



COACHING AND EDUPRENEURSHIP: EMERGING TRENDS IN EDUCATION ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

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Entrepreneurship in education has evolved as an important dimension in the field of educational development, specifically within the expanding business of coaching for entrance examinations. The present study explores growth trajectory of coaching industry and its emerging business models. The study adopts a qualitative-descriptive research design based on secondary data collected from Ministry of Corporate Affairs, corporate databases, government records, industry reports, and academic literature for the period 1981–2022. Decadal growth analysis indicates substantial increase in the number of education companies engaged in entrance examination coaching, indicating increasing commercialisation of shadow education. Further, correlation analysis reflects a strong positive association between the growth of coaching enterprises and the expansion of entrance examination participation. Using the Business Model Canvas framework, key dimensions of coaching enterprises were identified, including value propositions, customer segments, delivery channels, revenue structures, and strategic partnerships.

KEY WORDS: Commercialisation, Corporatisation, Entrance examination, Private Tutoring, Shadow Education

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the ability and readiness to develop organisation and run an enterprise in an uncertain environment for the purpose of making profits. In the last two decades, huge investments are being made in the education sector as investors; development in the education is making this sector more appealing (Tharaney & Upadhyaya 2014). Enterprises offering educational services are generally referred as ‘educational entrepreneurs or edupreneurs’ (Lacatus & Staiculescu 2016).

Edupreneurs have not remained limited to formal sectors only, slowly, non-formal sector is also witnessing significant attention. Under non-formal sector of education, shadow education or private tutoring or coaching business has emerged as the most lucrative business avenue. Its growth indicates towards the presence of parallel system of education, attaining a major foothold in education sector (Sharma et al, 2022). It has been transformed from earlier traditional small-scale tutoring set up to organized education service providers (Yung & Bray 2024). From physical classroom teaching to live or recorded classes, 24 x 7 hour tutor help, doubt clearing sessions, regular evaluation, set study material education dissemination mechanism has been evolved over time. Kumon, a tutoring

company founded in Osaka (Japan) started from one centre and later expanded to two million enrolments overseas by 2000s (www.kumon.com); with 26,200 franchises in forty-four countries with around 3.6 million students by 2022 (“Kumon Institute of Education” n.d.). According to an estimate by Fortune Business Insights (2021), global private tutoring market is expected to reach at USD 171.93 billion by 2028 with compound annual growth rate of 8.3 percent.

Edupreneurship in India

As far as the story of India is concerned, earlier there was only sporadic presence of home tutoring centres helping slow learners or weak students in conceptual understanding. Advent of admission tests to higher education institutions gave a big push to coaching business. Increasing academic competition, high-stakes entrance examinations, parental aspirations, added more to it (Bray 2021). Edupreneurs reshaped the entire coaching system; well-structured classrooms, groomed faculty, counsellors to guide the students, aggressive marketing made it highly appealing to the stakeholders. Lockdown increased number of ed-tech users, due to its ability to cater to large number of people (“Year Ended 2021”, 2021). Resultantly, several number of ed-tech unicorns sprouted in the Country, of

which some even were valued at \$ 1 billion or more since the time lockdown started (Anand, 2022). Post pandemic, the momentum could not be sustained and there were large eviction of faculty members specifically in case of BYJU'S, Unacademy and Vedantu which sacked its several employees (Dixit, 2023).

MHRD (2016) has called private tutoring in India an industry of astounding size and even referred it as 'third education sector' of the Country. It is estimated that this industry is earning around Rupees 58, 088 Crore (2022) and expected to increase to Rupees 1, 33,995 Crore by 2028 (Yadav 2022). Global Market Insights (2021) estimated market size of tutoring services in India to be around USD 90 billion (2020) which is expected to grow at the rate of five percent during the period of 2021 to 2027. Technavio (2023) made the market forecast of online tutoring market of USD 10,585.08 million which is growing at the rate of 17.03 percent during the period of 2022-27.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Shadow education refers to private tutoring also which is supplementary to formal schooling as it mirrors the curriculum of mainstream educational institutions. It operates outside the periphery of formal education system. Examination oriented admission system has led to increase in educational competition which has contributed to the rapid expansion of shadow education across continents including India.

