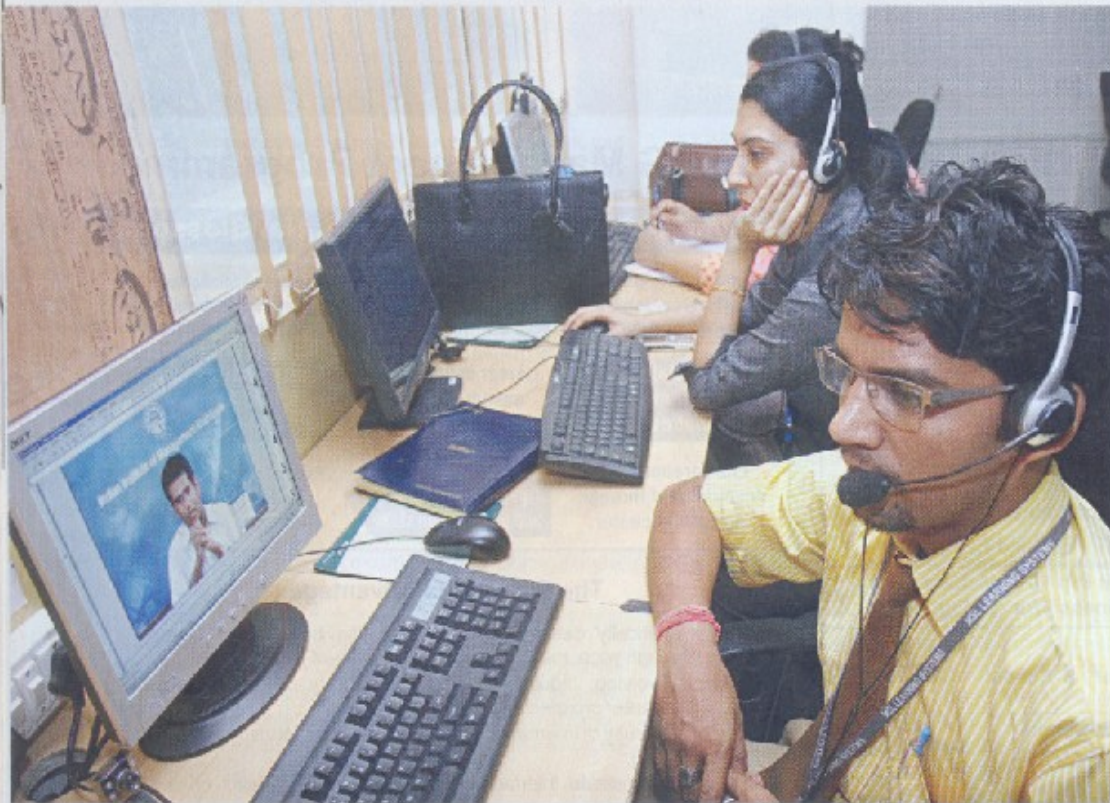




Schools SPECIAL

GOING THE DISTANCE

For lakhs of working professionals who want to move up the career ladder, distance learning MBA courses are a convenient and inexpensive option



THE INTERNET
PLAYS A KEY
ROLE IN
DISTANCE
LEARNING



Rs 60,000 is what an MBA course by distance learning costs while a full-time MBA diploma at IMT costs about Rs 8 lakh.

these employees get promoted immediately; what matters is they earn the required expertise and skills for the job, explains Agrawal. "Pursuing this degree makes an employee's career growth more progressive as they have a more wholesome and holistic picture of the business world," says Vidushi Soneja, HR executive, Ericsson India.

NMIMS offers customised programmes specially designed according to the needs of the company. "We trained 20 employees from Accenture through a postgraduate diploma in finance management," says Dr Vidya Naik, associate dean, School of Distance Learning, NMIMS. Graduates from Prin. L.N. Welingkar Institute of

(IMT), Ghaziabad, are offered placements by Infosys, Genpact, Royal Bank of Scotland, Aditya Birla Group, Hindalco and ONGC.

Distance learning programmes aren't a new phenomenon but institutes have finally given a shape to the courses. Most institutes have a core team comprising in-house professors. "The faculty for full-time courses trains distance learning students. As learning can happen over the Internet, industry professionals and professors from around the globe can give lectures online," says Arun Mohan Sherry, director, IMT Centre for Distance Learning. While such a programme costs from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 15 lakh for two years, a distance learn-



Chinmay Kamat, 32, Pune

Institute Prin. L.N. Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research

Subject Postgraduate Diploma in International Business

Reason for doing this course Wanted to start his own business venture

Previously employed With KPIT Cummins, Pune, for over three years

What now While pursuing this course, Kamat was working. After earning his diploma, he quit his job in August and has successfully set up his own venture called Finesse Learning—a soft skills and leadership training consultancy.

