**Banke Refresher Training Report on Laptop Assisted Teaching**


1. Introduction

The four-day refresher training from Nov 29 to Dec 2, 2012 for the teachers of four schools that have implemented ICT in education program that was jointly undertaken by OLE Nepal and the Department of Education, was aimed at supporting teachers with their ICT assisted lessons. Teachers with seven months' experience with the digital content, laptops and integrated teaching methodology were present in the training to share what actually worked and what didn't work for them and what more they need to go about for instilling an ICT enabled teaching. The training was therefore, designed to meet the needs of the teachers. The participating teachers ascertained their common as well as unique needs as the four day training took the course modeled by the participating teachers. OLE Nepal's trainers Mr. Sunil Pokhrel and Mr. Tika Raj Karki facilitated the process, with intern Mr. Sumit Acharya offering technical and logistic assistance.

The ICT intervention in four schools by OLE Nepal in close collaboration with the Department of Education in the beginning of the academic year 2069 had begun with the most important work of all- enlightening teachers on the issues posed by the traditional teaching methods. The training was aimed at encouraging teachers to do away with traditional modes of teaching and to endow them with necessary knowledge and experience on ICT enabled teaching process. The seven-day training in April, 2012 had provided teachers with an opportunity to gain understanding of the digital content and the process of delivering them in the classroom effectively. As per the very nature of the new subject in focus, with which teachers had minimal familiarity, it was largely a one way supply based training. While the in-school training in the Banke program schools was held in the month of August, the recent refresher training, which was held seven months after the initial training, was tailored to unknot the difficulties faced by teachers in the laptop assisted teaching process they now had experiences of. It was intended to be a two way, demand based training.


2. Teachers' Reactions

The training served a platform for the teachers of four different schools to express their unique observations, experiences and problems of executing a clean ICT integrated lesson. There were lots of praises for the program, but more attention was paid on what the complaints were and the different ways of addressing them. The four day training aimed to look into ways of solving their common as well as individual difficulties.

The common problems outlined by the teachers can roughly be divided into three categories: Technical, pedagogical and behavioral. The table below lists the opinions expressed:

| Technical | Pedagogical | Behavioral |
|---|---|---|
| ·Screens in some computers have black patches<br>·Takes long to start and shut<br>·Hangs too often<br>·Difficult to work on | ·Difficult to keep everyone on the same page<br>·The E-Paath content doesn't match with the book content<br>·E-paath English content have standard higher than students' understanding<br>·E-paath teaching takes away a huge amount of time; course content has lagged behind<br>·Low performing children are where they were | ·Some children move past the others quickly<br>·Classes get noisy<br>·Children don't share laptops with their peers<br>·Strong insistence to be taken to the lab for study |

All the participating teachers were of the view that Laptop Assisted Teaching had brought delight to children's learning process. The self-learning capabilities within children were slowly growing, with Pustakalaya offering books of children's diverse likes. Teachers were delighted that absentee-ism had seen a significant drop. Lalita Upadhaya, Principal of Rastriya Lower Secondary School expressed her happiness over the fact that children from boarding schools were seeking admission in the school. However, she was worried that children would outnumber the laptops.

3.Successes and Achievement

The training was intended to cater the common as well as individual needs of participants. Everyone was involved in the process of determining the structure of the training and content to be included. Each participating teacher expressed his/her expectations from the training, which was exactly covered during the course of the four day training.

The concern about E-Paaths not resembling with the book content was dealt with effectively. Teachers were asked to pick an objective from the curriculum, which could be for any grade and subject, for which E-Paaths were available.  Then they identified the content of the textbook which took care of the stated objective. They were then led to identify the E-Paath which dealt with the same objective. Lastly, they browsed E-Pustakalaya to see if anything in there covered the same objective. This exercise was found to be useful by the teachers, who after doing the exercise vowed to do the same for all the objectives of grades 2-6 in the curriculum.

The teachers were provided with a few teaching strategies such as POE, ROPES and Gallery Walk which are useful as pre-E-Paati activities.  A session on preparing test papers to cater to the needs of children of varying learning styles was an eye opener for many of the teachers.

For the technical part of the training, teachers were trained on basic network cable connections and on how to check and fix loose cable connections from the school server to the switch and routers. Teachers were also guided on cloning the operating system, so that they would be capable of troubleshooting basic problems..


4.Problems, difficulties

The participants had been using E-Paath for their regular teaching. But they were still very confused with the fact that E-Paath did not have a direct resemblance to the textbooks in use. Making teachers understand that fulfilling the objectives defined by the curriculum is what the focus needs to be on rather than completing a book's content in a year's time, was a tough task. The occurrences of teachers equating textbooks with the curriculum and demanding the E-Paath pages look like those of the textbook were high. It was explained to the teachers that E-Paath was more in line with the curriculum than the textbooks.

Informal discussions with teachers indicated that E-Pustakalaya was under used in the four schools in Banke. Teachers sought ideas in maximizing the use of E-Pustakalaya in classroom teaching. Some participating teachers had a notion that integrating E-Pustakalaya in lessons would mean that more time would be required to finish the designated course. It was thus, very difficult to make the teachers understand, that enhancing reading habit in students had many positives.

The training was attended by 4 Resource Persons whose primary jobs were to support teachers with necessary resources and need based training. The resource persons were invited to the training with a hope that they would provide teachers with necessary help when required on ICT enabled teaching. The Resource Persons however, were late for the training and were not interested in taking part in discussions or sharing their knowledge.

5.Participants' Evaluation of the Training

The POE, ROPES and Gallery walk were few activities that seemed to have been liked by the teachers, and they were of the opinion that those teaching strategies could be used in their classrooms. The practice session on possible technical problems with the school server, where the problems were addressed by the teachers themselves, was well liked by the teachers.

Few of the trainees felt that the training was too short. When requested to present their critical analysis of the training, a few trainees responded that the training would have been more encompassing in a real classroom setting, instead of a resource equipped training hall. One of the trainees felt that ICT based training, being different to what he was doing for ages, demanded harder work. He was of the view that the salary for those who implement ICT based training needs to go higher.

Appendix

Session Plan

| Day | Session 1 | Session 2 | Session 3 | Session 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Opening Introduction Expectations | Trainees Needs Identification<br><br>Categorize and prioritize the needs | Technical Aspects | Connecting laptop to the server and searching for books |
| 2 | Establishing a relationship between the curriculum, book, E-Paath and E-Pustakalaya | Establishing a relationship between curriculum, book, E-Paath and E-Pustakalaya ( contd.) | Ways to use E-Pustakalaya in classroom teaching | Making a functioning Class routine |
| 3 | Teaching Strategies and group formation | Differentiating while using ICT to teach | Preparing questions papers to meet everyone's needs | Lesson plan Discussion |
| 4 | Lesson plan presentation | Micro-teaching (1), Feedback | Micro-teaching (2), Feedback | Open discussion Closing |