

MUSINGS

National Instructional Design Workshop - A Report

M K Senthil Kumar

One of the biggest challenges facing the Indian education system today is how to ensure that 5.5 million teachers in 1.2 million elementary schools have the support they need to improve the quality of classroom processes. Teachers need opportunities to strengthen their subject matter knowledge, gain access to educational tools that facilitate interactive learning, and utilise instructional strategies that promote student achievement.

Technology-based tools that are developed using proven instructional design methodologies, and which integrate the technology into the instructional process, have potential to



improve quality. Computer software, video and radio programmes, when designed effectively, encourage more interactive

teaching styles and allow students to construct their own knowledge through experiential and participative processes. Today, many state governments in India have made large investments in technology hardware and are seeking ways and means to support their investment.

The National Instructional Design workshop held from 1st to 3rd November, 2006, got off to a start with a 3 minute short film. The film brought memories of reading the copy of a commercial advertisement which went something like this... 'it is universal knowledge that children 'walk' to school and 'run back' home! However, here were children approaching an ostensibly quotidian lifestyle with unparalleled *joie de vivre*. They romped to school in joy and worked with computers as though it was the most common thing to do. Yet curiosity and innocence was writ large on their faces, as they were eager to explore, experiment, experience and learn.

QUEST Alliance, in partnership with Azim Premji Foundation, brought together international and local instructional designers, policy makers and content providers to share lessons and explore ideas about how instructional design can produce technology tools that are capable of improving educational quality.

The objectives of the workshop were as:

- ◆ Sharing lessons and explore ideas on how to improve the quality of content development for educational technology tools
- ◆ Presenting a systematic methodology for the design and development of e-content
- ◆ Raising awareness among policy makers, practitioners and educational technology providers about the importance of good instructional design in creating quality content

- ◆ Developing a set of recommendations that will be used to draft a framework to guide practitioners and policy makers in developing and investing in technology-based tools.

Dileep Ranjekar, CEO, Azim Premji Foundation, while framing the objectives of the workshop discussed the Foundation's experiences so far in this area. He observed that across the world and especially more so in India, the evidence of technology significantly contributing to children and their learning is largely non-existent. Consequently, there is a strong need to bridge the gap between what is happening in school and what we want to happen.

Dr. Badrul Khan, founder of *bookstoread.com*, distinguished e-Learning as one which deals with *open* and *distributed* learning environment, unlike the traditional *closed* system of Instructor-led classroom-based instruction. However, he cautioned that to develop quality e-learning, we need policies and standards in place, and the government should play an important role here.

One of the key learnings from the workshop was that technology is no more resisted as earlier and that resources are not a big issue. It is the question of teachers perceiving the relevance of using technology to create live learning environment as envisioned in the National Curriculum Framework 2005. With some interesting sessions on Design and Development, Evaluation and Needs Assessment, the workshop reinforced the belief that it was critical to improve the quality of content development for educational technology tools in India.

As the discussions and deliberations continued over a span of three days, the workshop was seen as a move towards stimulating a dialogue around instructional design for educational technology as a serious discipline in India. Further research and development in the field, the need for communication and sharing of lessons, and capacity building in the area of teacher training, is a requirement that has to be met at the earliest. As a follow up to the workshop, QUEST is drafting a policy framework which can inform decision-makers at all levels of the education system.



Presentations of the National Instructional Design workshop are available at: <http://www.eeaonline.org/questresources.asp>

M.K. Senthil Kumar is Head, Content Development, Azim Premji Foundation