To,
The Director,
NCERT,
New Delhi

Sub: Outsourcing of core educational processes through "Computer education" programs in schools

Prof Krishna Kumar,

We have recently read in the newspapers that the MHRD is planning to implement computer education in government schools on an outsourced model wherein the program implementation including the actual teaching would be done by a trainer from a private agency.

We have earlier shared our feedback with MHRD that the design of curriculum of ICTs in education needs to be evolved by those having experience and understanding of curricular processes, and not by technology companies, since ICT in education is a pedagogical issue and not a mere technology issue. Secondly teacher professional development, of which computer related skills training is a part, is a complex process, (as highlighted for example, in our National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education), and requires deep understanding and perspectives based on educational philosophies and policies.

It may at times be necessary to outsource non-core activities such as hardware procurement, setup and maintenance. However curriculum design and teacher training are core educational activities and it is pedagogical detrimental to hand over such basic educational processes to private technology vendors whose core competency is in writing software
products and whose main interest is in creating mass markets for their software products.

The Position Paper from the Focus Group on Educational Technology,National Curriculum Framework Review 2005, clearly stressed the dangers of imposing computer education using external, top down models and called for the integration of computer learning and computer aided learning with the mainstream educational processes already being carried out by people within the system. Our public education system has elaborate structures and resources which engage with the pedagogically demanding tasks of curriculum design and teacher professional development and our SCERTs, DIETs and BRCs need to be involved in designing these processes as well.

We enclose a letter that has been sent to MHRD earlier with these concerns, as a part of our feedback sought by MHRD on the draft National Policy on ICTs in School Education. In a similar matter, many eminent educationists recently wrote to the Education Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, against outsourcing the curriculum and teacher training
processes to a software vendor.
The role and impact of ICTs in educational processes is a new and contested area. Any form of outsourcing or Public Private Partnership that is employed in this area should be in accordance with clearly laid out policies and guidelines that are evolved keeping in mind core educational priorities and objectives of public educations system in India. This requires wide consultations with educationists, and we request that any program on outsourcing ICT education be put on hold pending such consultations and development of clear guidelines. The undersigned and other educationist would be happy to help in organizing and participating in such consultations, and it may be useful to organize these under the aegis of NCERT.

We request your urgent attention to this issue, which has grave
implications for the public school system.

Yours truly,

1. Amman Madan, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur
2. Anjali Noronha, Ekalavya, Bhopal and member of the National Focus Group on "Systemic Reforms for Curriculum Change" of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2005 (NCF 2005)
3. Anita Rampal, Central Institute of Education, Delhi University, Delhi and member of NCF 2005 National Focus Group on Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks
4. Geetha B. Nambissan, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

and member of NCF 2005 National Focus Group on Problems of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Children

5. Gurumurthy Kasinathan, IT for Change, Bangalore
6. Hriday Kant Dewan, Vidya Bhavan Society, Udaipur and member of NCF 2005 National Focus Group on Systemic Reforms for Curriculum Change
7. Jayati Ghosh, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Member, National Knowledge Commission
8. Padma Sarangapani, TISS, Mumbai, member of the working group on School Education and Literacy of Karnataka Knowledge Commission, and member of the National Steering Committee, National Curriculum Framework Review 2005
9. Poonam Batra, Maulana Azad Centre for Elementary, and Social Education, Central Institute of Education, Delhi University and member National Focus Group on Teacher Education
10. Ramakant Agnihotri, Delhi University, Delhi and Chairperson, National Focus Group on Teaching of Indian Languages
11. K. (Ravi) Subramaniam, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Mumbai and member of NCF 2005 National Focus Group on Teaching of Mathematics
12. Rohit Dhankar, Digantar and Chairperson, National Focus Group on Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks
13. Vinod Raina, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Delhi and member of the Central Advisory Board of Education