Scientific / Information Technology For Quality Enhancement in Rural Colleges

Sukdeo Ingale
SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN RURAL COLLEGES

Asst. Prof. Sukdeo Ingale*

“Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire.”
-Times of India, Teach India Campaign.

1. INTRODUCTION:

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established by the UGC in September 1994 at Bangalore for evaluating the performance of the Universities and Colleges in the Country. NAAC's mandate includes the task of performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation of universities and colleges in the country.¹ The philosophy of NAAC is based on objective and continuous improvement rather than being punitive or judgmental, so that all institutions of higher learning are empowered to maximize their resources, opportunities and capabilities.

In pursuance of the National Action Plan of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Bangalore, for performance evaluation, assessment and accreditation and quality upgradation of institutions of higher education, the NAAC proposes that every accredited institution should establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) as a post-accreditation quality sustenance measure.² IQAC has to find out different measures which can assure and enhance quality of education imparted by particular educational institution. It will lead to very bright future if members of different IQACs established under different colleges tried to find out methodologies for quality enhancement of overall education system in India. Moderate use of scientific/information technology is one of the method to do so.

2. MODERN LIBRARY:

Library, in the life of students, is synonymous to lungs. The more you breathe, the more you live. The library with scientifically modern information technology can support all

* Member of IQAC, D.E.S. Law College, Pune, and research scholar under the guidance of Dr. A. S. Raju, University of Pune.
1. Available at http://www.ugc.ac.in/page/NAAC.aspx, visited on 14/10/2012 at 8:22 pm.
the academic activities on the college campus. In today’s demand of high-tech teaching and learning environment, the rural libraries shall take up more modern techniques to meet challenges of rural education. This is precondition for assurance and enhancement of quality of rural education. It can provide infrastructure for online education. Students of any rural college can access online library from any college affiliated to same University.

3. ONLINE EDUCATION THROUGH RURAL COLLEGES:

The universities can facilitate rural students by videotaped lectures of eminent professors in the form of DVDs, audiotapes or lessons sent through the mails which may include pre-planed text. Similarly live video education can be the most popular and fastest growing mode of online education in rural colleges. Technology enabled online education can include computer-based teaching, web-based tutorials, virtual classrooms, electronic monitoring during examination and a variety of other personalized models. It can create new and powerful methodology which can help students to learn anywhere and anytime. It can relive ever-increasing pressures on educational institutions and can partly solve problem of poor funding capacity of rural colleges.

Major part of rural society is ‘unprovoked population’ for higher education and more provoked for early income. Most of the students need constant boost up for continuing college education. Online education helps to impart knowledge to such students. It is also proved helpful for handicapped students, or those who are suffering from geographical or cultural separations, gender bias, personal cognitive, psychological orientations and occupational constraints. Thus many of the demands of rural society can be met or supported by use of scientific or information technology.

4. IMPLEMENTING SCIENTIFIC/INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:

Private, self funding educational institutions could be economically overburdened if they need to maintain quality expected by NAAC. The situation of Government funded colleges is not much different. Government usually begins by deciding how much money it is willing to spend on education, and then allocate these limited funds to the colleges.

---

Policymakers seldom consider what it actually cost for rural colleges to provide students with quality education. It is not considered by NAAC.

It is important to note that use of scientific/information technology is not as expensive as it appears. Prices of computer are falling. If government focus on wide area networks, reaching to rural population can become more feasible. On this line substantial numbers of state governments have programmes to equip government schools with computers. In its next phase same network can be used for enhancing quality of rural private educational institutions.

Some of the states have already taken leading role in ensuring that their school faculties could be trained to keep in step with the other technology based education initiatives. Regular teaching programmes are organized in collaboration with Intel and Microsoft. Such initiatives are called for in all the states with respect to rural colleges so that their quality can be enhanced at remarkable level.

The Telecom and Computer Networks Group (TeNet) of IIT-Madras has made a compelling case for making computer education available at Rs. 50/- per student per month. As India is the only nation in the world which had launched a satellite purely for educational purposes, this could be useful to connect rural schools and colleges.

