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Inside: NIIT's contribution towards ICTeducation in schools

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IT in Education

Incorporating ICT to rejuvenate the Indian education system is necessary to make the youth more employable and entrepreneurial

As Giti, a 12-year old, trudges her way through an arduous 4 km walk to reach her school everyday, the sole motivation for this Gorakhpur resident is the enticement to work on the new black PC, a recent addition at her modest three room government school. Giti and millions of other such students can now dream of working on a PC, thanks to the government's growing emphasis on introducing ICT in school education by earmarking Rs 5,000 crore in the 11th Five year plan.

As the literacy rate grew from 18.3% in 1950-51 to 65% in 2003-04 owing to increase in the number of schools from 0.23 mn to 1.18 mn in the same duration, India's education system has been grappling with the declining quality of education. In order to stem the rot perpetrating in the education system, the government is now going all out to introduce ICT at the secondary and senior secondary levels.

According to a Boston Consulting Group report, the developed world will have a shortage of 40 mn working people by 2020. This shortfall can be met by a knowledge economy like India, with its predominantly young population. "Incorporating ICT in renewing the education system in India is a necessity since India has a large demographic divide. This will help address the gaps in skill development in youth and will make them more employable and entrepreneurial in a larger socio economic system," agrees Rahul Bedi, director, corporate af-

COURTESY: NIIT LTD

fairs, Intel South Asia.

A silent revolution seems to be on in the dusty corridors of government schools, pan India, as the government makes a concerted effort to bridge the digital divide and ensure that the benefits of ICT reaches right up to the grassroots level. Apart from making the education system more applicable to the demands of the modern day world, ICT can also address some of the key challenges like quality of teachers, infrastructural issues, low relevance in jobs, etc. "Our children are not equipped with the right kind of skill-sets which would make them employable candidates in the future. Therefore, we need to make sure that all children are made part of this digitally aware generation and have the same levels of exposure to IT," says Soumya Kanti, president, Edureach (Educomp's ICT Division).

It is not an easy task however, considering that the government sector is known to be plagued with issues of red tapism and slow decision making. In addition, factors like lethargy on the part of the school management to upgrade skills and lack of support functions can cost dearly.

Growing Interest

Often derided as merely money spinning entities with no social responsibility, the private sector seems to be showing a keen interest to work with the government. But the government too has not woken up overnight to partner with the private sector.

Introduced way ... computers in the i... stallation were simply set up at school premises, leaving the school management responsible for its maintenance and hardware and software purchase. In certain cases, replacement of a faulty keyboard took as long as eight months, leading to loss of precious training time for the students. Realizing that school authorities were perhaps not the right people to manage such things, for the first time in India, the Tamil Nadu government took the initiative of partnering with the private sector and offered them guaranteed quarterly profit on a BOOT model—with strict SLA guidelines to maintain IT infrastructure in schools. "The model seemed to have worked since even after a change in guard in Tamil Nadu, the new AIADMK government did not make attempts to seek changes in the model," says L Balasubramanian, president, school

"We are in the business of creating human resources for the future by upgrading competency and bridging the divide"

- L Balasubramanian, President, School Learning Solutions NIIT Limited

learning solutions, NIIT Limited.

While many may argue that the corporate sector functions only as a money spinning entity, they should keep in mind that any change in the education system takes a long time to bear fruits—so obviously, companies which are committed to the cause would think above short term gains in business or in terms of branding.

Intel India has been working for the past ten years with various central and state education bodies offering programs in higher education, ...formal education ...otion, etc. "Significantly, we do this in non revenue driven PPP mode, wherein we bring our content and manpower expertise and partner with government bodies to bring in the infrastructure, to jointly implement these education programs," says Bedi. The company runs another such program called Learn Program—a community-based program for emerging markets designed to help learners in the age group of 8-16 years. Launched in 2004 in India, the program till has reached more than 87,000 learners in 1,100 centers across 23 states and 4 Uts, in collaboration with Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti. In states like Kerala and Chandigarh, in addition to NVS, the program runs in collaboration with KSITM and SSA respectively.

Microsoft India also makes its technologies accessible and afford-

Cover Story

able to educational institutions and students through special licensing programs including licensing Microsoft software at approximately 20% of the market cost; campus-wide site licensing program through easy annual or term based subscriptions; programs like PIL for government schools, MSIS (Microsoft Student Innovation Suite) for government-funded student PC programs, student option for students procuring laptops/PCs etc, further subsidize the cost of licensing Microsoft software.

State-wise Report Card

The Indian government had launched its ICT in schools scheme way back in 2004 for providing access to computer education to secondary students. While the southern states had taken the lead in introducing computers in government schools quite sometime back, other states too are finally waking up.

Incidentally, Andhra Pradesh has become the first state in India to offer ICT education to all its 1.8 mn school going children. Covering 5,000 government schools, the state government will be installing a total of 50,000 computing seats in the schools. The YSR Reddy-led Congress government has outsourced the five-year tenure project to leading educational IT companies like NIIT, Educomp, Everonn, Social Computers and Terasoft based on a BOOT model. It requires outsourcers to install, staff and manage the labs, and helps ensure that the labs are installed quickly and performance benchmarks are met. NIIT incidentally has bagged the lion's share (worth Rs 172.8 crore) in this single largest turnkey project in the school segment in India and would work across 2,005 schools. The company has incidentally been involved in providing school learning solutions in over 663 government schools in the state over the last five years.

The Karnataka government too

"The challenge before private vendors is spreading awareness in the government sector about benefits of ICT"

—**Soumya Kanti**, President Edureach, Educomp

has awarded a work order worth Rs 50.27 crore to Educomp for implementation of computer aided education in 708 PU colleges in the state over a period of five years. In addition, the Yedurappa led government also inked a Rs 109 crore deal with Educomp to provide computer aided education in 1,571 schools.

Even as the southern states stole a march over the Northern states attracting IT MNCs a dime a dozen, offering tax concessions and other infrastructure benefits, this time around the tables have turned. All in a matter of 2-3 years, the supposedly 'backward' states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Rajasthan are now working hard to equip their students with the right ICT skills.

Lauded for the developmental work being undertaken since the

The Public Private Partnership model seems to have emerged as the most successful model for bridging the digital divide in the country

change of guard in Bihar, particularly during the Kosi floods last year, the Bihar government along with the Maharashtra government has awarded the contract to NIIT for providing computer and computer aided education to 1.9 mn students in 900 state government schools in the two states While in Maharashtra NIIT will be training nearly 1.3 mn students in 500 state government schools, about 6 lakh children in 400 schools in Bihar would be taught in the next five years. As per the contract, the company would provide a network of ten computers and one server in each school backed by a UPS and a generator to enable continuous power back up apart from providing highly trained instructors for classes eight to twelve in secondary and higher secondary government schools for a period of five years.

Following in the footsteps, states like Uttar Pradesh and Assam too have given out orders for a total of 2,042 schools to Educomp. Occupying a major chunk of the Rs 120 crore Educomp would work in 1,401 schools in UP across four zones—Lucknow (372 schools), Meerut (380), Jhansi (369), Gorkhapur (280). Right from providing hardware and software, including providing connected accessories, Educomp would also provide one full-time instructor at each school, supplying courseware; imparting training; providing electricity and Internet connection at each school and at the same time monitoring and managing the project during the five-year contract period. On the other hand, in Assam, working with the Assom Sarba Siksha Abhijan, (SSA) Mission, Educomp would be involved in imparting training and engagement of Technical Para teacher in 641 schools.

Cover Story

Close on the heels is Haryana, which is also taking the first steps in introducing ICT in senior secondary schools. The state government has awarded a Rs 18.3 crore order to Educomp to be implemented over a period of three years to over 800 government high schools in 12 districts—Ambala, Bhiwani, Faridabad, Gurgaon, Hissar, Jhajjar, Karnal, Mewat, Panchkula, Panipat, Rohtak and Sonipat.

The Rajasthan Council of Elementary Education (RCEE) has entered into a Rs 21.4 crore contract with NIIT to introduce CAL in 1,672 government upper primary schools in twenty-two districts of Rajasthan within the framework of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA). The five-year agreement would involve setting up 1,672 fully furnished modern computer labs with over 5,016 computers, benefiting 33,340 teachers and 8,36,130 students.

Closer home, the New Delhi Municipal Corporation inked an agreement with NIIT for providing information and communications education in 29 municipal schools including 11,500 students from classes six to twelve, for a period of one year initially. As per the engagement, NIIT would train teachers and would also set up computer labs inside NDMC and Navyug Schools to offer training on computer science and informatics practices and offer basic computer education programs for students of classes six to ten.

With this, NIIT will offer ICT education in more than 9,500 government, municipal and private schools across the country.

