

INTERVIEW

'We are keen to explore the use of social media to engage students'

Classteacher Learning Systems is a pioneer in educational content solutions in the country. The company caters to over 500 schools and over 5 lakh students as it provides consulting and innovative technology solutions in the area of K-12 education. Established in 2000 by two founders, Rohit Pande and Sameer Buti, Classteacher was originally started to deliver enterprise resource planning software and learning management systems for schools. In an interaction with FE's Vikram Chaudhary, the CEO of Classteacher Learning Systems, Rohit Pande, shares how the company has evolved over the last decade to focus on providing digital content solutions for schools and how it has developed one of the most comprehensive product offerings for multiple education boards in the country. Excerpts:

How Classteacher Learning Systems came into being?

Our business and company has been built over the last decade around two ideas—technology and education. The twains were not very complementary in the early days of Classteacher. We created technology to connect the school to parents, to help children learn over the Internet at home. This was the first wave of Internet at the turn of the century. The possibilities were immense—convenient access to information at home and in office, immediate solution to a doubt while learning at home, instant grading and feedback for test results.

But, broadly speaking, that age was less about social activity, more about making money...

Yes, the journey of Classteacher was more related to the inner urge, less linked to the market *per se*. Essentially we wanted to break out of the idea of the 'corporate' and make an impact in the society. We hadn't bargained for the fact that education is a social activity that occurs in the human context. Subsequent events were to prove that technology was to have a critical role in education but it had to be balanced with the supremacy of face-to-face teaching. Just as important as it is to understand the value added through technology, it is important to understand the context and the specific problem being solved through the application of technology.

Isn't change hard to come by in the institutions of learning?

I agree. Education has been one of the lagging sectors of society in adopting technology. So, it is extremely important to understand and harness the factors that drive institutional change. It provides as much competitive advantage to a company as does access to cutting-edge technology. Now that education is getting fundamentally reshaped

assessment, pedagogy and community. Each aspect of education right from pre-kindergarden to adult learning is being impacted by technology-driven innovation. Educators are also coming out and boldly experimenting with newer ways of teaching, of testing and of fostering a sense of collaboration.

What solutions you offer to support teachers?

We offer an integrated solution to support teachers in classrooms. This has three components—hardware, content and services. The hardware includes interactive whiteboards, a computer, projector and speakers that the company sources from international and local vendors. The content is developed internally and the services include teacher training and an on-site facilitator to help the school use digital solutions in classrooms.

How do you develop your content?

We have developed our content with a focus on increasing interaction level in classrooms and keeping in mind the requirements of schools, teachers and students in India. The company's product offering has 85,000 modules, which is one of the largest repositories of content in the industry. This vast content base allows teachers to teach the same concept in 2-3 different ways depending on individual preferences and skill levels. Our survey with schools highlights that teachers value this flexibility. Our clients include some of the best ranked schools in the country.

Where do you see Classteacher in the future?

I see Classteacher as a platform for continuous innovation and thought leadership in education. Also, we, as a company, are keen to explore the use of social media to engage students.

Which of your solutions are easily accepted in the market?

Product design in the last few years for us in education has been at the intersection of hardware and software. The interactive software that goes along with the interactive board, the personalisation platforms that we are now building around tablets. Our experience has been that such hybrid solutions are better accepted in the market.

Lastly, recently Fidelity Growth Partners India (FGPI) acquired a significant minority stake in Classteacher Learning Systems. How will this investment help you?

This investment will help us enhance our product offering as well as expand into new segments of education. We see this as a key milestone in our evolution and are glad to partner

