Online versus Traditional Learning: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: The focus of the study is to compare and analyse the behaviour and preference of students with respect to online (digital) learning and traditional learning. Primary survey conducted by Confluence Education Services is used in the paper to study the preference of XI and XII students of Hyderabad regarding traditional and digital platform of learning. The study concludes that although the technology has advanced so much, students still prefer classroom teaching pedagogy over online or digital teaching pedagogy, and find traditional pedagogy more convenient and reliable. Keywords: Confluence Education Services, Consumer Engagement, Digital Education, Education, Traditional Education

1. Introduction

India is a developing nation and is growing fast. According to census 2011, the literacy rate in India is 74.04%. This means that one fourth of the population is still illiterate. India is also growing in a rapid pace in the field of technology. Technology has been advancing in various sectors and industries including education sector, medical industry, insurance sector and other service sectors.

The education sector is increasing in India. The education industry is one of the biggest industries in India. But still, one fourth population of India still remain illiterate. To eradicate illiteracy, the Government of India is taking actions to increase through various initiatives. The amount of money flowing into education is huge and but the outcome is not as profitable. Apart from the traditional way of classroom teaching, digital teaching is also booming along with digital India.

After the U.S, India is the biggest market for e-learning. According to IBEF (India Brand Equity Foundation), Indian education sector is valued at USD 2-3 billion, and is expected to reach USD 40 billion mark by 2017. The inflow of FDI in this sector has also increased. Access to education from foreign colleges/ institutes/ universities has also been opened up with technology. To capitalize on this, Confluence Education Education project was undertaken.

Confluence educational services private ltd. is an educational consultancy firm. Confluence came into existence in the year 2005 and has been growing strong for 10 years. Confluence now is one of the leading players in the overseas study consulting business. Confluence educational services came into existence with the intention of providing counselling and training to students who want to pursue education abroad leveraging the growth in the education industry.

The company service portfolio includes abroad education counselling, coaching for competitive exam for abroad education, visa and document processing and facilitating admission in foreign universities.

Confluence Education Services conducted a survey in Hyderabad, and focused on XI and XII students. This data has been used in the study to reveal the preferences of students regarding online education and traditional form of education.

1.1 Objectives and Scope:

Most of the sectors of economy use technology to enhance efficiency in their respective sectors. It includes banking sector, insurance sector, education sector, etc. The paper attempts to see if technology is playing a crucial role in the field of education or not, and how do the students of XI and XII in Hyderabad think about the same. A survey was conducted by Confluence Education Services to study the same, and this data has been used to make inferences. Hyderabad was chosen by Confluence Education Services for the survey as Hyderabad is a growing hub of education.

1.2 Review of Literature:

E-learning has become a vital method of teaching for more than a decade. The review of literature shows opinions and works of various authors, who have worked in this area.

Shiva Kanaugia and NR Satyanarayana in 2004 wrote a paper on “e-education in India- pace of learning on a Hi-tech path”. At that time, India was not very advanced when it came to e-learning. The authors of the paper tried to picturise the role of information technology in educational sector on a global level, emphasizing the necessity for India to adopt technologies for education. The authors favour the golden idea of e-education in India, by picturizing the models, tools and advantages of e-ed. In 2008, Sanjay Rampal, Sanjay Singh, Awadhesh Bharadwaj and Alok Mittal wrote a paper on “e-learning revolution: status of educational programs in India”. In the paper, the authors provide comprehensive insights to the then-status of educational status of India, which involved more of chalk and talk classroom teaching. With the use of case examples, the authors opined that e-learning models can be successfully implemented with the growth in population of those, interested in learning.
In December 2012, Dr. Adarsh Preet Mehta and Mrs. Ritu Mehta wrote a paper on “internet based education in India: a paradigm in contemporary learning”. This paper was published in Peripex- Indian Journal of Research. The authors opined that online education is providing opportunities to researchers, faculties, and students as a regulator to the education and educational institutes. In India, online education has already paved its way. The authors are expecting that in the years to come, many more people would benefit from this increasing access of online education.

KM Upasana in 2014 and Sunita Gaur, Archana Chaudhary and Mithilesh Mittal (collectively) in 2015 wrote two papers. The main idea behind both the papers was to do a comparative study of online education and traditional way of education.

KM Upasana in her paper “a comparative study of traditional education and e-education with special reference to India” favoured e-education by saying that it proves to be beneficial to all. In this globalized world, the traditional pedagogy is losing relevance. Her model also proves that technology can improve the drawbacks of traditional learning methods. Sunita Gaur, Archana Chaudhary and Mithilesh Mittal wrote a paper on “a comparative study of e-learning technique with traditional teaching techniques” in 2015. The views of these authors and KM Upasana are similar. The study done by them is a ground level study, using primary data. Data was collected using feedback from students, teachers, researchers and staffs, which suggested the effectiveness of e-learning based teaching techniques over and above the traditional method of learning.

In 2015, Dr. (Mrs.) Urvesh Chaudhery and Dr. Satish Gill wrote a paper on “Online Education in India: Enhancing the overall knowledge of students”. In the paper, the authors have come up with a comparison between the traditional ways of education vis-a-vis the online education system, with relation to the needs of students (at individual level), their learning outcomes and perceptions in Indian environment.

India has more than a million schools and other organizations for higher education. Some surveys show that more than half of the population of India falls under this market of education and allied services. Many institutions compete with each other when it comes to online education, in the form of distance learning, which has widened the opportunities for and horizons of knowledge for students. It is a small world. At the same time, studies also reveal that students are more inclined towards classroom teaching than digital form of teaching.