The latest in line is the Gujarat government which has awarded the contract to the two leading IT education majors, Educomp and NIIT. While Educomp has bagged a Rs 83.82 crore contract to cover around 8,50,000 students from classes 9th-12th across 1780 schools in two zones namely, North Gujarat (905 schools) and Saurashtra & Kutch

Key Challenges for Schools

Availability of power: a crucial factor in the functioning of any ICT initiative, as power outages and fluctuations add to the high maintenance costs of computer.

Maintenance includes three components—preventive maintenance, troubleshooting, repair. Without local support computer breakdowns have a long turnaround time for repair therefore it is imperative that the authorities put into place the maintenance backbone. Troubleshooting problems at the site helps in identifying problems reducing cost of the maintenance engineer's visits.

OS software is expensive, requiring version upgrades adding to the cost burden of the hardware.

Addressing initial resistance to change from teachers and allaying fears of redundancy once technology comes in assuring that technology is no substitute and is only a platform of knowledge transfer.

Tackling lack of trained faculty and lethargy on part of management and faculty to upgrade themselves by introducing more training programs.

(875 schools); NIIT would work in 1,870 higher and higher secondary government schools impacting around 9 lakh students; the contract is worth Rs 84.3 crore.

Training Teachers

Even though equipping the students with the right IT skills to make them employable candidates tops the agenda, one cannot brush aside the significance of training teachers—that is, equipping educators with IT tools to enable access to quality content. And challenging them to integrate ICT into teaching in order to replace traditional teaching methodologies.

One such program is Microsoft's 'Partners in Learning' under which 3.5 mn educators in more than 100 countries have been trained. In June 2008 Microsoft India an-

nounced an investment of $20 mn, specifically for the Indian education sector, and launched Partners in Learning 2.0. The first phase of the project, Shiksha, has till date trained more than 340,000 government teachers in states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

"The reason Project Shiksha has managed to be so successful is that apart from establishing IT academies, where we set up infrastructure for state governments for training teachers on a BOOT model, we have also tied up with state-run district institutes for Education and Training and with educational institutions like Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Madarsas," says Rajeev Katyal, director, education, Microsoft India. Apart from partnerships, since Shiksha has a pre-service delivery model and a post-school model, the impact increases.

Intel's Teach Program, on the other hand, is a professional development program assisting classroom teachers for effectively integrating technology to enhance student learning. Since 1999 more than 5 mn teachers in over forty countries have been trained, while in India, the program has trained more than ten lakh teachers across nineteen states, has sixty-two teacher education universities, eight SCERTs and central government relationships like NVS, KVS & NCTE.

The Public Private Partnership model seems to have emerged as the most successful model for bridging the digital divide in the country. And ICT in education, especially computer-aided learning, is well on its way to achieve its purpose—exercising a positive impact on raising learning standards as well as in reducing dropout rates among children in these schools across the country.

—Stuti Das
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Training India

For ICT education in Indian schools, the government seems determined to raise the bar

COURTESY: NIIT LTD

Boasting of the world's largest school system with more than 1.2 mn schools spread over 604 districts, India's education system story ends on a dismal note. Nothing illustrates the abysmal picture more than that almost 35 mn of its school aged children are still out of school, accounting for the largest out-of-school population in the world.

Even as the government charges a 2% education cess, the education system in India is in a complete disarray, having to deal with high dropout rates (the average school attendance was around 70% of the enrollment in 2004–05 while states like UP and Bihar recorded an average attendance of 57% and 42%, respectively). Lack of trained teachers; teachers missing from school duty (one-third of the teachers in MP, 25% in Bihar, and

20% in UP do not attend schools); and growing work load on trained teachers has resulted in one teacher teaching several classes at the same time.

The fact that children drop out of school early or fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills partially reflects the poor quality of education, making a strong case for introducing ICT to address many of these issues. However, it cannot be a standalone scheme. It has to be one that actively solicits the partnership of states and other organizations for homogeneous proliferation of ICT in the education sector, in the country.

Early Days

Perhaps not many would be aware that India's efforts to introduce ICT in schools goes way back to 1984,

when computer literacy and studies in school (CLASS) was introduced as a pilot project. During the eighth five year plan, the project was even adopted as a centrally sponsored scheme and was extended to institutions and new government aided secondary and senior secondary schools, which were subsequently given BBC micro computers.

While not much is known about the progress of the project itself, the intention to introduce IT in the education sector was once again revived by the IT Task Force constituted in July 1998.

The task force made recommendations for introduction of IT in the education sector including schools, following which the central government introduced several schemes like Vidyarthi Computer Scheme, Shikshak Computer Scheme and School Computer Scheme to enable purchase of computers by students and teachers at affordable costs. The force also recommended introducing the Internet, beginning from the school level and going up to polytechnic colleges by 2003.

One of the most significant recommendations was introduction of SMART Schools. However, its scope was limited in concept and definition. It also emphasized on setting up of Smart Schools by Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas in the states.

Calling for Netizens

In an address the union minister of state for HRD (higher education), D Purandeswari, called for dovetailing efforts at the ICT level for providing quality higher education. Taking a cue from developed countries like the US, UK and Australia which have not only invested significantly in higher education but have also made the sector as one of their largest export earners. Some Asian economies like Singapore and UAE too have experienced the competitive advantage

Cover Story

provided by a world class higher education infrastructure.

Purandeswari added that Indians should consider themselves fortunate since the demographic profile is dominated by the young population, thereby providing an ideal opportunity for maximizing the benefits of ICT.

To equip the students with IT skills, for preparing them for jobs in the growing services sector and making them self-learners in the cyber world, the central government is soon going to launch a scheme called the 'National Mission in Education through ICT'. The scheme seeks to provide connectivity to the learners so that they can link themselves to the knowledge world in cyberspace. It would also work for creation of knowledge modules with right content to address the personalized needs of learners.

Underlining the significance of ICT in attaining the goal of a knowledge-based society and for delivering the benefits of ICT enabled learning, the national mission would also focus on achieving technological breakthrough by developing low cost and low power consuming access devices—making available free bandwidth for education proposes to every Indian.

National Policy

The absence of a national ICT for education policy has led to a proliferation of individualistic, expensive and unreplicable ICT initiatives across several states in India. For instance, the Madhya Pradesh government initiated a computer-enabled education program called "Headstart" for using the computer as a teaching/learning tool at elementary education level. Operational since November 2000, the program is now being run in 3,361 schools in forty-eight districts.

11th Five Year Plan: Delivering ICT in School

■ A sum of Rs 5,000 crore has been allocated in the eleventh five year plan for establishing ICT infrastructure in government schools. Out of the 1.08 lakh government schools, 80,000 schools are proposed to be connected to the Internet through terrestrial broadband mode and the remaining 28,000 will be provided Internet connectivity through broadband VSAT. Each school will be provided a networked computer lab with at least ten computers, a server, a printer and broadband Internet connectivity of 2 Mbps.

■ The plan is also laying emphasis on teacher training in the use of computers and teaching through computers. This revamped scheme will be implemented in partnership with the states and private providers, and will be a sub-mission of the National Mission of ICT of MHRD.

The department of school education & literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development along with the global e-schools and communities initiative (GeSCI) has started the process for formulating the national policy on ICT in school education. To facilitate this GeSCI partnered with center for science, development and media studies (CSDMS).

However, considering that India has some 1.2 mn schools with 290 mn students attending school every day; thirty-five state boards and two central boards and a number of educational agencies are involved as stakeholders. The engagement model for policy building process therefore is based on multi-stakeholder partnerships including engagement with concerned communities; sharing of experiences and

Asian economies like Singapore and UAE have experienced the competitive advantage provided by a world class higher education infrastructure.

ideas from stakeholders; building focus groups with member partnerships on content, infrastructure, capacity building, etc. And most importantly, incorporating inputs and recommendations to create an informed policy document.

As a follow up, the HRD ministry has engaged with approximately 400 members including education experts, ICT specialists, businesses, schools, teachers, students and others to collate their views, suggestions and recommendations on a national policy on ICT in school education.

The project is focused on assisting the department of school education, MHRD, for developing an appropriate framework to support the effective deployment and integration of ICT in the education system. It will provide a platform for dialog amongst all stakeholders; evolve a strategy for leveraging economies of scale in procurement of standard content, equipment and services; and leverage resources from other partners. Also, to evolve a mechanism to ensure that knowledge, expertise and skills are shared across all states and territories; and building inhouse capacities within the MoE to conduct regular updates for ensuring a dynamic and live policy.

