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EdTech Startups Driving Next-Gen Learning Models

*¹Shaista Sultana and ²D. Satish Kumar

¹Student of MBA, Shadan Institute of Management Studies for Girls, Khairatabad, Telangana, India.

²Faculty, Shadan Degree College for Boys, Khairatabad, Telangana, India.

Abstract

The rise of EdTech startups has significantly transformed India's educational landscape by integrating technology-driven learning solutions into mainstream education. The study, "*EdTech Startups Driving Next-Gen Learning Models*" explores how these technology-based enterprises are reshaping teaching and learning practices across various age groups and disciplines. With the growing adoption of digital platforms, EdTech startups have introduced innovative tools that make education more interactive, accessible, and personalized.

This research employs a descriptive methodology using secondary data collected from academic publications, market research reports, and credible online sources. It examines the operational models, growth trajectories, and technological innovations of leading Indian EdTech companies such as BYJU'S, Toppr, Unacademy, and Vedantu. The study also investigates their role in promoting adaptive learning, personalized education, and digital transformation in both formal and informal learning environments.

Findings indicate that EdTech startups play a critical role in bridging the gap between traditional education and modern technology. They provide learner-centric platforms that enhance engagement through artificial intelligence, gamification, and data analytics. Moreover, these startups contribute to improving educational accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity, particularly in remote and underserved regions. However, challenges such as digital literacy limitations, data security concerns, and the need for continuous innovation remain.

Overall, the study concludes that EdTech startups are key drivers of next-generation learning models, facilitating the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered education. By enhancing educational quality, reach, and digital integration, they align with global trends in digital learning. The research underscores the importance of collaboration among policymakers, educators, and technology innovators to ensure sustainable growth in the EdTech sector.

Keywords: EdTech Startups, Digital Learning Models, Adaptive Learning Technologies, Hybrid and Blended Learning, Post-COVID Digital Transformation.

Introduction

The global wave of digital transformation has profoundly impacted the education sector, reshaping traditional learning environments and introducing innovative, technology-driven models of instruction. While industries such as banking, healthcare, and retail have rapidly adapted to technological change, education has been comparatively slower in adopting digital solutions (Bugbin, Dhingra, & Stamenov, 2017) [1]. Traditional teaching structures, particularly in K-12 education, have remained relatively static for decades and are increasingly viewed as insufficient in equipping learners with the skills required for the modern workforce (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2016) [3]. This scenario has paved the way for the growth of educational technology (EdTech) startups, which are redefining how knowledge is accessed, shared, and applied.

EdTech encompasses the integration of digital tools, artificial intelligence, and data-driven platforms to enhance teaching and learning experiences. Startups in this space are leveraging innovation to make education more personalized, interactive,

and accessible to learners across different backgrounds. Through online classrooms, gamified learning environments, and adaptive assessment systems, EdTech promotes inclusivity, lifelong learning, and global collaboration. These new approaches not only expand access to education but also encourage creativity and problem-solving among learners.

India's rapidly expanding startup ecosystem has become a major player in the EdTech revolution. With over 9,000 technology-based startups and an annual growth rate of 12–15%, India is now the third-largest startup hub in the world (NASSCOM, 2019) [2]. Prominent EdTech companies such as BYJU'S, Vedantu, and Unacademy have transformed the education landscape by providing flexible and affordable digital learning opportunities. Globally, the EdTech market is projected to reach nearly USD 404 billion by 2025, indicating the vast potential of this industry (WEF, 2016) [3].

Despite these advancements, EdTech startups face challenges related to scalability, sustainability, and digital equity. Nonetheless, by integrating innovation with pedagogy, these startups are emerging as catalysts for next-generation

learning. They are not only bridging educational gaps but also empowering students and educators to engage in meaningful, technology-enhanced learning experiences that prepare them for a dynamic global economy.



