



**IMS GLOBAL**<sup>®</sup>  
Learning Consortium

## Article Series on Learning Impact

### What Will Define Tomorrow's Next Generation Education Technology?

April 2014

Deborah Quazzo and her associates have arranged more than 283 transactions during her career, valued at more than \$41 billion. In addition, the founder and managing partner of **GSV Advisors** has been an angel investor in about 25 companies serving the education sector. And what does she look for when deciding which businesses and institutions in which to invest?

“What I hope people take away from the IMS conference is the idea that investment is interested in aligning with companies and teams with really big ideas to transform education,” she said. “I think, for the most part, the great companies and entrepreneurs are focused on those key outcomes: improving learning, increasing access, lowering costs and increasing leverage for the education leaders. What we like to call the return on education. There seems to be a lot more accountability around performance and outcomes than we have historically seen in the education segment. I hope people leave the Learning Impact Leadership Institute with the idea there are a lot of great, positive things happening around change in the education sector and, hopefully, they’ll get some ideas around what the next game changers will be.”

Quazzo will lead a panel discussion at IMS Global’s **2014 Learning Impact Leadership Institute** in New Orleans, May 5-8. Participating in the panel discussion titled “What’s the Next Game Changer? – Following the Money in the EDU Space” are **Roger Novak**, General Partner, Novak Biddle Venture Partners; **Brian Napack**, Senior Advisor, Providence Equity; **Michael Locke**, Vice Chairman, Rasmussen, Inc.; **Manoj Kutty**, CEO, LoudCloud Systems; **Adam Newman**, Managing Partner, Education Growth Advisors; and, **Matt Haldeman**, Vice President of Technology Partnerships, McGraw-Hill Education McGraw-Hill Education.



*Deborah Quazzo,  
Founder and Managing  
Partner GSV Advisors*

One trend Quazzo said she has seen in the last decade is that it costs less to develop key technologies. “Obviously, mobile technology is completely transforming the classroom. Mobile adoptions are occurring by schools and districts at a much faster clip than anyone imagined. It has made

an enormous difference for offerings like **Edmodo**, the scaling of a company like **Quizlet**, or for a relatively new company like **Newsela**. Another trend that we're seeing is an incredible amount of usage of educational technology at home by the students. One example that comes to mind is **Think Through Math** that offers an artificial intelligence layer and then bumps up into a computer and to a phone-based teacher for intermediation component. They have incredible statistics of students taking home their math product; they'll even give you numbers from Christmas and New Year's Eve, a stunning number of minutes done on their program at a time when you wouldn't think a child would be working math problems."

Quazzo said there's no doubt the recent global recession impacted financial support for K-12 and higher education. But as investment dollars recover and begin to flow again, the proportion of funding to K-12 institutions is outpacing investments in higher education, reversing a long-time trend. "There's still a lot of money flowing in, just not in proportion to K-12."

Whenever Quazzo's firm makes an investment or works with a client, first and foremost, they are betting on the team, she said. "And I think it's been interesting to see, people have been pretty critical about the level of talent on the technology side in education. Perhaps it's still a bit of an issue, but I think we've seen a renaissance in people coming into education to solve things from the technology sector. We have a much more talented group of technologists in education today than we've ever had. We're also looking for ideas that are special, different, or great, that make companies special, different or great."

"We look for people who have found some sort of white space in the education sector," she added. "For example, we recently backed a young group who just graduated from Yale and developed an application called **Panorama Education**. They saw a white space in student/parent/teacher surveys, which is a very core part of accountability, and transformed those results into a more sophisticated technology environment, having them become really critical data. It's really great teams that see the field and recognize critical needs that need to be met. And they attack those needs in unique ways."

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— *Deborah Quazzo, Founder and Managing Partner GSV Advisors*

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Rob Abel, IMS Global's chief executive officer, said that in addition to the many learning tracks that will be available at this year's Learning Impact, this year will feature the first annual **IMS Connected Learning App Challenge** finalists, offering attendees the opportunity to spend time with those innovators who are developing the applications that will drive education technology into the future. "It will provide a chance to see firsthand the type of open applications, platforms, and content being developed today that could be the next game changer for education."

## About IMS Global Learning Consortium

IMS Global is a nonprofit organization that advances technology that can affordably scale and improve educational participation and attainment. IMS members are leading suppliers, institutions and government organizations that are enabling the future of education by collaborating on interoperability and adoption initiatives. IMS sponsors Learning Impact: A global awards program and conference to recognize the impact of innovative technology on educational access, affordability, and quality. For more information visit [www.imsglobal.org](http://www.imsglobal.org) or contact [info@imsglobal.org](mailto:info@imsglobal.org).

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