

Re-shaping national education with learning technologies

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Information Technology is re-shaping national and international society, affecting almost every aspect of daily lives and is constantly presenting new opportunities and challenges. The use of technology in education is a powerful strategy to support the development of student outcomes, allowing students to achieve their potential in their personal and working lives to play an active part in civic and economic life. The catalyst for this transformation will be technology supported schools. Unfortunately, for the nation's schools, these technologies are not a reality and the IT revolution has yet to penetrate into schools. It is heartening to note that the government has identified the importance of IT education and its benefits towards tomorrow's education, and taken measures to setup computer labs in schools and to introduce Information Technology as a subject.

With the aim of integrating information technologies into learning and teaching and improving access to learning technologies for students and teachers, an e-school project was started at the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology. Under Phase I of the project, a national survey was conducted with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, on introducing learning technologies to schools in Sri Lanka. The research group interviewed teachers involved in teaching Information Technology in 35 national schools islandwide and 5 private schools. The primary goal of this survey was to find out how these technologies could be integrated into the education system to enhance the delivery of education and the learning process itself. Further, it focused on the need to identify essential features of learning technologies for all schools and the educational and the technical support needed to enable schools to apply these technologies to enhancing students' learning outcomes.

The results of the survey showed that a blended learning system will be the best solution for Sri Lankan schools. Therefore, a learning model based on blended learning principle, was proposed to implement computer based learning in Sri Lanka and the e-learning system proposed in this paper will allow teachers to delegate routine exercises or deliver information and free them from the more mundane administrative tasks to concentrate on the human facet of education. The proposed e-learning system provides teachers with the opportunity to enrich their modes of instruction and students with the opportunity to contribute useful resources to others