

It's Time for India Edtech Startups to Recalibrate

By Samuel Abraham & CDOTrends editors on September 27, 2022



You would think that the Indian edtech market would be saturated, especially with leading companies such as [Byju's](#) and [Unacademy](#) acquiring nearly thirty edtech or related companies over the past few years.

Yet, there is plenty of room to grow. Consider the unique demographics of India. The General Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India (calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in primary education between the ages of 5 and 20 years old by the population of the age group) is only 23. The Indian government wants to reach 35.

Edtechs will play a significant role in helping the government achieve this GER number.

However, the challenge for Indian early-stage edtechs is that it may be time to rethink their business models.

Many blossomed during the pandemic when students had more time to spend online grasping edtech content. But now, with schools reopened, a typical student must set aside eight to 10 hours for schoolwork and has barely enough time to squeeze in for edtech content.

At an edtech forum organized by Google in Pune, Nitin Vohra, head of education and edtech at [Google Cloud](#), said early-stage edtechs need to shift their thinking. They need to move

from influencing the parents to pay for their child's edtech solution to persuading schools to buy their solution for their students.

"Not many edtechs have thought about this, although there are some edtechs that are already trying to do it in India," he added.

Taking the personalization route

Early-stage edtech have an opportunity to take the lead as late-stage edtechs face funding challenges. For Vohra, those who succeed will be those that deliver a differentiated value proposition. One area of interest is the personalization of the student and teacher experience.

In a class led by a teacher with 40 students using an edtech solution, an edtech solution is seldom personalized for each student. As a result, different aptitudes, cultural attributes, learning abilities, and preferences for content formats or media are not captured or considered.

"If you are an early stage edtech startup, whether you are building a solution to cater to an institution, a student, or a teacher, personalization should be at the core of the solution," Vohra clarified, addressing edtech startup founders at the event in Pune, India.

Another area that Indian edtech startups should consider is gamification.

"Gamification helps students master abstract subjects such as mathematics more easily. Whether you are in the edtech content space or helping content writers develop content using technology that drives high engagement, such as flashcards, for example, you are gamifying it. You can drive high engagement with your solution," he adds.

An edtech entrepreneur whose funded startup is in the B2B edtech space shared that children need not be told to go out and play because they are naturally inclined to it. Yet, he added that children do not approach studies with the same natural inclination.

But gamification is not easy and is where many edtechs flounder, according to the edtech entrepreneur. So instead, personalization and gamification should be considered together.

To do this, edtechs need to overcome several challenges in India. "If you see the CBSE content or the e-Patshala app content, the format is the standard PDF. You would have a great edtech solution, but if the content is only a PDF, there is only so much that you can do with it," Vohra observed.

Content distribution is another challenge. "Edtechs have to think of how to integrate content distribution with assessments. If edtechs want to address the B2B2C market (like schools), they also need to look at interoperability in a big way considering that the way students access content at their schools widely varies and is fragmented," said Vohra.

At the same time, Vohra noted that the learning management systems (LMS) that the Indian edtechs use leaves much to be desired. The typical edtech LMS is built to deliver the best experience on a laptop browser, while the user experience drops considerably when the user moves to a mobile or tablet.

“Then you need an LMS that can support remote exams, manage proctoring, help conduct assessments, and drive analytics for personalization,” Vohra explained.

How Google Cloud helps

Edtech entrepreneurs face various questions on scalability and security. This is where having a strong cloud partner like Google Cloud can help.

Google Cloud brings immediate value to edtech startups in three areas, the first of which is app modernization. Readymade tools mean edtech IT teams do not need to spend too much time modernizing their apps. Google Cloud also offers a scalable solution that takes care of all edtech concerns concerning security, resiliency, and reliability for app modernization.

An Indian edtech expanding into Europe must have a cloud provider certified. Google Cloud, by default, takes care of such certifications at a global level. It also provides the flexibility to migrate to a hybrid app without hassle.

Edtech startups can also target faster growth with AI and data analytics with Google Cloud. Edtech startups can deep dive into the data to understand who laggards in a particular course are and how their performance can be improved. These analytical functions are automated to a large degree and can generate granular analysis without the need for any deep in-house expertise in analytics.

Another benefit for edtechs is that they can seamlessly integrate their solutions with the productivity apps that Google offers, including YouTube, to create a well-rounded student value proposition. In addition, edtech startups can leverage education-specific APIs to integrate their solutions with Google Workspace offerings.

“If Workspace is integrated into your offering, you do not have to customize your platform for sharing content in a particular format or deciding how to run a survey. These tools already exist,” said Vohra.

Vohra delineates another benefit of Google Cloud for edtechs – revenue-generating partnerships with Google. “Brands that have taken the partnership model with Google have seen a growth of 10X in their revenues,” claimed Vohra.

One example is [Book Creator](#), an app that helps teachers and students create a book from any MS Word document, PDF, or website.

“Now Book Creator is used by most of the international schools in India, and it is widely popular in U.S. schools. Book Creator partnered with us to achieve global growth,” said Vohra.

Google created joint go-to-market strategies with partners like Book Creator to help them expand the market and increase revenues, while Google benefits as they use Google Cloud. And for edtech clients who want to leverage the benefits of multi-cloud to the hilt, Anthos is a product that is serverless and agile.

The window of opportunity beckons

India has a vast edtech potential, and the current economic climate offers an opportunity for new startups to take the lead. But they cannot do it alone, nor with a model designed during the pandemic.

While the opportunities are numerous, the challenges are immense. But those edtechs who can take advantage of technology partnerships with Google Cloud and recalibrates their business model have the chance to become tomorrow's edtech unicorn.