

REPORT

Workshop
on
Broad Objectives of a National ICT in Education Policy
eINDIA2007, Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi, India
31st July 2007



Organised By
Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI)
(Founded by UN ICT Task Force)
Dublin, Ireland

and

Center for Science, Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), India

in collaboration with

Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD)
Government of India



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1. Introduction

1.1 India today aspires to emerge as front-runner amongst the knowledge-based societies. Thus, the benefits of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution in providing education and training of desirable quality can hardly be over emphasised.

Education is a powerful tool towards empowerment of society and its people. It builds the foundation for their participation and contribution to the country's prosperity and progress. To begin with, elementary education has been made a fundamental right of all children in 6-14 age group. Focus thus has been to provide universal access, equity and ensure provision of quality elementary education. Universalization of access has nearly been achieved. Investment in the sector has resulted in satisfactory outcomes. 94% of our rural populations have a school within one sq. kilometer. The gross enrollment ratio has improved to 108.56 in 2004-05 from 96.30 in 2001-02 at primary level, and to 70.51 from 52.09 at upper primary level during same period. The dropout rate at the primary level has reduced by 10.50% i.e. 28.49 in 2004-05 from 39.03 in 2001-02. 2.2 million children with special needs have been enrolled. Multi-pronged strategies, in the form of various incentives, such as, free textbooks, scholar-ship, mid-day meal, residential school for girls, etc., sensitization of parents and communities to become partners in this endeavour have yielded well. Teachers' development has also received equal priority to improve the quality. Use of technology in the classroom transactions has gained impetus in the form of computer aided learning in many States. Credible NGOs have joined as partners in this effort.

1.2 The challenge ahead is to provide universal access, equity and quality at the Secondary stage. It is a critical stage in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students' career path in higher education as also in the world of work. As educational indicators are not very encouraging at the moment, the responsibility is now to ensure substantial investment to improve the current scenario at the earliest.

1.3 Use of technology by students at the Secondary stage pre-supposes their strength in terms of knowledge and skill development. As Internet becomes more and more accessible, the world of information and innovations has become more accessible today. Recognizing the importance of ICT in education as early as 1984-85, Computer Literacy and Studies in Schools (CLASS) Project was launched. Today, exclusive educational television

channel 'Gyan Darshan' has been launched to provide satellite based education across the country besides the interactive radio programme.

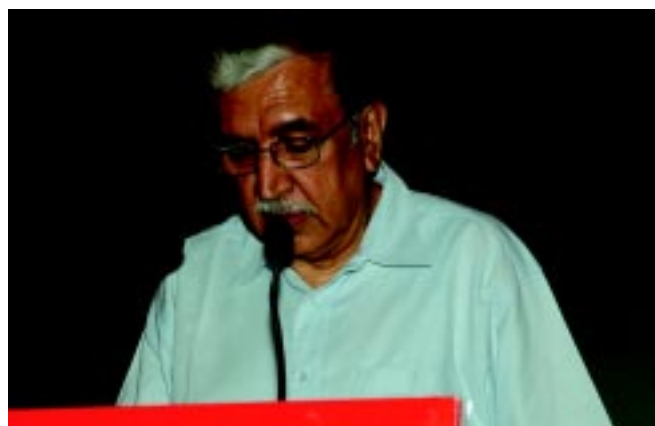
1.4 In December 2004, the ICT in Schools Scheme was launched to open a window of opportunity for secondary stage school students across the country in partnership with states/union territories. While the emphasis has been on the computer literacy programme, the advantage is now realized in use of IT tools for development of e-content in the computer aided learning activities and self learning by students.

2. Need for a National ICT in Education Policy

While many States have developed their own policy on ICT in School education, at the national level there is a need for putting in place a coherent and enabling policy for use by all stakeholders. It has thus been felt to develop a set of policy objectives, guidelines, practices and knowledge tools to enhance the role of ICT in school education, particularly, by following a consultative and a participatory process with States, academia, NGOs, civil society organizations, practitioners and other stakeholders. In this regard, Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, (GeSCI) has offered its expertise and assistance to the Department of School Education & Literacy (D/SE&L), Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India in the formulation of the national policy.

3. GeSCI Initiative

GeSCI was founded by the United Nations ICT Task Force, and is a global organization that catalyses, supports and convenes national and regional ICT in Education initiatives and provides strategic advice to Ministries of Education on the effective use of ICTs for education. In the recent past, it has facilitated development of ICT policy in education for a few countries, namely, Namibia, and Bolivia with on going work in Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda.



Inaugural speech, Shri Champak Chatterjee
Secretary, Department of School Education, MHRD at eINDIA2007

- 3.1 The International event of eINDIA2007, provided the right context to start a first level of discussion with the stakeholders and solicit recommendations from them.
- 3.2 During the eINDIA2007 inaugural speech, Shri Champak Chatterjee, Secretary, D/SE&L, Govt of India shared his vision to incorporate the benefits of the IT revolution in providing quality education and training while recognizing that ICTs are revolutionizing the paradigm of addressing developmental issues. He also emphasized the collaborations of IT and telecommunications, which have become powerful instruments for dissemination of knowledge, skills and services to citizens.

