The old-fashioned approach of EdTech companies in India and its impact on education

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Abstract

Education is essential for each and every one in order to enhance knowledge, way of living as well as social and economic status throughout the life. Education transforms a human being completely from inside and outside by changing the mind and personality. Education was confined within four walls till the emergence of technology and internet services. The boon of technology paved way for a new industry EdTech. While there is a debate that they are not effective as classroom teaching, it became the only medium of education to the students in this unprecedented time. This research paper seeks to study the needs and benefits of EdTech firm and also studies why students enrol for a particular online course and provide suggestions to overcome the old-fashioned teaching approach in the industry. At last, the study arrives at a meaningful conclusion that can be used as a basis for further research study related to the EdTech industry.

Keywords: EdTech, Educational Technology, personalized education, technological innovation, MOOC

1.0 . Introduction

The drastic advancements in technology and internet services over the last decade has transformed every sector, especially the education sector. The approach and attitude towards teaching and learning has been changed with the emergence of technology. The large scale movement of higher education to remote instruction due to the pandemic is unprecedented. The use of EdTech- (The technological tools and media that assist in the communication of

knowledge, and its development and exchange.[1]) provides an alternative to physical classes and ensures social distancing, but there is very limited evidence on how EdTech affects knowledge and academic outcomes.

In today's world the student is expected to use media and internet to get learning experience from all perspectives. Education has become the process of interaction and interpersonal communication development. The role of teacher is to guide and facilitate the student's development. Also, the teacher has to inspire and motivate the students and assist them in their quest for knowledge and skills.

2.0. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows,

1. To study the need for EdTech in India.
2. To find out how beneficial EdTech's are.
3. To point out and provide suggestions to the wrong methodology of teaching and learning in the EdTech industry.
4. Will explore why the students have subscribed to a particular course with an EdTech firm.

3.0. Research methodology

The data required for this study is collected from both primary and secondary sources.

3.1. Primary data

The primary data for the research is collected through a structured questionnaire with close ended questions.

3.2. Secondary data

The secondary data for the study is collected through various sources like journals, magazines and websites.

[1]Joseph Lathan. (n.d.). What is Educational Technology?. University of San Diego. https://onlinedegrees.sandiego.edu/what-is-educational-technology-definition-examples-impact/

3.3. Sampling design

The sample size consists of 50 students from the University of Madras pursuing their post-graduation who have subscribed to a course from an EdTech firm or a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC – a course of study made available over the internet without charge to a very large number of people.[2]). This research study is based on a simple random sampling method.

3.4. Limitations of the study

The various limitations of the study are as follows,

1. The study utilizes the data collected from both primary and secondary data. Hence, limitations of these sources apply to the study.
2. The study limits itself to a university which offers only arts and science courses. Therefore the results might vary for other types of institutions.

4.0. History of EdTech in India

India has come a long way in the usage of Information Technology in the education sector. Tracing back the use of EdTech during the colonial era, it was in 1937 when All India Radio broadcasted educational programs for school children. Then in the year 1985, Computer Literacy and Studies in Schools was introduced. It paved way for the installation of thousands of computers in the upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools through various programmes of government. The all boundaries and obstacles for learning has been removed with the access to computers and internet.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has initiated various channels for video materials. These initiatives are utilized majorly in the urban areas where teachers use it as an aid to their classroom teaching. Apart from these initiatives by the government, the year 2014 witnessed a large number of EdTech start-ups which changed the perspective towards EdTech in India. The market size of EdTech in India is estimated to grow 3.7x in the next five years, from $2.8 Bn (2020) to $10.4 Bn (2025). (Sandeep Singh, 2020).

[2] Ryan Tracey. (2013). The definition of a MOOC. Elearningindustry. https://elearningindustry.com/the-definition-of-a-mooc

Now the EdTech Byjus is also planning for an Initial Public Offering (IPO) in the upcoming year to raise more funds to expand their business operations to other countries.

5.0. Need for EdTech in India

There are three factors namely which led to the growth and need of this industry.

- **Productivity –** The ability and the potential of the workforce to use equipment that is more productive than the earlier versions of teaching and learning.
- **Quality labour –** The EdTech industry has created a workforce that is more knowledgeable and adds value to the economic output.
- **Innovation in technology –** The industry has identified some problems and addressed with their innovative technologies. They update themselves with the latest technologies to compete in the market. Attributes like critical thinking, emotional intelligence, creative learning and applying theoretical knowledge into practice by building practical applications, are all examples of successful EdTech application.[3]

6.0. How beneficial are EdTech's? The pedagogy of the courses has been structured to get best learning outcomes and allows to master tough concepts with ease and develop their skills. They provide a wealth of benefits to the student community in the following ways.

