

Comic book route to solve maths

Bengaluru-based start-up takes the novel route to teach children

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Bengaluru-based education technology start-up Cuemath has created comic-book characters to help students learn mathematics.

Through Cuemath Universe the company, backed by CapitalG, formerly Google Capital, hopes to tell compelling stories to children aged five to thirteen, and teach them mathematics in the process.

The comics, which will be delivered digitally, will tie in with the mathematical concepts students learn in Cuemath centres.

"I was a fan of Harry Potter and became a part of that universe for the next seven years. What we are trying to do is create a world that kids can identify with and become a part of. As they progress in their mathematical journey, they also progress in this universe," says Manan Khurma, founder and chief executive officer of Cuemath.

Several education technology firms are developing digital content to aid learning, but Cuemath is the first to

try to engage children through comics. Khan Academy, for instance, relies on video content to teach children. Byju's focuses on video, animation, and interactive tests and exercises to help students to learn. EkStep, a non-profit startup, uses games to teach mathematics to children in rural areas.

Cuemath has put together a team of cartoonists, storytellers and artists from amongst well-known game developers, and television and publishing professionals. The team has been working on the comics since March.

The stories are in three categories based on the age of the students: *Thomas Tallman and Friends*, meant for the youngest age group, deals with numbers seen in nature; *Zero Squad*, an Enid Blyton-esque story of two children who use mathematics to solve crime; and *Kalina and the Shards of Singularity*, the tale of a rebel travelling through space breaking complex codes and figuring the mathematical origins of stars.

Learning music or a sport is easy because children are engaged, but that engagement is usually broken when it comes to teaching mathematics.

LEARN VIA STORIES

A team of cartoonists, artists and storytellers hired to create comics to teach maths

Khan Academy and EkStep work on improving maths concepts for students

Cuemath is the first start-up to use storytelling via motion comics to teach students

The Bengaluru-based start-up is backed by CapitalG (formerly Google Capital)



rather than just bringing in our biases. We are actually looking at what kids will like," he adds

Cuemath has over 2,500 centres in the country where teachers coach 20,000 students in a set mathematics curriculum. The curriculum sets Cuemath apart from its peers because of the focus on fundamentals without delving too deeply into school syllabi.

This makes Cuemath less favourable to parents who are constantly seeking ways to help their children score better marks in examinations. Khurma, however, emphasises the need for problem solvers and analytical thinkers in today's world.

Khurma says creating content as an education tool is not easy for today's students who are exposed to books, comics, video games and movies. He is, however, confident of getting this right over time.

"We have really good people working on this, some of the best in the industry. We are also doing research

"We are up against an entrenched mindset that has been in place for decades, if not centuries. The only yardstick for success in the education system is marks. Unless and until the education system shifts focus to learning rather than just acquiring marks, I do not see this problem going away," he says.