Literature Review

1. **Gupta & Bhatnagar (2019)** analyzes Indian EdTech business models—subscription, freemium, and B2B—highlighting that hybrid monetization strategies outperform single models due to user price sensitivity. It provides a framework for sustainable revenue generation and market adaptability in India's education technology ecosystem [6].
2. **Kulkarni & Desai (2020)** explores how digital platforms enhance reach and delivery for Indian EdTech startups. They emphasize localized content, UX design, and adaptive marketing as key growth drivers, while addressing challenges like regional diversity and fragmented markets [4].
3. **Mohanty & Raghavan (2020)** investigates AI and machine learning in adaptive EdTech systems, identifying benefits in personalized learning. It also notes challenges such as data privacy, content curation, and cultural adaptation, recommending teacher collaboration for effective implementation [5].
4. **Gothwal (2022)** examines how COVID-19 accelerated EdTech adoption while deepening digital inequality. It recommends blended learning models, infrastructure development, and public-private partnerships to ensure equitable access to digital education in India [7].
5. **Khaldi, Bouzidi & Nader (2023)** found gamification improves engagement when integrated with pedagogy. They caution that surface-level rewards limit learning impact, advocating for purposeful design tied to measurable educational goals to enhance motivation and retention [9].
6. **Pan (2024)** highlights the value of learning analytics for improving retention and early intervention. However, issues like data quality, ethical use, and limited teacher readiness constrain impact, emphasizing the need for practical dashboards and training [6].
7. **Shah (2024)** studied on VR in STEM education shows enhanced conceptual understanding and engagement. It suggests phased, cost-effective integration of immersive tools and faculty training to improve learning outcomes

and institutional adoption [10].

8. **Research Gate Authors (2024)** identifies infrastructure gaps, policy uncertainties, and regional language diversity as barriers to EdTech expansion. It also highlights opportunities in teacher training, localized content, and collaboration with government initiatives for scalability.
9. **Financial Times (2024)** analyses documents declining post-pandemic EdTech investments due to market saturation and governance issues. It urges startups to strengthen differentiation, financial sustainability, and ethical transparency for long-term viability.
10. **ASU-GSV Panel (2025)** emphasized shifting focus from rapid growth to profitability in Indian EdTech. They highlight partnerships with schools and workforce skilling programs as sustainable models, guiding startups toward balanced scaling strategies.

Emerging Trends of EdTech Start-ups in India

India's EdTech sector has grown rapidly due to rising internet access, smartphone use, and demand for quality education. Start-ups use technology to deliver flexible, personalized, and engaging learning, overcoming traditional education constraints and driving transformative trends across the education landscape.

- **Online Test Preparation:** Online test preparation is a key focus in India's EdTech sector. With high competition for professional courses, platforms provide structured courses, mock tests, adaptive modules, and AI-based performance analytics. These tools offer personalized, cost-effective, and convenient learning, helping students improve outcomes and manage exam pressures efficiently.
- **Language Learning:** India's linguistic diversity has driven EdTech start-ups to offer language learning solutions, including English and regional languages. Through interactive modules, gamified lessons, and live tutoring, these platforms enhance communication skills. Technology integration expands access, overcoming geographic and socioeconomic barriers and promoting personal and professional development for learners nationwide.
- **Skill Development and Vocational Training:** Supporting initiatives like "Skill India," EdTech start-ups offer skill-based and vocational training through flexible, self-paced courses. Covering areas such as coding, digital marketing, data analytics, graphic design, and entrepreneurship, these programs bridge the gap between academic learning and industry needs, equipping learners with practical skills for enhanced employability.
- **Gamification and Interactive Learning:** EdTech platforms boost student engagement and learning through gamification and interactive techniques. Incorporating points, leaderboards, badges, and rewards, these game-like elements make education enjoyable and immersive. Such approaches promote active participation, enhancing critical thinking, problem-solving, and long-term knowledge retention among learners.
- **Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR):** AR and VR technologies are transforming education by creating immersive learning environments. Students can visualize complex concepts, perform virtual experiments, and explore simulations. These tools enhance understanding, retention, and engagement, making learning interactive, experiential, and more effective.