While the policy is still in the pipeline, some of the salient recommendations include enabling schools and colleges to use ICT in an integration mode—the radio, television and computer; implementing the scheme under the BOOT model with private participation. Considering that last mile implementability is an issue in education the committee should also have someone who understands how ICT tools address last mile realities. While devising the policy for the use of ICT in school education, there should be uniformity in syllabus as well as synchronization between lectures.

—**Stuti Das**
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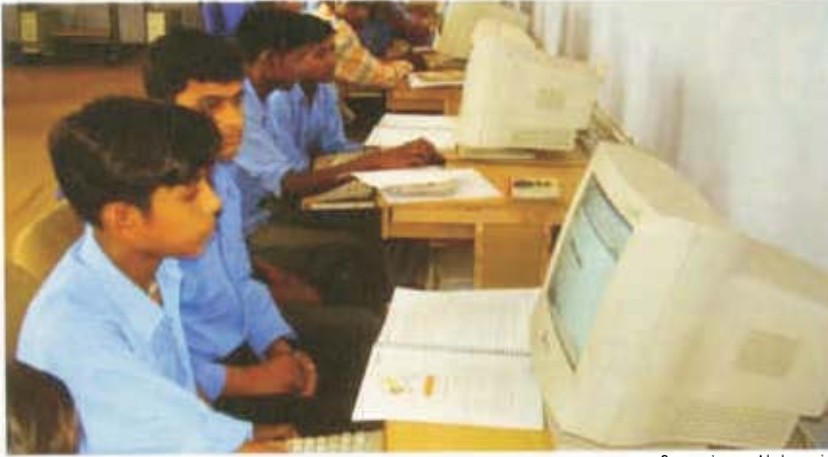
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Technology in School Education

India needs innovations to impart quality education. This can be achieved through techno-pedagogy and a thorough change in mindsets

Education today holds the key to India's development. India cannot cash in on its demographic dividend and emerge as a super power if its predominantly young population is not well-educated. Even after sixty years of independence, India is home to 46% of the world's illiterates.

On the brighter side though, the country has come a long way up the literacy curve. As the literacy rate rose from 18.3% in 1950-51 to nearly 65% in 2003-04, the number of schools in the country too increased from 0.23 mn to 1.18 mn during this period. The government's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), launched in 2000-01 to achieve useful and relevant elementary education for all children by 2010, is now showing encouraging results with the number of out-of-school children in the 6-14 years age group witnessing a drop from 13.4 mn in 2005 to 7.06 mn in March 2006.

When it comes to education, India is a study in contrast. There are not just vast differences in quality of education being imparted in schools across the country, but there are regional differences as well. To begin with, education being a state subject, each state has its own educational board and curriculum. In all, there are around 1 mn government schools; 200,000 private schools; and 31 educational boards in the country.

These discrepancies notwithstanding, there is a dire need to impart quality education. For, the opportunities before India are huge. As per a Boston Consulting Group report, the developed world will have a shortage of 40 mn working people by 2020. This shortfall can be met by a knowledge economy like India, with its predominantly young population, provided our education system undergoes some fundamental changes.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can play a vital role in imparting quality education. Information technology can bring about two vital changes—one, it can help impart education in an effective manner; and two, it has the potential to change the education system. But this is no mean task. It requires planning and vision.

On its part, the government recognizes the role IT can play in imparting quality education. According to the Planning Commission, the Indian government is committed to provide computers in all government secondary schools by the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012). But computers alone will not lead to quality education.

Bridging the Digital Divide

Even though computer education was introduced fifteen to twenty years back in some urban schools in the country, most schools in rural India still do not have adequate teachers, let alone a computer laboratory. In short, an enormous digital divide prevails in India. In order to bridge the digital divide, we need to train teachers, provide schools and students with the right IT tools and assess and manage students on a regular basis.

The costs for bridging this digital divide can be prohibitive. Even though PCs, laptops and Internet connectivity have become cheaper, they remain unaffordable for a majority of schools in India.

In order to take ICT to every school, we need to keep the total cost of ownership low. Various institutions are working at reducing the price of a laptop. One Laptop Per Child

Cover Story Column

(OLPC) Foundation (a non-profit organization) has launched the OLPC XO laptop, priced at around $188. And, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore has been working on a computer that would cost a lot cheaper—at around Rs 500-1,000.

Last year, Andhra Pradesh became the first Indian state to provide computing access to 5,000 government schools, covering 1.8 mn school children. These schools are using a low-cost and eco-friendly virtualization tool provided by US based NComputing. This technology creates multiple virtual desktops on a single PC, enabling several users to tap its unused capacity and share the system simultaneously. This represents a key innovation reducing not just the procurement costs of the ICT infrastructure, but also the TCO, over a five year period. This is an important aspect as one should consider the cost of electricity and backup power supply when arriving at the TCO.

Towards Techno-pedagogy

Students can learn from various sources—beginning from a traditional set-up like a teacher teaching in a classroom environment; through self-learning media (like books, computers and television); through experiences and project based learning methodologies and even through testing and assessment modules.

Every student has his or her unique style of learning. Some students learn better when visual props are used, others through oration. Some may learn better through experiences. In fact, the styles of learning for the same student may vary from time to time. By using ICT, educators can have an array of tools at their disposal that can cater to the unique learning styles of students (such as multimedia learning tools, visual learning tools, abstract learning tools, etc). For instance, an atomic explosion can be explained more effectively using a multimedia tool.

Besides learning styles, even the learning capability of each student is different. In any class, nearly 50-60% of students are average learners. Slow learners generally lose out as they cannot keep pace with what is being taught in the classroom. Fast learners lose interest and need something extra. This is where technology can help in self-paced learning. Educators can also deploy assessment tools to see how students are progressing. These assessment tools can be used to generate a 'collective response' which, in turn, can be used to modify and even redesign the curriculum.

Globally, the technological revolution has prompted a fundamental shift in the understanding of pedagogy and its related practices. Traditionally, teaching did not require the instructor to also be a learner. The teacher's role would be that of a facilitator and at times, could become a co-learner.

Techno-pedagogy implies that there is no 'one' valid or legitimate method of instruction per discipline, neither per medium and neither per learner. It refers to weaving various techniques of teaching into the learning environment. In techno-pedagogy, creativity is an essential aspect of the successful learning environment.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 recognizes the need to meet the challenges of ICT and globalization. The framework, in some form, recognizes the importance of techno-pedagogy by seeking to view the child as a constructor of knowledge and by recognizing the interface between cognition, emotion and action.

A New Learning Culture

In my view, mobile devices can be an excellent tool for learning. In the

> **A mobile device is a cheaper and simpler tool to facilitate remote-learning. India already has a well-established mobile infrastructure**

case of PCs and laptops, the equipment cost, including battery as well as the software costs, are prohibitive. Besides, bandwidth is still quite expensive. Mobile devices, on the other hand, are all-pervasive. Mobile phones have reached remote villages, with an overall penetration of 36%.

A mobile device is a cheaper and simpler tool to facilitate remote-learning. India already has a well-established mobile infrastructure. And new technologies like 3G will bring faster Internet connectivity, making it easier to view rich media content on the device.

The young are more tech-friendly and adept at using new applications (such as social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter). Social networking websites can, in fact, be an effective tool to clear (classroom) doubts. Similarly, YouTube is an excellent supplementary, self-learning tool; just type 'mathematics' on its search engine and you will get several videos on problem solving. All these applications can be accessed on a mobile device with a larger screen.

The education system has to witness a tectonic shift in order to adopt concepts like techno-pedagogy and mobile-education. The system has to open up to concepts like 'learning at home' and 'learning on the move'.

The younger generation adopts technology very fast. It's the parents and educators who will require a drastic change in mindset. For, a mindset change will undoubtedly lead to a larger change in India's education system. That, in turn, will lead to development at the very grassroots of this country.

