Encouraging Students As A Service (ESAAS)

Global South Innovation Challenge

Concept Note

The [United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #4](#) aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (*Source:* [*UNSD website*](#)). The problem is that we have an education crisis in the developing world. Over 250 million+ children are out of school and there are poor learning outcomes for students who are in school. For example, on average in South Asia, 40% of 5th graders cannot read a Grade 2 level text in any language. In addition, school closures due to the COVID pandemic kept 90% of students out of school reversing years of progress in education.

Equal access to quality educational resources is a problem not just in the developing world but also in developed countries. Generally, quality educational services are behind paywalls which under-privileged students cannot access.

Traditional approaches to mitigating this problem will be ineffective. For example, to cater to all of the current out-of-school students, we would need to build ~150 schools every day for the next 20 years - this is a lot of time and would be cost prohibitive. Plus, due to a massive global shortage of teachers, quality of learning outcomes will not get better anytime soon

Opportunity:

EdTech presents a promising opportunity as penetration of mobile digital devices and connectivity rapidly increases in the developing world. This can allow for privileged and under-privileged students to get access to the best teachers beyond their physical proximity. The shared economy enabled by the internet has already transformed commerce, transportation and accommodation. It is now moving into education.

Noon is strategically positioned to capitalize on this opportunity to democratize access to quality education because of its highly engaging learning product and significant student base.

The Takaful Experience

Noon partnered with Non-Profit organization Takaful in Saudi Arabia to provide a student mentorship program to their students, who generally came from underprivileged backgrounds. The program offered the students access to all the platform's educational resources including premium courses, as well as a student-centered mentorship program to motivate them. The program was hugely successful. On average student scores increased by:

- +2.5 points in the national standardized exam Qudrat

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- +2.5 in the General Aptitude Test (GAT)
- +6.2 in the Academic Achievement Test

Adapting the Takaful program in other geographies led to the birth of the *Noon Open-Borders Learning Enablement* (Noble) Program. One aspect that the Noble team quickly realized was unique about Takaful was that it was both a beneficiary and an already endowed institution. The team had to pivot this model for other regions as endowed institutions like Takaful are quite rare.

The ESAAS model (Pronounced eh-saas, a common word in South Asian vocabulary (एहसास, احساس) meaning compassion)

In adapting the Takaful experience, the Noble team developed the ESAAS (Encouraging Students as a Service) offering for potential sponsors (e.g. non-profit institutions, foundations, CSR initiatives, HNW individuals and crowdsourced campaigns). Noon's freemium model ensures that every student, regardless of financial capacity, can get a comprehensive education. However, as the mission of this program is to democratize access to quality education, we have to ensure that those who are less privileged are able to not only learn through Noon's free offerings but also get access to Noon's premium offerings.

For USD 50 per student per year, ESAAS offers sponsors the opportunity to support a student demographic of their choice. Sponsored mentees can access all of the platform's features, including premium content.

We understand that students coming from under-served backgrounds will have all sorts of other disadvantages, e.g. poor foundational skills, limited access to devices, limited understanding of their future educational roadmaps, etc. To mitigate the effects of these, we offer these students additional value added services including mentorship, counselling and customized courses for foundational skill building. Where possible, we will even aim to fund access to devices + connectivity.

IDENTIFYING AND ONBOARDING STUDENTS

Noon has over 10 million+ students across 8 countries. We estimate that a significant number will hail from under-served backgrounds. We can identify these students through multiple indicators, e.g. if they are attending not-for-profit schools, or attending public schools in areas where the learning outcomes are extremely poor, e.g. select rural districts in developing countries.

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Furthermore, we can onboard new students from under-served school networks / communities in the countries we already operate. For example, five of the largest NGOs in Pakistan have more than 1million students combined.

As the model scales, we will strive to reduce education inequality globally by expanding to other areas where there is a relative lack of access to quality educational opportunities, e.g. other developing countries where we do not have a presence yet, or even inner-cities in metropolitan areas of developed countries, in the Global South where there is great educational disparity.