



Cell-Ed – Adult Basic Education via Smartphone

Summary of Innovation: Cell-Ed is a platform that provides basic educational instruction via simple mobile phones. The platform uses voice (audio) and SMS messages to deliver 437 adult education lessons (called “micro-modules”) to learners. Each micro-module consists of three components:

- (a) audio instruction – an audio lesson on a particular concept (vowels, consonants, words), and varying from 1-3 minutes in length, is introduced when the learner calls a designated number;
- (b) written instruction – an SMS message reinforcing the voice lesson is sent to the participant; and
- (c) interactive quiz – an SMS question is sent to the participant asking them about the lesson that they recently learned, and the participant must text a response. A correct response to the question triggers the beginning of the next micro-module, whereas an incorrect response leads to a repetition of the same micro-module until the user succeeds.

To activate the program and each micromodule, participants call the Cell-Ed phone number from their own mobile phone. Students can access the program 24 hours a day, seven days a week, allowing them to learn when, where and how they wish.¹ While a smartphone isn't necessary for participation, students do need access to a cell phone and regular access to a cellular network or WIFI connection to get and receive texts and to make calls.

Cell-Ed is currently exploring the possibility of going direct to learners and of monetizing some of its learning management system features.²

Partners: Cell-Ed's current business model is B2B2C (business to business to consumer), where Cell-Ed's direct customers are government agencies, nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations, and companies that buy “seats” over the duration of a contract. The exact client list is unknown. Articles describing Cell-Ed mention that the company has about 20 customers that have thousands of employees nationwide.

Targeted Population of Learners: English Language Learners, immigrants, adults with low literacy levels who are looking to enter the workforce or already hold jobs. The current service is designed to assist Spanish speakers.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: Cell-Ed does not offer face-to-face time with a teacher, either in-person or by video, as would be the case with offerings by colleges, community centers, or nonprofits. The lack of these features may limit the learner experience in some ways, and reduces the variety of courses Cell-Ed can offer when compared to upmarket competitors.³ Cell-Ed's next steps are to create a direct-sale pipeline to the learner.

¹ https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/CellEd%20Paper_22july2014.pdf.

² <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/innovators-worth-watching-cell-ed/>.

³ <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/innovators-worth-watching-cell-ed/>.