

Please explain your venture to us in brief.

Creya Learning & Research is a research-based education organization that has the mission to make learning in schools relevant. We believe over and above the subjects and concepts, skills and new methods of learning are equally important for children to learn. These are rarely the areas of focus in our schools. We partner with schools across the country to equip their students with the skills, attitudes and competencies (the “21st Century Skills”) that they need to succeed in the 21st Century.

When did you join the business? What have you brought to the table?

I co-founded Creya in 2011 with Venkatesh Datla and Praveen Vudoagiri. I primarily work with the team providing an overall vision, oversee our new initiatives and focus on forging strategic partnerships with government, educational boards and other key constituents in the educational ecosystem.

What makes this particular concept different? Are there competitors? If yes, how do you stand out?

Our unique flagship program XEL differentiates us from others in the sector. The program is implemented inside schools with the pioneering Learning Studio concept. The studio is a learning space that Creya sets up in partner schools. The studio is richly equipped with a diverse range of constructibles, that include Bricks for younger children, Engineering, Robotics, Digital Media Kits like voice recorders, cameras and a diverse range of software and hardware equipment. The studio is supported with a well-researched curriculum, teacher resources, and professional development for teachers; as well as comprehensive implementation support from Creya that has come in for much acclaim.



What differentiates us from competition is the unique blend of the program we offer. Our program is a confluence of STEM, Design Thinking, Experiential Learning focused on delivering 21st Century skills. This enables us to replace several stand-alone programs that schools implement and provide one comprehensive solution that is aligned to what children are already learning inside their classrooms.

The unique partnership model that Creya forges with schools is a true differentiator never before seen in K-12 schools. Under this model, the school and Creya teams work together at various levels to achieve set objectives and goals every year, with the focus being on the learner and the learning outcomes. This implementation support has proved to be the crucial differentiator for success for Creya. This is very different from the typical buyer- seller relationship that dominates product/solution sales in K-12 schooling in India.

What is the revenue model?

Schools pay around INR 1800 per child per annum under a “Whole School Subscription Model” to use Creya. As part of the package, Creya sets up the “Learning Studio” within the school campus and provides most of the hardware and software required for running the program. This fee also includes

continuous professional development to the school's teachers and implementation support running through the duration of the program.

Who are the consumers that you are targeting with the innovation? How is this going to affect them?

Our target is schools across the country, that feel the need to improve the quality of learning in their schools, improve engagement of children inside their classrooms and improve their compliance to the requirements of their educational boards. Our end-consumer is ultimately the school-going student. The impact of Creya's programs on students' academic success is tremendous. Beyond this, students rediscover their love for learning when their innate spirit of enquiry is ignited. Students learn crucial skills such as analytical thinking, problem solving and collaborative working that will help them throughout their careers and lives.

What is the potential of growth?

As per the 8th All India Education Survey (AIES), our country has roughly 23 crore children enrolled in schools. 29% of these children (~6.8 crore) are enrolled in private schools, which is our current target demographic. Creya has the potential to reach out to around 5 crore children across various private schools. We have also started working on a pilot basis with some state governments and we believe this segment will drive our growth in the mid term.

What is the strength of the organization and the scale of operations?

We have a staff of 50 working across sales, marketing, implementation, curriculum and various support functions. Geographically we have teams spread across all major cities in India and across the north, west and south of India. Besides our staff we do have several consultants and vendors supporting us in specific areas of operations. Creya has partnered with 50 schools this year (in just the 2nd full year of our operations). We plan to reach 120+ schools the next academic year.

Give us a brief background of what you were doing before starting the venture.

I am an engineer and a postgraduate diploma holder in industrial management from the National Institute of Industrial Engineering, (NITIE) Mumbai. Prior to co-founding Creya, I was the business leader at KUED (Knowledge Universe Education Digital), USA that involved using technology to connect remote students and teachers, providing resources to students to learn at their own pace and time and connect the learning community across the world. I have been a long-time votary for change in our education system and have advocated making learning relevant for the children of the 21st century.

I believe that academic excellence alone, which is by far the most focused aspect of education in our country, plays a small role in our children growing up to be successful and happy in life. My personal motivation is to guide children to discover their path to learning, careers and success in lifetime and to connect to learning communities across the world by becoming 21st century learners.

Future plans:

Our future development plans are four-fold:

a. Plans for XEL (our in-school product) include quantitative growth by spreading out geographically

within the country and working with more schools in the geographies we are present in. We will continue to make more investments to create a larger repository of products, thus allowing schools a choice and personalization for their implementations. This will also allow us to offer several price points for the product and enable us to cater to schools in smaller towns and villages across the country. For the forthcoming year, we are replacing Creya curriculum and resource books with tablets bringing in several advantages to make personalization a reality.

b. For the Summer of Discovery program, we propose to increase the scope of our partnership with the National Council of Science Museums and offer the program in even more science cities across the country. Last year we offered this program in four cities across the country. We also propose to increase the footprint of our summer programs, through newer channels to reach out to a larger base of children.

c. On the product development front, we are investing in bringing a more diverse set of constructibles into the realm of the program, offering children a wider choice based on their specific interests.

d. Under the Creya Iconic Schools program, existing school partners who have been implementing Creya for more than 2 years can enroll with us to accelerate their movement to the newer paradigms of learning. We are developing customized solutions for such schools, driving deeper integration with their curriculum and helping them move away from being “Institutions of Teaching” to becoming “Spaces for Learning”. Creya Iconic Schools will use about 300 plus hours of learning inside their schools at each grade level using the Creya Studio based approach to learning.

Have you received any funding so far? Are you looking for funds? If yes how do you look to allocate the funds?

We have raised INR 20 Crores of capital in our Series A Funding in 2011. We have plans to raise another round of capital in 2015.

What challenges did you face when you were starting out?

Trust was the biggest challenge for us has been to continue to build trust with schools by ensuring their success and the success of the children they serve. There have been many products/services/solutions offered to schools over the last several years that have not lived up to their promise of delivering outcomes. We had to work very hard to build trust and to get prospects and customers to not slot us and punish us for their prior bad experiences with other products or vendors.

Resistance to change is another big challenge we face. Thought most schools and teachers agree that children learn to ace examinations, and are not engaged in learning, they are not yet prepared to make a shift. They want to stick to old ways of doing things, despite pointers to the fact that these old ways are not effective any more.