

Will 2017 be the Reboot Year for K-12 Education?

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Source: Genesis Global School

With companies replacing humans with machines and organizations launching a strife to digitize their processes, 2016 has been an eventful year in terms of technological disruption. While these events made it to the headlines, another profound impact of technology wasn't discussed much. I am referring to the digitization of K-12 education in India.

With a current market size of estimated USD 1 Billion, e-learning isn't a newfound concept in the sub-continent. However, in the last one year there have been some tremendous developments in the field, which have caught the attention of e-learning advocates, investors, and stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) alike. 2016 saw Mark

Zuckerberg and wife Chan Zuckerberg invest in the Indian edtech market, soaring hopes of a bright future. As per industry reports the smart classroom market in India will witness a growth of a CAGR of 15.89%. But what does this future exactly look like?

Let's look at some trends that have shaped the smart learning industry over the last year.

Mobile-based Learning – Enabling a Larger Student Base

Mobile data usage is witnessing a YoY growth of 74% pan India. This means now even people living in smaller towns and cities can get access to the best possible learning resources from across the world at affordable prices.

Mobile learning is giving a facelift to K-12 education system in India. Students are more motivated to learn when using mobile devices. The gamut of m-learning apps available today are providing students an enriching learning experience, engaging them through gamification and other medium. They allow students to gain easy access to learning material and promote self-paced learning, mobile devices being constant companions. This helps in retaining students' interest and engaging them better.

Getting Teachers to Enable Themselves

While m-learning has encouraged students to explore self-learning, it hasn't been a lonely affair after all. Teachers are being trained to use technology to interact with and instruct students in physical as well virtual environment. E-learning advocates and government are working together in this direction. The launch of e-classes and subsequent teacher training in Vijaywada is a founding example. There, teachers will now be conducting digital classes in Government-run schools with a strength of 300 students. Special training sessions will be held to bring teachers up-to-date with the technology.

So, the transition isn't only for students but for teachers as well. E-learning aims at developing better teachers. Teaching through digital platforms helps them reach a larger student base, get real-time feedback, and give students personalized attention. Government of India has also launched the Aakash Education Portal in a bid to empower teachers through workshops, which are conducted using a unique blend of technology and an innovative pedagogy. It will teach them about the importance of experiential learning, and help them transition smoothly from the top-down method of teaching to digital learning.

Bigger investments in indigenous e-learning products

One in every five fundings in India is in the edtech sector. CB Insights' recent report revealed India's strong holding in the global e-learning market. In 2015 we witnessed around 50 edtech deals, the number went up by 315 per cent since 2011. And 2016 was a record-breaking year too. This money rush in the education sector is indicative of one thing – people are hooked to tech-enabled learning. The instant gratification may be limited, but education technology is finally gaining momentum in the country.

The Reform Push from the Government

E-learning is a stepping stone in making Digital India. Keeping this in view, the Indian government is taking several initiatives to promote digital learning. Recently, it allocated a Rs. 500 crore (\$ 81.38 million) budget for digitization of the classrooms, which ups the expected growth trajectory exponentially. Besides, the Ministry of Human Resources Development has also started the National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL). Its main aim is to design curriculum-based video lectures and web courses to enhance the quality of engineering education in India. Other initiatives include A-VIEW, a multimedia e-learning platform that provides an immersive e-learning experience that is almost as good as a real classroom experience and the Virtual Learning Environment.

Boards are also doing their part to make digital learning main stream in Indian schools. CBSE recently released the E-CBSE app. It aims to provide students and teachers with learning and teaching resources to supplement and complement existing curriculum.

As the Indian e-learning market in India grows to touch the \$40 Billion by 2017, it becomes imperative to understand how tech will further transform k-12 education as we know it today.

The Global Outlook

There will be a significant shift in the e-learning market at the global level. Disruptive technologies like Artificial Intelligence will change the way students learn in 2017. Innovations like Study Assistants will make personalized learning fun. Besides, Big Data will provide creators and teachers insights into students' performance and achievements. This will help them in creating learning modules tailored for individual needs.

This personalization will also make way for microlearning. It refers to a bite-sized learning module designed to meet specific learning goals, especially in case of students with shorter attention spans.

In another bid to improve attention span, edtech companies will experiment more with gamification. Games motivate learners and thus, we'll see a rise in creation and adoption of gamified content in the coming year. As per a recent study, the Global Gamification Market will cross a whopping \$7 billion by 2021.

E-learning in India in 2017 – Setting Things into Perspective

More investments coming in

With focused edtech incubators, hefty investments are likely to come in. This seems the right time for entrepreneurs to contribute to the space, which is no less than a gold mine. So, we can expect new players to emerge in the space. It is just a matter of time when a unicorn is born here.

Measurement of Learning – A Key Driver for Companies and Schools

As technology becomes an integral part of education, moving forward we'll have accurate, real-time data available about various performance indicators related to K-12 education. There'll be data points for student performance, teacher training, curriculum design, and other aspects that'll help schools and edtech companies improve the quality of learning.

Teaching with Technology Aids

As students gravitate towards new learning mediums, teachers will also have to gear up and learn to deal with technology in the classroom. They'll need to get familiar with new technology aids like whiteboards, tablets, wearables etc. to utilize them to the best of their potential. Taking trainings and attending tech demos will prove to be a good resource. Besides, they'll also have to be in touch with the parents to let them know about the tech they'll use in classrooms and get insights on how it can be made effective.

Increased Parent Participation

Just like students and teachers, parents will also feel the impact of education technology. With the help of technology parents can seamlessly communicate with schools and vice-versa. They can keep a track of their child's curriculum, performance, and attendance, amongst other things. What's more? Parents can stop worrying about finding ways to encourage their children to study. Thanks to the gamification approach apps and e-learning tools are bringing to the classroom, children are taking the initiative to learn and take tests/quizzes. This is likely to encourage parents to support their kids in transitioning from traditional to e-learning.

Making Ed-Tech more secure

Security and privacy will remain key concerns in the future as well. Inventions and development efforts will be focused on protecting student data and preventing phishing or leaks. Keeping the tech-based systems up and running throughout will also be a challenge. Edtech startups will also need to figure out ways to ensure tech-enabled tools are easy to use and can be integrated seamlessly with existing school systems.

In the upcoming years, we expect the edtech industry in India to mature. New technologies and tools will appear on the scene, while attempts will be made to make eLearning more mainstream. At the end of the day, the idea is to make learning fun and education accessible to all.