Highlighting the use of technology by students at the Secondary stage to build capacities in term of knowledge and development, he said that as Internet becomes more accessible to students, they are exposed to a larger world of information and knowledge.

He informed government's intention for creating a National ICT in education policy for schools that is expected to elucidate the National goals, provide an efficient framework and minimum set of standards essential for integrating the use of ICT in education. He emphasized the need to monitor the programme through external agencies and ensure that the impact assessment studies are conducted regularly so as to gauge the progress made and lead the way forward.

The GOI has several National as well as State Specific schemes that run concurrent to a large number of

privately led ICT initiatives across India. In addition there are several ICT in education initiatives across the country and these account for a large degree of understanding and awareness about the role that ICTs can play in enhancing the teaching learning process. However, the lack of a concerted, dynamic education policy has continued to hound the ministries of education, increasingly, this new tool called ICTs and their incorporation has added to the challenge.

4. The Workshop

The partnership with D/SE&L to evolve a national policy is proposed through a series of consultations and deliberations with key partners and others. The Centre for Science Development and Media Studies (CSDMS), an NGO working in the field of ICTs and education in India will assist GeSCI in fostering the objectives.

Objectives

4.1 To begin with, it was decided to hold a workshop on July 31, 2007 in the backdrop of eINDIA2007 conference, organized by CSDMS. The main objectives of the workshop were as under:

1. To establish a multi-stakeholder framework for the National ICT policy in school education
2. Seek stakeholder consensus and clarity on the broad objectives and components of a 'National ICT policy in school education'
3. To understand key issues, concerns and strategies to integrate ICTs in the Education policy
4. To provide a platform to understand, collect, synthesize and document the sectoral development that has already taken place in the States and neighboring countries and draw out a framework for ICT policy in the School Education Sector.
5. Collate the recommendations emerging from the workshop and frame further action plans in the formulation of the Policy.

Opening Remarks

4.2 The workshop was chaired by Shri S.C. Khuntia, Joint Secretary to Govt. of India, D/SE&L. A list of participants who attended the workshop is included as **Annexure I**.

In his opening remarks, Shri Khuntia emphasized the need for consultations in evolving a robust and dynamic policy which would make ICT integration at schools easier. He highlighted India's dynamic software potential and a good enabling environment with an expanding IT landscape. He emphasized that India is a federal country and though the Centre would provide a broad framework



Opening remarks by Sh. Subhash C. Khuntia, Joint Secretary, Department of School Education, MHRD

or a set of guiding principles for ICT integration and usage, most of the action will be taken at the state government level.

He said that as States would be expecting guidance from the Central Govt., the Ministry should be ready to take a leadership role in the matter. An important aspect of the process would be a set of sustainable public-private partnerships. The Public Private Partnerships that exist today are well intentioned but they function in a disjointed manner. There is an urgent need to collate good practices and use them as scalable and replicable models. He invited all the participants to share their vision, ideas and opinions openly as the same would both help the shape the policy and would be reflected in the policy as well. He shared a list of areas (given below) and requested participants to furnish their suggestions.

- What would be the objective of the policy and why ICT should be used in education?

- We have a centrally sponsored scheme where our objectives of computer literacy to school children as in the 21st century is a must, that skill has been developed. Secondly ICT can be used to enable more effective teaching-learning environment in school. It can be used as an aid by teachers or for self learning by the students also assessment and evaluation of students capabilities.
- How to build the capacity for ICT implementation in schools for students and teachers?
- What is a good policy of procurement - Hardware, software, infrastructure?
- What are the connectivity options?
- In which other fields can ICT be included viz; vocational education or open and distance learning?
- How can it be replicated across the schools? Our vision is that within the next three years, all secondary and higher secondary schools will have minimum level of ICT infrastructure and then penetrate down primary schools.

4.3 Outline of the Workshop and Discussions

Section	Description	Outcome
Sharing global experiences: An International perspective Ms Astrid Dufborg Executive Director Global eSchools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI)	Building the case for an over arching, end to end framework, bringing in lessons learnt in other countries developed and developing.	Sharing GeSCI's work in assisting MoEs in developing a National ICT in Education policy. Establishing GeSCI's position as a neutral, unbiased expert.
Opening remarks Mr. Subhash Khuntia Joint Secretary Dept of Education and Literacy Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GoI)	GoI's perspectives in developing an overarching National ICT in education policy. Draw out the main objectives of a National policy. References to stakeholder roles and a brief word on the role played by GeSCI.	Establish the need for a National ICT policy, Need to start the process quickly, need for a neutral expert whose main domain is to assist MoEs develop ICT policies, need for a collaborative and consultative, bottoms up approach.
Process briefing Ms Ashish Garg Programme Coordinator - India, Global e Schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI)	Session Moderator	Defined process, objectives and expected outcomes of the session.
Round Table Discussion		
Concluding remarks and Discussion Summary Mr. Subhash Khuntia Joint Secretary Department of Education and Literacy Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), GoI	Summarised discussion points, bringing into comparison the work already done by some states, the lessons learnt from them, collating the experiences at various levels, and outline at more accepted objectives, adding the Ministry's perspective to round off the discussion.	Summarised the points of discussion, building the case for broad based objectives, a guideline for a National ICT in education policy.