53,000 students joined distance learning courses at SCDL in 2009, up from the 8,000 that were enlisted in 2001.

Management Development and Research (LNWIMDR), Mumbai, are given placements by companies like Mahindra & Mahindra, L&T, Reserve Bank of India, IBM India, Raymonds Ltd and IIPCL. Graduates from SCDL have been placed with companies like Wipro Learning Centre, Wipro BPO, Rubikube, IThink Solutions, Resource Plus Services, NIIT Ayush Software and Stylus Systems. Students at the Institute of Management Technology

ing course costs between Rs 20,000 and Rs 60,000 for the same. "In this module the expenditure is only on the technology used," says Uday Salunkhe, director, LNWIMDR.

Study material consists of audio CDs that have PowerPoint presentation on each subjects with a detailed explanation of every chapter. Some institutes also give reference books. These are delivered right to one's doorstep. With case studies to analyse and



INSTITUTES OF NOTE

Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS), Mumbai and Bangalore
Courses Postgraduate Diploma in Finance, Business Management, HR, International Trade, Supply Chain Management and Banking
Fee Rs 50,000 for two years

Prin. L.N. Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research, Mumbai
Courses Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management, Finance, HR, E-Business, Retail Management, International Business and Banking and Investment and Insurance
Fee Rs 45,000 for two years

Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning, Pune
Courses Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration, Instructional Design, Marketing Management, HR, customer relationship management, Finance and Operations Management
Fee Rs 25,000 for two years

XLRI School of Business and Human Resources, Jamshedpur
Courses Business Management, HR, Logistics and Supply Chain Management and Sales and Marketing Management
Fee Rs 1,75,000 onward for a year

Amity School of Distance Learning, Delhi
Courses HR, IT, Marketing, International Business, Finance, Operations and Insurance

Fee With Personal Contact Programme Rs 57,000; otherwise Rs 42,000; for two years for graduates, three for professionals

Amity Center for E-Learning
Courses Production, HR, IT Marketing, International Business and Finance

Fee Rs 59,000 for MBA-three years, MBA (EFT)-two years, MBA (CAFT)-1.6 years

assignments to submit, these courses are as exhaustive as full-time courses. "We try to maintain parity with the full-time programme so that those pursuing it are also intensively trained," says Naik. The first-year curriculum covers a mix of subjects like organisational behaviour, marketing management, financial accounting, consumer behaviour and business economics. In the second year, one has to choose a specialisation. Though there are no entrance tests for these

whole of two years," says Salunkhe. Students based in the same city as the institute have the option of attending personal contact programmes, which take place on weekends.

Some institutes offer admissions twice a year, while others accept students four times a year. There has been a rise in the number of people joining these courses. It's not just the mid-level executives who are pursuing them but also fresh graduates who opt for jobs instead of higher education. "SCDL has



Upasana Mukherjee,

27, Pune

Institute Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning

Subject Postgraduate Diploma in Instructional Design

Reason for doing this course

Wanted to combine her language skills with technical ones and work as an instructional designer

Previously employed

With IBM, Kolkata, for one year

What now

Mukherjee was previously employed as a technical writer at IBM. After completing her course she secured placement with Wipro Technologies, Pune, as an instructional designer with a 50 per cent salary hike.

courses, mid-term and semester exams are conducted online.

The Internet has become a key space for communication between the professor and students. "Virtual classrooms allow students to see and hear the lecturer, ask questions and even replay a lecture. This creates a sophisticated learning experience similar to a live classroom session," says Swati Mujumdar, director, SCDL. Students and professors can also chat online to discuss problems. "Our virtual classroom sessions are decided well in advance—twice a week in the evening for two hours. During the time of admission, students are given the schedule for the

seen a rise: 8,000 students in 2001 to about 53,000 in 2009," says Mujumdar. NMIMS has from 2,000 to 5,000 students joining every year.

According to experts, the disadvantage of such a programme is that students can't experience the physical presence of peers and professors which would motivate them. "Distance education requires self-motivation. Opting out of the course, following a bad score in a mid-term test is not the solution. Students need to be focused in order to complete the degree," says Salunkhe. As they say: No pain, no gain; clubbed with determination, is a sure-shot win for the candidate. ■