

Chapter 14

Emergence of EdTech Products in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The chapter presents a comparative analysis of the emergence of EdTech companies in South Asia and discovers the motivating factors behind it. It has a global perspective regarding scope of EdTech and then a specific perspective according to South Asian countries. As all the countries in this region fall under developing nations, it is interesting to see how these countries are embracing the education technology, what is the scope of expansion in EdTech sector, what are the encouraging and limiting factors that are promoting or restricting the growth of EdTech in this region. An exploratory and qualitative approach is opted to collect and analyze data related to EdTech growth in South Asia. The findings suggest that, barring India, no other South Asian country has a stable EdTech market. The availability of high-speed internet connectivity, younger population, affordability are the factors that work in favor of India whereas poor digital infrastructure, credibility issues, affordability, and poor student engagement are the reasons for slow EdTech penetration in rest of the countries.

INTRODUCTION

The advancements in Information & Communication Technology (ICT) can be witnessed in every field one can possibly think off. Not only it has ensured that the life becomes easier and comfortable, but it has also given rise to new frontiers and territories for humans to further excel, create new systems, applications and opportunities for growth and development. Education is one such frontier where ICT is making its presence felt. Using ICT to its advantage, the technocrats of today are utilizing it to deliver quality content over the web to masses. Whether it is in the form of online/offline videos, tutorials, Massive online open courses (MOOCs), static content or chat sessions between the instructor and learner, the technology firms are investing heavily in creating quality content by connecting with subject matter experts from both academia and industry. This grave utilization of technology in education is generally referred as “Education Technology” and the firms those are into this domain are referred as “EduTech organizations” or “EdTech”. Also, the whole concept where entrepreneurs are utilizing technology to create and deliver products & services is called Technology Entrepreneurship. A Framework for Technology Entrepreneurship was proposed where they included three phases (Formation, Exploitation and Renewal) and three levels of granularity (Product/service, Business/firm and system levels) and identified various research areas in each of these phases and levels that can be pursued (Spiegel and Marxt, 2011). Then, (Bailetti and Tony, 2012) defined Technology Entrepreneurship as “the creation and capturing of value by assembling and deploying specialized individuals and diverse resources related to scientific and technological advances.”

Looking at these two concepts- education technology and technology entrepreneurship from the angle of the South Asian region, which is about one-fourth of the world’s population (Population of Southern Asia, 2018) and where fresh minds equipped with huge technological knowledge base exist, there is no denying that this region has been constantly producing quite a number of technology leaders who have changed the world with their innovations. The focus of a modern era technocrats is now on utilizing Education Technology to create EdTech Firms that are leveraging technology in various modes to deliver high quality educational content through various platforms, thereby catering to the academic requirements of young minds.

If spoken about the learning achievement, which is a key indicator for accessing the outcome of the education system, then as per a report by UNESCO, the unsatisfactory levels of student learning and Shortage of trained and qualified personnel for education management are the biggest challenges of South Asian Education System (UNESCO Report, 2015). This has adversely impacted the students’ performance which is visible in Table 1 where data of SAARC countries regarding the students’ performances in various subjects have been analyzed by various surveys and the results have been disappointing. This sorry state of students’ performance and quality of education in South Asian countries gave a push to EdTech organizations with a belief that the self-paced learning environment and innovative teaching-learning methods will generate interest among students about learning.

Around the world, there are endless numbers of EdTech solutions are being marketed and preferred by the clients, depending on their requirements, right from the primary education to senior secondary education and even customized modules for competitive examination preparation are also available now on EdTech platforms. Each one of these EdTech’s promise to deliver the best quality content with innovative teaching pedagogies being applied for content delivery and claim to be the best among all but there is little clarity on the same.

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