

UN-DESA GAID  
Global Forum 2009: ICT & Innovation for Education

Statement and Position Paper: ICT and Innovation for Education  
*Emphasis on Traditional Knowledge Resource Management*

Dr. DhruPAD Mathur  
Member, Strategy Council, UN-DESA GAID  
DhruPAD.Mathur@Gmail.com

---

Respected Chair, distinguished participants and dear friends,

'ICT and Innovation for Education' is a noble thought and there are a thousand ways in which this will have a prolific impact on society, in time to come. But as happens with anything which has a certain 'character' and a certain 'manifestation'; people start linking the manifestation with the character. Gradually manifestation becomes the only way to ascertain character and then people get interested only in the manifestation whether or not it emanates out of the character.

ICT can transform both the character and manifestation of the education process. However, the manifestations of ICT enabled processes are so profound that at times it becomes difficult to concentrate on the character of the transformation. And this phenomenon is evident in all forms of 'e-enablement' whether it is e-Learning, e-Government and so on. The challenge is thus to address both consciously and suitably in the education process.

The initiatives pertaining to ICT and innovation in education must be inclusive and broad-based to address range of areas: basic education, trades, upcoming fields of cutting-edge development and building such capacities in society but at the same time must also adequately address the conventional ways of life and simple social business. With ICT practices getting into mainstream of social affairs, there has been a phenomenal impact on the lives, behaviors, professions, capabilities, preferences, and consumption patterns everywhere. Whereas, ICT can be a powerful enabler to instill values in the normal or traditional ways of life, I am not too sure if it is presently eroding the same and the associated social homeostasis. If yes, then an intervention is required. Why I am emphasizing this is because of the reason that ICT is a very intense media, a powerful mechanism towards developing the individual and social conscience; and certainly so when it is used for Education.

*If one is determined towards a disaster,  
Technology will only help getting there faster.*

Now, the news from the field: Having interacted with several children, teenagers from small villages, I realized that most of them want to go to the cities and get into the

professions that have no relation to their established and sustainable ways of life. While the aspirations are good, it is a part of a bigger social phenomena; and I am not giving a detailed diagnosis of the situation, but in present context, one area which is fast depleting and must be urgently addressed using ICT in Education is - Traditional Knowledge Resource Management to help them doing better what they are really good at and continue doing that with pride. Nations that have witnessed dedicated farmers and fine craftsmen turning into urban labors will understand what I mean here.

Certainly, ICT might have nothing to do with the causes but has a lot to do with the mitigation and optimization of such situations and other social anomalies. 'ICT in Education' has a role to play, probably far more important and bigger than this paper can visualize.

Why the onus is on us: ICT has a very unique character, and has a great potential to emerge as a solution towards diverse social issues. Also, ICT might not be a direct cause of social problems but if not addressed suitably can become an inadvertent subtle catalyst to these causes. The need of the hour is to evoke a thought process towards theses social implications of ICT, to debate and think of suitable actions towards addressing it. And in achieving this, Education is the key and IT enablement of the same will give it an impetus.

My humble submission to the distinguished forum is that conscious efforts must be made to ensure that the wave of ICT & Innovation is minimally invasive to the social homeostasis. Stability of social fabric is important and ICT acclimatization must not result in a radical lifestyle adoption or massive behavioral abrasions which cannot be sustained for long on planet Earth. Yes, ICT led improvements; augmentations and empowerment are absolutely welcome.

Submitted for your kind consideration, seeking your views.

---