

ICT and Teacher Education

Proposal #1 – Continuous teacher development by the teacher for the teacher

Premise:

All discussions of ICT for teachers have remained restricted to training teachers to use Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office, particularly MS Power Point. And the champion users have been showcased across the country, given national awards, taken on trips to the US...

ICT is unheard of in teacher education institutions, at least a majority of them, and among the minority who have caught the 'mouse', ICT still means computers.

The scenario which begs for an intervention:

The tacit assumption that all teacher education institutions make is that their students know their 'content', meaning thereby they know enough maths or science or English or history or ... Therefore they subject them to lectures on philosophy, sociology, psychology; followed by ritualistic practices of teaching (the algorithms for writing lesson plans, cutting up thermocol or using stencils and lasting through their first encounters with teaching) and finally after a University Examination declare them to have mastered methodology.

At the end of this process we have a double graduate, trained for life in content and methodology, and ready to take on all the NCFs, and turn our children into *whatever you wish*. That our children survive "schooling" is a miracle.

To say the least, the teacher is not ready to teach. The actual classroom, the children, the disjoint between theory and practice – all of these shake her up. The content becomes a threat, the methodology irrelevant. The burden grows. And she feels all alone in this battle to make sense of and meaningfully respond to her class.

The proposal:

But the teachers are not to blame at all. They did not ask for or expect such a raw deal in the first place. Hence the proposal.

If you can afford it, increase the duration of the teacher education course. But such proposals have already been rejected quite vociferously by most states.

Alternately, hand-hold the teachers through a mentoring process for as long as the teacher feels the need. I think of a gurukula model, each generation of teachers taking on the mantle to groom the next generation. Numbers, logistics, are certainly going to come in the way.

Distance modes perhaps hold the key. Internet could hold the key. Portals like Sakshat or Vidya Online can be re-engineered into peer networks, e-learning platforms, with built in certification mechanisms (frankly this is optional). Such portals can serve multiple needs of the education system – MIS, examinations, curriculum delivery – apart from its primary purpose of supporting teacher development, which can more than justify costs.

How should the ICT Policy support this idea:

Despite the absence of any stated ICT policy, much of the technological means already exist. What does not exist is an adequately articulated demand for teacher development. Nevertheless, I propose (in this order):

- 3G mobile based broadband internet connectivity to every teacher.
- Encourage teacher development initiatives on the internet.
- Ask SCERTs to work out an ongoing teacher development plan based on the internet initiatives, co-opting all teacher education institutions.
- Tell all teachers to 'get on to the net' or else...

Premise:

Each NCF dreams of transforming the nation's classrooms. Its latest avatar proposes that every child shall emerge out of the school, among other things as an independent thinker and a knowledge constructor. Some assume that the teacher is 'ready' to do this – on stage and waiting for the spotlight to be turned on. Some others assume that 'teachers need training' (they also call it orientation) and lecture them on constructivism, peace education, reflective practices, critical pedagogy,... and for good measure use audio-visual presentations through video-conferencing on the EDUSAT for the purpose.

The scenario which begs for an intervention:

Teachers are not ready, and will not be. You need a constructivist teacher for preparing a constructivist student. And the constructivist teacher is not being made in Indian classrooms (if at all one can be made).

Teachers do not own any part of teaching-learning practice. They were the pre-cursors of call centre workers, except they need not be called Jill or John because the masters are Indian. They read out textbooks, write out notes, conduct exams and pass or fail students at their masters bidding. At the very least, this will have to be undone all the way down to its foundations for any constructivist structure to be even planned.

The proposal:

The NCF05, the syllabus and the NCERT textbooks are already on the net (<http://www.ncert.nic.in>). Let teachers begin deconstructing them to begin with – on the net, together, wiki style – and let a new version emerge. What will come out of it? How will it be different? I frankly don't know. Perhaps it can only be better. But at least, every teacher would say, "that's my thoughts, my books". I am told 450 people were involved in writing up all the material associated with NCF05. I believe NCF10 should have 450,000 at least. And I believe the day is not far when we have as many different versions of each textbook.

How should the ICT Policy support this idea:

Again, the technological means exist. Armed with an e-mail ID and assured access to the net, every teacher can be on it. In addition we need:

- Opening up and equipping portals like the NCERT one, to handle such forums
- Get each SCERT open up their curricular materials for de- and re-construction
- A BJVJ style intervention, getting every teacher on to this platform