

# Never a better time

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI'S BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT ON SETTING UP LIVE VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS REINFORCES THE POTENTIAL FOR INDIA TO GRAB A SIZEABLE PIECE OF THE \$20-BILLION GLOBAL IT TRAINING PIE, WRITES **ROHIT AGARWAL**

**T**he Narendra Modi government's Rs 100-crore commitment towards establishing Live Virtual Classrooms and Massive Open Courses is a testament to the potential the concept holds. With the Prime Minister's call to "Make in India" resonating across the world, the LVC concept presents the country with the opportunity of inviting students from abroad to "study in India" via the online route.

Given how the LVC set-up is flexible and cost-effective for students and employees abroad, the abundant opportunities for Indian players who can impart training via this channel are available for the asking, just waiting to be seized. While some Indian companies have made a foray in the field, their participation is just the tip of the iceberg, with a lot more waiting to be explored.

As per the 2013 State of the Industry Report by The Association for Talent Development, companies in the USA spent \$164 billion on employee learning and development in 2012. Of this, IT training constituted \$6 billion. When the IT training and certification market globally stands at \$20 billion, the \$6 billion US chunk alone is a big pie that Indian IT train-



ing companies can eye.

Till a decade back, the LVC idea came across as a distant dream for IT training companies because of several bottlenecks, poor Internet connectivity being the biggest issue in delivering training online. However, over the past few years there has been a turnaround in web delivery services in India, with high-speed Internet gaining ground.

The emergence of these high-speed services have enabled hitch-free video conferencing, making Live Virtual Classrooms a reality for Indian IT training players who are looking to impart training overseas through the project. These firms can deliver sophisticated training online and cash in on the cost advantage that such a set-up offers to corporate clients abroad.

The Indian government recently approved a Digital India project, under which it plans to spend Rs 100,000 crore and, besides other things, introduce high-speed Internet avenues in rural parts of the country. It aims to complete this project by 2019, thereby providing a shot in the arm for players who are looking to operate in the LVC domain from remote areas.

The requirement for catering to students and corporate employees who want to upgrade their IT skills is minimal — there is just the need for a laptop or a desktop and robust Internet services. A 2MBPS line is sufficient to support video conferencing through which trainings can be delivered.

A Koenig Solutions employee successfully trained corporate employees in Silicon Valley from remote Nahan, a hilly destination in Himachal Pradesh. Sound broadband facilities made it possible for him to tutor his clients sitting abroad without any interruptions. If such a model is replicated elsewhere in the country with the availability of basic resources for such training, it will become a panacea for India's lingering problems of unemployment and people migrating to cities for want of opportunities in rural areas. Youngsters in particular come scurrying to cities in search of more lucrative pastures so as to earn enough to fulfill their personal and social responsibilities.

Tutoring students abroad, especially in the USA, through virtual classrooms is gaining currency in urban areas. Those who move to cities and deliver coaching from there will have greater opportunities in their small towns if Modi's vision on Digital India is realised. Live Virtual Classrooms can open new doors for people and create newer and innovative ways of becoming financially reliant. The successful model of the Bengaluru-based

TutorVista speaks volumes of the potential the LVC channel holds. The company provides online tutoring services by connecting instructors in India with school and college students, mostly in North America. Besides IT training, tutoring via the LVC mode is another area people in the country can look at.

Coming back to IT learning, the opportunities for companies and individual trainers are enormous as the \$20-billion global LVC market is still largely unexplored. For IT professionals, skill set upgradation is a continuous process to match the pace and requirements of the corporate IT world. When IT learning is an ongoing process, corporates spend a lot on honing the skills of employees.

For corporates in the USA and elsewhere, training their employees onshore is an expensive deal. Offshore training companies in India offer a cost advantage and allow employees to acquire training at a time convenient to them. Corporates shell out between \$2,000-5,000 for a week of training via LVC, which they find cost-effective because their employees are able to learn without deviating from their job responsibilities and the price is comfortable.

The IT curricula of Microsoft, SAP, Oracle, Adobe and Cisco, among others, are global, training on which can be provided from any part of the world. Providing technology training via the LVC mode has huge potential and India just needs to grab the opportunity to make the most of it.