Marketisation of education has led in booming of shadow education market, as educational services are increasingly influenced by market-oriented principles like competition, consumer choices, branding and corporate venturing. Withing this structure coaching institutions operated as Edupreneurial ventures reposing to educational demand through offering specialised services, technology integration and diversified business strategies. Present theoretical perspectives give insights of growth and transformation of coaching enterprises over the time in India.

RESEARCH GAP

A growing body of literature has focussed on examining socio-economic implication of participation in shadow education or private tutoring such as academic performance, examination stress, and student experiences. Comparatively limited research has been devoted to exploring growth of coaching institutions as entrepreneurial ventures with distinct business models. Furthermore, there are scarce studies exploring the organisational evolution, market expansion, and strategic functioning of coaching enterprises in India. The present study attempts to address this gap through analysing the growth trajectory of coaching enterprises in India and explore business models adopted by edupreneurs operating within the coaching sector.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Specifically, it has following objectives:

- To examine the growth trajectory of education companies (coaching enterprises) providing training for entrance examinations of higher educational institutions in India.
- To analyse relationship between expansion of education companies and participation in entrance examinations of higher education institutions.
- To identify and classify business models of coaching enterprises for entrance examinations of higher educational institutions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study follows a qualitative and descriptive research design to examine the growth trajectory of coaching enterprises and explore the business models adopted by edupreneurs in India. Growth patterns of coaching enterprises were examined through longitudinal secondary data for the period 1981–2022. Secondary data-based approach appropriate to understand broader industry trends and patterns of expansion.

SOURCES

Information on education companies engaged in coaching services for entrance examinations was compiled from corporate databases such as Connect2India, Zaubia Corp, QuickCompany, and records available through the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India. Official reports of IIT-JEE/JEE Advanced, NEET, CLAT, CAT, AIEEE were consulted to make data for registration of entrance examinations. Information was gathered from numerous official publications, websites, and published papers because registration data for separate entrance exams was not available in a consolidated form and was dispersed across diverse sources.

METHODOLOGY

To assess growth of coaching enterprises and entrance examinations registration Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) was calculated. Karl Person Correlation was used to analyse association between number of education companies and number of registrations in entrance examinations. Thematic content analysis was done for crafting business model framework.

DISCUSSION

Growth of Education Companies providing coaching for Entrance Examinations in the Country

An examination of the decadal growth of education companies provides insights into the level of commercialization and institutionalization of shadow education in India. Table 1 gives details of education companies registered in the field of entrance examination coaching from 1981 to 2022, data are collected from various databases subject to its availability.

Table 1
Decadal Growth of Education Companies in India

Year	Number of Education Companies	Year	Number of Education Companies	Year	Number of Education Companies	Year	Number of Education Companies
1981	5	1991	11	2001	45	2011	342
1982	6	1992	11	2002	54	2012	437
1983	6	1993	11	2003	68	2013	510
1984	7	1994	12	2004	88	2014	573
1985	7	1995	14	2005	102	2015	655
1986	7	1996	15	2006	123	2016	746
1987	7	1997	22	2007	152	2017	839
1988	7	1998	24	2008	191	2018	951
1989	9	1999	30	2009	229	2019	1277
1990	9	2000	36	2010	270	2020	1472
						2021	1600
						2022	1746
P ₁ (1981-1990)		5.5***	P ₃ (2001-2010)		22.3***		
P ₂ (1991-2000)		15.3***	P ₄ (2011-2022)		15.9***		
P ₅ (1981-2022)				17.0***			

Source: Database of websites of www.connect2india.com, www.zaubacorp.com, www.quickcompany.in, Ministry of Corporate Affairs (various issues), Government of India; Authors' calculations using SPPS (Version 22)

Note: *** significant at one percent, ** significant at five percent

Table 1 shows that in the decade of eighties, there were only nine education companies. Era of nineties contributed more to its growth and the number of education companies started increasing at rapid rate which is due to advent of economic reforms in India. Widespread commercialisation of education has given impetus to the growth of coaching business (Modi 2023). In 2000, their number swelled to thirty-six, growing at significant rate of fifteen percent per annum. This increase continued in the next decade (2010) where the number increased to 270, growing at a rate of twenty two percent. Between the time period 2011-2022 their number increased to 1746, growing at the rate of fifteen percent significantly. This significant growth reflects several big players investing crores in the markets, huge expenditure on advertisements, latest developments in education technology etc. Precisely, the growth of education companies in the few decades (1980-2022) was significant at seventeen percent which is also reflected graphically below.

