



We hope you enjoy this edition of *OLE Nepal Newsletter*, a bi-monthly email newsletter from Open Learning Exchange (OLE) Nepal. It provides current news and information about the organisation and its activities and will keep you up to date with OLE Nepal's work to provide high quality education for children in Nepal.

Localising OLPC: From Names to Games

OLE Nepal has been working since 2007 on introducing ICT-integrated teaching methodology in Nepal's public education system through its unique content-focused OLPC (One Laptop Per Child) programme. Why OLE Nepal picked OLPC XO laptops for its programme and how the XO and the Nepali education content got their respective Nepali names make for an interesting story and highlight what the project fundamentally stands for. It is a proud moment for us at OLE Nepal to reflect back and see how we have made this project our own starting with an implementation strategy that suits our needs and environment, to the localised content that Nepali school going children can easily relate to, all the way to the names of the different components involved that reflect the noble- yet intimately local- initiative.

(Full story on page 2)

Leadership Development: Missing Piece of the Puzzle

OLE Nepal's experience over the past two years has shown that there is a strong positive correlation between committed and innovative headmasters, who demonstrate excellent leadership skills, and the successful implementation of OLE Nepal's ICT-integrated education programme. Although most headmasters we have worked with are committed and have good



intentions, most of them have not been trained specifically to have the leadership skills necessary to reach out to teachers and motivate them in adapting a completely novel teaching methodology. For this reason, we have decided to add a leadership component to our training programme starting this year. OLE Nepal's leadership training will be conducted for headmasters, School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Chairs. At any school, the headmaster is responsible for ensuring that teachers are performing well on their jobs. This includes regular monitoring to make sure teachers have realistic yearly plans as well as daily lesson plans and also being firmly committed to keeping teachers motivated through professional development and interaction programmes. These become especially critical within the context of our programme given that we are introducing completely novel teaching-learning concepts that integrate ICT into daily pedagogy. We view the hardware and the content it contains as resources. The teachers are still the

Latest Developments

- » Teacher training package updated
- » Leadership training component added
- » Full year course with weekly plans completed for grade three English
- » VoIP system to connect schools tested and setup in schools in Lalitpur
- » Advisory panel for E-Pustakalaya formed
- » Nepali children's books published by NESCHIL acquired for E-Pustakalaya
- » The deployment scheduled for this new academic year has been postponed due to adverse political climate. All the preparatory works have been completed, and the laptops will be rolled out soon in collaboration with the Department of Education.

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main agents in the delivery process. Therefore, the impact of the project will be hugely influenced by whether or not teachers 'buy into' the new approach and are motivated enough to use these resources to best effect. Good leadership is essential to making this happen.
(Full story on page 3)

Localising OLPC

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OLPC's XO laptops greatest advantage over competing hardware is that each country can make it its own. Its Sugar interface can be localised, activities that take into account the local context and environment easily developed, and appropriate power solutions found. Unlike other initiatives imported from the West that are pre-packaged and controlled, we Nepalis could make this our own, and that is precisely what OLE Nepal has done, from how it looks to what it is called.

When the concept of OLPC was first introduced in Nepal, a critical question that arose was what to call the XOs. There is no Nepali word for computer, let alone a laptop. In normal usage, a computer is referred to as 'computer' written in Devnagari script. While most people who have come into contact with a computer do have an idea of what the word refers to, the word did not do justice to the education aspect of the XO and had technical connotations made the largely non-tech savvy public resistant at some level to the OLPC concept. On the other hand, referring to it as 'XO' was acceptable within the OLPC community, but was too abstract for the general public and caused more confusion.

Many names were suggested: some liked 'Mero Sano Sathi' (my

small friend), yet others suggested various combinations of Nepali words for book, learning, knowledge and machine. The community could not decide on a single name, although a few continued to refer to it as Mero Sano Sathi. The name however did not seem quite right to OLE Nepal's Founder Rabi Karmacharya. OLE Nepal's programme is fundamentally about connecting kids to other kids and educating them through the me-

electronic learning platform.

What is unique about OLE Nepal's OLPC implementation is the clear focus on developing interactive digital learning activities based on Nepal's national curriculum to go with the hardware. These activities are designed with the goal of integrating ICT-based resources in daily teaching-learning processes, to enhance children's learning. When we developed the first ones back in the fall of 2007, we decided to call this set of learning activities *E-Paati*.

