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The Rise and Fall of the School of Enablers, Sargodha

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Abstract

This case is about the “School of Enablers”, which started in 2023, but was unable to survive given its flawed marketing and growth strategies. The main reason was a full-scale start-up rather than a gradual expansion and a lack of market differentiation strategies. The case highlights the key issues that educational startups face in Sargodha region.

Key words: Educational startup, growth strategies, marketing tactics

Subject: Strategic management/ marketing/ entrepreneurship

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Level: Undergraduate

Introduction / Background

The School of Enablers was founded in Sargodha in early 2023, the school had an aim to revolutionize the early and middle grade education in Sargodha. Vision for the school was one that was complete-spectrum, where students would be given attention and from kindergarten to grade 8. It was initiated with state-of-the-art infrastructure, large campus, located in a rich locality, and a good number of well-qualified teachers. The vision was to set the example in areas of quality education in Sargodha.

Even with the high morale vision and good financial support, the school did not survive for a period of few months. What appeared to be a lucrative venture soon unraveled and exposed deep seated weaknesses in planning, management and alignment to the market. This case showed valuable lessons for educational startups to avoid the strategic and marketing mistakes in the earlier phases.

Key Issue: Mismanagement and Market Misalignment

This failure of the school was due to a mix of strategic overreach and operational detachment. Picking to start a full K-8 setup from the initial day resulted in the hiring of many subject-tied teachers, substantial expenditures on the facilities as well as the enduring costs; all this without even a sense of the market demand. Consequently, the classrooms remained almost empty, on average with four to five students only in the sections.

The investors' selfish intentions were no less moral, but they remained far from the daily activity as they left the management to a team lacking direction and accountability. Lacking good leadership at the operational level and feedback loop for the investors, early signals were overlooked or ignored.

Marketing was not well-defined, inconsistent, and less intense. The audience was not well defined, whether the school aimed to attract the high-income earning families, middle-class families, or the budget-constrained families, nobody knew what the school was aiming to establish. Consequently, potential parents either deemed the school too vague or standardly suitable or disparate to their expectations, especially in a premium location.

Challenges and Strategic Errors

The most important issue of the school was its disregard to scale gradually. Creating another institution that was meant to be run to its full capacity but seeking to do this without students only meant to encourage inequalities on the overheads. The rent facility, being large and fully equipped, turned into a question of costs but not strategic advantage.

Also, the school did not provide outstanding differentiation. Given that there were many private schools in the market, parents did not find any differentiated reason that would drive them to choose the School of Enablers rather than someone else more famous. There were no innovating approaches to teaching and learning, curriculum improvements, or extracurricular activities that could distinguish the school.

What also affected teachers was a sense of underachievement, which impacted their morale. This continued to cause dissatisfactions and results in poor morale among teachers. The issue was exacerbated by the attitude of the administration, which was slow to respond to the concerns raised by the staff so the enrollment figures did not improve.

The place, as described outside the window, proved to be a liability. Located in an affluent neighborhood, the school had the reputation of luring in expectation-oriented parents—but did not offer a great academic experience in return, therefore deluding value perception. In the meantime, the school was found to be unaffordable or inaccessible by families from middle-income areas.

Outcome and Lessons

The School of Enablers shut down after a few months of operation. Teachers were dismissed, pending dues turned into a bone of contention, and the investors had to bear considerable financial losses. When the school was closed suddenly, it caused a shock to enrolled students who had to look for transfers and the staff were left in the disappointment of an experience that did so much and so little. The closure was a result of not only having improper utilization of resources, but also due to improper segmentation, targeting and growth strategies. If the school would have used the marketing tactics in a better way and focused on the internal as well as external branding, it would be a thriving educational institution.