

Aakash EduTV Sees Its Subscribers Base Soar During Pandemic Amid Widening Digital Divide

- *Active subscribers base of Aakash EduTV increased by 66%, and new subscribers by 44% since April, 2021.*
- *Its success points to the fact that educational TV channels can be a more viable option for remote learning in India where only about 24% of Indian households have any internet access at home (National Sample Survey's Report on Education 2017-2018), and only 8.5% of school students were able to access the internet for remote learning in the past year, according to a UNICEF's 2021 report.*

New Delhi, June 29, 2021: Education may have gone online during the pandemic. But not every student has access to it, thanks to the wide digital divide in India, where over two-thirds of the households do not have any access to the internet. Interestingly, what comes to the aid of the students now is the humble television seeing the soaring subscribers base of Aakash EduTV, an education TV available on Airtel DTH, dedicated to coaching students for school exams and medical and engineering entrance exams.

Launched by Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), the national leader in test preparatory services, in October 2020, Aakash EduTV has seen a 66% and 44% growth in active subscribers and new subscribers base, respectively, since April 2021.

Aakash EduTV offers live lectures, recorded live lectures for revision, doubt clearance, motivational lectures, NEET and JEE tips and tricks, previous paper discussions, among others, proving to be a lifeline for school students from Class 9 and for those who prepare for medical and engineering entrance exams. Aakash EduTV also offers career counselling programs - all at a cost of Rs 8.23 per day.

Aakash EduTV's subscribers base is expected to increase multifold as over 18 crore households (out of the total 25 crore households) already have a TV, and, as per a 2020 report of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, DTH broadcasting, which accounts for 37% of total television subscribers in India, is fast expanding. In stark contrast, the existing digital divide means that only 25% of Indian households have any access to the internet.

And as the pandemic continues to impact the incomes of a vast majority of the households, the digital gap could become wider in the near future, making online education unviable for most students. This perspective is shared by UNICEF's 2021 report, titled COVID-19 and School Closure: One Year of Education Disruption, which estimated that only 8.5% of school students have any access to the internet in India in the past year.

Commenting about Aakash EduTV's phenomenal growth, and the driving factors, **Mr. Aakash Chaudhry, Managing Director, Aakash Educational Services Limited, said,** *"As a fallout of the pandemic, over 15 lakh schools face closure, and about 28 crore students from pre, primary to secondary levels are out of touch with classroom education. Though online education is a very good solution, it cannot be an equitable one. We know students from economically disadvantaged families struggle with access to online learning. Hence, we launched Aakash EduTV a year ago, targeting especially the students who lack any access to the internet, and who are at the risk of being left behind. With Aakash EduTV, students can attend classes without an active internet connection. We are happy that EduTV is helping millions of students access high-quality educational content for their school exams and for helping them prepare for medical and engineering entrance exams."*

He added that there is a big chasm between people who are digitally connected and who are not, across the country, and between rural and urban areas; rich and poor, boys and girls.

In the poorest income group, only 2% have a computer as well as internet, only 3% have a computer, and 10% any digital device with internet, according to the National Sample Survey on social consumption of education (2017-2018). There are gender factors too - only 33% of the internet users are women. Surveys show that boys are given priority over girls in online studies due to lack of a computer or adequate number of mobile devices at home. Only half of those having internet access have basic broadband speed of 512 kbps or more, and an equal percentage of the users face issues related to poor connection and signal strength.

Aakash Institute also provides quality study material at a very nominal price at the student's doorstep, through its Distance Learning Program (DLP). The program is ideal for students who cannot attend regular classroom sessions due to remote locations. Thousands of students have cracked the tough exams like NEET, JEE (Main & Advanced) and other State Engineering Entrance Exams with the help of DLP study materials.

About Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL)

Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL) provides comprehensive test preparatory services for students preparing for Medical (NEET) and Engineering Entrance Examinations (JEE), School/Board Exams and Competitive Exams such as NTSE, KVPY, and Olympiads. The "Aakash" brand is associated with quality coaching and a proven student selection track record in various Medical (NEET) and JEE/Engineering Entrance Examinations, Scholarship exams & Olympiads.

With over 33 years of operational experience in the test preparatory industry, the company has a large number of selections in Medical & Engineering Entrance Exams and several Foundation level Scholarship exams/Olympiads, a pan India network of 200+ Aakash Centers (including franchisee), and an annual student count of more than 250,000.

PRESS RELEASE



The Aakash group has investment from Think & Learn Pvt Ltd (Byju's) as well as by world's largest Private Equity firm Blackstone.

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