

# How educational brands can remain relevant to the new world of work

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Distance education - popularly known as correspondence education in the 1980s - was commonly understood as an individual learning from home using printed study materials. Perhaps a bland and uninspiring learning journey, however many a person pursued this form of education due to limited opportunity to higher education, lack of funds for post-school education and because they needed to work whilst advancing their education. Fast forward - 2020; the distance education model of learning has been transformed to promise a very rich and rewarding learning experience - the two are literally incomparable.



This transformation was precipitated by emerging educational pedagogies, more reliable and affordable technology and the opening of the global education market. The most influential element though for this transformation is perhaps a simpler one to understand- the increasingly discerning student who seeks individualised service and support, who demands freedom of choice, who desires flexibility in learning and who expects a competitive and globally relevant learning experience.

The increasingly discerning student acknowledges that learning is a lifelong process and that now, more than ever, education is inextricably linked to one's career progress, especially so in the Knowledge Economy.

As the global demand for education rises and the pressure to reduce the cost of education increases, educational brands are forced to re-evaluate what it means to remain relevant in an increasingly competitive sector. Distance education has risen from a peripheral market position to pole position in a matter of a few years and it is hardly surprising to see many more students studying at their own convenience, in their own space.

## Why?

Successful distance education institutions invest significantly in researching and designing learning experiences which facilitate success and exposure to the new world of work. They undertake meaningful employer and student engagement to ensure this input drives educational design.

Such institutions foster healthy partnerships with academic leaders, employers and best of breed technology leaders. These are agile learning organisations who invest their resources for impact. They create live ecosystems to promote advanced academic quality through collaboration, creativity, reflection and innovation in education. The outcomes of such initiatives manifest in the form of a graduate that is better prepared for the 21st century.

## **What is the experience like?**

A person studying a well-designed distance education programme enjoys flexibility in learning, has access to a range of rich online and offline learning resources, has access to a diverse pool of academics, enjoys personal student support service, has access to a range of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities, access to powerful and cognitive adaptive learning management systems as well as personal mentorship for development.

Students develop through physical and virtual learning communities. Such learning communities are diverse (culture age, nationality, background) and students bring rich and unique experiences to a common space in an environment which promotes collaboration. The experience is often referred to as “the student’s journey” and progressive distance learning institutions spend considerable time and resources in ensuring that the “journey” is pleasurable and leads to the development of a holistic graduate – one that is able to remain agile and employable in the ever-changing labour market.

## **Impact**

Graduates of high-quality distance education programmes develop a significant level of self-autonomy and a strong internal locus of control. They quickly develop the ability to manage competing priorities, possess good time management skills and are able to work in fluid and dynamic contexts. These attributes developed beyond the conventional knowledge areas provide a graduate with critical soft and cognitive skills required in the ever-changing world of work.

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