



Lifelong: INCREASING COMPETITION AND EASY ACCESSABILITY TO ONLINE RESOURCES HAS ELIMINATED BARRIERS LIKE AGE AND AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION. LIFELONG LEARNING IS NOW THE KEY TO SUCCESS AS THE INTERNET PROVIDES NEWER AVENUES FOR LEARNING

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RHYTHM OF THE TIMES



BY MATT SYMONDS
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It is the dream of many entrepreneurial MBA students to come up with a disruptive innovation that will prove to be an industry game-changer. And these days, they might apply the lessons learned from professors such as Harvard's Clayton Christensen to the very institutions they will graduate from. For it is business schools themselves that face disruption, in the form of technological innovation. Is the business model of business schools about to be turned on its head? We're already seeing the likes of MIT Sloan raising eyebrows by making available hundreds of lessons through open courseware, and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). The idea of free or low-

cost lectures delivered by renowned faculty to a global audience throws down a gauntlet to the high-touch and high-cost classroom experience, which defines the MBA experience at the world's top schools. For Bob Bruner, dean of the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business, the evolution of MOOCs could reveal the weaknesses and stress points in the industry. "There will be winners and losers" he says, and likens the impact of technology to that of globalisation in the last decade. He believes basic courses will be delivered online, freeing up more time for classroom debates and a focus on the case method. Critics claim, business schools are too conservative and resistant to change, and that the writing is on the digital wall for many institutions. But is that entirely true? After all, among the lessons to be learned

in a globally inter-connected world has been the ability of business schools to experiment and adapt, and find ways to meet the management training needs of young professionals and senior executives alike. As companies from Bangalore to Beijing learn to work across time zones in virtual teams, programmes such as the OneMBA Global Executive MBA have formed business school partnerships across continents to integrate perspectives and best business practices from many cultures and professional environments. "These programmes allow participants to see everything on an even basis — there is no presumption that an approach is somehow better because it originates in a particular place," says associate dean Jay Swaminathan. Few industries can boast a similar level of internationalism, or lev-

els of collaboration across different sectors to ensure that learning is relevant and applicable. The trend towards a new breed of specialised Masters is a case in point. French business school EM Lyon, for example, now offers specialised Master's degrees, not just in finance & marketing, but in areas such as sports & outdoor industry management and luxury management. "Companies that operate within these highly competitive, international environments need managers who can adapt their knowledge to the particular nuances of their markets," explains Patrice Houdayer, vice-president of Graduate Programmes. "Whether a hotel chain, a fashion house, or a manufacturer of sports gear, recruiters are looking for talented graduates who have worked or studied in different regions of the world to help them better understand customer expectations and cultural norms." And of course the learning doesn't stop once you have graduated from school. Berkeley MBA graduates, for example, can continue to hone their business skills through free training offered by the school's Center for Executive Education within the first five years after graduation. The new programme was inspired by the school's emphasis on being 'Students Always'. For Whitney Hischier, assistant dean for executive learning at Haas, "alumni participation in our executive education programmes will enable us to more closely align with the needs of the market, as well as provide ongoing feedback to our faculty on how we can innovate our content and teaching." Clearly there are lessons in innovations for both students and schools.



Live the Change

Do mid-career professionals require further education and upgradation of skills? Education Times finds out

>> **KOMAL BEDI SOHAL**
National Creative director
Rediffusion Y&R

Learning is a constant process and you can never stop learning. Further, to meet the challenges of the 21st century, all mid-career professionals need to update their skills and knowledge to remain relevant in the industry. I have been in the advertising industry for close to 18 years now and I have seen the change and been a part of it. Advertising was earlier restricted to print, television and radio. However, with the arrival of internet, advertising has changed dramatically and has become youth-oriented. If people don't upgrade their skills, they will not be able to connect with the youth. One has to upgrade oneself to understand the digital medium and master the language of the youth. It may be a struggle in the beginning for professionals to understand the new medium but once they learn, they feel more confident. People who resist change will get redundant, so we need to constantly upgrade our skills and never let go of an opportunity to learn.



