

EduTech Alliance for Action x BCG Digital Ventures

BCG Digital Ventures



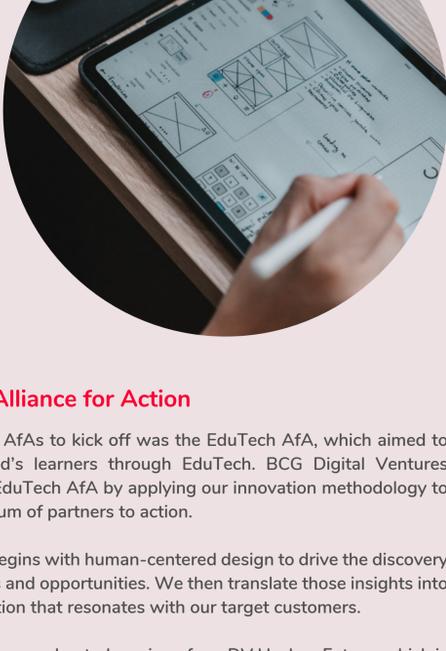
The views expressed are solely from these organisations, and do not represent that of the Emerging Stronger Taskforce (EST), the Alliances for Action (AfAs), or the Singapore Government.

Beyond a global pandemic, COVID-19 has created a crisis of human capital. With school closures globally, over 1.5 billion or 87% of enrolled learners were out of school (UNESCO). The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown led to an increase in global unemployment by 33 million in 2020, and labor market shocks left governments scrambling to preserve jobs (International Labour Organisation).

EST x BCGDV

In Singapore, the Emerging Stronger Taskforce (EST) was formed to quickly identify and seize opportunities through which Singapore could emerge stronger from the crisis, adopting a collaborative private-public partnership approach to drive the economy. The EST's Alliances for Action (AfAs) are driven by a bias to action and are industry-led coalitions, that adopt an iterative agile sprint approach.

As the education industry undergoes a transformation and pressure to respond to such unprecedented disruptions, it faces a similar challenge that many established companies are grappling with: the Innovator's Dilemma, which states "The reason [for why great companies failed] is that good management itself was the root cause. Managers played the game the way it's supposed to be played. The very decision-making and resource allocation processes that are key to the success of established companies are the very processes that reject disruptive technologies."



EDUTECH Alliance for Action

One of the first AfAs to kick off was the EduTech AfA, which aimed to reach the world's learners through EduTech. BCG Digital Ventures supported the EduTech AfA by applying our innovation methodology to drive a consortium of partners to action.

Our approach begins with human-centered design to drive the discovery of key problems and opportunities. We then translate those insights into a value proposition that resonates with our target customers.

We conducted an accelerated version of our DV Hack-a-Future, which is a structured ideation sprint that brings together multi-disciplinary perspectives to rapidly develop and prioritize potential new growth opportunities for our corporate partners. The primary goal of the Hack-a-Future is to define the opportunities for investible ventures.

The Process

In support of the EduTech AfA, we accelerated our typical Hack-a-Future process into four days. We brought together participants from 20 different education companies and institutions to collaborate and develop 60 pitches. The final six pitches were presented in a "Shark Tank" style at the end of the four days to a group of 20 CEOs and leaders from the education industry and beyond.

We led the group through a structured rapid ideation process, examining both future visioning opportunities and anchoring in the challenges of the day.

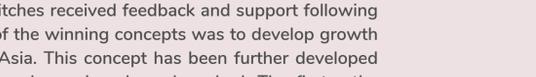
We structured the ideation around human problems and opportunities. The preparation of the sprint involved creative synthesis and curation of trends and future uncertainties that will shape the context of the Future of EduTech. This range of alternative futures served as a starting point and constraint to drive the group ideation. Thoughtful use of constraints can in fact enable creativity by establishing the problem scope, focus, and the rationale of why the ideation matters. Associated with each theme or opportunity area were specific "how might we" questions which helped reframe the insights into clear opportunities for new ideas.