Based on different literature reviewed, the reasons for this rapid growth can be attributed to:

System of Entrance Examinations in India: This system can be traced back to the establishment of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), which introduced competitive examinations for the purpose of admission into engineering and technological programmes. Subsequently, medical institutions also chose entrance examinations as a criterion for student intake into professional courses. Over time, this style of admission system was adopted by several other professional educational institutions such as National Council for Hotel Management Joint Entrance Examination (NCHM JEE), Common Admission Test (CAT) for management courses, Common Law Admission Test (CLAT). This raised the demand for mentoring and accelerated growth of coaching enterprises.

Expectations of the Stakeholders: Boom in the information technology industry in nineties and prospect of lucrative job opportunities abroad raised the demand for engineers and other professionals (Sankar 2021). Therefore, entrance examinations set hopes for bright future (Kapur 2019). This made the parents spend huge amounts of money to get specialised training for entrance examinations. Students too have higher aspirations for a bright career for themselves which is not all the time due to the peer pressure but also their own will too. **Different Style of functioning of the Formal Sectors:** Schools prepare students for the Board examinations only or for getting conceptual understanding of the subjects. Though, preparation for entrance examinations requires analytical and logical understanding (Dahiya & Parihar 2016). This mismatch makes the students to look for coaching help where they are prepared for both exams together.

Less Acceptance Rate: Students in large numbers appear for entrance examinations against the limited number of seats in elite institutions resulting in selection of only few (Gosavi 2016). This led in crafting difficult entrance examinations to choose only the brightest minds. Level of difficulty can be assessed from the acceptance rate of JEE (Advanced) which is 1:50, whereas it is 1:19 in Harvard and 1:6 in Oxford (Ponnayolu 2020) making entrance to IIT as one of the toughest in the world. Difficulty level of the entrance exams, less acceptance ratio led to mushrooming of the coaching business (Jalote & Singh 2010).

Marketisation Strategy of Coaching Institutes: Coaching institutes have started offering much more than just teaching services. Specialised study material, personal attention to the tutee, usage of digital tools makes coaching more appealing (George 2023). It catches attention of both students and their parents as they have functioning not less than like any formal institution.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GROWTH OF EDUCATION COMPANIES AND ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS

From above discussion it is obvious that expansion of education companies providing coaching services is closely linked to growing significance of entrance examinations for admission to higher education institutions. To study association between growth of education companies and entrance examinations; number of registrations is taken as proxy for number of entrance examinations for which data was available.

Since entrance examinations for various programmes were initiated at different point of time, for that reason, there could

not be consistency in candidates registered for these examinations. Depending on the availability of the data candidates registered for different following entrance examinations were taken into consideration: IIT-JEE (1991-2012), AIEEE (2002-2012), JEE-Mains and Advanced (2013-22), for medical institutions i.e. NEET (2013-22), for CLAT (2008-2012), for management institutions Common Admission Test (CAT) (2009-2012). Information was gathered from numerous official publications, websites, and published papers to make the study easier because registration data for separate entrance exams was not available in a consolidated form and was dispersed across diverse sources.