>> **SHRUTI MAHESHWARI**
AVP Content
InfoEdge Solutions

Traditionally, engineers have always opted for upgradation of skills. But in today's high-tech world, professionals from all industries need to upgrade their skills. I was a print journalist for nine years before shifting to online content management, and I have witnessed the rapid changes in the media industry thanks to technology. Now mostly everything is online and, hence, information is dynamic not static. You have to constantly update yourself, and work at a higher speed than before. Interested professionals need not have to take time off from work as several online courses are now available.

>> **PK GERA**
Director
National Institute of Fashion Technology, Delhi

With the demand, market and technology changing at a rapid pace, one cannot afford to be complacent. Professionals have to rise up to the occasion to respond to the emerging needs in society and the job market, otherwise they will be fossilised. At NIFT, even though we have a good faculty, we still invite experts to train them in different fields because everyone has to keep themselves updated with the latest that is happening. It's wrong to believe that you have achieved it all as a mid-career professional, and you can take it easy. It's not the case in this highly competitive world. In fact, even for mid-career professionals, you are yet to deliver your best.

- Compiled by Aaditi Isaac

TRANSFORMING CAREERS

The Indian School of Business (ISB) last week announced the commencement of the academic year for the Class of 2014 of its Post Graduate Programme in Management (PGP). The class has around 774 students across Hyderabad and Mohali campuses, from diverse academic, professional, cultural, geographic and social backgrounds. The PGP is a full-time, one-year programme in management designed for young working professionals to enable them transition into roles of greater responsibility, or pursue an entrepreneurial dream. A significant development this year is the marked increase in the number of professionals from PSU/ government, healthcare and fashion sectors. There has been a steady increase in the number of PSU and government employees joining the PGP with the present class having 33 professionals from organisations such as Indian railways, GAIL, BHEL and ONGC, among others. This class also witnessed a spurt in the number of medical doctors and professionals from the fashion industry. The rise in the number of professionals from these sectors, as compared to the previous year, can be attributed to the focused approach on the part of the school to enhance its class diversity — particularly the 'Diversity Scholarships' launched last year. Expressing his views on the new class, Deepak Chandra, deputy dean, ISB, said, "The Class of 2014 at the ISB reflects the school's efforts to identify talent and provide them with a rich learning experience that will expand the boundaries of their thinking and set them on the path for long-term career progress."

Blurred boundaries

HC Pokhriyal, executive director, School of Open Learning (SOL), Delhi University, on how technology connects the learner with the content

As a teacher, the role is to create a learning environment, whether in a real or a virtual classroom. The criticality is not in the learning content given by the teacher, but in the environment and with a mentor, who works on to improve the competency of students. In many ways, classroom learning is restricted. In a classroom, there is less peer-learning and so an attitude of creating an atmosphere where learners can look for ways to improve their skills and knowledge has to be encouraged. Technology has changed the way education has traditionally been disseminated, changing the dynamics of the teaching and learning process. It is through technology that distances can be bridged and education can be brought to the doorstep of the student. Technology connects the learner with the content. There is a big movement where people believe that the concept of copyrights should not exist as learning should be free and open to all, including downtrodden masses. When learning is free and open, boundaries are

blurred and students from anywhere can access relevant content and increase capabilities. In today's world, there is a need to provide the best to students. Learning through a distance mode allows students to study at their own pace and access quality material from any part of India. Students can read, re-read material at any time of the day without having to think twice. In the case of Delhi University, students who study through the open learning system get the same benefits as students who study from the regular system. Learning is done through the distance education mode. Personal contact classes are conducted for them and through this system, they are able to complete their education and acquire other skills, which help them. Democratisation of learning has begun in India and it is here to stay. — As told to Aaditi Isaac



GANESH CHANDRA