Teacher Skills required Facilitating ICT Driven Learning

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Education is shaping with the advances of new information and communication technologies (ICT). Most countries all over the world have accepted the need of incorporating ICT to promote the quality of learning. Sri Lanka also invests a large amount of funds to provide ICT education and ICT based education. Each of 200,000 teachers are to be equipped with a personal computer by 2009. The purpose of this is to make all teachers use computers in their everyday academic work i.e,. in instructional process and classroom management. The benefit comes to all 2,000,000 students when the plan becomes a reality.

Ministry of Education spends a large portion of the total expenditure of the ADB funded Secondary Education Modernization Project on purchasing computers, establishing computer centres, multimedia centres, computer resource centres, laboratories, and training of teachers. In addition, various other activities are also being carried out to modernize the general education system.

Purchasing equipment and training teachers in ICT are important to achieve such targets, but is it sufficient for effective learning with advances of new ICT? Past experience about early attempts to incorporate technologies in implementation of the school curriculum proved a failure. Some examples are introducing motion films, educational radio and educational TV. It was forecasted that teacher, black board, and textbooks will be substituted by those technologies. Consequently, spending millions of public money a large number of projects had been designed and implemented, but ended with disappointing results.

How do we prepare our teachers in effective use of new ICTs to increase the quality of instructional practices. The results of documentary analysis of training programmes and interviews with eight trainers cum software developers show that the appropriate pedagogical aspects and essential awareness about recent learning theories are lacking in the curriculum used for training teachers. The author suggests that teachers need to be empowered with essential pedagogical skills to get the maximum advantage of the large-scale investment of foreign funds on ICT based education.

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