—L Balasubramanian
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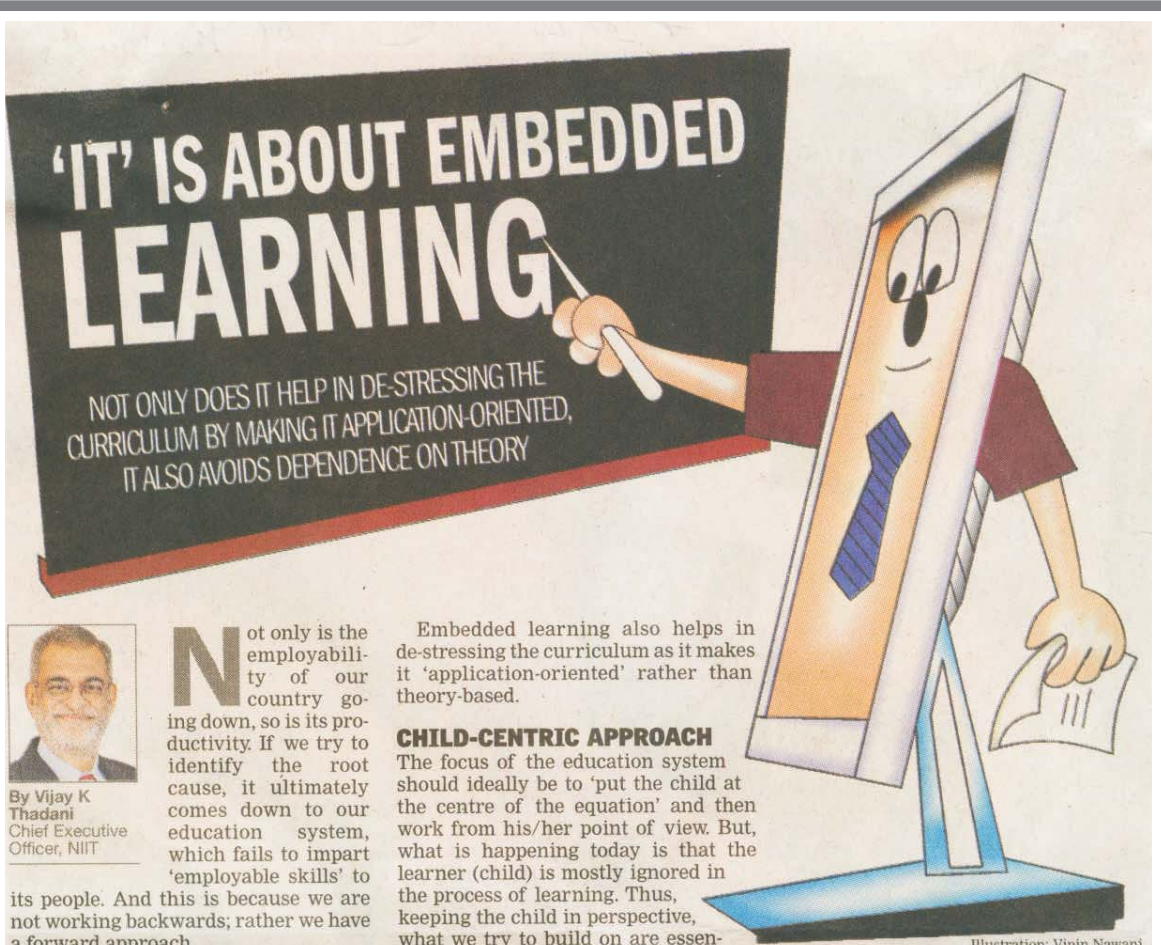# The Times of India

New Delhi

1 June, 2009

'IT' IS ABOUT EMBEDDED LEARNING

NOT ONLY DOES IT HELP IN DE-STRESSING THE CURRICULUM BY MAKING IT APPLICATION-ORIENTED, IT ALSO AVOIDS DEPENDENCE ON THEORY

By Vijay K Thadani
Chief Executive Officer, NIIT

Not only is the employability of our country going down, so is its productivity. If we try to identify the root cause, it ultimately comes down to our education system, which fails to impart 'employable skills' to its people. And this is because we are not working backwards; rather we have a forward approach.

The words 'productivity' and 'efficiency' are mostly used in the context of commercial organisations but rarely with educational ones. But come to think of it, don't educational institutions need to be efficient as well? And if we put software in this system, we can make it more efficient — in terms of access and in delivery mechanisms to make learning effective.

ACTUAL LEARNING

To make a considerable impact, it is important to make education widely accessible to maximise its benefits, and this can be made possible through leveraging IT. And when IT is incorporated into the curriculum, it not only increases 'reach' but also makes it interactive. This helps in actual learning and all-round development.

As regards our school curriculum, it is neither current nor standardised. This is where information, communication and technology (ICT) can bridge the gap. With ICT in place, for instance, experts can deliver lectures to not only the few hundreds in a classroom, but to thousands, simultaneously and that too in a real-time mode.

Embedded learning also helps in de-stressing the curriculum as it makes it 'application-oriented' rather than theory-based.

CHILD-CENTRIC APPROACH

The focus of the education system should ideally be to 'put the child at the centre of the equation' and then work from his/her point of view. But, what is happening today is that the learner (child) is mostly ignored in the process of learning. Thus, keeping the child in perspective, what we try to build on are essentially those models and innovations, that are child-centric. This will make the child want to come back to school willingly. So, be it our HiWEL (Hole-in-the-Wall Education Limited) project or computer learning centres, children enjoy learning.

Simultaneously, 'consistency' of curriculum is also imperative. It is important to ensure that all children have access to it and this is done through building live multimedia curriculum, interactive classrooms, labs and so on.

Further, to achieve a 'skill-based' education, the focus should be placed on including vocational education in the curriculum after class VIII. The system should be such that it has exit points at all levels. After all, we don't just need expert technicians or engineers but also people at the junior-level, so that the system allows flexibility.

LAB TALK

For subjects like mathematics that most students are averse to, how do we ensure that it doesn't remain confined to tables or formulae? We need to make the subject come alive and this is what

Illustration: Vipin Nawani

we do through our IT-enabled mathematics labs. Similarly, we have science labs and we plan to launch language labs as well. In fact, every subject should have a lab to make learning more meaningful. Technology allows one to experiment and that is the key to learning, so it should be incorporated in all subjects.

We need to look at a child holistically and aim to create multidimensional personalities instead of one-dimensional ones. Also, why can't we have a few select entrance exams rather than burdening the child with hundreds of them? Besides, the education system is such that it doesn't allow a student to make career choices and instead seems to decide for them; this needs to change.

To sum up, there is a need for increased industry interface, need to promote competition in education to make it excel, need to provide skill-based education, need for privatisation, and finally, a need for transparency to bring in quality, access and equity.

— As told to Sakshi Khattar

The New Indian Express

Hyderabad

29 June, 2009

Students from more than 2000 schools in Andhra Pradesh will have chess clubs, organised by NIIT Mindchampions Academy

Moulding chess champions for tomorrow

NIIT MindChampions' Academy, a joint initiative of NIIT and World Chess Champion, Viswanathan Anand, to promote Chess among young kids in schools has reached out to over 2,005 more government schools in the State.

At a function held recently in Hyderabad, Minister for Secondary School & Intermediate Education, D Manikya Vara Prasad flagged off NIIT MindChampions' Academy. The academy, which has already made its presence felt, now has a total of 2,668 schools.

Conceptualised in 2002 with an objective of initiating students into the world of Chess, NIIT MindChampions' Academy has fostered nearly 6,351 chess clubs with more than 7,45,000 students.

Minister Manikya Vara Prasad and Viswanathan Anand distributed MCA kits to the principals of some of the identified Government Schools where MCA was launched.

Speaking at the launch, Hon'ble Minister said, "We are pleased to have this initiative by NIIT. I am confident this will prove to be a significant contribution towards development of these young minds. According to Viswanathan Anand, "The game of chess makes a significant contribution to the field of education. Since playing Chess improves our memory, logic and decision-making skills, it serves as an important educational tool. NIIT MindChampions' Academy offers a marvelous opportunity for children to explore chess and, at the same time, benefits them in development of intellectual abilities."

The MCA Kits consists of computer-based tutorials, which a student can use during and after school as a virtual playfield to hone his skills in the game of Chess.

Apart from tutorials, promising Chess players get an opportunity to interact and play with Viswanathan Anand, in person at regular intervals.

The Hindu
Hyderabad
21 June, 2009

'Chess helps excel in studies'

KING OF SQUARES: *World chess champion Viswanathan Anand signs autographs on the palms of schoolchildren during the expansion programme of the NIIT in city on Saturday.* – PHOTO: P.V. SIVAKUMAR

V. V. Subrahmanyam

HYDERABAD: 'The King' has conquered the hearts once more. It was the launch of the Mind Champions Academy of NIIT in the city.

Apparently, the organisers cannot hope for a better and more pleasing ambassador than the world champion of 64 squares – Viswanathan Anand. And, touching the imagination of the select gathering, Anand reminded the audience about his romance with the 'City of Pearls'. "I have a special affinity with this city having won the World Cup the last time I played an international event here," he said amidst applause.

Going one step further and striking empathy, he remind-

- Anand was in city in connection with NIIT expansion programme
- Says he is disappointed with the Indian team's show in T20 World Cup

ed the growing influence of Andhra Pradesh in the world of chess.

Chess centre

"This State has emerged as a major chess centre. There is plenty of young talent which is keen to emulate the likes of Humpy, Harikrishna and Harika. And, we at NIIT make a sincere attempt to provide them with the desired exposure and training," he said.

