

# Customising Learning for ‘Success’: EdTech Market and its Users in a Metropolitan City of India

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## Abstract

*This study attempts to understand the operational strategies of a multinational Educational Technology (EdTech) company, Byju's and its clientele in Hyderabad city in India. It used qualitative data collected from parents (n=15), students (n=30), teachers (n=5), and content providers (n=5) associated with the company. The study is conducted with two key objectives; One, how does Byju's operate in a metropolitan Indian city to attract and engage its clientele? And, two, how do parents and students negotiate with the EdTech company while accessing its services to meet their dreams of attaining high academic credentials. The study observed that the EdTech company attempts to allure the prospective clients [users] by providing personalized and interactive learning experiences and promising high scholastic goals. Evidence suggests that the online learning platform potentially fosters 'passive learning' due to its controlled content delivery. Restricting pedagogical operations and the high-cost of the premium models appear to have adverse implications for the prospective users, especially the students from marginalised social groups.*

**Keywords:** EdTech market, Byju's, Freemium, Premium, Personalised learning, K-12 schooling, Neoliberalism

## Introduction

India at the dawn of the 21st century has witnessed a significant increase in the investments in educational technology (EdTech hereafter) by the state, private players and philanthropic organisations. This growth is reflected in the public sector's adoption of online modes<sup>i</sup>, along with a sharp rise in start-ups launched by non-state actors, fuelling substantial private equity investment in education. The Covid-19 pandemic<sup>ii</sup> marked a turning point for the widespread adoption of technology in education, though this momentum saw a few exceptions in the period that followed (ASER 2020; Jain 2023; Chiang 2024). Studies have examined impacts of technology-based learning models especially for disadvantaged social groups, changing meaning of education and pedagogical operations and popping up of a distinctive culture of standardisation,

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