

# Digital University

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*“What we learn with Pleasure, we never forget”*

*-Alfred Mercier*

## **The Announcement:**

It's a changing time. The technological changes, human requirements, spatial distribution of populations and evolving approaches to life all are witnessing modifications. In every field of human aspirations like health, sanitation, infrastructures, finances, urban and rural development and Communications etc new thoughts mingled with newer available technologies have come into place. There has been a feeling that divergent approaches to issues have become essentially essential. In this context, the Education Sector is one where new ideas and possibilities have been worked. The National Education policy, 2020 aimed at balancing between the school certification process and market requirements and it too offered the students the option to orient their school and college studies. The policy envisaged a student oriented class structure with more creativity and context driven scenario while studying the school curriculum. Taking the reform to another level, in this year budget 2022, Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the

establishment of a Central Digital University for the vast aspirational student community of India. The major aim of such University would be to provide access to students all over the country for world class quality universal education. This also includes a personalised learning experience at their doorsteps. This institution desires to promote Online Learning in different Indian Languages amid the COVID-19 Pandemic situation. This new set up will be collaboration with best Public Universities and Institutions in the Country. Alongwith this, to address the 'Learning Loss' due to closure of schools in the last two academic years, the Government plans to expand the One class One TV Channel initiative under the PM e-Vidya scheme. Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan said the proposed Digital University and the expanded TV education programme will lead to “a modern, pioneering and practical blueprint for steering India in the Amrit Kaal”.

## **Structure:**

The proposed Digital University will be set up on a “hub” and “spoke” mode. The hub and spoke model visualises that the distribution of knowledge would be centralised. The origin of contents will come from a common source called

hubs like as it is done at present in 'Indira Gandhi National Open University' (IGNOU). Then the contents will be shared to other locations around the nation called spokes. Students situated at their own places will be able to access the learning though digital mode. The Hubs and spokes shall have direct and continuous interactions through Online and also Offline Communication channels to enable the e-learning process a success. Uniformity in curriculum due to a common source will be an important feature of this scheme. It will also impart teachings in Regional Languages and ICT (Information, Communication & Technology) mode. The Digital University is to be set up as per Indian Society for Technical Education, ISTE standards with examination of comparative perspectives adopted at various educational systems.

India has two digital universities already. The first such University was set up in Kerala by upgrading the Indian Institute of Information Technology, IIITM-K. The second similar University was set up in Jodhpur. The announcement of the Digital University (DU) by the Government assumes importance as it formalises the matter and elicits lot of hopes among education watchers.

#### **Why:**

The concept of Digital University has arisen keeping in view the rapid advancements in the world over technologically. Already educational institutions around globe are mostly functioning in online mode for more than two years due to the Pandemic situations. The physical campuses of the schools and colleges have become learning imparting centres through digital transmission of knowledge. Virtual classes, Webinars, e-materials, e-examinations,

e-evaluations and e-convocations are happening too. Students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders have accepted and engaged themselves through this design. A digital University is a further extension to such arrangements. It is a setup towards bringing all the Universities under one roof for the benefit of students. Students can know the details about the contents, structure and design by virtual modes and take a comparative decision. In offline mode, sometimes it is difficult to visit campuses of all universities and know the course details. Lower and middle class students find it difficult not only to get admissions to universities located far away, but also to face challenges to provide the tuition fees, hostel expenditures and travelling costs too.

#### **Advantages of a Digital University:**

A Digital University will provide the following benefits to them—

1. It will save time, money and energy spent on searching for a standard University. At times, large scale migration of students occurs in search of learning centres which leads to dislocation to younger students and loss of access to local support system. A digital environment will protect the root of the students.
2. It would help in clearing doubts about a course and its applications to larger issues of life. A student who does not want to go out of his city or village can get an education which justifies his or her local needs.
3. It is meant to minimise Expenditures and make learning cost effective. Unnecessary burden of choosing expensive courses would be lifted.
4. It will help in getting Abundance of Choices. A student is sure to get multiple set of

options at his own search. He need not be misguided by anyone.

5. This will create Personalised learning and retention is likely to be more. A person going for digital world knows his own space and surrounding.

#### **Disadvantages of a Digital University:**

1. It lacks social interactions. The continuous exposure to digital dimensions will give less time to be available to social needs. The anonymity of the digital world may interfere with the requirements of the social world.

2. Internet division may create problems. Though digital revolution has already happened, still there are pockets where regularity of internet connection is a matter of concern.

3. Self motivation and time management cannot be sure because the ability of every individual in receiving Online Learning is not same.

4. Assessment processes may be manipulated because the monitoring at home levels cannot be guaranteed by digital teachers. A mechanism has to be developed.

5. More of theoretical knowledge will create a divide for the students. The students with physical mode will have better understanding to practical aspects of sharing certain knowledge.

#### **Process of Admissions in a Digital University:**

1. Simple Browsing about Courses Online from the Desktop/TV sitting at Home

2. Selecting the Available Options
3. Online Fees and Documentation
4. Comfort Learning
5. Reduction in physical projects
6. Supplementation by physically available literature
7. No class divide or Rural Urban division
8. Direct Exposure to Select Faulty

#### **Conclusion:**

Over the years funding Education, Courses, Streams and Curriculum have more and more become costly matters. A normal student is confused and often at a loss to understand the applicability of numerous degrees and diplomas. Even a student who wants to just get a degree out of pure interest finds it difficult to provide the fees for a particular course. The Digital set up will help knowledge seekers to exercise their educational rights in an effective way. It will bridge the knowledge divide that often create social chasm. The Pandemic has resulted into vulnerability of some sections of population who now face challenges to education, particularly higher studies. In this condition, a digital university would definitely help them bridge the education divide.

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