The champion acknowledged the fact that from 63 schools when the NIIT con-

cept was launched it grew in number to 2005 schools in the State. "We are grateful to the support of the State government and other related wings for this," he said

"Research has shown that those who play chess do remarkably well in academics. This is the guiding principle for NIIT concept," was his reply to those hesitant parents in encouraging their chess-loving children. What makes Anand so special even now? "Well, essentially I enjoy the game, keep working hard and

love to compete."

Does he set any targets? "Not really. Even in this era when chess is becoming younger across the world as reflected by the fact that five players have become GMs at the age of 12 of late," he pointed out. "Significantly, I got the best results in the last three years," he quipped.

Fitness mantra

Keeping himself fit by cycling and a bit of mountaineering, Anand also is a keen follower of Indian cricket team and was disappointed with the recent show. "It is disappointing to see India knocked out. These things do happen in sport. But, let me tell you it is always very difficult to retain a title," he pointed out.

Rajasthan Patrika

Jaipur

20 June, 2009

एन्जॉय का नाम चेस

जस्ट रिपोर्टर

जयपुर। एनआईआईटी यूनिका की ओर से शुक्रवार को 'इमर्जिंग कॅरियर ऑपोर्चुनिटीज इन द बीपीओ आईटीईएस सेक्टर' विषय पर आयोजित वर्कशॉप में विशेषज्ञों ने बीपीओ क्षेत्र के कॅरियर की अपार संभावनाओं पर चर्चा की। जवाहर कला केन्द्र में आयोजित इस कार्यक्रम में मुख्य वक्ता के रूप में विश्व शतरंज चैम्पियन विश्वनाथन आनंद ने इस क्षेत्र में मौजूदा मुश्किलों को दूर कर कौशल बढ़ाने की आवश्कता पर बल दिया। साथ ही बीपीओ सेक्टर के विशेषज्ञों ने जयपुर में बीपीओ इंडस्ट्री के विकास व संभावनाओं पर चर्चा की। इस अवसर पर विश्व शतरंज चैम्पियन ग्रैंड मास्टर विश्वनाथन आनंद ने जस्ट जयपुर से बातचीत में अपनी जिंदगी के कुछ पल शेयर किए।

रेस्ट जरूरी है

आम लोगों की धारणा है कि शतरंज तेज दिमाग लोगों का खेल है। कुछ हद तक यह सही भी है, लेकिन मैं कहना चाहूंगा कि इस खेल को एंजॉयफुल मूड में खेलें तो यह बहुत आसान है। मैं एक टूर्नामेन्ट के बाद थोड़ा गैप देकर खेलता हूं, वहीं कम्प्यूटर के साथ चैस खेलते समय भी कुछ पलों का रेस्ट लेता हूं।

एक्सरसाइज विद योगा

शतरंज में जितना दिमाग का रोल होता है, उतना ही शरीर का भी। शरीर पर थोड़ा कंट्रोल लूज होते ही आप गेम से बाहर हो सकते हैं। किसी बड़े टूर्नामेन्ट में पार्टिसिपेट करने से पहले मैं खुद को फिजिकली व मेंटली फिट करता हूं। इसके लिए मैं नियमित योगा व लाइट एक्सरसाइज करता हूं।

यूथ में बढ़ा है क्रेज

मैं इण्डिया का पहला ग्रैंड मास्टर हूं। मेरी सफलता से यूथ में नया जोश देखने को मिल रहा है और वे चेस में ज्यादा पार्टिसिपेट करने लगे हैं। स्कूलों में भी शतरंज सब्जेक्ट के रूप में शामिल किया जाने लगा है। सही माहौल बनने से नए खिलाड़ी उभरकर सामने आ रहे हैं।

वर्ल्ड चेस चैंपियन विश्वनाथन आनंद पत्नी अरुणा के साथ।

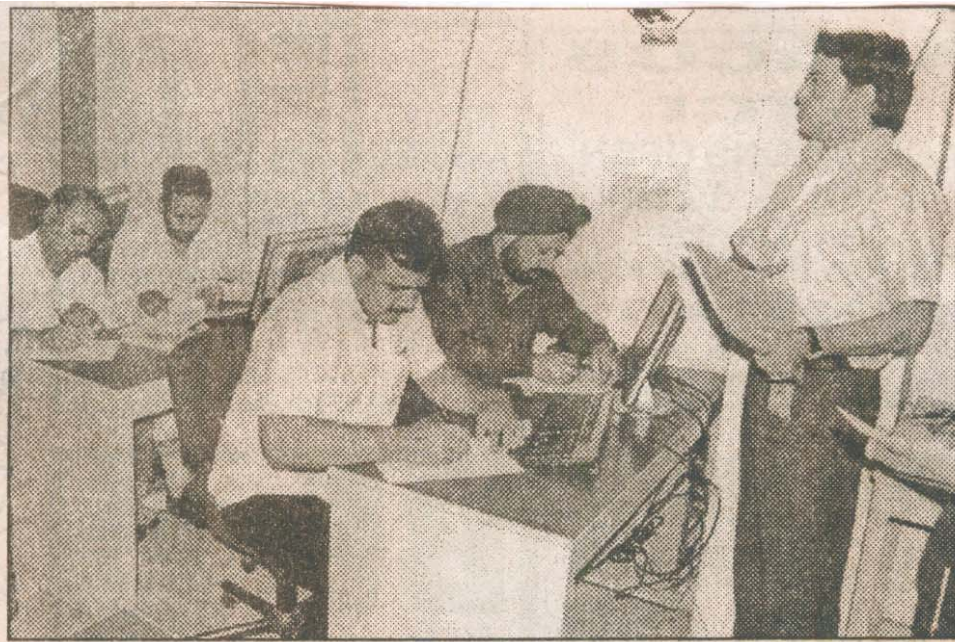सूर्यशेखर गांगुली, अभिजीत गुप्ता, निहारिका, तान्या सचदेवा जैसे प्लेयर इसका उदाहरण है।

फैमिली का सपोर्ट जरूरी

किसी भी फील्ड में सक्सेस के लिए फैमिली सपोर्ट जरूरी है। मेरे माता-पिता व पत्नी ने मुझ हर मोड़ पर सपोर्ट किया है। जब कभी भी मुझे निराशा महसूस हुई, परिवार के सहयोग ने मुझे उससे उबारा है।

Daily Excelsior

Jammu

25 June, 2009

Officials of Revenue Department attending a program at NIIT Jammu centre on Wednesday.

3-days program for Revenue officials at NIIT

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 24: NIIT Jammu, under a MoU signed between NIIT Limited Delhi and Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt of India, conducted a three-days program for the officials of State Revenue Department on "Computerizing and Maintaining Land Records using IT tools."

The program was conducted by a trainer who was specially trained for the purpose by the NIIT Limited at its School of Employee Education and Development, Delhi.

The program will help the revenue officials in land recording system using computerized record for Land Records Modernization and to improve quality of data for use at various levels and generation of various reports.

Rahul Sharma, Director of NIIT Jammu centre, was present at the concluding session of the program. He expressed hope that the training would be beneficial to the participants in updating the land records that will ultimately help the people of the State.

Earlier, NIIT Jammu had conducted a two-days program for NIC officials of the State on Plan Plus, a software developed by NIC which will converge the rural and urban plans to generate an integrated district plan, at Srinagar.

Daily Excelsior

Jammu

20 June, 2009

Syed Hassan Akhtar, Territory Head of NIIT, explaining about newly launched program to students in Jammu on Friday.

NIIT Jammu launches IMS program

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 19: With an aim to meet the industry's growing needs in hardware and networking, the NIIT Jammu today launched a three-years degree program in Infrastructure Management (IMS).

While launching the program, Syed Hassan Akhtar, territory head of NIIT, stated that program will open exciting career opportunities for youth in Jammu and Kashmir in the filed of Networking and Infrastructure Management as the demand for managing ever growing number of hardware and networking equipment is rising every day.

He further said, "It has been NIIT's constant endeavour to introduce industry relevant programs which benefit the students and the industry at large."

Earlier, while welcoming the students, Rahul Sharma, Director of NIIT Jammu, stated that the centre was already providing many programs, including one leading to career in IT industry besides, literacy programs and specialized programs.

He also told that NIIT Jammu was the only centre in J&K offering GNIIT.

Daily Excelsior
Jammu
10 June, 2009

Rohit Sharma, Director, NIIT Jammu, receiving "Excellence Award" during a function at New Delhi.

NIIT Jammu gets Excellence Award

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 9: The NIIT Limited has awarded its "Excellence Award" for the year 2008-09 to NIIT Jammu during their award ceremony held at New Delhi. The award was fifth in a row.