Table 2
Number of Education Companies and Total Registrations in the Entrance Examinations

Year	Education Companies (in Numbers)	Total Number of Registrations for Entrance Examination (in Lakhs)
1991	11	0.83
1992	11	0.85
1993	11	0.88
1994	12	0.90
1995	14	0.93
1996	15	0.92
1997	22	0.91
1998	24	0.96
1999	30	1.12
2000	36	1.29
2001	45	1.48
2002	54	3.90
2003	68	5.07
2004	88	5.93
2005	102	6.34
2006	123	8.23
2007	152	8.97
2008	191	22.85
2009	229	31.50
2010	270	36.36
2011	342	42.26
2012	437	44.27
2013	510	54.11
2014	573	53.84
2015	655	68.00
2016	746	69.02
2017	839	78.08
2018	951	88.12
2019	1277	91.75
2020	1472	106.78
2021	1600	100.72
2022	1746	94.02
CAGR (in percentage)	19.9***	21.8***

Source: www.gate2016.info, Kelkar (2013), www.jeeepage.in, www.testbook.com, IIT Reports- JEE Advanced (Various issues), “NEET-UG 2024 Registration” (2024); “CBSE Announces AIPMT” (2015), “CLAT 2014” (2014); Parikh (2014); Shree (2015); Mullick (2016); Kumar (2017); www.legallyindia.com; “78% of Registered Candidates” (2020); Anand (2021); Sharma (2022), www.careers360.com; Shrivastava (2020); Authors’ calculations using SPPS (Version 22)

Note¹: ***significant at one percent, **significant at five percent

Table 2 reflects that number of coaching institutes is increasingly keeping up with number of registrations. Both have shown significant growth rate which is more or less same

for both variables. In order to assess the degree of association between the two variables, Karl Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was calculated.

Table 3
Correlation between Education Companies and Total Number of Registrations in Entrance Examinations

Variables	Correlation Coefficient
Education companies	0.956***
Number of Registration	

Source: Authors' calculations using SPSS (Version 22)

Note: ***significant at one percent, **significant at five percent

Table 3 reveals results of correlation coefficient between the number of companies and number of students registered, which was +0.956, significant at one percent. This clearly shows that the number of registrations which is proxy for number of entrance examinations being held in Country has resulted in encouraging setting up of edutech companies.

The rapid expansion of the coaching industry apparent from above discussion due to entrance examinations makes to delve deeper into structure and functioning of the coaching industry. Development of exclusive operational and revenue-generating mechanisms makes it important to explore the business model adopted by coaching companies.

BUSINESS MODEL OF COACHING COMPANIES

Business model defines functioning of a firm or the way an organisation runs (Zott et al 2010). This is basically a layout of the plans of operations of a company and making way to make those plans achievable. It works as a bridge between planning and execution of the plan (Kong 2009). Dimensions of Business Model Framework includes Key partners, Key activities, Key resources, Value proposition, Customer relationships, Channels, Customer segments, Cost and Revenue structures. Below is detailed discussion of these dimensions of business model used in the coaching industry.

Key Partners

Under the franchise model, coaching companies offer franchisees with the right to use brand name, trademarks, along with operational processes in return for a licensing fee (Hayes 2021). In the field of coaching enterprises, formal partnerships have remained concentrated in metropolitan areas only due to greater market potential. Coaching sector has also developed several informal collaborations. A prominent example in this case is, association between coaching centres and schools through the practice of "dummy schooling". Under this system, students remain formally enrolled in schools for Board examinations but spent their entire day in coaching classes (Virk 2016). Additionally, some schoolteachers work as part-time faculty in coaching institutes and makes student enrolment through referrals.

Key Activities

Traditionally, educational delivery was predominantly limited to classroom teaching only, with a few providers providing correspondence courses and study materials for distance learners. With the advent of information technology, delivery mechanism has undergone significant transformation. Currently, coaching companies are offering online, offline and

hybrid modes of instruction. Additionally, they provide specialized study materials, mock tests, analytical and time bound examination strategies to enhance student performance ("Is Coaching Important" 2019). Further, some coaching providers have diversified their services and even offer boarding and lodging facilities to attract and retain students, this is for those who migrate from other regions for taking coaching (Shukla 2010).

Key Resources

Key resources in the coaching, primarily consisted of physical infrastructure including buildings, classrooms, and basic facilities, which is supported by tutors and administrative staff for academic and operational activities. Rising adoption of information technology has made it a crucial resource in content delivery along with institutional management. Some coaching enterprises operate online, while some employ hybrid models for its content delivery. Even under institutional management, human resources have also been expanded to include marketing professionals, customer relationship executives, and technical support personnel. It shows coaching companies functions like any other organised business which require physical, technological, and human resources.