List of Recommendations

4.4 Outcomes of the workshop - List of Broad Recommendations

- The policy must define priority areas and the implementation would have to be phased.
- The policy must identify National priorities as linked to the National Education Goals, the EFA goals and provide direction on the phased structure of implementation.
- The policy must be based on identified educational objectives.
- The policy can neither exist nor be implemented in isolation. Coordination and alignment of plans, projects and on going programmes is a must. This coordination would exist at various levels.
- Coordination amongst states for knowledge sharing, and sharing of best practices, sharing of vendor information and infrastructure specifications etc.
- Coordination would also be required between the various departments to ensure provision of electricity, connectivity, school buildings and other infrastructure etc.
- Standardization of outcomes to ensure consistence in the quality of education imparted through the use of ICTs.
- The policy would need to work within the parameters of a defined time-line within which it would be ready for sharing.
- The policy should be an overarching umbrella statement of intent. The policy could be supplemented by specific mechanisms such as a tool kits and guidelines for appropriating the costs or the time frame for usage etc.
- The policy should have a Preamble / Vision - linked to a larger goal.
- The policy must address Issues of equity and must be child centric.
- Process definition - Need to learn from experiences of states, rural schools, govt, guarantee of quality education - not built in isolation - define process - collaborative and bottom's up approach, build stakeholder ownership, Process - defined and sensitive - phased plan of implementation/ build readiness for adoption and use.
- Optimize usage - school time, post school time, linked to community development.
- Need for standardization - not simply to be used as a delivery mechanism.
- Benchmarking the Return on Investment (ROI) - define quantifiable measures for specific objectives.
- Need for alignment - between various projects, between states and districts, between states and centre, between various departments and ministries etc.

- Role of the MHRD- leadership role at the National level, define policy statement, define educational objectives, NCF provides some road map - MHRD to define Road map for quality education, leave local need based objectives for States to take forward.
- Realistic, PPP, political will, answer the question 'why do we need an ICT in education policy'.

Closing Remarks

4.5 The workshop was able to provide the participants an open forum to discuss their vision of a National ICT in education policy, suggest broad objectives and provide inputs on the basic components that the policy must address. Discussions also reflected upon the kind of processes that should be used.

The outcomes of the discussion reflected the depth of engagement and discussion and we are indeed thankful to all the participants for their expert comments.

In his closing remarks, the Joint Secretary, expressed satisfaction at the quality of discussion and recommended the following:

- Create a draft policy based on the workshop and then invite discussions on it, through the creation of a blog or group.
- A first draft of a National policy to be developed in the next couple of months through a collaborative process with the involvement of the stakeholders, experts and practitioners.

5. The Way Forward

Further to the workshop, GeSCI and CSDMS had another round of discussion with the Joint Secretary of D/SE&L on next steps which are as under:

- The work may begin in two phases: development of the framework for an overarching policy followed by development of an implementation strategy to support the policy.
- The policy documents should be completed in a period of about two months and simultaneously start deliberating on Implementation Strategy.
- While preparing the documents, efforts be made to analyze the policies evolved by the States in India ,other countries, international agencies , and by private sector as a part of their corporate social responsibility.

We at D/SE&L, MHRD, GeSCI and CSDMS would like to extend our sincere gratitude and thanks to all the experts who attended the workshop and shared their views with us. We look forward to your continued support in the ensuing consultations also.

List of Abbreviations

CLASS	Computer Literacy And Studies in Schools
CSDMS	Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies
D/SE&L	Department of School Education & Literacy
EFA	Education for All
GeSCI	Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative
GOI	Government of India
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resources Development
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
ROI	Return on Investment

ANNEXURE I

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ANNEXURE II

Photographs



Ms Chandita Mukherjee, Director, COMET Media Foundation emphasised the need of creative content.



Mr. Khalid Bomba, Regional Co-ordinator (Africa), GeSCI suggested a set of guidelines by the Ministry as benchmarks for the various states .



Dr. M C Pant, Chairman, National Institute of Open Learning urged the use of ICTs to achieve education for all with focus on teachers training.



Dr Utpal Mallik, Joint Director, Central Institute of Educational Technology called for measurable objectives as a provision in the policy statement.



Dr Radha Ganeshan from Quest Alliance recommended the inclusion of ICT in learning levels as a component in the overall policy.



Mr.. Ashutosh Chadha, Manager- Education Programmes, Intel stressed the need to collate the existing ICT initiatives across the country.