**Quote by Charu Malhotra, Co-founder and Managing Director, Primus Partners**

## Google Gemini's free exam prep for JEE and SAT is here and India's edtech industry cannot ignore it

**Authored by Ashish Singh**



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**Article Content**:

AI has shaken up almost every industry that I can think of. The creative professionals are at risk. The coders are losing jobs. And, now AI is coming for educational institutes by defining the way students prepare for their exams. Recently, Google rolled out free competitive exam preparation on Gemini, covering competitive exams like the SAT and JEE. While these were not flashy launch events or subscription banners, they definitely raised a few questions. What will happen to the already struggling Ed Tech companies? How will the teachers react? or what will be its impact on coaching centres in the future?

But for students, the appeal is obvious. Full-length practice tests, adaptive questioning, instant explanations and zero cost. But are they going to accept it? To get answers to all these questions, Digit sat down with the premier ed tech company Physics Wallah, consultancy firm Primus Partners and a few students and here is what they had to say.

**The new baseline: Content is no longer the product**

According to Physics Wallah (PW), generative AI platforms like Gemini and ChatGPT have effectively reset the floor value of learning. With this shift, the company will have to change the way it operates.

"Free, high-quality practice, explanations, and doubt solving have now been fully commoditised. Selling access to lectures or practice sets, while still possible, is no longer a defensible standalone proposition," said Pulkit Swarup, Senior Vice President of Engineering at PW.

This shift, he argues, will force the edtech platforms to move beyond content libraries and rethink what students actually need, not just to learn, but to perform.

"Students will no longer pay merely to learn concepts. What they continue to need is structure, prioritisation, consistency and exam strategy," Swarup added, pointing to areas like time-bound study plans, mock tests, feedback loops and mentor-led accountability as services AI alone struggles to replace.

**Pressure is real, but not where you would expect**

While there were concerns about AI tools leading to sharp decline in users, the impact on edtech seems to be mixed. Companies built mainly around content libraries are facing the most pressure, while those that use AI to strengthen structured learning, planning and progress tracking are seeing more stable engagement.

"The impact across user acquisition, engagement and revenue metrics has never been stronger," the company said, clarifying that platforms integrating AI thoughtfully are seeing gains rather than losses.

By embedding AI into personalised study plans, backlog management and goal tracking, Swarup claims it has been able to sustain engagement and reduce churn. "This shift toward execution, accountability and personalisation remains key to shift revenue pressure in an AI-first environment," he said.

On the other hand, Charu Malhotra, co-founder and Managing Director at consultancy firm Primus Partners, sees a sharper divide emerging across the industry. "Pressure is most visible in consumer-facing test prep, tutoring and homework-help services," she said. "Students now expect free or low-cost AI support, making it harder to justify premium pricing for basic assistance," she added.

She adds that edtech revenue is already shifting away from content access toward credentials, employability and job-aligned learning, a trend that AI has dramatically accelerated.

**Is AI a disruption, or a forcing function?**

Both Swarup and Primus Partners agree on one thing: generative AI is not just another feature to bolt on. "AI is not competing with edtech. It is forcing edtech to evolve," Swarup said, stating AI as an intelligence layer that powers personalisation, while human educators focus on strategy, execution and accountability.

Malhotra goes further, arguing that AI has fractured traditional learning models altogether.

"ChatGPT immediately disrupted assignments, grading systems and assessment models. Rote-based learning lost relevance almost overnight," she said. "Students are not waiting for permission or ethics, they are appropriating AI, experimenting and co-creating knowledge," she added.

In that sense, AI is less an add-on and more a rebuild trigger, pushing platforms to rethink pedagogy, assessment and even the role of teachers.

**But can students trust AI during high-stakes exams?**

Despite their capabilities, both experts warn against students relying solely on general-purpose AI during critical exam years.

"AI models are not inherently aware of syllabus boundaries, marking schemes or evolving exam patterns unless tightly constrained," Swarup cautioned. "Learning may feel productive while drifting away from what is actually tested," he added.

Malhotra flags additional risks- from plagiarism and bias to data privacy and accountability. "Unlike curriculum-aligned edtech platforms, general-purpose AI tools are not designed for academic governance," she added.

## What students actually think

Among students, the response is far from one-sided. Some believed this is the new way of learning while others doubted if AI is actually going to help them pass those extremely hard competitive exams.

Ravi Vishwakarma, a student from TCET Mumbai, says AI tools have made exam prep more accessible and less intimidating. "With AI like Gemini or ChatGPT, things got much better for competitive exams. You can learn in your own way without judgment, which we don't always see in paid batches," he said.

Others remain cautious. Tarun Chaudhary from MIET Meerut prefers traditional platforms. "AI just provides information based on prompts. Platforms like PW or Unacademy have registered tutors and structured courses. They understand exam patterns better," he said.

Nakul Chaudhary, also from MIET, strikes a middle ground. "AI tools and free platforms help with practice and concept building, but they may not always be accurate. Paid platforms offer structured courses and expert guidance. A balanced use of both leads to better results," he said.

## Collaboration, not collision

Despite the AI chatbots entering the space, neither Swarup nor Primus Partners believes the future is a zero-sum game between AI giants and edtech players.

"Companies like Google bring scale and intelligence. Edtech platforms bring domain depth, pedagogy and outcome ownership," Swarup noted, hinting that we may see more collaborations than competition.

Malhotra agrees, pointing to Google's long history of ecosystem-building in education. "AI companies provide infrastructure; edtech firms provide curriculum alignment and institutional trust. These capabilities are complementary," she said, though she warns against edtech firms becoming "thin wrappers" over dominant AI platforms.

## What's the future

After years of boom-and-bust cycles, the next phase of Indian edtech is likely to be quieter and maybe, sharper.

"The next phase will be leaner, outcome-driven and AI-native," Swarup said, hinting at long-term programs and deeper integration with schools and colleges. Malhotra sees a similar future, where institution-integrated platforms, employability-linked learning and AI-powered diagnostics dominate.