Value Proposition

Value proposition of coaching companies lies in the specialised academic services provided tailored to student's educational and career aspirations. In earlier times, coaching institutes remained limited to providing training for entrance examinations and improving performance in Board examinations. Over time, coaching enterprises expanded their value proposition through offering customised study material, mock test, previous year question paper for practice and examination-oriented strategies. Personalised attention with integration of digital technologies have made coaching fascinating to students (George 2023). Several coaching providers even offer many complementary services such as hostel accommodation, food facilities, and transportation which goes far beyond academic services.

Customer Relationships

This is one of the important aspects of coaching business model which is entirely built on students' academic performance and success in securing admission to get admission in desired educational institutions. Personalised guidance, individual attention and consistent academic support customer engagement. Successful examination results enhance trusts of the stakeholders even more as coaching industry is more outcome oriented. Continuous interaction with students through

digital communication platforms foster stronger customer relationships and engagement.

Channels

Digital advancements have significantly transformed the channels through which coaching content are delivered to the students. From traditional classroom instruction, coaching companies has started using digital channels such as video lectures, live classes, mobile applications promoting self-directed learning. Continuous interaction between students and tutors also facilitate continuous interaction which allow timely solution of academic queries. Such integration of these channels has increased accessibility and outreach of coaching enterprises.

Customer Segments

Traditionally, coaching institutions cater to the students who prepare for entrance examinations and Board examinations simultaneously. Over the time, customer base of the coaching industry has expanded according to age and academic level. Coaching companies has started targeting student of junior classes such as class 6th to 8th and offer pre foundation batches to students in class 9th and 10th, which reflects early preparation for entrance examinations. This helps in promoting not only long-term academic success but increase competitive advantage in future entrance examinations.

Cost Structure

There has been witnessed significant changes in the cost structure of the coaching industry. Earlier expenses have remained limited to physical infrastructure, rental premises and faculty salaries. In the current scenario, faculty salaries have also spiralled to an unimaginable level as experienced faculties are hired to attract students and enhance institutional reputation and many of the enterprises even offer more than the formal education sector (Nanda 2012).

In the contemporary era, marketing and promotional expenditures have made significant contribution to the cost structure. Many of the coaching companies go for celebrity brand endorsements such as Lionel Messi for BYJU'S (Bhushan 2024), Shahrukh Khan for BYJU'S India (Bhushan & Mishra 2023), Aamir Khan for Vedantu (Hariharan 2020), and Yuvraj Singh for Aakash Educational Services Limited ("Aakash Educational Services Limited" 2020). In addition to it, investments in advertising, career counselling programmes, and school outreach initiatives to increase student intake have spiked the costs.

Revenue Structure

Academic and examination-oriented training services is the primary source of revenue for coaching companies. Along with classroom, online and hybrid-based learning programmes, other services such as personalized mentoring, test series, doubt-clearing sessions are also provided to the students. These additional services are based on customer centric approach contributing to expanding revenue streams and enhancing capacity of coaching providers.

CONCLUSION

Study reveals that the growth of the coaching industry in India has strong impression of increasing entrance examination-based

admissions, rising educational aspirations, and commercialization of education. From the past four decades, coaching enterprises have transformed from small tutoring centres into well-established Edupreneurial ventures with significant market presence.

Technological integration, service diversification, customer segmentation, and innovative revenue strategies have continuously evolved business models adopted by coaching companies. Resultantly, the coaching industry today operates not merely as a supplementary educational service but emerged as a dynamic and influential component of India's education economy, which is shaping both learning practices and educational opportunities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings reveal that continued expansion of coaching enterprises is closely connected with increasing relevance of entrance examinations along with growing marketisation of education in India. There is utmost need on the part of policymakers for strengthening regulatory framework of coaching institutions. There should be regular monitoring on assuring ethical practices being followed. Formal sector education also needs to be revamped to reduce excessive dependence on supplementary coaching. In order to increase educational access while guaranteeing student welfare and fair learning opportunities, technology-enabled and inclusive learning methods should also be promoted.

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