Another significant part of our implementation strategy is to ensure that teachers are well prepared to not just use laptops, but to use them effectively to deliver quality education to their students. During the course of the teacher training programme before laptops were deployed in the two test schools in 2008, the teachers started referring to the laptops as E-Paati. While a community of

tech enthusiasts, education specialists, and volunteers had not been able to come up with a Nepali name for the laptops, it was a natural choice for the teachers, who had witnessed firsthand the use of Kharipaati and later Kalopaati in daily classroom teaching. It then occurred to us, that E-Paati was indeed an appropriate name for the Nepali XO. The name connects Nepal's past with its future and is indicative of the collaborative process that OLE Nepal strongly believes in, where the input of teachers and experts in government have always been greatly valued with regards to teacher training, content development and future scalability prospects for the programme.

This then left us with the task of having to find a different name for our digital learning activities; calling both the laptops and the activities by the same name created confusion in the classroom. For



Learning activity with localised content

dium of ICT, not just about handing kids computers. Furthermore, the XO icon emblazoned on the top of each laptop represents the child's own agency, not a separate entity. The Nepali counterpart thus remained nameless until its name came about in the most unexpected manner.

When OLE Nepal was established, the group decided to give itself the Nepali name *Sajha Sikchha E-Paati*. *Sajha* means open and public, an important aspect of what we do at OLE Nepal because we believe that quality education should be freely accessible to anyone and everyone. *Sikchha* means education while *Paati* means a board, used in words like *Kalopaati* (blackboard) and *Kharipaati* (wooden predecessor of the blackboard). *Paati* also means a place of gathering or public shelter. For our purposes, *E-Paati* then stands for digital or

example, when teachers would ask students to close their E-Paati, students did weren't sure whether they were meant to close the activity or turn off their laptops. It was important to make a clear distinction between the content (activities) and the hardware (laptops). Once again many names were suggested but one suggested by Dr. Saurav Dev Bhatta (former Education Director) was chosen- *E-Paath*. *Paath* in Nepali means lesson. However, we want *E-Paath* to mean more

than just digital lessons. *E-Paath* stands for interactive digital lessons and activities that provide children with additional resources that make learning easy and fun.

Currently in Nepal, teachers and students in 28 schools in 6 districts around the country are blazing the trail to transform education in Nepal using approximately 2000 *E-Paatis*, pre-installed with curriculum related content *E-Paath*. It is expected that within the next month, sev-

eral more schools will have been added and a total of 4400 laptops deployed. It is a proud moment for us at OLE Nepal to reflect back and see how we have made this project our own starting with an implementation strategy that suits our needs and environment, to the localised content that Nepali school going children can easily relate to, all the way to the names of the different components involved that reflect the noble- yet intimately local- initiative.

Leadership Development

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There could be many reasons for teachers rejecting such new methods: a. Teachers feeling that it requires much more preparation time, a luxury that a lot of teachers who have to walk long hours to and from school feel they cannot afford; b. Teachers not being confident about using the technology and the new ICT-based approach in the classroom; and c. Teachers not wanting to seek help from col-



ICT integrated classroom in Kapilvastu

leagues for fear of being labeled as incompetent. Since we cannot have project personnel or district officials going to each school every week to work with the teachers, we need effective leadership within the school, in the form of headmasters, to lead the teachers in making sure that they are able to use the new approach with confidence.

OLE Nepal's regular teacher training programme is designed specifically to train teachers on how to integrate ICT resources in classroom

teaching. The training includes topics such as basic knowledge about the laptop and its activities, preparing lesson plans to integrate ICT in classrooms, classroom management, optimal seating arrangement, proper instruction style and basic troubleshooting. Although topics such as maximising use of laptops outside the classroom, and community and parent orientations are also covered in the training, the entire training programme was designed primarily with teachers as the audience. There was no material to train headmasters on how to ensure that teachers have the support and motivation needed to implement the program in their classrooms.