Rahul Sharma, Director, NIIT Jammu, received the award at the hands of Rajendra S Pawar, Chairman cum Managing Director of the NIIT Ltd. Besides, the top management of NIIT, including co-founders of the NIIT Vijay K Thadani, Chief Executive, and P Rajendran, Chief Operating Officer, the business partners from north zone were also present at the award ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Pawar lauded the role of NIIT Jammu in maintaining the high standards of education delivery and meeting the targets for the year 2008-09.

NIIT Jammu has four centers, including one at Udhampur and three at Jammu City. A number of porgrams are being offered in these centers of the NIIT.

The Hitavada

Nagpur

15 June 2009

NIIT launches GlobalNet+

From left Ashwin Agrawal, Rina Sinha and Aajay Alva, at the launch of Global Net+.

■ Business Bureau

NIIT Limited, the leading IT trainer, has launched GlobalNet+, a comprehensive industry-oriented, certification mapped programme for preparing skilled professionals for the emerging Infrastructure Management Space (IMS). Addressing a press conference, Aajay Alva, Head - Product and Alliances, NIIT said GlobalNet+ is being launched considering the development that Nagpur is going to see. "Massive and revolutionary projects like the prestigious MIHAN will be changing the face of the city," Alva said. NIIT has tied up with global majors like Cisco, CompTIA, Microsoft, Sun Microsystems to bring out this special programme. The course will be of one and half years duration with the fees in the range of Rs 65,000 to Rs 72,000. The eligibility for admission into this course is just 12th pass. "As far as the curriculum is concerned, it is a product of global vision of all our tech partners who have left no stone unturned in bringing out a world-class course content," Alva said.

Alva said there are massive job opportunities for the youth if they take up GlobalNet+. "Talking about the infrastructure management space, as of year 2009, there are nearly 3,75,000 professionals in India and the industry is reporting a shortfall of about 1 lakh professionals," he said. Rina Sinha, Director of NIIT's Nagpur branch, said that after clearing GlobalNet+, the students can expect a package in the range of Rs 1.25 lakh right up to Rs 4 lakh. Also present was Ashwin Agrawal, National Channel Sales Manager.

The Economic Times

Mumbai
1 June 2009

Kamal Nath can take his Chhindwara skill training programme nationwide

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI

AS THE new government prepares to fulfil its manifesto promise for a nation-wide skills development programme, Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh can help set the template for its execution. For, it is here that the initiative has been tried and tested by local MP and minister for surface transport Kamal Nath, bringing success in the form of lucrative job offers for the unemployed in the backward district.

The skills development institute in Chhindwara may today boast of a training faculty from corporate A-listers, including Larsen & Toubro, as well as placement of its students with Cisco, but four years ago, it was just another job skills training school churning out passouts who seldom landed jobs involving the skills taught.

The turning point came when Mr Nath, in his efforts to help the employable youth of his constituency find jobs, approached Wipro chairman Azim Premji with 100 job applications of the men trained at the local skill development institute. Wipro went through each application meticulously and rejected all 100. Fortunately, the story did not end there. Mr Premji walked the extra mile to explain to Mr Nath why exactly Wipro had to spike all applications. He enlisted the skills being looked for by his company in prospective employees, something that had not been taught at Chhindwara institute. The minister heard him carefully and concluded that the need of the hour was to reorient the skill development syllabus to suit the corporates' requirements.

Soon after, Mr Nath approached NIIT's Rajendra Pawar to set up a computer skills development institute in Chhindwara. Mr Pawar, however, said NIIT could only help a franchisee set up such an institute. Not the one to step back, Mr Nath graciously offered to be a franchisee himself. A knowledge centre was started in his constituency and the placement cells of big corporates asked to define the skills they were looking for in their prospective employees.

Once the companies outlined these skills, the knowledge centre incorporated them in its training syllabus. The youth of Chhindwara were duly trained in these skills and started getting picked up by the corporates. The CII, too, set up an office in the district, while heavyweights like L&T started showing interest by sending their faculty to train the students in skills like operation of heavy-duty machines. For corporates, it was a profitable venture to be involved in skill development of its prospective employees. The larger involvement of corporates has fortunately also taken care of the funding needs of the institute.

The Chhindwara experiment can now serve as the perfect model for implementing the proposed nation-wide skills development programme. With its implementation a top priority for the Manmohan Singh government, the Centre need not look too far.

THAT'S THE WAY

- **The skills** development institute in Chhindwara today boasts of training faculty from corporate A-listers like Larsen & Toubro as well as placement of its students with Cisco

- **Big companies**, including Wipro, helped this institute from Kamal Nath's constituency enlist specific skills that corporates look for in their prospective employees

- **Kamal Nath** himself became a franchisee of NIIT's computer skills development centre set up in Chhindwara. Cos, then, were asked to outline their specific requirements

The Economic Times
Mumbai
3 June 2009

Planning counts, plans don't

Shelley Singh
NEW DELHI

IN the ongoing Power of Ideas programme, the 254 participants who have made it to the final shortlist are fine tuning their business plans before they meet investors. They would do well to look at how successful entrepreneurs penned their own plans. Let's hear from the pioneer of computer learning in India.

Back in the winter of 1981, Rajendra S Pawar, chairman, NIIT, wrote the first plan about bringing computers and people together. That plan translated into the company which heralded computer training in India and later got into software services as well. The 15-page business plan, written in pencil on paper (the kind used in dot matrix printers with holes on the sides) by Mr Pawar in the cool climes of the Uttarakhand hills with ripe fresh apples all around led to the company starting operations in five cities —Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai in 1982, Kolkata and Bangalore in 1983.

Those were early days and soon, the three co-founders Mr Pawar, Vijay K Thadani and P Rajendran were writing another plan in 1984-85. This time it ran into a few 100 pages and "was a vision document that looked 10-years ahead," recalls Mr Pawar.

That was pre-reforms, pre-globalisation era where Mr Pawar was able to peer into the future that computers will be important but people will not know how to use them and therefore what to do with them. It was this gap that got filled via NIIT. The Rs 1,148-crore company has trained over five million learners at over 8,000 education centres across 40 countries over the years.

Today, when we ask him about what kind of business plans should young entrepreneurs have, the pioneer is quick to say,

THE POWER OF ideas
THE ECONOMIC TIMES
www.ideas.economictimes.com

"Planning is more important than the business plan itself. When you are conceptualising a business, the plan will probably be the third or the fourth step. Entrepreneurs have to visualise an opportunity, see the gaps in the future and understand what is the unmet need they are trying to fulfil via their proposed business endeavours."

In essence, budding entrepreneurs should visualise the future and then work backwards. At the same time they need to look at both the demand side and the supply side of the business. And one key point from Mr Pawar is that, "entrepreneurs must have their head in the clouds and feet on the ground." Well, you should think big and be sure that you can deliver. "An entrepreneur must look at the unsolved problem with head in the clouds with feet on the ground to be able to meet the demands of that future. You have to bounce to-and-fro ferociously between the ground and the clouds to build a successful organisation," Mr Pawar points out. In a plan, while numbers are important (like revenue projections, profits, employees and so on), visualising the future and working towards that goal is more significant.

The right time and a bit of luck is also important. In NIIT's case it was Rajiv Gandhi's emphasis on technology that helped the company and later the Y2K problem and the whole reforms process acted as a catalyst. Yet there are plans that fail too. "Little failures are part of the game. Plans should be constantly evolving, a static plan will fail. Also if you think like a manager it may not work as managers work to small tolerances while entrepreneurs work to huge tolerances. Don't forget that an entrepreneur by definition pushes the envelope, goes into unchartered territory and builds a team with great chemistry. Humility is also the key." Else, the best laid plan sans any planning might just remain on paper.

The Indian Experess
Hyderabad
30 June 2009

ROCKET SCIENCE?

