

Beyond bookish knowledge

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Typical distance learning programmes in India comprise a set of thick books delivered by mail. Some of them set up 'contact centres' in certain cities where students can occasionally attend lectures. However, due to the lack of interaction and inconvenience, a substantial number of these students either drop out of the course or give exams half-heartedly.

In comparison, there are institutions like Welingkar Institute of Management, which offers 10 different programmes under the distance learning mode, (recognised by the Distance Education Council, Government of India) using technology not just extensively but also efficiently.

From providing study materials

in the form of books and audio-video CDs (plus a master CD for all subjects) to an on-line system where students can check notices, access the various web-based facilities like placement opportunities and newswire services where they can browse the latest updates topic-wise, every aspect is designed to leverage technology in a way that empowers students.

There is a virtual classroom facility whereby students can 'attend' interactive lectures from the comfort of their home itself. They can pose queries to the professor using a microphone or the keyboard, participate in live tests to instantly gauge their knowledge and understanding. A detailed time table is provided well in advance so working students can adjust schedules accordingly. For professionals who miss a lecture due

to an urgent meeting at the workplace, there is the e-learning toolkit on the website, where subject-wise, chapter-wise summary and power point presentations are available along with skill builder modules. Another recent addition is the WE Tube, an online video library that is ideal for those who face a conflict of timings due to office deadlines. Moreover, Personal Contact Programs are held for first year subjects, twice per semester.

Working professionals find this technology-based approach in sync with their working environment as the same principles are applied at the distance learning mode programs at Welingkar Institute of Management as well. The format and its implementation are appealing enough to even make full time students turn green with envy.