

Dear Members,

The first e-discussion on the framework for ICTs in school education covered investment issues addressing the topics of infrastructure and capacity building. We are delighted at the valuable expertise sharing from the ICTD and Education Community members. Thanks to the positive response to our first query, we have been able to learn of:

Topic 1: Investment Issues: Infrastructure and Capacity Building

Topic 1: Infrastructure

- Key challenges for ICT infrastructure: power, maintenance, operating system software, no standards set for the ICT in schools, non use of alternate source of power in schools where no grid power is available, lack of funds or intermediaries that can channel funds, and aspect of software missing from the ICT school infrastructure; seamless integration of new technology with the existing and well-proven classroom techniques.
- Ideas to overcome the challenges of the ICT infrastructure to include: upkeep and maintenance to be on a priority basis every month, the school to make it mandatory to use the infrastructure by the private partner for training local people or guardians/parents who are mostly unaware of the role of ICT in lives of their children, The PCs to increase the RAM/HDD every 6/12 months, the school to pay extra to the private partner if they can make a School Automation Software; the Virtual Class Technology on Edusat for Rural Schools (VICTERS) project in Kerala to be taken as a model; encouraging methodologies like creating a repository of off-the-shelf courseware, providing one multimedia PC with inverters/UPS in each school, demo lessons for students on using courseware, providing interactive multi-media material or educational TV which offers the raw material for computer based video and multi-media instruction in Indian languages, creating a digital library on a server or on the LAN, and providing the classroom PC-cum-projector facility in every class room.
- For school ICT infrastructure to be used as community learning centres: many factors need to be addressed such as who owns the infrastructure, what is the business model, for what purpose is it being used, who benefits (especially financially) from such access, and who will pay for the access. The other issue today is that many schools operate in two shifts.
- Solutions to address the issues of ICT infrastructure to be used as community learning centres can be found in PPP model as in the case of Common Service Centres and linking it up to e governance and other such initiatives.

Topic 2: Capacity Building

- Important deterrents to capacity building for most of the educational institutes identified as initial cost associated with putting up the infrastructure, lack of trained faculty & lethargy on part of management & faculty to upgrade themselves, initial resistance to change by the teachers, lack of bandwidth & other technical support functions across states, and lack of awareness with regards to utility of ICT for education;
- Ways to overcome the challenges of capacity building including, public private partnership as the best alternate, training programmes for the teachers to view the benefits of ICT based training, teachers need to be convinced that technology is not their substitute and is only a platform of knowledge transfer in an effective manner; create student clubs and include creative tools (software such as Photoshop, Adobe Insight, Illustrator, Flash or GIMP and so many other open source software) as part of the schools software library.