PIC: A RADHAKRISHNA
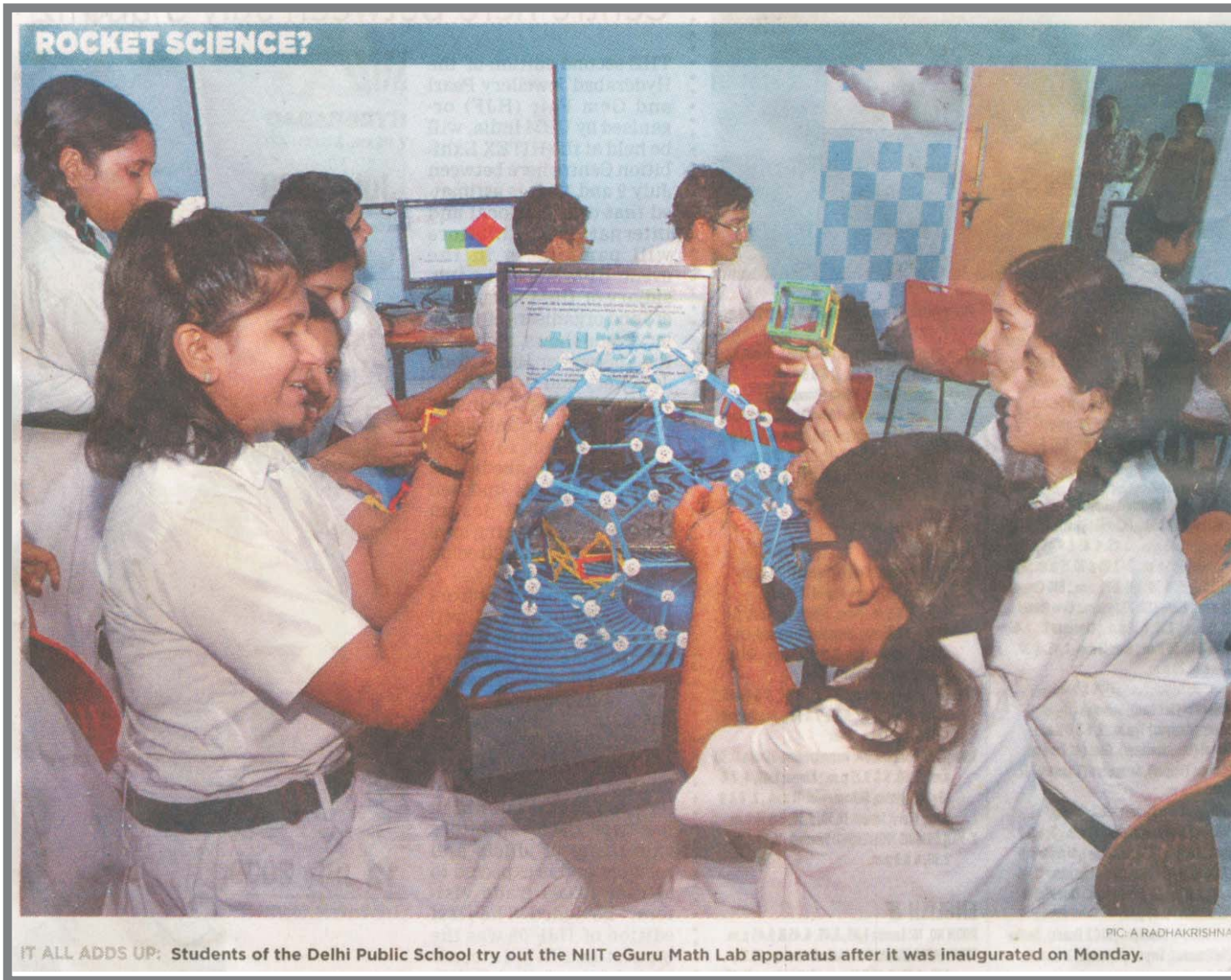
IT ALL ADDS UP: Students of the Delhi Public School try out the NIIT eGuru Math Lab apparatus after it was inaugurated on Monday.

The Hindu

Hyderabad

17 June 2009

CHESS

I'm enjoying learning new skills, says Anand

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: All along, Viswanathan Anand has maintained that one of the reasons behind his unparalleled consistency is the enjoyment he derives from playing the game.

Having won every major title at least once, the World champion is currently enjoying adding variety to his opening repertoire.

"I am learning new skills and doing things that I've not done or something that I haven't tried for a long time. I am enjoying this new work," revealed Anand during a media interaction here on Tuesday.

WAY TO GO: *Viswanathan Anand interacts with the media on Tuesday.* – PHOTO: SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

Rare chance for kids

The NIIT Brand Ambassador was in the Capital to play online simultaneously against eight champion children from Bangalore, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Bhopal and Patna.

Anand spoke about his recent 5-3 triumph in the eight-game rapid chess match against Hungary's Peter Leko and revealed how he chose to play the Grunfeld Defence after a gap of nine years. He also drew a parallel between the match against Leko and his World championship clash against Russia's Vladimir Kramnik in Bonn last year.

"In many ways, it was a continuation of Bonn. Since Leko was Kramnik's 'second' in Bonn, I was aware he could use some of those unused preparations. Funnily, both wanted to surprise the other in the opening and ended up preparing the same lines (of Grunfeld Defence). "I was the first to recover from this fact after refuting his ideas in the first game and won a nice (second) game. He had a chance in the fourth game but missed it," said Anand.

About the decisive fifth game, Anand said his preparations had been deep and that helped him come out stronger after Leko's relentless attack.

Speaking on the World championship match next year against former champion Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov, Anand said, he had already shortlisted players to form his team of 'seconds'.

Formidable Topalov

On Topalov, Anand said, "Without doubt, Topalov is incredibly strong. He has plenty of match experience that makes him a formidable match-player. He is very well prepared and has the ability to completely shut out setbacks and come back strongly."

Asked to comment on former World champion Garry Kasparov's remark that Anand would not be able to last long as the world champion due to his age, the 39-year-old said, "I find it strange that in October (2008), when I was 38, Kasparov said I had a great future. In December, after turning 39, I was too old to continue for long."

The Hindu

New Delhi

22 June 2009

Pink City emerging as outsourcing hub

In the next two years there would be 20,000 new jobs in the sector in Jaipur, say experts

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: Global melt down or not there are jobs waiting out there for those adequately trained in Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology enabled services (ITes) in the Pink City.

Jaipur is fast emerging as an outsourcing hub and if the industry experts are to be believed, in the next two years there would be 20,000 new jobs in the sector. More than 100 IT and ITes companies have set up shops in the city.

Over the past three years, the total exports from the city rose by 40 per cent, touching about $100 million in the last fiscal. Leading companies such as Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Nucleus Software, Nagarro Software, Truworth, Connexions will be starting operations here shortly.

One came across these rather heart-warming pieces of information at a seminar on "Emerging career opportunities in BPO and ITes Sector", organized by NIIT Uniqua-Centre for Process Excellence, an NIIT-Genpact venture here this weekend. World Chess Champion and NIIT Mind Champion, Viswanathan Anand also was present.

The seminar was held to discuss the growing opportunities in the BPO/ITes sector and how to create a talent pool for this industry. Experts from Genpact, Infosys and Deutsche Bank attended the seminar.

Skill upgradation

The seminar served as a forum to address the ever increasing demand for skilled workers in the BPO and ITeS sector which till recently Rajasthan and Jaipur lacked. The experts were emphatic about the need to upgrade skills and get to areas of value addition instead of retaining the notion that "BPO is all about making and receiving calls".

Though the industry continued its strong growth trajectory to become the 'nerve centre' for global outsourcing, the demand-supply gap in skilled manpower resources remained, the experts pointed out. Anand too highlighted the need for "up-skilling" to increase employability.

"Our education system offers a rigid and inflexible course curriculum which leads to constrained development of skill sets in our society. Hence, acquisition of additional skills becomes imperative to help increase one's employability. Just like a game of chess contributes significantly towards intellectual development, up-skilling helps you to have an edge over others," Anand said.

NIIT Uniqua President Chockalingam Murugan too focused on employability. "The important issue that needs immediate attention is employability of the potential workforce. Most of the graduates who aspire to be employed in this sector remain unemployed for want of right skills to excel in the BPO environment. ITeS-BPO industry is growing at over 50 per cent, providing an ever-expanding opportunity to create more jobs than any other sector," he pointed out.

The Economic Times

New Delhi

21 June 2009

The king in the battle of pawns

IF you thought that brawn is mightier than brain, then checkmate. For in the battle of pawns we know who the king is–it's not a Singh or even a Khan this time. It's Vishy. Full name: Vishwanathan Anand.

The defending world chess champion, Vishy, was in the capital recently to play live chess across seven cities with the winners of a competition, cleverly christened 'Vish come True'. "Vish come True is a national chess competition organised by NIIT (IT training and services giant), wherein the winners get a chance to play with me in the grand finale. School students are encouraged to come forward and play chess, as the game helps improve concentration and decision making abilities, thereby enhancing academic performance among children."

Novelty is the most important thing in chess and who knows that better than the master himself. "I generally first see what kind of player I am facing. It is important to get your opponent to a position he least expects. Then you try and establish patterns as to what he does. If the opponent needs a win at all costs then he may adopt a very risky approach and my job would be not to allow it. Important thing is to remember all

Defending world chess champion feels that India has made a name as an established chess nation

nuances in the position and be prepared for a long battle," said Anand when SundayET caught up with him over a cup of coffee.