EdTech Adoption in Post-COVID-19 India and Changes in the Education System

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the shift toward digital learning worldwide, as educational institutions closed to curb the virus's spread. In India, this disruption emphasized the need for technological integration in education and created opportunities for EdTech start-ups to ensure learning continuity. Students, educators, and institutions were compelled to adopt online and virtual learning, marking a notable shift from traditional classroom-based methods.

Digital learning, encompassing web-based, computer-mediated, blended, and mobile learning, allows students to access education anytime and anywhere using diverse digital tools. The pandemic highlighted both the potential and the limitations of these technologies, underscoring the importance of scalable, high-quality digital learning solutions. Experts suggest that sectors such as EdTech are critical to digitization due to their far-reaching educational impact.

The flexibility and convenience of online learning are likely to sustain interest in hybrid models that combine classroom and virtual education. Such approaches can enhance equity and accessibility in higher education, improving gross enrollment ratios and providing opportunities irrespective of geographic or socioeconomic constraints. Digital platforms also promote learner-centered approaches, enabling interactive participation, real-time assessments, and immediate feedback.

India's EdTech sector has grown rapidly in response to these trends. With over 1.5 million schools, nearly 39,000 colleges, and around 260 million students, India has one of the world's largest education systems. The sector, valued at USD 100 billion in 2016, was projected to reach USD 180 billion by 2020. Expanding internet penetration—from 40% in 2016 to over 735 million users in 2021—and widespread smartphone adoption have fueled this growth. Online learning users increased from 1.57 million in 2016 to 9.6 million in 2021, reflecting a CAGR of 52%. Currently, India hosts 327 EdTech firms, representing 10% of the global market. These developments indicate that post-COVID-19, EdTech adoption is a transformative force, reshaping the Indian education system toward digital, flexible, and accessible learning.

EdTech Companies Providing Education in India

BYJU'S – Think & Learn Private Limited



Founded in 2011 by Byju Raveendran and headquartered in Bengaluru, BYJU'S is one of India's leading EdTech start-ups valued at \$5.4 billion. The platform offers engaging online learning programs for students from grades 6 to 12 and competitive exams such as IIT-JEE, CAT, UPSC, GMAT, and GRE. Available on Android and iOS, BYJU'S combines interactive video lessons, adaptive assessments, and personalized feedback. Recognized with awards like the CRISIL Emerging India Award, it has over 15 million users, including 9 lakh annual subscribers, and an impressive

engagement rate of 53 minutes per day.

Toppr – Haygot Education Private Limited



Founded in 2013 by Zishaan Hayath and headquartered in Mumbai, Toppr is an innovative EdTech platform designed to support students from K-5 to K-12. The app provides goal-based and adaptive learning features, including interactive video lectures, practice questions, concept sheets, performance reports, and past exam papers. Toppr offers courses aligned with school curricula and preparation for competitive exams such as JEE, NEET, UPSC, and SAT. It also supports students preparing for board exams and Olympiads. With expert doubt-clearing sessions and all-India test series, Toppr ensures a personalized and comprehensive learning experience for every learner.

Unacademy – Sorting Hat Technologies Private Limited



Unacademy, founded in 2015 by Gaurav Munjal, Roman Saini, and Hemesh Singh, is one of India's largest online learning platforms. Headquartered in Bengaluru, it began as a YouTube channel and evolved into a full-fledged EdTech company offering live classes, video lectures, and test preparation for a wide range of competitive exams such as UPSC, CAT, IIT-JEE, NEET, and more. The platform connects students with top educators and provides structured courses, mock tests, and doubt-clearing sessions. With affordable subscription models and interactive features, Unacademy has made quality education more accessible, helping millions of learners across India achieve their academic goals.

