

## **Major Challenges in online Higher Educational Environment:**

Considering the present scenario of higher education, the boundaries of the classrooms are now extending. With the onset of the online education, the restrictions of studying only the classroom material and to enroll only in a specific course is out of date. With the help of Open Educational Resources and MOOCs the student enrolled in its home state university can also be a part of the other course running online by a world class university, for multiple purposes or based on its interest in the specific skills set. But due to this, the classroom size has grown beyond the horizons, which poses a number of challenges for the instructors to handle the class. The major challenges posed by this changing scenario of higher education are:

### **1. Course Completion Rates:**

It is difficult to maintain the interest of the students in long-term courses resulting in mass enrollments but low retention rates. The low motivation level of the students, no direct interaction between the instructor and the student, low problem solving rates on the discussion forums, lack of peers support, assessments etc. form a number of factors which distract the interest of the students. Due to this they go out of track and hence the low retention rates.

### **2. Diversification of the Learners (Lack of Standards):**

Due to the enrollment of cross-continental students in a class, there is an increase in the variety of students in a class. The different students have their different native languages, different learning rates, grasping powers, different age groups students etc. The underlying challenge is to deliver the lecture as well as designing of the reading material which is understood by all, a learning course pace that is compatible to all. The main motive here is to work in the direction which can minimize the existing differences amongst the students of the same class.

### **3. Quality Concern:**

With the emergence of the online-education and e-learning, there are multiple on-line courses based on same subjects running at one time in different universities which are further taught by different instructors. However, their aspects and assessment levels followed are different. Every other instructor uses its own methods to teach and assess. Which further leads to different competence levels of the students studying the same course, but from different universities. As a result there is a great need of standardization of the education that is being poured up to the students. The procedure and assessment levels must be standardized and transparent enough such that the competence level and credits that the students earn after the course completion is same all over and must go hand-in-hand with the rising demand of the changing technologies. [Reference: Forbes]

### **4. Identity Crisis:**

Growing number of enrollments and multiple providers of educational courses, poses a major challenge of maintaining the identity of the students who are being enrolled in their respective courses. The other part which needs attention is to keep a track of whether the student who has been earlier registered is the same who is attending the lectures, taking part in discussion forums, taking the assessments and finally earning the credits or badges? The student verification is one of the major challenges which needs an instant focus for its resolution.

### **5. Credentials: Traditional Certificates, Degrees Vs Badges:**

The traditional universities focus on the degrees and diplomas where as the changed digital ecosystem has launched the new concept of Badge-based certified programs. A major debate regarding the 2 different credit earning representatives is ongoing as the traditional universities are nowhere authorizing the skill-set based badges whereas due to the changing technological environment and digitization of higher education, the students are more tilted towards skill based education. As the online skill based education are badge based certification programs, the need for authorization and

acceptance of the badge based system or verified online certificates or any other alternative credential system needs to be thought of.