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What makes online learning a success: profiling successful online learners?

With the new advances in Web Technologies, greater access to internet in the educational institutions, many universities all over the globe are offering courses and degree programmes online. There are universities which find it easier to run the show by being online and are delivering also. There have been good researches on effectiveness of learning thru distance education mode and traditional mode, it invites debate on what happens in the case of online learning. What makes it a successful online learning?

The concept of 'Just-in-Time' Learning fuels this, that whether we do require certain skills or strategies to make it a successful online learning. Can we learn effectively thru online medium by being anywhere and at anytime? Certainly there are certain pre-requisite things to be available, in terms of necessary hardware, software and human support, but is it all that we need? Can there be other factors in terms of skills and strategies, which if a online learner possess and adopts, may make him better than others? Can such strategies and skills be introduced to the learners to promote better success?

This paper discusses such skills which an online or a distance learning student may possess, different cognitive/meta-cognitive learning strategies, and sources of motivation in relation to online computer programmes offered by Indira Gandhi National Open University. These programmes are Bachelor's of Information Technology and Advanced Diploma in Information Technology. The purpose of this paper is to profile successful online learners studying above said programmes. Specifically, this paper will provide a comprehensive look at the various skills, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, motivational factors, and the stages of concern of online learners for accepting this new paradigm of learning. The finding of the study shall help us understand the "Learning Anywhere Anytime for Anyone" philosophy that is the base of many online degree programs in the Indian context because India is on a continuous road to online learning.