Vedantu – Vedantu Innovation Private Limited



Vedantu, founded in 2014 by Vamsi Krishna, Pulkit Jain, Anand Prakash, and Saurabh Saxena, is a Bengaluru-based EdTech company specializing in live online tutoring. The platform connects teachers and students through real-time interactive sessions using its innovative WAVE (Whiteboard Audio Video Environment) technology. Vedantu offers courses for students from grades 6 to 12, covering school curricula and competitive exams such as JEE, NEET, and NTSE. It also provides coding and skill development programs. By offering personalized learning experiences, live quizzes, and performance tracking, Vedantu aims to make quality education engaging, flexible, and accessible to learners across India.



UpGrad, founded in 2015 by Ronnie Screwvala, Mayank Kumar, Phalgun Kompalli, and Ravijot Chugh, is a Mumbai-based EdTech company focused on higher education and professional upskilling. The platform collaborates with top universities and industry experts to offer online programs in fields such as data science, management, technology, and digital marketing. UpGrad's courses combine video lectures, live sessions, mentorship, and career guidance to help learners advance in their careers. With a learner base spanning professionals and graduates, UpGrad emphasizes outcome-based learning, ensuring participants gain practical, job-ready skills aligned with evolving industry demands.

Objectives of Research

- i). To examine the impact of EdTech start-ups on transforming traditional education into next-generation digital learning models.
- ii). To analyze the emerging trends, technologies, and innovative practices adopted by EdTech start-ups in India.
- iii). To evaluate the role of EdTech in enhancing accessibility, engagement, and learning outcomes for students in the post-COVID era.

Scope of Research

The scope of the present research is to examine how EdTech start-ups are transforming India's education system through innovative, technology-driven learning models. It focuses on their role in improving accessibility, interactivity, and quality of education while addressing emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in building inclusive and future-ready learning environments.

Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the structured process used to collect, analyse, and interpret data to achieve the objectives of a study. It provides a systematic framework ensuring the validity, reliability, and accuracy of the findings. This research focuses on analyzing the growth, challenges, and opportunities of educational technology (EdTech) start-ups and related businesses through a descriptive and analytical approach.

Research Design

A descriptive research design has been adopted for this study to provide an in-depth understanding of the existing conditions and trends within the EdTech industry. This design is suitable for describing the characteristics, operations, and performance of EdTech start-ups in India. It helps in identifying key industry players, market trends, technological advancements, funding patterns, and challenges faced by emerging businesses. The descriptive nature of this research supports data-based observations without altering the existing phenomena.

Data Collection Method

The study primarily relies on secondary data to ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic. Secondary data is

collected from reliable and credible sources such as academic journals, industry reports, research papers, government publications, business magazines, and reputed EdTech websites. This approach provides valuable insights into the evolution and impact of technology-driven education businesses.

- **Identification of Sources:** Relevant data sources are carefully selected based on authenticity and relevance to the study's objectives. Sources include published literature, official reports, and databases like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Statista.
- **Research Gap:** An extensive literature review is conducted to identify previous research on EdTech growth, technological innovation, and market challenges. This helps in understanding research gaps and theoretical frameworks relevant to the study.
- **Data Organization:** The collected data is systematically categorized into themes—growth factors, challenges, government policies, and technological influence—facilitating structured analysis and interpretation.
- **Documentation:** Proper documentation of all sources and methods is maintained to ensure transparency and replicability.

The chosen methodology, emphasizing descriptive research and secondary data analysis, ensures that the study captures a holistic view of India's EdTech landscape. It provides a strong foundation for evaluating the performance, growth strategies, and sustainability of educational technology start-ups.

Data Evaluation

Data evaluation is a vital stage in research that ensures the accuracy, relevance, and credibility of the information collected through secondary sources. In studying Educational Technology (EdTech) start-ups and related businesses, this process verifies that the data used is authentic, reliable, and aligned with the research objectives.