- **24/7 Learning –** Instead of sitting and learning inside a classroom the EdTech offers 24/7 access to learn anytime and anywhere in a digital environment. Irrespective of whether the student is at home, school, work, etc., they are able to access their educational content. Additionally, the technology allows students to stay in touch with their teachers or professors. Ed tech experts say simple digital tools can help make learning more accessible if utilized correctly.[4]
- **Personalized education –**Personalised learning means instruction is paced to learning needs, tailored to learning preferences, and tailored to the specific interests of different learners. In an environment that is fully personalised, the learning objectives and content

[3]Ashish, C. (2020). How innovations in Ed-Tech are disrupting school education in India?. Higher education digest. https://www.highereducationdigest.com/how-innovations-in-ed-tech-are-disrupting-school-education-in-india/
[4]Brandon, P. (2021). Can Ed Tech make learning more accessible?. Government technology. https://www.govtech.com/education/k-12/Can-Ed-Tech-Make-Learning-More-Accessible.html

as well as the method and pace may vary.[5]Depending upon the skills, strengths, weakness and knowledge of each individual the industry opens up opportunities to customize learning experiences for each of them. Online lectures and video content enables students to pause and replay, hence helps them to fully grasp the concepts.

- **Increased learning –** Irrespective of age groups EdTech has opened up opportunities for all students. Through collaboration tools the students and the educators are more connected on a project or a research, thus enabling them to work together.

7.0. The incorrect approach of the EdTech industry

7.1. Exam-oriented & Test-prep approach

The major players of the EdTech market in India are Byju's, Doubtnut, Meritnation, Toppr, Gradeup and Vedantu. All these companies focus namely on the competitive exams and the board exams. On their road to success in these agendas they have failed to stress on the critical thinking of the students unlike in European and American education systems. The importance to these examinations puts large amount of pressure in students. Securing a good rank among lakhs of students is considered a supreme excellence.

The online government test-prep coaching in India is a $23 Mn market, with UPSC and Bank PO being the leading segments.[6] Despite an increase in the number of aspirants for private sector, the craze for a government job is still seen in all parts of the country. These courses specifically tailored for competitive exams prepare individuals only for those exams and does not enhance their knowledge and skills.

7.2. Requirement for the degree programmes

The survey was conducted with 50 respondents studying at the University of Madras who have subscribed to a course from an EdTech website or an MOOC in platforms such as NPTEL and SWAYAM. The following table illustrates the purpose of opting for the courses.

Purpose of the course	Number of students

[5]Rishi, K.(2016). Personalised learning: The now and next of Edtech. Inc42. https://inc42.com/resources/personalised-learning-edtech/

[6]Omidyarnetwork. (n.d.). Edtech in India – Redseer report 2019-20. https://www.omidyarnetwork.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20200527-EdTech-Report-Omidyar-V6.pdf

Test-prep	8
Requirements for the post-graduation course	39
Enhancement of skills	3

It is evident from the above table that majority of the students enrol for a course in MOOC as a requirement to complete their post-graduation degree. Namely, students opt for a four or eight week course. Students tend to opt for the course only for the sake of obtaining the certificate to be submitted in their respective universities. A couple of students have enrolled for their test-prep, mostly for the government jobs. And only three students have enrolled to enhance their knowledge and skills. This is the pathetic situation of higher education sector in India. Only very few students would like to enhance their skills and enhance their career growth.

Findings

The various findings of the study are as follows,

*The EdTech companies are beneficial to the student community in terms of accessibility and personalized education which results in increased learning and collaboration.

* The majority of the EdTech companies focus only on the competitive exams which essentially prepares students only for those exams and does not hone their knowledge and skills.

*Students pursuing studies in a university or a college opts for an online course only for the sake of a requirement for their degree programmes and a negligible amount of students opt for the sake of enhancement of their skills.

Conclusion

To conclude the following suggestions can be taken up by the EdTech industry,

- The industry should focus on the integral development of an individual rather than being a virtual coaching centre for competitive exams. This would enhance the students to be more creative and think out of the box, as this particular element is lacking in the Indian society. Also, this would help them to critically think and analyse, instead of mere rote learning. For instance, Khan Academy does not merely focus on exams, they focus on

making difficult concepts easier for students to grasp with examples such that they impart knowledge and remember it forever.

- An awareness must be raised among the students of colleges and universities across the country on honing their skills with the use of MOOC's and EdTech, instead of enrolling for a course just for the sake of a certificate or as a requirement to their degree programme. This would enable more students to opt for courses as per their interest and helps them in their career development. The universities can take up the initiatives to stress-out the importance of hard skills and soft skills which is very essential in the job market today.

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