

digital LEARNING
AWARDS

Digital Learning India Award for the ICT Enabled University of the Year

Last Date of Submission: 15th July 2009

Note: Please fill all the fields and email at awards@eindia.net.in

Nominated By: Sikkim Manipal University Directorate of Distance education (Implementer)

Implementer

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Please Answer the following questions:

(1) Describe the nominated programme/project description. Whom does it serve? What needs and challenges does it address? (max. 500 words)

EduNxt initiative launched by Sikkim Manipal University's Directorate of Distance Education (henceforth referred to as SMU – DDE) is the nominated programme. SMU – DDE has 2.25 lac students on its rolls across 310 towns of India, who are attending 650 authorised learning centers pan India.

EduNxt is a new technology – infused learning system that has transformed distributed learning across India. EduNxt functions on the principle of **3As + 4Cs**. The 3 As of Affordability, Accessibility and Appropriateness are the guideline to scaling up EduNxt across distributed learning. Meanwhile, the 4Cs of Content, Collaboration, Communication and Computing are the basis of developing EduNxt into a means of disseminating educating among the not-so-privileged or the infrastructure – challenged.

The EduNxt platform is an easy to use delivery system. It enables a collaborative and interactive environment for learning and includes small group mentoring, virtual classrooms, simulation, self-study content, recorded presentations and shared browsing.

Link for EduNxt: <http://edunxt.smude.edu.in>

Demo of EduNxt: <http://www.smude.edu.in/edunxt/demo.html>

EduNxt was launched by **SMU-DDE on 12TH May, 2009 by Mr. Steve Ballmer, CEO Microsoft Corp. USA and Mr. Anand Sudarshan, CEO Manipal Education, to –**

- 1) Take the fruits of online learning to all the Distance Education students of the SMU-DDE
- 2) Impart quality education through cutting edge technology
- 3) Develop a sense of togetherness among the members and different stakeholders of the huge SMU community within the platform

EduNxt is a pioneering effort in the field of Distance Education (henceforth referred to as DE). The primary objective behind it is to provide Sikkim Manipal University (henceforth referred to as SMU)'s DE students with a plethora of resources not possible in the existing physical mode so they **learn through collaboration.**

SMU has armed its DE students with industry knowledge and skills necessary to be industry-ready. EduNxt attempts to provide a powerful interactive learning experience to our students, improving

their quality of learning leading to better employability. Unlike conventional programs that use technology to disperse content, EduNxt focuses on personalised learning and mentoring at a very large scale.

Another important objective behind the development of EduNxt is to open a channel of communication between the **2.55 lac students on the rolls of SMU-DDE and our 63 core** faculty and **6500 counsellors** in order to utilise the varied expertise and vast experience of this community. To that end, the EduNxt platform is also being used to train, certify and orient these 6500 counsellors to technology based education and its benefits.

The long term goal of EduNxt is to enable distance education programs to have the same degree of acceptance as conventional programs both in the minds of prospective employers and other educational organizations.

The key challenges addressed are first delivering quality interactive learning across a very large number of students - there are currently **over 55,000 students** who make use of the EduNxt environment. Second is to make this environment accessible from **anywhere and at anytime** across the Internet. Third is to provide affordable access to computing and Internet connectivity to our students.

2) How is the programme/project innovative? (max. 500 words)

There are several existing initiatives to use the internet as a part of distance learning environments. EduNxt is unique in the following manner.

