Impact of online learning on the education system

TopicArea –Education forall

Can online learning replace our current model of education?

Introduction

We live in a world where access to most resources (thanks to the internet) are just a click away. The only resource that seems to be struggling to reach to the majority of the world through this method is schooling or education. Is it possible for education to remove the walls around our schools? Can our current model of education be replaced by online learning?

Global

How has online learning affected our world?

Online learning has been out there since search giants like Google, Yahoo and Bing were set up. The only difference between now and then is that earlier it was difficult to prove that you had knowledge about a subject because there was very little proof of what you knew unless you could demonstrate it. Earlier all organizations mandated proper certification or documents of qualifications. It's only now that online learning offers proper certification. And in accordance to that online learning is slowly getting accepted in companies and organizations with the proof of the certificate(s) achieved by doing so. Online learning offers courses on everything – from counting on your fingers to university level Astrophysics.

As of 2013, the number of people in –

- Colleges – 183 million
- Secondary School – 568. 5 million
- Primary School – 713. 6 million

- Total number of students – 1. 436 billion (20. 5% of the total population in 2013)

The laws that govern population growth entail that these numbers would have grown in the past 4 years and would be approximately 1. 501 billion people (20. 5% of 7. 461 billion {total population}). According to EdSurge the number of learners on the ' big 3' online learning sites (edX, Coursera and Udacity) were a stunning 24 million.

United States of America

Several universities like Harvard even encourage their students to view video lectures so they can use the time for the lecture for doing something else and when they are free they can simply view the lecture. According to Udacity CEO, Sebastian Thrun, " some 4 million registered users worldwide, and about 60, 000 working on nanodegrees at anyone one time". In several schools in USA, the teachers use Khan Academy to aid/conduct their daily classes. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has put almost all of its courses online on MIT OpenCourseWare for all student regardless of their nationality, or the college/university they attend. This really helps students a lot since most of the material for math and science is almost the same as their universities/schools/colleges.

India

In countries like India where students are pushed to their mental and physical limits to achieve grades that yield are a 100 percent average or the equivalent, these certificates show another stairway to success to these students. Students now turn to websites like edX, Coursera, Udacity and Khan Academy to learn whatever they need to or in several cases want to.

This also allows the students to excel in their studies, and get better career opportunities in their future, as online learning shows an effort to learn beyond what is expected of a student. The Rajasthan state government is going to add Khan Academy lessons as part of their day to day school curriculum to provide their students with a platform with universally accepted teaching-learning models and techniques. But due to other problems like poverty and availability of electricity (which I will address later) it is difficult to switch over to online education.

China

In China the number of universities and colleges offering online learning platforms has skyrocketed in the past years. 30 out 110 of China's well-known universities have an online learning platform. China's ministry of education has been encouraging a lot of students to take online courses, however no university is allowed to give out degrees.

Another advantage to online learning is that you can view videos/lectures as many times as you need to. You can ask for help on forums on many online learning sites. Online learning also offers a lot of different perspective and immense exposure. Google was one of the first multi-national organisations to employ people not based on their qualifications or proof of knowledge/learning rather based on their skills and experience.

There is an option for the learner to avail for the ' Honour Code Certificate' but courses offering these certificates are extremely few and when a learner presents an honour code certificate as part of their CV or résumé, they are looked at with suspicion as the terms of the honour code are literally –

honouring your word. The reason honour code certificates and statements of achievement (based on the honour code) were stopped is because of misuse of the fact that there was no way to verify (branching out to Verified Certificates) that the person doing the course is the person whose name is on the certificate. On the other hand, verified certificates use a government issued ID to function and the name on the certificate has to match the one on the ID. This reduces chances of someone else doing your work for you. A problem with certification for online learning and online courses is that almost all the verified certificates on the most online learning platforms are now paid and these prices are very high. A lot of the paid/verified certificates on edX are for $50 and quite a few of them are for a hundred dollars. As a matter of fact, Udacity has a minute number of free courses and all other courses on Udacity are paid. This makes it difficult for a learner to get these certificates because of the cost of these certificates. This reduces the number of learners completing the course, contary to what is said by edX when a user enrols into a course – " It's a proven motivator to complete the course". These prices can create a barbed-wire around the school we are trying to render wall-less.

