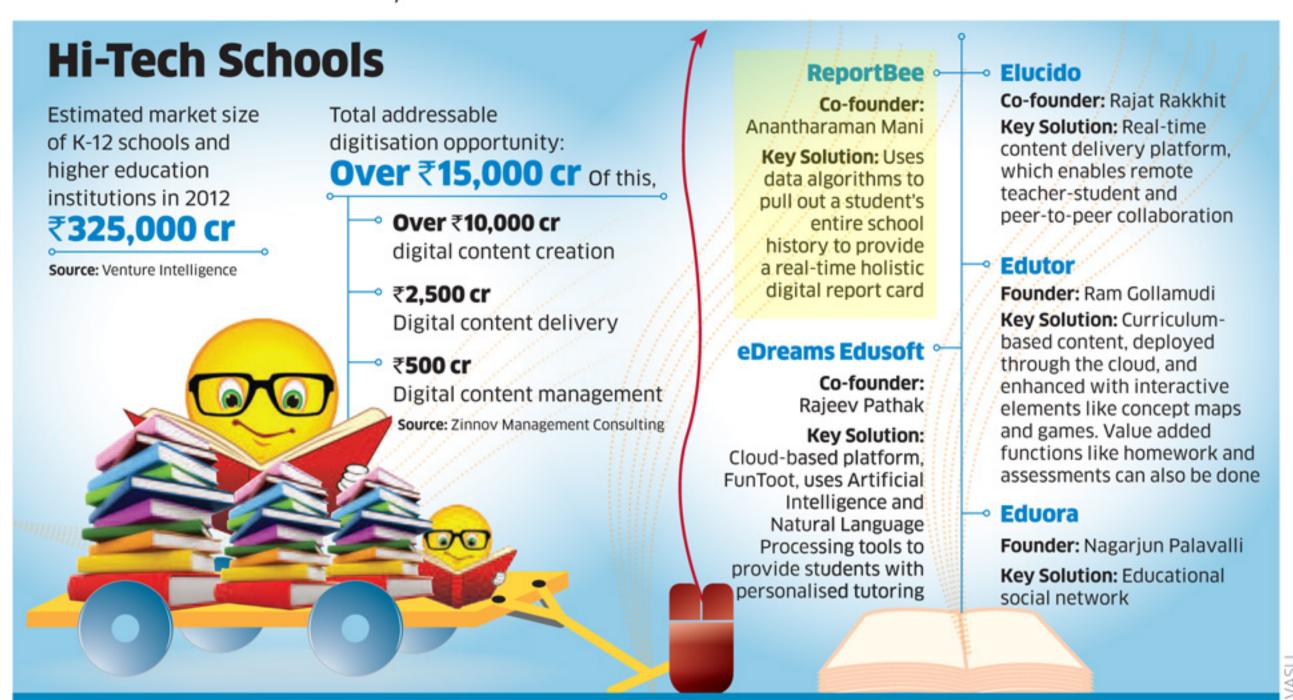# 📖 Tech Entrepreneurs Go Back to Classroom

A slew of entrepreneurs are using cutting-edge technology to change the way students learn and schools function, finds out **Radhika P Nair**

Hi-Tech Schools

Estimated market size of K-12 schools and higher education institutions in 2012
₹325,000 cr
Source: Venture Intelligence

Total addressable digitisation opportunity:
Over ₹15,000 cr Of this,

- **Over ₹10,000 cr** digital content creation
- **₹2,500 cr** Digital content delivery
- **₹500 cr** Digital content management

Source: Zinnov Management Consulting

ReportBee
Co-founder: Anantharaman Mani
Key Solution: Uses data algorithms to pull out a student's entire school history to provide a real-time holistic digital report card

eDreams Edusoft
Co-founder: Rajeev Pathak
Key Solution: Cloud-based platform, FunToot, uses Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing tools to provide students with personalised tutoring

Elucido
Co-founder: Rajat Rakkhit
Key Solution: Real-time content delivery platform, which enables remote teacher-student and peer-to-peer collaboration

Edutor
Founder: Ram Gollamudi
Key Solution: Curriculum-based content, deployed through the cloud, and enhanced with interactive elements like concept maps and games. Value added functions like homework and assessments can also be done

Eduora
Founder: Nagarjun Palavalli
Key Solution: Educational social network

VASU

The school, for long considered a bastion of tradition, is the newest hub for innovative technology start-ups.

A clutch of entrepreneurs is creating software, platforms and applications for schools to enhance content and make its delivery more efficient.

It is India's large and growing education market that is attracting these entrepreneurs. Their innovative products are changing the way students learn and schools function.

