Distance Education in Indian Music : feasibility and prospects

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India is now fully on with the latest advancements in Information Technology. So, it is time that the music-academicians think of making the music education available in Distance learning mode. Our music is so rich in content and approach that availability of Indian Music through DE[1] is expected to receive global welcome. This will also help in fostering this great art and retaining its values intact.

One is to one is the best ratio for teaching and learning Indian Music. Talking of classical music, individualistic teaching has been the key-word for effective teaching that has been proved and practiced for thousands of years. During the last four decades we saw a boost in institutionalized music teaching. The initial intention to introduce such a teaching-mode was to boost the clientele in the society so that classical music may sustain with glory. Ultimately, the classroom teaching could assume an important role in music teaching. This proved to be good as a hobby class but this teaching-learning system failed to prove to be compatible when someone asks for a more individualistic outcome like formation of a promising musician.

This mode of teaching can reach a wider student audience and can meet the needs of students who are unable to attend in-campus classes. This mode can involve outside teachers who would otherwise be unavailable. This can link students from different social, cultural, economic, and experiential backgrounds

Distance learning mode may be a solution to cater individual demands of students. Looking at the Distance Education against the classroom teaching we can see that DE is more student-friendly. The CRT [2] is time-bound but the future teaching-learning through DE mode may see a more self-paced, self-directed learning which can take place in a wide variety of individualized but interactive settings.

The shift in educational paradigm will focus on the learning process and the learner, rather than the traditional teacher-centered course. In a learner-centered environment, the traditional role of the teacher or faculty member will change significantly. Introduction of this technology promises a change in the way the education is designed and delivered to off-campus individuals and groups. There may be mix instructional system where the students are free to also join classes in campus.[3] In institutionalized music teaching, faculty was the primary source of knowledge and expertise, and the practical classes and lectures were the principal instructional methodologies to transfer knowledge to students. Faculty members

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[1] DE: Distance Education

[2] CRT : class room teaching

[3] In this case, the Study Centers have to be established at different geographical locations so that the students may get assistance with not too long travels. The DE offering institutions may consider of contacting the touring musicians for this job. There may be a list of musician-teachers those may be approached for this job. This may be attractive to both the musicians and the institute as the musicians will have some job during their free days and the institute will be able to save on the travel expenses of their teachers.

directed learning through processes of independent discovery synthesis and application of knowledge within a discipline.

In the new mode the emerging role of faculty would be to retain the traditional processes to direct the learning experience, and the new technologies will provide learning resources with enhanced instruction materials and friendlier learning process. To appropriately address the specific needs for the Indian music transfer there has to be through brainstorming before arriving at a specific teaching-learning design style. A major part of the CRT and experiential learning are expected to be supplemented by multimedia modules and technological resources. To make the education more student-friendly and, easily and widely accessible we can contemplate of making full use of the available technology. This can also help to achieve standardization of course numbering and transfer procedures, improve student advisement and course selection, provide competency-based curricula tied to student achievement regardless of "seat time," and offer technology-enhanced instruction across the curriculum in convenient locations through access to appropriately designed Intranet, Internet, UGC established INFLIBNET, CD-ROMs, electronic texts, and multimedia learning modules. Some institution may come up and position itself to work in close partnership with progressive local institutions to maintain national leadership in designing, testing, delivering, and enhancing education through new and advanced technologies.

The new educational paradigm may focus on the learning process and the learner rather than the traditional teacher-centered lecture course. In a learner-centered environment, the traditional role of the teacher or faculty member will change significantly. This new education technology looks ahead for a change in the way education is designed and delivered to off-campus individuals and groups. An emerging role of faculty retains traditional processes to direct the learning experience, but provides new technologies and learning resources to enhance instruction. The learning through practical music classes may be supplemented by multimedia modules and technological resources. Faculty will assume new roles as designers and developers, facilitators, mentors and coaches for learning. To assume these roles, faculty must be trained to utilize the new technologies, to master their applications, and to become more involved in defining and assessing the outcomes resulting from new and changing educational experiences.

Responsibilities of the learners and faculty

In the new system the learners must be prepared to assume greater responsibility for acquiring skills and basic knowledge, understanding, and the means and processes for acquiring and interpreting new information. The learner must acquire knowledge, internalize it, integrate it, and test its implications in real-life environments. Students will have to acquire technical literacy to access information networks and global highways, libraries/learning centers, off-campus centers, etc. With faculty guidance, the learner must increasingly become self-directed, acquiring knowledge and skills through interactive technology-based instruction, videotaped courses, CD ROMs, self-paced learning modules, and interactive distance education Some parts may be done through the availability of traditional mode of teaching and learning where it is unavoidable. This part may be kept to required minimum and can be taken up by the visiting faculties or specially assigned teachers in the established study centers in different geographical locations.