Another fact worth considering is, that in a lot of countries schooling/college is expensive and using free, online resources can help you save all that money.

For the world as one, I think the developed countries (like the United States) should start by using online education to enhance and ultimately replace their current models of education. By doing so, they would set an example and would encourage other countries to be like them.

National

Is replacing the current model of education with online learning feasible in my country?

According to the Indian Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment 27. 5% of India's population is below the poverty line, which is roughly 367. 48 million people (Population of India â†' 1, 336, 286, 256 * 27. 5/100 = 367478720). I believe, asking students/people who are underprivileged to learn using online resources, is inappropriate because having an internet connection is expensive and without one online learning is impossible. So it's almost like saying the water is free but the way to get to the water is paid (and expensive). So I do not think it is feasible to replace my country's current model of education with online learning.

Local

Is replacing the current model of education with online learning feasible for the students in my school/community?

According to a survey I conducted among my friends on my social networking circles (Link to responses available in the bibliography below) â†'

- 98. 3% of the people use the internet for learning something, studying and/or work.

- Most people use the internet for 5-8 hours a day.

- 22. 4% of the people use google and/or other search engines to learn what they want to.

- 5. 1% also use Khan Academy and use search engines.

- 1. 7% use Khan Academy and similar websites for studying.

- 6. 9% do the points mentioned above and also use edX, Coursera and similar platforms for studying.

- 3. 4% use Khan Academy and edX/Coursera and other platforms for studying.

- 11. 9% use the internet for college/university work and use all of uses mentioned above.

- 49. 2% use all/some of the tools mentioned above and also work.

Keeping the above points in mind I believe that my friends' circle can depend on the internet for schooling/education or can use the internet to enhance this essential process.

Personal

As an individual I believe I can switch over to the Internet for my education as I have no problems with Internet access, and the colleges/universities I am considering for my further education accept and even encourage online learning and certification, which again is not a problem with me. I find that I can fit into that group of people who can and should turn to online learning. I find that using E-Books and E-Lectures is more convenient and environmentally friendly (using E-Books rather than books). I can also get my hands on to material that sometimes teachers in class might not be able to cover. I think that replacing the current model of education with online education is possible for me, although I might require a teacher to guide me at times.

Personal Response

My research and essay were partly inspired by Salman Khan's (educationist) Ted Talk (in 2011) and I had turned to online resources for learning. Salman

Khan tells us how the traditional academic model is not cut out for the extremes of the Bell Curve – the students who find a topic/subject easy, and the ones who don't, but the system is rather suited for the average student. He says that, just like in Music or Martial Arts, you only move onto a further skill once you've mastered the basic. But as all of us know, most of our schools cannot compensate for the students who lag behind in a subject/concept and the class simply has to move on. He uses the cheese-block analogy and demonstrates to us how minor gaps in our knowledge can make the cookie crumble (the cheese in this case!). So I see myself working on Khan academy to do the best I can and learn all I can because according to ' Sal' Khan – " You only need to know one thing – You can learn anything". This will help me and can also inspire other people to be like me.

Possible Future Scenarios

The world needs to realise that traditional schools and curricula will not be able to cope with our rapidly changing world. Getting the world to accept online resources as instead of/to enhance our education, we need a little amount struggle to overcome the natural resistance to change that we have, monetary funding and support from governments of the world (in terms of providing cheap internet access and pushing learners to use online resources). After taking these steps the world would slowly but surely be a better place.

1. The world can simply ignore the fact that online education holds the key to our future and would not embrace online learning, which would cause problems several other problems (like availability of space for schools, teachers and staff required to run the school and availability

of books etc). It would also cause a rise in illiteracy and poverty (since it would restrict learning and schooling to schools and colleges only). Taking into account my research, I think that this scenario is not very likely to occur.

2. The world can realise this fact now and can help our future generations to focus on keeping up high in the sky rather than getting out of problems like illiteracy and poverty. Considering what I learnt through the course of my research, this scenario is very likely to occur.

3. The world can move toward Scenario 2 but might not be able to make enough progress due to problems like poverty, illiteracy and lack of access to the internet. This would cause these problems to grow further. This scenario is highly likely to occur.

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