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## AVENUES

### 'DISTANCE LEARNING IS THE NEXT BIG THING'

Wednesday, 12 August 2015 | Sangeeta Yadav



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**Shantanu Rooj, MD of Schoolguru.in, talks to Sangeeta Yadav about the emergence of learning from mobile application in distance education that aims to be more interactive and reduce school dropout rate**  
**What is Schoolguru all about?**

It is an organisation which works towards providing a complete online learning solution through mobile app in the distance learning industry. There are more than 12 million

students going into distance education every year. We believe that constant communication in distance education is very important. Through our app, we help the Government Universities to make a strong platform and make learning more interactive. Students can ask question, take the feedback from the professor, attend the lecture, do revision, switch language to get more clarity and go through self-assessment quiz.

#### What is the purpose of launching it?

What was happening was the private players were pick up the correspondence course of the universities which costs `3,000, build some technology around it and provided it at `30,000. That's how they pocketed the entire money and the student got cheated. We realised that if we could make Government universities self-sufficient and enable them by creating a platform on which they could themselves do what these private players were doing, the product would be much stronger. That's the reason that we went to various universities and help them improve their product.

#### How does Schoolguru works?

When we tie-up with the universities, we work as a back-end service provider. The degree, courses, syllabus and exam is by the university and the teaching and student service will be from us. When the student will come and take admission, they will give them study material and also a chip which the students can put inside their phone. It will work on any phone that has audio-visual feature and doesn't require internet. The app will start working automatically. Once the student logs in, the app recognises which university you are from and what is your name and enrollment number. Accordingly it guides you to the course.

#### Who all are your partners?

We have partnered with 11 universities. Up next is Kurukshetra University, Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata; Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala and Utkal university, Bhubaneswar. We are spread across 12 States in this country and teach in 11 different languages. We are targeting 50,000 students getting trained this year onwards.

#### Why is enrollment for correspondence education on the rise?

Correspondence education is self-studies format where you get some study materials, you study of your own and come back for the exam. Earlier out of 100 students taking admission, 60 per cent of students were seen dropped out of their programme because of lack of communication. But in the past two years, the engagement level and retention level has grown from 40 to 85 per cent. We have seen huge interest from the corporates as well. Today, I have 75 students from the same Infosys enrolling for the same programme.

#### What do you have to say about the Digital India movement?

It's not only about technology but a combination of several things that needs to work in proper harmony. In the next three to four years, traditional mode of education will no longer be there in India and technology will take over. Affordability, authenticity of the university over course provided by them is an important aspect of what we provide University has no financial risk as they don't have to invest in capital expenditure, server, managing, software and much more. Everything is available in the managed service model. A lot of public private partnership will open up.

#### What are the major challenges?

In India, very few houses have computers and broadband connection especially in the rural areas. And 90 per cent of India doesn't know how to talk or learn in English. That's what makes India lag behind. Since

mobile is available everywhere nowadays in India, we have taken leverage of this platform and trying to do a much better job in educating the masses.

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