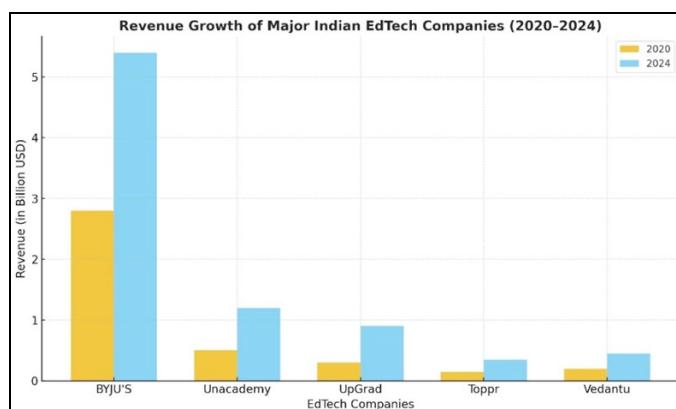
- **Source Credibility:** The credibility of each data source is critically examined. Information is collected from trusted and reputed sources such as academic journals, industry reports, government databases, and verified EdTech research publications. The expertise and reliability of the authors or organizations behind the data are key factors in this evaluation.
- **Data Relevance:** The relevance of the data is assessed to ensure it directly supports the study's objectives. Data related to EdTech market growth, investment trends, technological innovations, user preferences, and policy frameworks is prioritized to provide meaningful insights into the current industry landscape.
- **Data Completeness:** Researchers ensure that the data comprehensively covers all necessary aspects such as time period, geographical scope, and various EdTech business models. Complete datasets help in forming accurate conclusions and avoid analytical gaps.
- **Consistency and Coherence:** Data from multiple sources is compared to identify uniformity and coherence. Consistent data across credible references enhances the reliability of findings, while inconsistencies are analysed carefully to avoid misleading interpretations.
- **Reliability, Validity, and Bias Check:** The data's authenticity is verified by examining the methods and sampling techniques used by the original sources. Potential biases or limitations are acknowledged to

maintain transparency and strengthen the study's objectivity.

- **Documentation:** All evaluation criteria, results, and observations are systematically documented. This ensures transparency, allowing future researchers to replicate or validate the findings.

Data Analysis

- **Overview of Data:** The analysis uses secondary data from market reports, industry surveys, and credible online sources on India's EdTech sector. It studies revenue growth, user expansion, technological innovation, and investment trends of leading start-ups such as BYJU'S, Unacademy, Vedantu, UpGrad, and Toppr (2020–2024).
- **Growth in Revenue:** The bar chart illustrates a strong upward trend in revenues of major EdTech companies from 2020 to 2024. BYJU'S rose from \$2.8 billion to \$5.4 billion, with Unacademy and UpGrad also showing steady growth. COVID-19 acted as a catalyst, accelerating online learning adoption and indicating a long-term shift toward digital education among students and professionals.
- **User Base Expansion and Market Reach:** Analysis of user engagement shows India's EdTech start-ups have rapidly expanded across regions and demographics. The user base grew from 1.6 million in 2016 to over 9.6 million by 2021. Affordable smartphones, low-cost data, and internet access drove this growth, with Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities contributing over 45% of new enrolments.
- **Technology Integration and Learning Innovation:** Qualitative analysis shows EdTech start-ups leveraging AI, AR, VR, and data analytics to personalize learning. BYJU'S and Vedantu use AI assessments to monitor progress, while UpGrad applies analytics for career-focused course recommendations. These technologies have enhanced engagement and retention, leading to a 20–30% rise in course completion rates.
- **Investment and Financial Backing:** Financial data indicates a significant surge in venture capital for Indian EdTech start-ups after 2020. Over \$4 billion was raised between 2020 and 2023, enabling firms to scale, expand globally, and implement advanced digital infrastructures.