"Schools have specific pain points, which need specific solutions," says Anantharaman Mani, founder of ReportBee, whose eponymous product re-imagines the dreaded report card as a fun and interactive digital application, which provides teachers and administrators all aspects of a student's performance – on a single sheet.

According to a Venture Intelligence report, K-12 schools and higher education institutions are expected to reach above ₹325,000 crore ($65 billion) in market size this year. In 2009, this number stood at over ₹225,000 crore ($45 billion).

The total opportunity for digital content, which is the area many technology start-ups are focusing on, is estimated to be over ₹15,000 crore ($3 billion), according to advisory firm Zinnov. In this, digital content creation is projected at over ₹10,000 crore ($2 billion), digital content delivery at above ₹2,500 crore ($500 million) and digital content management at about ₹500 crore ($100 million).

"The opportunity is huge in India, given the sheer number of students, there is also global market for many of the solutions," says Chandramouli, senior director–globalisation advisory, Zinnov.

Here is a selection of start-ups that are bringing cutting edge technology to the classroom.

REPORTBEE

The Chennai-based venture was founded by Anantharaman Mani, an IIM-Bangalore alumnus, to change the way report cards are used. Traditional report cards do not reflect all the activities a child undertakes in school. Also, teachers are not able to track the student's incremental progress and compare class-to-class performance easily. The ReportBee application pulls out all the data that is entered in the school's systems about a student. The company also trains teachers and other staff to enter co-curricular data and health and physical training data of students into the systems. Using algorithms, the application summarises every aspect of a student's school history onto a single page. Teachers can track the progress of a single student, see a class' overall performance and compare classes. Schools that do not have digital data can send a spreadsheet to ReportBee and the company will do the analysis. The application, which is available for ₹4,000-8,000 per month per school, is being used by 18 schools in Tamil Nadu and is in pilot phase in 30 more schools.

EDREAMS EDUSOFT

Launched in 2010 by Rajeev Pathak, Surayprakash Konanuru and Haris Poonthala, eDreams has developed a digital tutor, FunToot, for K-12 students. FunToot, a software that runs on the cloud, uses Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing tools to provide students with personalised tutoring. The programme starts learning about the student right from the first interaction through a series of questions such as what sports does she like.

"As more data comes in, the programme becomes more intelligent," says Pathak, CEO, eDreams, which earlier this year raised angel funding from Mumbai Angels. FunToot is being used in 30 schools across South India. The company plans to scale it up to all K-12 classes for all subjects and also bring out an at-home PC-version.

EDUTOR

Ram Gollamudi, founder of three-year-old Edutor, was working in the US and saw at close quarters the positive impact of technology on education. "My five-year-old son had hand-held devices for one-on-one learning when we were in the US and I could see how effective it was," says the IIT-Madras alumnus. The company initially launched an educational tablet with rich, interactive content, which was sold through bookstores. As tablets have become ubiquitous, the company is now focusing on just the software and launched their platform in March.

The content, which is deployed through the cloud, is based on the school curriculum and is enhanced with interactive elements like concept maps and games. Teachers can post homework and access completed homework through the platform and assessment tests can also be done. The company, which raised seed investment from Hyderabad Angels earlier this year, has tied up with 20 schools and six test preparation institutes.

ELUCIDO

Founded by Silicon Valley serial entrepreneurs Rajat Rakkhit and Jay Sethuram in 2008, the venture launched Elucido Learning and Collaboration System (ELCS) earlier this year. "We found a huge gap in real-time content delivery with collaboration built into it," says CEO Rakkhit, who was previously vice-president and general manager of Silicon Valley-based Cypress Semiconductor. Using interactive whiteboard, computer, web camera and an internet connection, the platform allows teachers and students separated by geography to interact in real time.

The platform is preloaded with the content and students can electronically make notes alongside the content and the annotations made by the teacher gets reflected on a real-time basis as well. Using the platform, students in a remote location can talk to the teacher, see what is being written on the whiteboard and also make changes to it. The audio, video and text are recorded onto the platform for future access. The company is working with supplementary education, skills training and test preparatory institutions.

EDUORA

Nagarjun Palavalli's Eduoro started out as a personal project in late-2010. "I wanted to bring in the social network aspects to the boring part of education," says Palavalli. Eduora, which raised seed funding from Seeders in January this year, creates hubs for various campuses. Students, teachers and management can log onto a single online destination and interact. Students of each institution are connected automatically according to the graduation year. A college can claim a hub and post official messages.

Colleges can put up course details, assignments and announcements. While students, teachers and administration have the same dashboard, the latter two have editing options.

While the company has pre-created 2,000 hubs, it remains to be seen how popular the network will be among students and colleges.

radhika.nair@timesgroup.com