At the institutional level when education was once predominantly classroom-based and faculty directed, the future will see more self-paced, self-directed learning which can take

place in a wide variety of individualized but interactive settings, including more collaborative student group learning environments.

The State support in initiating the program

It will also be a challenge for the State to harness and merge the enormous capabilities of computers, telephones, and telecommunications technologies for the education. Shifting of the educational paradigm through technology will include the following basic infrastructure.

1. Strategic investments has to be made in educational technologies, networks, and technology-enhanced facilities to support new modes and methods of teaching and learning for both on-campus and off-campus learning environments. A significant portion of the delivery of education will be technology-based and available on demand. Learning cannot be bound by place, space, or time.

2. Investing in the development and acquisition of curriculum, course design, and multimedia software. The goal may be to make available world-class education with superior instruction that enhances learning for all students.

3. Providing opportunities for faculty and student development to utilize and integrate technologies in the design of instruction. Technology will be an added tool for communicating and obtaining information and an important part of every student's learning experience.

4. Working as partners with public education to provide a seamless educational system -- promoting lifelong learning and a better quality of life. Technology can make education more student-friendly, help achieve standardization of course numbering and transfer procedures, improve student advisement and course selection, provide competency-based curricula tied to student achievement regardless of "seat time," and offer technology-enhanced instruction across the curriculum in convenient locations through access to Internet, INFLIBNET, CD-ROMs, electronic texts, and multimedia learning modules.

There have already been quite a few experiments on Distance Education in Music. Matti Ruippo, Department of Music Education, Sibelius Academy worked on a project *Net Conferencing in Music Distance Education:* and from the paper we can have an idea about the different perspectives involved on implementation of this alternative teaching-learning mode in music. The three basic media are telephone, E-mail, Internet and the paper has put special emphasis on Net Conference. Our experts may throw light on different technical implications of the available Internet related facilities as available in the country.

The three important points of consideration at the initial planning level of designing may rest on the followings:

1. Determine need
2. Analyze audience
3. Establish goals

The answers to some of the common questions may be addressed appropriately

The distance education is perceived as increasingly effective method of instruction, educational researchers have examined the purposes and situations for which distance education is best suited.[i] Frequently asked questions cluster in five areas:

1. Is technology-assisted, distant teaching as effective as traditional face-to-face teaching?

2. What factors determine the most effective mix of technology in a given distant teaching situation?

3. What are the characteristics of effective distant students and teachers?

4. How important is teacher-student and student-student interaction in the distance education process and in what form(s) can this interaction most effectively take place?

5. What cost factors should be considered when planning or implementing distance education programs and how are those costs offset by benefits to the learner?

Last but not the least

Distance Mode of Music Teaching is an effective tool to reach wider student community. The intricacy and subtlety factors of our music tend to compel us to doubt the productiveness of the proposition. The musician community always reacted that the *guru-shishya* system of music education is the only teaching-learning style applicable to our music. The institutionalized teaching has never been attributed from any corner as a suitable Indian music teaching mode. Fortunately, some institutions like, *Sangeet Research Academy, Calcutta; Dhrupad Kendra, Bhopal*; etc. have proved that music teaching through institutions can also yield to substantial results. So, distance education in music should also come up with impressive outputs provided all relevant points are duly taken care of before actually going for it. The curricula design is also an important area where there is a serious demand for serious thoughts. Even the present institutionalized music teaching is gravely lagging in this area. Some of the basic areas of thoughts may be:

1. Clear and elaborate statement of the objective/s of each teaching program.

2. To focus the curricula only on the stated objective/s.

3. To appropriately address the process of knowledge

4. Monitoring system of the output for due corrections in the teaching-learning system.

So, with appropriate brainstorming and efforts in this direction and ultimately with the availability of Indian Music through Distance Education we may look forward to a much larger musician' community in closer association with our music. Sharing the knowledge of our great music that has been verified by scientific experiments as closer to the Nature[4] is

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[4] Brendt, Joachin Earnst: *Nada Brahma: The World is Sound: Destiny Books, Rochester*: 79:1987

expected to substantially reduce some of the global problems where nature-adverse mental state is responsible.

Reference:
Utah System of Higher Education *<http://www.utahsbr.edu/tech/plan.htm>*
http://www.pedanet.jyu.fi/cato/calive/musdista.html
Report of Matti Ruippo's (Department of Music Education, Sibelius Academy) project
http://www.pedanet.jyu.fi/cato/calive/musdista.html
Distance Education at a Glance (University of Idaho) http://www.uidaho.edu/evo/dist10.html
Instructional Development for Distance Education: Idaho University http://www.uidaho.edu/evo/dist3.html

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