Graph 1: Revenue Growth of Major Indian EdTech Companies (2020–2024)

Interpretation

The chart clearly illustrates that BYJU'S remains the dominant player, with revenue rising from \$2.8 billion in 2020 to \$5.4 billion in 2024. Other companies like

Unacademy and UpGrad show steady growth due to increased demand for online learning and professional upskilling. Toppr and Vedantu demonstrate moderate but consistent expansion, highlighting the sector's overall upward trend in India's EdTech market.

Findings

- **Rapid Digital Transformation in Education:** The study reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic served as a major catalyst for digital transformation in India's education sector. Traditional institutions rapidly adopted online platforms, leading to the rise of EdTech start-ups like BYJU'S and Unacademy. This shift transformed online learning from a temporary necessity into a permanent educational framework.
- **Increased Accessibility and Inclusivity:** A key finding is the enhanced accessibility of quality education through EdTech platforms. Affordable internet and smartphones have enabled learners in rural areas to access digital education, bridging urban–rural gaps. Regional language content and flexible learning options have further promoted inclusivity and equal learning opportunities.
- **Growth of Skill-Based and Professional Learning:** The findings reveal a strong shift toward skill-based learning in India. After the pandemic, demand for digital skills, vocational training, and professional certifications surged. Platforms like UpGrad and Simplilearn now collaborate with universities and industries to deliver practical, career-oriented education.
- **Technological Advancements Enhancing Learning Experience:** EdTech start-ups are increasingly adopting advanced technologies like AI, ML, AR, and VR to enhance interactivity and personalization. These innovations enable adaptive learning models that track student progress, provide tailored learning paths, and significantly improve engagement, understanding, and knowledge retention among learners.
- **Financial Growth and Investment Opportunities:** The study found that Indian EdTech start-ups have attracted substantial domestic and global investments between 2020 and 2024. Increased funding has empowered these firms to expand their reach, strengthen technological infrastructure, and diversify course offerings, reflecting strong investor confidence in India's growing digital education ecosystem.
- **Challenges and Sustainability Issues:** Despite the rapid growth, the findings indicate challenges such as market saturation, quality assurance, and affordability. Many smaller EdTech firms struggle to sustain operations due to high competition and limited funding. Ensuring equitable access and maintaining consistent learning quality remain key concerns for the sector.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

- **Promote Digital Inclusivity:** Government and private players should collaborate to improve digital infrastructure, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, ensuring that all learners have equitable access to online education.
- **Enhance Affordability:** EdTech companies should introduce flexible pricing models, scholarships, or freemium access options to make premium educational content affordable to a wider population.
- **Focus on Localization of Content:** To cater to India's

linguistic and cultural diversity, start-ups must develop regional-language learning modules and culturally relevant educational materials.

- **Strengthen Data Privacy and Security:** Establish strict data protection policies and transparent user agreements to enhance trust and protect learner information.
- **Encourage Public–Private Partnerships:** Collaborative programs between government agencies, EdTech firms, and academic institutions can accelerate innovation and expand outreach.
- **Invest in Teacher Training:** Educators should be upskilled to integrate technology effectively into their teaching methodologies, ensuring that EdTech complements rather than replaces traditional teaching.

Conclusion

The study concludes that EdTech start-ups are transforming India's education landscape by making learning more accessible, interactive, and personalized. Post-COVID-19, platforms like BYJU'S, Unacademy, Vedantu, and UpGrad have showcased how technology can bridge educational gaps through innovation and affordability. The integration of AI, AR, VR, and adaptive systems has enhanced engagement and learning outcomes. Supportive government policies and rising investments have further fuelled this growth. However, challenges such as digital inequality, high costs, data privacy concerns, and limited regional content persist. Despite these barriers, the outlook remains highly positive, with EdTech expected to play a vital role in shaping hybrid and inclusive learning models. The ongoing evolution of digital tools indicates that technology-driven education will continue to be a cornerstone of India's academic and professional learning ecosystem.

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