Difficulty in finding suitable schedule to learn Mandarin inspired this founder to build his own education app

Coming home after a study abroad, Thiha Nyunt found himself struggling to find appropriate classes with the right timing and location in Myanmar

How often do you find yourself having difficulties in accessing language learning that works with your schedule? It's hard to believe that in this digital, on-demand era this situation can still occur.

Thiha Nyunt, a Co-founder of MyanLearn, had a friend experience this problem when he was simply looking for suitable classes of Mandarin course in his area in Yangon, Myanmar.

"We experienced first-hand how difficult it was to find appropriate classes in Yangon. My friend, who's now one of the co-founders, actually gave up learning Mandarin because he was not able to find the class with the suitable timing and location," Thiha explained.

Thiha, along with his two co-founders, then created MyanLearn app. "It was born out of our frustrating experience in finding appropriate classes. We believe finding the right class for education shouldn't be this difficult in the modern world," said Thiha.

Education in Myanmar

According to The Myanmar Times, Myanmar's basic education curriculum is about 30 years old, with the last amendment made in 1985. Widely considered to be out-of-date, Myanmar's education system is left behind compared with the international community.

Simply put, education in the country no longer fits in with this age of technology.

It was only in 2012 when the Department of Education Research Bureau started drawing up a new curriculum that is in accordance with the National Education Law. A new syllabus was introduced just two years ago for its academic year.

A teacher named Kyaw Wai Phyo was recorded in the article saying that the current education system in Myanmar needs lots of work. The fact that it takes 13 years to change the system if the curricula is changed gradually, year after year, reflects that the education in the country is still lacking access and efficiency.

How to use Myanlearn

"Myanlearn app was born with the intention of tackling disorganized information of fragmented private education market in Myanmar. We want to make learning simple, easy and accessible," Thiha added.

Thiha then continued, "I would say that it is a classified platform for private education market." He explained about the private tutor practice that we all have known and certainly have benefitted from with the change of technology.

With Myanlearn, students are able to search and discover classes from nine categories. In each category, they can find detailed information of all classes, accessible though Myanlearn's app.

Besides options for private classes, students are free to utilise the app to facilitate learnings. The app also provides articles related to a student's field of interest.

Tackling a specific management issue

As a platform for schools as much as it is for students, schools are able to update and make changes to class information in real time.

"We think it is very important as changes of class timing is a common thing in Myanmar," said Thiha.

Another localised feature made available given the current class management in the country is the review system.

"Myanlearn has review systems for these classes. From them, students can make a more informed decision before choosing a suitable class tailored to their needs to avoid unnecessary and costly schedule changing that often become a nuisance of a set daily schedule," he explained.

The same management issues are also faced by students from rural areas, and it is even more challenging for them.

"Finding classes information easily for students living in the rural areas are not easy. With Myanlearn, we hope these students can use it so they're encouraged to make the trip to study in big cities. They are no longer hindered by information scarcity," said Thiha.

Thiha highlighted that for students in the rural area, Myanlearn's transparency is especially helpful. "They know exactly how much a class will cost using Myanlearn, and how long will a class take so that they are able to plan their trip accordingly," said Thiha.

"It is really heartwarming to hear stories from our students that have benefited from using Myanlearn," he added.

A fight for education

For Thiha, education has always been a critical tool to help people in Myanmar and in the rest of Southeast Asia to improve their living standard.

"We've seen the boom of startup innovations in e-commerce and service industries for the past decade. Now, I think it is edu startup's turn to innovate and disrupt education sector in Myanmar. It is definitely a good trend to have," Thiha shared.

He added that with the emerging trend for edu startup, the whole country will start to pick up technology as an enabler for education.

"We are optimistic that Myanmar will definitely catch up and even leapfrog, if possible, in some areas of education with the help of technology," said Thiha.

As for Myanlearn, being a new edu app in the market, the next immediate plan would be improving the information organisation for the private education market and expanding to all major cities in Myanmar.

"We're at the stage of releasing one additional feature at a time. At the same time, we are striving to make our current features more efficient and effective for our users," said Thiha about the focus.

Myanlearn's students' app was first launched three months ago with the intention to understand how our early users would adopt.

All three of its founders are graduates of Singapore Management University and two of them majored in Information Systems Management while the other majored in Finance and Economic.

"All three of us believe that education is the most important tool to bring Myanmar people to prosperity. We were lucky enough to be educated abroad. We returned to our home country to give back to the community and when we looked at where to start, we thought of our belief and decided to tackle information scarcity for a start," Thiha continued.

"We sure hope that we can bring meaningful impact to Myanmar people using technology, closing the gap in education."