1. It takes a holistic approach to providing education - addressing all aspects from pedagogic modeling, to rich content, to interactive technology, to faculty training to providing access to computing devices and internet connectivity. It is truly an end-to-end approach.
2. EduNxt has a unique and powerful Pedagogic model. Instead of considering technology as an enabler to conventional teaching, a lot of research has gone into developing a teaching model that makes active use of technology. Interaction semantics using technology are actively modeled as part of the pedagogic process and a mechanism of evaluating the effectiveness of the pedagogic approach is used to fine tune it.
3. It creates an environment that **blends quality content with interactivity with teachers** and mentors at a very large scale

4. It creates an environment where a very large number of learners and teachers across the country can interact with one another and learn in a collaborative manner
5. It creates an ecosystem where faculty at the University and counsellors at study centers can interact with one another, share teaching material and improve the overall quality of learning
6. It provides rich content that is easy to access
7. It caters to both a connected and offline mode of learning via the Internet
8. Imparting quality education and overall upliftment of courseware delivery standards influenced the decision to choose EduNxt as a supporting tool along with the conventional mode (Self learning material, VSAT sessions and face-to-face interactions at authorized learning centres).

3) What are the achievements of the programme/project? (max. 500 words)

The EduNxt environment is used today by over 55,000 students and will be made available to over 130,000 students from August 2009.

The feedback from students and teachers has been very positive and they feel it is a great learning and teaching tool. Usage of the EduNxt environment has increased continually to a daily average of over **2000 unique users currently**.

The total cost of ownership of the EduNxt environment is very low so it's a sustainable model which can continue to help less privileged students **achieve scholastic parity** with others.

It has succeeded in bringing together students and faculty members so there is more interaction and the learning process is continuous and evolving.

Student testimonials –

- *“To be very honest I am in IT Industry from the last 13 years at Nielsen and busy with Web Project Development. The concept MANIPAL have provided for students is just awesome. You don't believe till last week we all students and few of our Nielsen colleagues who are pursuing MBA from your institute was not aware of this valuable e-resource and suddenly we discovered this fantastic concept and we are still trying to explore and consuming its resources. Only I can say Manipal is rocking and far ahead in comparison from any other institute”*

- “Great stuff...I used to look for online MBA subject related stuffs while sitting idle at office, but I never come across such useful and beautiful site which takes care of the complete course as well as related topics. Now it is very convenient for me to prepare for my examination anytime anywhere.”

From statistics point of view: **495,322** visits during the period. The average number of new visits has been growing at **36.5%**. The average time spend on the site is **12.35** min. The site has been regularly accessed from **over 90 cities across India and 69 countries** world wide.

(Source: *Google Analytics for the period 1st Jan 2009 to 15 July 2009*)

The soft skills training along with the placement and internship assistance through EduNxt will help in the overall upliftment of the DE students through better employment opportunities.

4) How can the programme serve as a model that can be replicated or adapted by other educational institutes? (max. 500 words)

The technology environment, the process of setting up such a large scale infrastructure and the pedagogic techniques being developed as part of EduNxt are extremely useful to other institutions in India.

The EduNxt delivery system is a boon to India where a large number of students do not have access to a conventional campus programme (lack of quality higher education) for reasons of infrastructure or finances or availability or quality faculty. To this end, EduNxt enables DE students to have access to varied **learning resources, assistance from designated faculty mentors and collaboration on study and projects with fellow students.**

With increasing reach of affordable technology into remote parts of the country, there exists a great opportunity for every educational institution to exploit the use of technology to deliver quality education to the students who otherwise may not be able access such facilities.

EduNxt can be eminently adapted for any university or educational institution in the country to serve and assist their students to learn better. EduNxt is also unique in **its learner centred** methodology and content design. Such a technology recognises the changing learning needs and learning modes of the new generation of students who are “Digital Natives”. The EduNxt model also envisions building appropriate skills in the “Digital Immigrant generation” which has long been used to only the traditional modes of teaching.

EduNxt uses open source platform and open libraries which will be helpful in replicating the same in other institutions. EduNxt has been envisioned to remove the barriers and help collaborate with resources, content across university **to provide affordable, accessible and apt education to all.**

5) Please furnish any other project related useful information about the nominated programme /project that you have not been able to provide in your earlier responses.

The road ahead for development of edunxt:

- EduNxt will showcase academic events in the 650 learning centres throughout the country.
- EduNxt will be platform for improving the employability of students in terms of enhancing their **soft skills and language skills.**
- It will bring online, industry experts and eminent academicians to interact with aspiring students