAVESDROPPER

Is it ok to write off GPT-3's op-ed writing experiment?

With a much more expanded database—175 billion parameters—GPT-3 is getting better at what it does. Newer AI models should now focus on building trust because that would also form the basis for newer applications of AI models



Divine Inspiration of Music(1640) Nicolas Regnier (Niccolò Renieri)

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● EMBA Rise in online enrolments

SP Jain School sees 50% growth in enrolments for its executive MBA offering

FE BUREAU

EVEN AS WORLDWIDE MBA enrolments fell owing to the Covid-19 crisis, SP Jain School of Global Management reported 50% growth in student numbers for its Executive MBA programme—delivered using a proprietary Engaged Learning Online (ELO) technology and the institute attributes the significant spike in student numbers to the success of this technology.

For its June 2020 online cohort, the Executive MBA witnessed a growth in numbers from multiple Indian cities, as well as from different international destinations such as Australia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and the US, giving students access to a global, multicultural network. Students have, on an average, 13-plus years of work experience and represent a range of industries such as automobile, banking and finance, engineering, hospitality, IT and government sectors. In response to the evolving needs of the modern organisation, the Executive MBA curriculum has been updated to incorporate a number of technology courses into the business curriculum. The advanced course structure is a blend of core course subjects, electives, simulations and projects, and students can specialise in areas such as marketing, finance, operations, entrepreneurship and general management.

The Executive MBA is an 18-month part-time programme delivered using ELO, a sophisticated online learning system that replicates a live classroom down to its last detail, thanks to a number of high-end features, says Nitish Jain, president, SP Jain School of Global Management.

The ELO studio is set up with a robotic tracking camera for the faculty, which allows them to move freely, maintain eye contact with students, respond to their visual cues, moderate discussions and more, all in real time. Faculty and students are able to engage in one-on-one conversations as if they were sitting side-by-side. ELO enables the faculty to evaluate each student's level of engagement, respond to them individually and keep them motivated—just like they would do in a conventional classroom. A big advantage is that ELO engages even those students who wouldn't have normally participated in an on-campus classroom discussion.

"The increase in online enrolments is noteworthy," said Jain. "Unlike Zoom, Google Meet or other popular videoconferencing software that were mostly designed for office use, the emphasis within ELO is upon 'student engagement'. Over 350 Executive MBA students have experienced this technology since June 2020, and the experience has been fantastic. We are collecting feedback and tweaking our technology to ensure that it is at the forefront of online education."

In addition to the online version, SP Jain delivers an onsite Executive MBA in Mumbai, Singapore and Dubai. These too have performed very well.

EMBA is 18-month course delivered using ELO, which replicates a live classroom

New Delhi