Examples of the themes explored:

DESCRIPTION	0A1	TREND	0A1	HOW MIGHT WE	0A1
Learn with me Digital distribution and MOOC platforms have made it easy for anyone to be a training provider. But content alone is not enough to drive sustained motivation and continuous development. There is an opportunity to reimagine the next generation of learning by combining physical/digital interactions, social communities and personalized coaching to create new experiences for adult learners.		Self optimisation Emerging pursuit of self-optimization enabled by technology to track everything from physical activity, calories and mood. Not about perfection, but a data driven, continuous journey of self improvement.		HMW... pair of group learners together to collaborate and support each other on their journey?	
Upskilling is the job Imagine a world where continuous learning and upskilling becomes your job. When you join a new organisation, your job description refers to the skills you will be building and the work you are assigned to the means by which you will learn, practice and apply those new skills. Your skills received learning, feedback and assessment are needed by you and more with you across different employers, so changing jobs will not end your skills progression. Skills progress more rapidly through job-to-job progression. Because a desirable model of upskilling capability and work opportunity has become obsolete.	FW1	Micro certifications People constantly pursue micro-certifications to upskill and re-training is based on all the micro-certifications you can gain from across your lifetime.	FW1	HMW... enable an employee's skills map to be transferable and recognised across organisations?	FW1

[Click here to view the facilitation deck.](#)

Each round of ideation involved unpacking the overall opportunity, rapid ideation on the "how might we" questions, and clustering. Each participant then created individual concept cards inspired by the ideation. This framing, along with the time structures, forced the participants to suspend their disbelief, shift their perspectives, and work together to find solutions.



Once the most promising ideas were voted on, groups were formed for the top concepts, and the team rapidly developed a business pitch for the "Shark Tank" segment of the event, around three key lenses of:

- Desirability - Is this an acute problem or frictions faced by the target customers?
- Feasibility - Initial thinking on technical and operational feasibility
- Viability - Can we capture value? Why now? What assets do the partners bring?

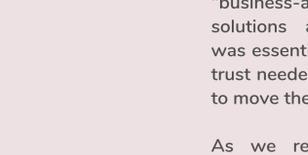
Final Reflections

Fall in love with the problem

Our innovation methodology is a process of exploration to identify a significant enough friction - or problem - to address. Often the solutions we first develop are "sacrificial" concepts or prototypes to test and learn more. In our accelerated AfA context, with diverse parties that had not worked together before, it was very important to try to simplify the process. It was however not sufficient to simplify and drive clarity and alignment around the problem they were solving, the AfA needed to try to help the partners to connect emotionally with the problem, and to truly imagine and empathise with the end-user struggles. It was not enough to know the problem, they needed to be passionate about it.

Leadership matters

Consortiums are both advantaged and disadvantaged in solving large complex problems. Bringing together diverse players from the ecosystem creates an incredible opportunity for learning multiple dimensions of a problem. There is the potential to achieve private-public alignment on a problem. This is the drive to change across industry practices, business models, capability building, and regulatory support. Driving this insight into action requires industry players to take the lead. Innovation requires not just trying something new, but to have the vision and ability to change course and inspire others to rally together.



"When nothing is sure, everything is possible"

When we ran the EduTech AfA Hack-a-Future workshops, it became evident that although the pandemic created incredible uncertainty and disruption, it also shook our participants out of their "business-as-usual" mindset and allowed for new solutions and possibilities. This mindset change was essential to drive open collaboration and build the trust needed amongst participants to identify solutions to move the industry forward.

As we reflect on the Hack-a-Future workshops we conducted for the EduTech AfA, we recognize the great opportunity this partnership presented our team at BCGDV, to contribute to shaping the future of the education industry. As we have seen in our work with large corporations, not dissimilar to established education players, change is never easy. We hope that by sharing - and demonstrating - our proven methodology, key education players have additional tools and inspiration to adopt more experimental, iterative approaches to addressing the crisis of human capital created by the pandemic.

Authored by: BCG Digital Ventures

As the largest digital business builder in the world, BCG Digital Ventures, the corporate innovation and digital business-building arm of Boston Consulting Group, has a proven methodology to de-risk concepts and rapidly launch in market. With our interdisciplinary approach, we systematically remove the risks of key assumptions on the venture, while fusing the best of corporate assets with a startup mindset to build and launch new ventures with corporate partners.

References:

1. <https://en.unesco.org/news/13-billion-learners-are-still-affected-school-university-closures-educational-institutions>
2. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_767028.pdf
3. Clayton M. Christensen, The Innovator's Dilemma: The Revolutionary Book that Will Change the Way You Do Business