

E-learning here to stay, but needs to be structured properly

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Educationists and academicians feel e-learning is here to stay and in a country like India, where an estimated 5 to 15 crore people are looking to benefit from the online learning process, it should be made an important component of the education system. The question, however, is: should academic courses be imparted solely through the online mode?



Noted academician Goverdhan Mehta, who had chaired a committee to evaluate the National Education Mission through Information and Communication Technology (NEMICT), feels such a thing is possible if all attributes required for a degree course can be delivered online. However, he adds, “it should be properly structured with proper rigour and proper system of evaluation.

It's absurd to give online degrees for engineering, nursing etc. According to me, certain minimum amount of productive contact interaction is a must for any degree programme.”

Now a national research professor at the School of Chemistry, University of Hyderabad, Mehta says that attributes of skills or scholarship expected from a degree holder has not been defined in India. “Acquiring knowledge is one thing and doing a formal degree is another. If I am scientist and I want to learn philosophy, the government should ensure I have access to a learning platform of the government where I can get a reasonable idea about this subject. As far as degree programmes are concerned, we need to put in place a proper framework for that. Online education cannot be left to fend for itself,” he says.

Many experts blame universities and institutions which have entered into the education sector with commercial interest for exploiting the regulatory mechanism. They argue that while the education sector is going through the internet revolution the regulatory authorities are taking their time to define the extent of use of online content in education.

As far as government initiatives for online education are concerned, schemes such as National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology and National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) provide additional learning material to students and learners. Similarly, Massive Online Open Courses by various IITs are certificate courses which provide study material to assist students pursuing graduate or post-graduate programmes.

“As far as imparting formal degree courses are concerned, we need appropriate vision and understanding to translate it into something tangible,” says Amarendra Pani, research head, Association of Indian Universities.