Aim for Excellence

Beas Dev Ralhan, Chief Executive Officer, Next Education Private Ltd

Digital learning solution provider Next Education is writing a new chapter in education system in India. Using ICT tools, they create ground breaking products for the education sector that make learning and teaching easier, more fun, and more effective. The company has more than 5,000 partner schools across the country using ICT solutions like TeachNext, LearnNext, MathsLab, ScienceLab and EnglishLab.

In this interview, **Beas Dev Ralhan**, Chief Executive Officer, Next Education Private Ltd shares his perspective on the emerging issues in education sector. He also throws light upon the role of ICT in streamlining education sector in India.

Please share with us the initiatives undertaken by Next Education? What are the measures taken to ensure quality education to the larger population?

Next Education has created innovative products that make teaching easy, engaging and effective. Its leading products such as TeachNext, LearnNext, MathsLab, ScienceLab and English Lab are used in over 6000+ schools across country transforming the lives of more than 6 million students.

The learning modules have been created by the company's in-house content development team using contemporary learning design principles with its proprietary Next Learning model and have undergone rigorous testing on and off the field. With excellent onsite service support, periodic teacher training and management reporting on content usage, we aim to bring the future of education to the schools in our country.

What are your views on the extent of ICT integration on schools?

ICT in education is fast picking up in India because teachers can look beyond preparing for their regular classes – they get capsulated information from the curriculum that is easy for them to use while in the classroom, and easy for the students to grasp. They can now focus on going deeper into concepts and information because they no longer worry about preparing for their daily classes. This apart, we have always maintained that technology is only a tool that a teacher can use –it can never replace her.

What role does ICT play in universalizing education?

Our product, TeachNext, is an audio-visual teaching product. It has enhanced the quality of teaching-cum-learning process throughout India. It can be used with minimal hardware – a projector and a remote in each class that the teacher operates. Our content is mapped to various education boards in India – ICSE, CBSE and 23 State boards – in eight languages based on NCERT guidelines, which helps standardize teaching quality across India. The content is designed to cater to all socio-economic and socio-cultural sections. TeachNext also makes the process easier for an average school teacher in India who is usually over-worked and pressured. Since the technology is simple, senior teachers also adapt to it with ease. It also includes lesson plans that the teacher can use as a base to compartmentalize lessons and plan her classes. Lesson plans suggested also include interesting activities in class that a teacher can use to reinforce learning. Today, we cater to more than 6000 schools across India.

Please share the vision of your company with respect to implementation of ICT at schools?

We believe that this is just the beginning, with only 20% school penetration and 20% adoption at the most at the classroom level. The market will grow fivefold from here. Our vision is to be a leading value provider in this segment and capture 25% of the overall market.

How do you see school education evolving in India with respect to the global scenario? How can our children cater to the global requirements in the light of shortage of skilled workforce?

At the K12 level where we operate, the focus has to be more on the life skills, leadership skills and HOW TO LEARN what you don't know. We believe that apart from making abstract concepts easy to understand, our solutions help kids through simulations, activities and standardization of assessments.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced so far and what was the strategy to deal with it?

We had to face a lot many challenges. Firstly, we had to provide onsite support for hardware because the vendors did not have enough reach. So we had to build our in-house team. Secondly, we had to make quality content for India because we could not use western content straight away, so that took approximately 3 years and 60-70 crore to build. Thirdly, it was difficult to convince teachers to leave the traditional chalk-and-talk method of teaching and change to audio-visual method.

What are the key marketing and building strategies for your business?

In India, we understand that the customer is ready to spend 30% of discretionary income in education of the kid, unlike in the west, where education is seen as an investment rather than an expense.

Therefore, we market products that can improve "value" based on quality when we offer solutions to schools.

What are your future plans?

Currently, Next Education is an ICT provider. We are working towards becoming a complete K-12 solutions provider, providing solutions from teacher training to teaching aids.