Again the proposed network of Internet Kiosks and CSCs (Citizens Service Centers) can play a significant role in enabling such applications at the desired price points in rural India. A Chennai-based company, Novatium has developed a thin-client which can provide LAN in village colleges at very low costs. The maintenance and management of the same can be carried out by Kiosk or CSC operators.

5. ROLE OF TEACHER:

4. See further at http://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/education/k12/intel-teach-ww.html visited on 16/10/2012 at 8:12 pm
5. See further at http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-ca/partners-in-learning/Pages/training-programs.aspx visited on 15/10/2012 at 7:20 pm
6. Ashok Jhunjhunwala, Using Technologies towards Education for All, Available at http://www.tenet.res.in/Publications/Presentations/pdfs/educationforallMar05.pdf visited on 16/10/2012 at 7:58pm
7. Available at http://www.infoworld.com/t/platforms/microsoft-takes-internet-kiosks-rural-india-480, visited on 16/10/2012 at 8:19 pm
8. Available at http://218.248.45.169/download/csc/csc%20centres.pdf, visited on 15/10/2012 at 7:32pm
9. See further http://www.novatium.com/service-offering.html?tabId=3, visited on 16/10/2012 at 8:22pm
There is a misconception that if technology is used there will be little or no interactions between teachers and students. But moderate use of information technologies can allow probability of interactions. Technology based learning does not mean that teachers can be eliminated. It is true that a teacher who is not comfortable with technology can ensure its failure. Therefore it is necessary to have teachers who are not only familiar with scientific/information technology but are also comfortable with presenting and teaching how to use these tools.

Because of less opportunity of growth, most of the time, well qualified and experienced teachers avoid working in rural area. So for more effective results, the existing teachers need to be trained. Technology can help to overcome such issues. It brings good quality contain to widespread students and teachers in rural areas. The teacher not only needs to be competent and knowledgeable about the subjects but also will equipped with modern tools of scientific/information technology so that they can pass on skills and knowledge to their rural students. There is need of a proactive approach in bringing the internet and other technologies to the rural students which will help to prepare themselves to face the challenges not only in education or career but all walks of their life.

6. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES:

The main advantage of using scientific/information technology is the flexibility of accessing information and resources. It is possible at any time or at any college library, according to one’s convenience. Student is not bound to attend lectures on a fixed date and time at fixed location which may be far away from the residence of students. Another advantage is access of multimedia based resources like text, audio, video, animation, graphics, pictures etc. it makes learning more interesting and effective. Moreover the information and communication technology provides an opportunity to capture, store and distribute information and resources which are cheaply accessible at any time at any place.

There are some negative consequences also. The main are lack of funds, willingness of government, university, as well as management, teachers and students of rural colleges. But if implemented, it will certainly help rural colleges to fill the gap between developed cities and rural undeveloped areas.

7. CONCLUSION:
The main constraint for implementing the ideas envisaged in this paper is availability of funds. But it is to be noted that it needs comparatively more expenditure is necessary only at initial stage. If compared with funding for encouraging industrialization, implementation of scientific/information technology needs same type of encouragement. For encouraging industrialization different State Governments are providing all necessary facilities to such extent that production for substantial period (for example 5 years for nano cars in Gujarat) will cost Rs. Zero. If educational institutions are treated and encouraged on same footing it will enhance quality of education imparted by rural colleges.

One thing needs to be mentioned that teachers can not integrate place-based learning if they are ignorant of the local community. It becomes main hurdle in many rural communities where most of the teachers are not local and not familiar with the special needs and culture of rural students. The teachers who are serving in their own rural society will better understand the needs of students and serve as a model and create a more stable faculty. Hence the graduates from rural colleges should be given preference during appointment in rural colleges.

To improve overall quality of education in rural colleges, there is need of emphasis on the information about training, career options and job market available after higher education. People in rural areas have very limited awareness of the job market and career options. It becomes a major obstacle to overall development of rural students. Traditionally job options of rural student have been limited to government jobs and there has been little guidance in respect of the latest developments in other employment opportunities. The rapidly expanding Indian industry found the graduates of rural colleges lacking in simple skills required for employability. Therefore on the one hand, the industry does not find enough people to employ and on other hand many graduates do not find employment as per their qualifications. The situation can be changed by using scientific/information technology in rural colleges.