Devising a strategy requires thorough preparation, which can be a gruelling task more often than not. Ask him his strategy and pat comes the reply, "My ability to experiment. I like to try different openings. Like in Bonn, I played the king-pawn opening which was actually my opponent's forte. It was a calculated risk but it paid off. I like playing new opponents and new formats. This is important to keep the passion alive and learn constantly." Anand has been playing chess for a long time and with each game his knowledge pool and theory evolve constantly. However, in the age of machines, the whole approach towards the game has changed." My game has evolved in a very structured manner. Since computers have become an intrinsic tool, the ap-

games people PLAY

proach to chess has changed. We use programmes to store games and filter searches. Since most players have access to the same information, how they prepare and use a computer efficiently is the key. Using these tools and knowing when to use human discretion rather than sheer computing power is very important," he says citing the importance of computers.

The new breed of players is very promising and it augurs well for India to endorse the game. Not only would it help in tapping fresh talent it will also put India on the international radar of active chess playing nations. "We have a very vibrant chess scene with 2 junior world champions. There are many promising players who are making progress in the international scene. Actually, India now has an organised chess circuit and there are two-three big open events, which attract strong foreign

participation and encourage local talent to play in strong events," he says.

Supporting the government's initiative to promote the game, he said that some states have shown tremendous interest in harnessing the talent. "The government has been a very able partner and facilitator. States like Assam and Tripura have shown a lot of interest and in fact, we are seeing a lot of talent coming from these states. The Bihar, Chattisgarh and, now, Andhra Pradesh governments are giving us a lot of support in getting the initiative rolled out in many schools," he says.

Needless to say, chess has the potential to be the national game of India. And why not? "We are now an established chess nation. In 2006, we were in fact second highest rated team based on ELo at the Olympiad. We have been adding grandmasters every year. And what is most heartening is that we have strong players both in mens and womens segments. This is very rare for a sport," he says gleefully with big a smile stretching across his face. Vishy will be traveling to Germany and will play in Mainz end July.

ABHIMANYU CHAKRAVORTY

PC Quest
National
30 June 2009

**Best IT Implementations of the Year 2009**

IT Infrastructure

NIIT

Project Pulse

NIIT has a strategic partnership with technology companies e.g. Cisco, Microsoft, Oracle, Adobe etc. Under these partnerships, NIIT provides curriculum to working professionals and career aspirants in IT. NIIT provides use of hardware and software resources to give participants real time hands on experience and work environment. NIIT found that deploying identical infrastructure across hundreds of education centers was neither cost effective nor green, as infrastructure is underutilized and also creates management overhead. As a result, NIIT decided to setup virtual labs to reduce the number of deployments by having centralized infrastructure. It also contributes to Green IT by reducing CO_2 emission that would have got generated due to massive deployment at education centers. NIIT has used 'Cisco gear' to setup virtual labs which can be accessed by its various centres from anywhere on time sharing basis. Also NIIT has partnered with Reliance Communication Infrastructure for co-hosting at Datacenter in Mumbai. NIIT has also setup a Cisco CCNA module enabling students to have hands-on of real time devices. They are now using this virtual lab gear to practice their lab exercises as part of the CCNA training they are attending at NIIT.
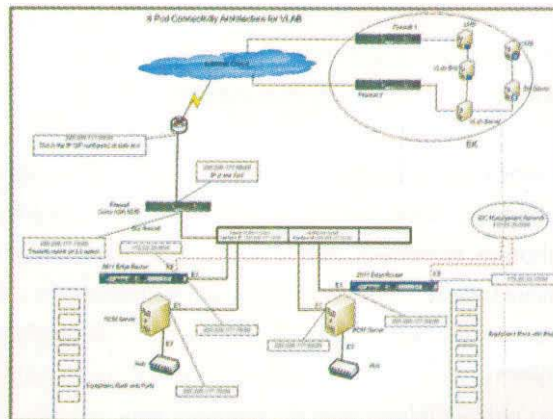
NIIT setup virtual labs to reduce the no of deployments by having centralized infrastructure, and reduce CO_2 emissions

Project Specs

- **Project Head:** Pankaj Dikshit, GM
- **Deployment Location:** Mumbai
- **Team Size:** 10
- **Tech Used:** Apache, Perl, Cisco 2800 Series Routers, Cisco 3560 Series Catalyst Switches, Cisco 3600 Series router, Cisco ASA 5520 Series Firewall, Element K for Virtual Lab setup
- **Expected life:** NA

Implementation Partner
Inhouse

PC Quest
National
30 June 2009

NIIT Ltd.

Improving Business Communication Value Chain

Projet Head

Col. Ajai Manohar Lal
Sr. Vice President

With around 500 centers spread pan India including divisions such as head office(HO), regional offices(RO), education centers(Center), etc it was becoming very difficult for the organization to propagate the conceptualized business policies to the respective regional offices for communication to the appropriate staff at the Center. Also, after the policies are implementing, the RO needs to know the difficulties being faced, collaborate with the center staff to assist and support in clarification, feedback for policy enhancement etc. Similarly HO staff designing the policies need to be informed and thus collaborate to design enhancements soon enough to catch the market before the policy lapses.

As a result the need for continuous communication & collaboration among HO, RO, Centers was required to make sure the implementation of business policies and plans are in the same lines of the design, consistent at all locations with respect to the services reaching prospects/customers. Plus sending business policies and other such confidential data over email was a potential threat to the company.

Finally SharePoint Server 2007 with Windows Server 2003 and My-SQL 2005 was used to create a central portal for publishing the policies. This also helped them to embed features such as collaboration, online discussion, single sign on, archiving/indexing, etc.

NIIT deployed a centralized Web2.0 ready portal to connect its 500 odd centers across the country to securely and effectively collaborate.

Project Specs

- **Deployment Location:**
  Gurgaon

- **Team Size:**
  7 employees

- **Tech Used:** Windows technologies, AJAX
  Hardware/Software used:
  Windows SharePoint Server 2007

- **Expected life:** NA

Implementation Partner
NA

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Hyderabad
25 June 2009

NIIT bets big on emerging markets to drive growth

RONOJOY BANERJEE

New Delhi

IT LEARNING solutions company NIIT is banking big on emerging markets in a bid to spur revenues from the region.

The company would focus on markets such as South Africa, Nigeria, Malaysia and China to increase its overall revenue share to over 22 per cent from the 15 per cent at present in the next few years, NIIT CEO Vijay Thadani told *Financial Chronicle*.

The move comes at the backdrop of a raging recession in the West that has hurt its revenue generation from key markets such as US and Europe.

"Our business operations in US and Europe has been dramatically hit, especially our custom training businesses," Thadani said. This has prompted the company to look at markets, which are expected to invest heavily in human infrastructure development.
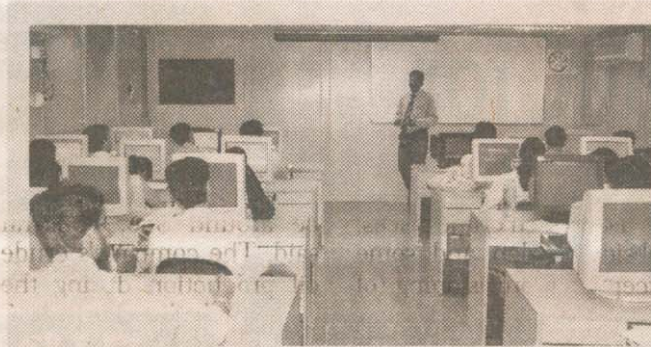
Business strategy

■ The IT learning solution firm plans to focus on increasing its overall revenue share from the present 15 per cent to over 22 per cent in the next few years

■ The move comes at the backdrop of a recession in the West that has hurt its revenue generation from key markets such as US and Europe

"China is using the recession to develop people in the field of education," he added. Similarly, Malaysian government has provided a stimulus package for upgrading skill development in all parts of the country.

"We want to work very closely with these countries to help in employability," he said.

At present, 50 per cent of the company's revenues come from overseas markets. In a parallel development, the IT education company would be recruiting 1,800 people for its Gujarat i-learning initiative in the next one-year.

The company was expecting this segment to grow between 35 per cent and 40 per cent this financial year, Thadani said.

"We are not looking at large-scale recruitments at this juncture. Most of the hiring would be project based," he added.

The company has a presence in 12 states including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Assam. The company is also planning to take up newer initiatives, but with a caveat. "Though the worst is probably over, we are looking to refrain from high risk investments which have very long gestation periods. However, we would continue to look into other business segments," he said.

Earlier this year, NIIT bagged a five-year contract from the Gujarat government to provide computer-aided learning in 1,870 schools. The contract was worth Rs 84.50 crore.

NIIT/BSE Rs 58.95 ▲

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