

A continuing education initiative of 24x7 Learning, AVAGMAH Online School (AOS) has partnered with universities like IMT-CDL, Thapar, Annamalai & IGNOU to offer degree courses recognised by UGC and accredited by the Distance Education Council. As it announces admissions for its Online MBA in Sales and Marketing, Karthik K.S. gives his views.

Q. How has distance education evolved in India?

A. It has been borne out of the requirement to provide quality and affordable education to the masses. Despite growing investment in education, 25 per cent of India's population is illiterate; only 15 per cent of Indian students reach high school, and just 7 per cent graduate. Since the formal system was unable to meet demand, the Planning Commission in its third five-year plan (1961-66) recommended Correspondence Education at the University level. Hence, distance education was adopted as an alternative in 1962. The 1970s saw a spurt in correspondence education, and Andhra Pradesh Open University, established in 1982, became the first open university. Today, close to 4.5 million Indians are undergoing distance education, compared to 1.4 million going to regular colleges.

Q. What factors have made this

change possible?

A. Since the start of Indian distance education, there has been a 7500 per cent increase in students' enrolled. This exponential growth can be attributed to:

- a. *Evolution of Indian mail system:* The postman now also brings to us our books and educational materials.
- b. *Technology:* Internet revolution has shaped the way we think and act. Everything is available on the internet.
- c. *Mobile phones:* Smart phones have not only made learning fun, but also saved lots of time. Now we can use phones or Tabs whenever, wherever we want.

DISTANCE LEARNING IN INDIA NEEDS TO PROVIDE QUALITY AND COST EFFECTIVE EDUCATION FOR MASSES

this gap, and provide quality and affordable education, initiatives like AOS are of prime importance if we aim to have quality professionals for our companies.

Q. What benefits would an online degree offer over the regular one?

A. Through AOS's virtual campus, students can learn at their own pace, access lec-

tures via webinars, communicate with faculty, network with students, and interact with industry leaders.

Q. How can companies use this for employees' learning needs?

A. A survey says 60 per cent of employees leave their jobs for better career opportunities; thus corporates are turning to continuing education for retention. AOS's corporate batches are scheduled per the company's requirement and training needs. The MBA programs are industry-oriented and up-to-date. **thf**

Aditi Sharma Kalra

Q. Why are online learning initiatives the need of the hour?

A. It is estimated that India would see a shortfall of 4 million seats in higher education by 2015 and 7 million by 2020. This leaves us with about 92 per cent of India's working population without a job-oriented skill or degree. To bridge



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KARTHIK K.S., FOUNDER & CEO, 24X7 LEARNING