SPOTLIGHT	INSIGHTS	STORYBOARD	EVENTS	INTERVIEW	BOOK REVIEW

We give children the choice to decide what, how, and when to learn
- Ajitha Molakalapalli, Founder of Aham

In an interaction with the research team of FDR, Ms. Ajitha Molakalapalli, founder of Aham Learning Hub shared her insights and thoughts on the state of education in the country, along with her experience of having founded the institution. Read on to find out more.

What is Aham Learning Centre? What made you think about building something like Aham?

Aham learning centre is an educational space where we provide personalized learning experience to the learners. I love education and I have always been passionate about contributing towards something in the field of education. The idea of Aham came to my mind when I saw my child's challenges in integrating with the conventional school system. Soon I realised that there were many children who were facing similar challenges and parents looking for a place where there are proper learning outcomes. I resigned from my corporate job in April 2016 and established Aham. We currently have 4 centres in the city.

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What makes Aham different from conventional schools and tutorials?

At Aham, we give children the choice to decide what, how, and when to learn. The choice can be something as small as a simple concept they want to learn. And fee structure depends on the choice the child/parent makes.

What is the admission procedure at Aham?

We don't have an admission criteria for children like other schools. But before we admit a child, we conduct a pre-assessment test. It would be a test in the subject he/she chooses to take tuition for. From the result, we deduce knowledge levels of the child and set learning outcome goals. We then discuss the goals set with parents and the existing knowledge level of the child. If the parent accepts it, we enroll the child.

Does Aham cater to diverse school board curriculum?

Yes we provide services for diverse school boards. It should be noted that only specific problem solving methods or techniques might differ from board to board but otherwise, the concept remains the same under any board curriculum and it won't differ.

What is the total current enrollment and what is the number of homeschoolers?

The current total enrollment at Aham is 600. We have learners from age group of 6-60. And There are 12 homeschoolers with grade 7-12.

What is the teacher recruitment process followed by Aham?

I want Aham to have the best subject matter expertise. Our hiring process is rooted in Aham's vision to connect students with teachers who are experts in their respective fields. First, we ask them general questions on the subject, to gauge their level of expertise.

Next, a demo class is held, where the teacher explains the course material to a target audience. Communication style, mastery of the subject and conceptual clarity are the qualities we look for.

What is Aham's policy of student-teacher ratio?

The student-teacher ratio is based on the choices of students, parents and teachers. To provide personalised learning environment is our core value. Currently it varies between 4-15 students for every teacher.

With so much of flexibility and choice at all stages, how did you design teacher remuneration model?

At Aham, teachers remuneration is not based on experience but based on the value they generate. Out of total value generated in the class, forty to eighty percent goes to teacher based on the mode of delivery of the class.

You come from a strong technological background. Could you throw some light on assimilation of education and technology?

In today's world, technology has become inseparable from any business. At Aham, we use technology for demonstrating concepts virtually wherever appropriate or to take online classes. But I don't believe in over use of technology to deliver classes completely online. Human interaction along with online delivery is the best model that's proven to work.

Technology is at the heart of Aham to on-board new educators, to stay connected in the system on what's coming up, to track and book courses/classes, etc.

According to you, which single feature of Aham contributes to its success?

We have a more customer-oriented approach. Our customers include both

teachers and students. We act as a bridge, matching the needs of expert teachers with students, and bringing them together. Our choice model without compromising on values of learning is our success mantra.

How far do additional monetary benefits help in improving the performance of teachers?

A teacher is not just a professional but is also someone who is serving society. I feel that appreciation and recognition would act as a major push for a teacher to do their job better, rather than giving them just monetary benefits. Appraisal and Feedback system for teachers is currently missing in many schools. Academic coordinators play a huge role in monitoring and giving feedback on teachers performance.

Serving in the field of Education, what according to you is the reason for low quality standards of current education system?

The problem lies in wrong diagnosis of children's performance. Examination pattern in the current system prioritize rote-learning over conceptual clarity. They are inadequate for assessing whether students actually understand what they learn. As a result, the current education system is not fulfilling an essential objective - it fails to impart the knowledge and skills required for securing a job in the future.

What is in store for Aham in the coming years?

I want to expand Aham Learning from 4 to 40 centres. My aim is to reach the unreached. I want to eventually take Aham to people in the rural areas and also to people who cannot afford conventional school education.·

Ajitha Molakalapalli, founder & CEO of Aham Technologies Inc., A post graduate in Computer Science Engineering, She started as a professor and later worked in companies like Sun Microsystems and PayPal.