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Showing Talented Educators The Money

Students and parents are paying directly to skilled and effective educators via internet marketplaces, says Ashish Sirohi

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Picture by Sathesh Nair

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Nobody can deny that educators have knowledge. But can they communicate it to students via books, study guides, online courses, video lectures or tutoring sessions. Oh, did I forget classrooms? The rare, talented and highly motivated classroom teachers with their dynamic lectures, teaching talent and passion have traditionally not earned any recognition from schools or colleges; they are considered equal to the terrible teacher teaching the same subject in the class next door with little interest in whether the students are following what he or she says. That, of course, is the education system. And in this system salaries of teachers are embarrassingly low and not merit-based, which would be one of the many reasons towards explaining the teacher who is as disinterested as many of his students! But this is not about

making a list of the many things wrong with the education system.

This is about the internet and how it is threatening the very foundations and traditions of the education system by making teachers with talent get benefits - in the same mundane way that excellent performers in normal jobs get appreciated - through financial rewards.

I am being very serious here about internet and educators! I have been in education and teaching all my life. Even when I have worked for companies it is those that employed teachers, tutors, content-writers et. al. Now I work for an internet company because I am with the teachers and so is the internet. Specifically it is the internet marketplace model that is leading the path towards rewarding top talent in education.

An educator's talent might be at making excellent video lectures for a topic, making great study material or being an outstanding private tutor. Educators can skip the companies who would market their product or service and go directly to marketplaces. An internet marketplace allows an individual educator to provide the product or service directly to the student and charge the price the educator wants.

Internet marketplace model is actually becoming more and more common. In fact most of the internet companies you see running big advertising are marketplace models: Flipkart, Snapdeal, OLX, Quikr, Olacabs, Zomato, TripAdvisor and the list goes on.

But let us look at education. Education marketplaces of various types have sprung up all over the world. Marketplaces cover online courses, video lectures, tutoring sessions and are moving to cover anything in education there is a demand for. In India you have WizIQ, Superprofs, Eduwizards and many others covering different education products and services. Who wins in these marketplaces? The provider with the best reviews. In a marketplace a person who buys a product or service guides others through reviews. Good reviews transform into actual money. In a marketplace you can have two video lectures on the exact same topic and one sells for more. You can have two tutors teaching the same subject and one charges more. And the ones charging more can do so because they have the reviews to back them.

On the internet there are no country barriers and the world is the marketplace. An Indian educator does not have to sell to just Indians. In fact, increasingly marketplace websites are multi-national and invite people from different countries to join. And the individual educator gets a chance to connect with students across the world. Like the Indian BPOs, they can use the currency conversion to their advantage. All this is not theory but is actually happening today. Students and parents are paying directly to skilled and effective educators via internet marketplaces and educators are crossing borders.

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Will teachers, content-writers, coaching center faculties and other educators leave their current job and run their own business on the internet marketplaces? Not today - it is the rare educator that can leave their normal job; the internet marketplace is supplementary income. Further, the marketplace seems to reward only top talent, so it is not a trend that lifts all boats. In fact, the mediocre educators will not prosper in the marketplace model.

The education marketplace trend is just starting and tomorrow (whenever that is) it could be that the internet becomes the main source of income for India's top education talent. But this will give legacy education companies and organizations a brand new reason to continue to keep salaries low and not feel embarrassed; the legacy employers can argue that if these educators are still working with us they probably are not good enough to make it in the education marketplace. So perhaps the education system founded on low and non-merit based pay will continue intact. Not only will it be shown that the education system cannot be defeated any internet-shinternet but the system will have won too by having a pipeline - the internet marketplace - to get rid of the ambitious and talented educators it never appreciated anyway!

The author is co-founder of Eduwizards.com

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