2. Materials and Methods

This study involved a lot of ground research and primary data collection. Data was collected by Confluence Education Services in Hyderabad. A pilot study was conducted with seven samples. This quantitative research involved collecting first hand data with the help of questionnaires.

The target group were students studying in 11th and 12th standard. Three hundred students from Hyderabad responded to the survey. Previous survey results were used as secondary research data. Using these data, inferences have been drawn upon. Hyderabad was chosen for the survey as it is emerging as an educational hub.

3. Theory and Results

The following inferences have been drawn using primary data collected from students of 11th and 12th in Hyderabad. Total sample size was 300. They were asked the following questions:

i) If they see studying abroad as an option for higher education
ii) If they have access to internet for studying
iii) Their preferences over seminars (online/classroom/both)
iv) Their preferences over conducting counselling and coaching (online/classroom/both)
v) Different channels they would prefer for consumer engagement.

This section is followed by four figures, which will help us analyse better. Figure 1 would deal with student’s preferences, figure 2 with consumer engagement for seminar, figure 3 with preference for channel of conducting counselling and coaching, and figure 4 with channels for consumer engagement.

![Figure 1: Student’s Preference](image.png)

Figure 1 depicts preference of students with respect to online and traditional learning pedagogy. Students were asked if they would like to study from foreign colleges/institutes. Only 30% students found this option of studying from foreign colleges/institutes viable, whereas 70% students denied this option.

70% respondents denied studying abroad and most of them mentioned the following reasons:
Studying abroad requires heavy financing.

Affordability as well as lack of awareness of scholarships and other financial aid was another reason for the same.

A few respondents found language as a barrier.

Most of the respondents who denied studying abroad were not familiar with online distance learning programs.

88% students had access to internet while 12% students still did not have access to internet for studies.

Figure 2 depicts the responses where respondents were asked their preferences about seminars. 52% respondents still preferred classroom environment in this revolutionised era of internet education. Only 20% respondents opined that they would prefer online seminars over skype. And 28% respondents were comfortable with both.

The study also indicated that students prefer to come down personally to know about the services before going for the online program.

From figure 3, we can see that out of the total respondents 62% of the respondents prefer classroom training as opposed to 20% of respondents who prefer engagement through Audio visual platform Skype. The remaining 18% would prefer a combination of both. This shows that students prefer a more real environment for interaction. This clearly shows that even though 88% of the respondents have internet access, they prefer traditional ways of interaction. Also there is an increase in classroom engagement when compared with seminars. This tells that interaction during seminars is for shorter duration whereas counselling and training services provided by the company is for a longer duration and the preference changes because of such factors.

From figure 4, we can see that 44% of the respondents are aware of consultancies through friends. The other traditional channels such as newspaper and pamphlets have led to awareness to 37% of respondents. The remaining 19% know about consultancies and coaching centres through internet. This shows that traditional method of consumer engagement are more reliable and will provide more business to an educational consulting firm than spending on consumer engagement on digital forms.

### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The focus of the study is to compare and analyse the behaviour and preference of students with respect to online (digital) learning and traditional learning. Confluence Education Services, which is a private consultancy firm in the field of education, collected primary data from Xi and XII students of Hyderabad, and inferences were drawn accordingly.

Because of lack of awareness and financial aid, 70% respondents denied going to abroad to pursue higher education. It also shows that respondents are unaware of foreign education. 12% of respondents still did not have access to internet.
When it comes to seminars, counselling and mentoring, respondents are still more comfortable with classroom environment over online learning. It reveals that most of the people are not willing to adopt technology when it comes to education. This is mostly because people are still more comfortable with traditional learning pedagogy and they find traditional ways more comfortable and reliable.

Thus, a general statement which can be drawn from the data gathered is that the potential customers of Confluence Education Private Limited preferred engagement using traditional method over and above digital methods. Even though digital platforms provide more convenience, respondents found traditional methods more reliable and preferred engagement over traditional methods.

It was observed that students are more aware of the consultancies and firms like confluence educational services through coming in contact with traditional consumer engagement channels rather than internet. Only 19% of students said that they are aware of such consultancies after doing research on internet. The remaining were because of traditional consumer engagement channels such as newspaper, pamphlets and posters. Recommendation from friends and relatives or WOM is the one responsible for highest percentage of consumer engagement. 44% of students said they chose a educational consultancy or coaching institute because of recommendation.

Reach of the traditional forms of consumer engagement for the company is less as compared to digital forms of consumer engagement. Internet has broken the boundaries and any one can be engaged living far away from the company location.

It was found that prospects and customers preferred that during the pitching the business to a client one to one interaction is required to finalise the agreement. Online platforms of consumer engagement are to be used in the later stages once the customer is has a good relationship with the company.

The conversion of leads through online medium was less than the conversion of leads who directly visited the premises of the company. In the initial stages of interaction consumer engagement is more profitable in increasing the customer base but later the engagement through online channels is more for customer retention. It was observed that consumer engagement through online channels work better if an organization has a strong online presence and has many followers. It increases the credibility of the company in an online front.

Other studies also suggest that people are still not very much comfortable with online education. They find traditional way of learning more reliable and comfortable. But when it comes to data, then India is the second largest user of e-education after the Unites States of America.

The main challenge in front of the government of India is to eradicate illiteracy, which comprise more than one fourth of the population of India. Our present Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji have initiated the Digital India movement in India. Although there isn’t any provision for e-education, but with the advent of digitalization, provision for e-education or online education would also increase.

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