

Reflecting on the future

We have never seen the single continent 'Pangaea', or the single ocean 'Panthalassa'; we have never seen our predecessors who survived and evolved through time and have ultimately given birth to modern human being. But we have seen the models of the primitive features of the earth, lively dinosaur on the electronic media, we have seen the bones and skulls of our predecessors in the museum, we get charmed and thrilled to know where we have come from, how the life was, what life style our predecessors had.

History has created a bridge between our forefathers and us, and this trend will continue in the same way in future as well. That day is not so far when a baby will be thrilled to know that his or her grandparents used to write by their own hands with some instruments called pen, pencil etc, people were writing letters on papers rather than writing 'mails' or 'chatting on net', there were artists who were drawing by real paintbrush, not by the electronic programme, the people read books (hard copies) in the library rather than on their PC, there were teacher-student interactions in the classrooms where both were visible offline!! This type of 'generation gap' may differ from place to place due to the varying extent of 'digital divide'. But it's evident that time and space will keep on creating some differences in terms of lifestyle, thinking process and mentality. And the best quality of a human being is that 'he can alter his life by altering his attitude' as stated by William James.

Communication has been revolutionised, holding the hands of audio, visual and audio-visual media, cell phones, personal computers, internet etc and the young people are considered to be the best practitioners and adapters of all new technologies by means of their high level of efficiency and acceptability. The range of positive impacts of ICT exposure and training on young people is widespread. In addition, young people are generally very passionate about new technologies and quick

to learn new skills. Therefore, children and young people are a very appropriate target group for ICT initiatives.

The expansion of ICT can be explained as both cause and effect of globalisation on all levels. No doubt it is a powerful instrument to create new avenues of communication between young people and can help to create a 'global youth culture'. But there are spatial and temporal aspects which matter a lot in effective implementation of ICT for specific development purposes. Despite numerous promises that the information age holds, it must be kept in mind that ICTs alone can not satisfy many of the fundamental



challenges that young people confront every day. Adding a simple 'e' to all the development parameters of the society of every corner of the globe may not be so easy to solve the problems right from the grassroot level. Because this 'e' is highly technology oriented and needs some basic infrastructural facilities which is also beyond the reach of the majority. Therefore, simply installing a computer in a classroom may not be effective to enable an untrained student to reap the benefits of technology, e-Health might be in the reach of limited people rather than the mass, e-Agriculture might be confined to a few, keeping a majority untouched... but it's a beginning!

It's remarkable that the youth has already shown their motivation towards the

development activities using ICT. ICT also has shown many ways to the youth to survive in a better way, with more facilities in terms of income, employment and innovations. Internet has squeezed the geographic distance in such a way that physical movement and communication have been replaced by electronic movement and communication that are speedier and accurate. But ICT initiatives for social development should not be isolated, keeping the older generation apart. Rather it is important that competent and knowledgeable adults integrate their skills and experiences with ICTs. While it can be argued that young people can teach themselves basic ICT skills, this does not negate the need for qualified staff to guide and support the learning process. Indeed, this support and guidance are critical to the long-term success of these initiatives. The youth of our society must not forget that first they were children to their parents. In the coming days, they will be the parents to their children, then parents to their parents, then children to their children – it is the normal cycle of life as described by Milton Greenblatt. Youth has the responsibility today to take care of traditional ethos, keeping pace with technology. Else emotion, passion and other humanistic feelings might soon be too mechanical, many of us may lose our natural intelligence because of the full dependency on the 'artificial intelligence', our memory will be a store of some keys and commands of ICT. Here an interesting quote must be mentioned: "Education makes machines which act like men and produces men who act like machines" (Erich Fromm). We really need to think about our future where the contemporary youth closely associated with ICT, the 'machinery' of the 21st century civilisation, will be the guiding citizens of this world. Are they prepared to face that challenge? Let's see in this issue what the youth have to say. ■

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