OLE Nepal's leadership training will be conducted for headmasters, School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Chairs. SMC is the managing body elected by the community to manage the school. Although most SMC members mean well for the school, the relation with school administration often times can turn sour when they do not have the necessary management skills. Therefore, we have decided to include SMC and PTA Chairs as well in the training programme to build awareness about the programme and its merits as well as to inform them of their responsibilities in order to ensure successful implementation of the project. We expect that they will then in turn pass the message to other members of their respective communities.

In brief, the leadership training will include: a. an overview of the project and its goals, b. the role of the

school, teachers, SMC, parents and communities to ensure its success, c. the importance of good leadership skills and healthy, constructive relationships between various bodies involved with the school, d. various scenarios and problems that may arise and their possible solutions, and e. the need for and process of regular monitoring and reporting of the status of the project to OLE Nepal.

Other motivational activities that headmasters can be involved in in-

clude holding regular teacher meetings to discuss the difficulties faced and seeking solutions together with other teachers, so teachers realize that the problems they may be facing are universal but can be solved through collaborative work. Headmasters can also hold meetings with parents and other community members to maximize the use of laptops at home both by students and other members of the family because the true beauty of the programme lies in not just educating the student who is attending a par-

ticular classroom but in them being able to share this resource with others, like siblings and family who haven't had the same privilege.

A truly innovative model in a school in Bajjalpur Kapilvastu, that has outstanding leadership in the form of its headmaster, is running an after school adult education programme for the mothers in the community using the laptops. Such innovative projects can only be made possible by good supportive leadership.

Latest Developments

Updated Teacher Training: The teacher training package from the first round of deployment (2009) has been updated with inputs from teachers, government teacher trainers and other district education officials involved in the programme. Some of the changes include a greater focus on practice teaching, on how to use E-Pustakalaya and how to integrate its various contents in classroom teaching to enhance children's learning, and more advanced topics with regards to laptop usage like using other activities it contains. A new leadership training component, for school management, has been added to the teacher training programme this year.

Full Year Course: In response to request from teachers, OLE Nepal's curriculum experts have set out to develop a complete course package for an entire academic year that combines E-Paath activities, textbook contents, and other activities. It is hoped that this will facilitate integration of ICT in teaching practices further. This course outlines weekly activities that teachers can utilise to deliver effective teaching in respective grades and subjects. The first full year course has been completed for Grade 3 English with active participation and input from Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) experts.

VoIP: Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) enables the delivery of voice communication over the

Internet. A VoIP server has been set up at the OLE Nepal office, which will allow schools that have Internet connection to call the OLE Nepal office and each other using this technology. It is hoped that this will facilitate better communication between schools as well as allow OLE Nepal to better monitor the programme at the schools in a cost effective manner. Pap devices, which enable this interchange using a normal telephone (provided there is Internet connectivity), have been set up at two of the programme schools in Lalitpur-Siddheshwor and Navajyoti- and the network team is working on testing the system further so the facility can be extended to the other schools.

E-Pustakalaya Advisory Panel: Given that E-Pustakalaya is not just a repository of any and all materials, but a specifically education-focused library, OLE Nepal has set up an advisory panel for it to review and suggest new additions that fit OLE Nepal's vision. The panel consists of notable personalities from Nepali literary circles, who have themselves already contributed materials to the initiative. The first advisory panel meeting took place on March 18.

Books for E-Pustakalaya: Nepalese Society for Children's Literature (NESCHIL), the largest and most well known children's literature society in Nepal has given E-Pustakalaya fifteen of its published books to be published digitally. The most prominent and

acclaimed Nepali children's writers are affiliated with or involved in NESCHIL. NESCHIL, like E-Pustakalaya, believes in expanding leadership and nurturing a healthy reading culture in Nepal.

AYAD Volunteer: OLE Nepal is fortunate to have been matched with a highly qualified software project manager Grant Cox through the Australian Government's AYAD (Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development) program. Grant's assignment will last for a year from May 2010 till April 2011, and during this period he will work together with OLE Nepal's education software development team to optimise the development process and improve our productivity.

OLE Nepal's former Education Director at the World Bank: Saurav Dev Bhatta, PhD, former Education Director and a founding member of OLE Nepal, has taken leave from OLE Nepal to join the World Bank Kathmandu Office as their Senior Education Specialist. During his two and a half year tenure at OLE Nepal, he led the development of the ICT-based education model that is currently implemented at the OLPC pilot schools. His vision and dedication were inspiration for many of us. Although he will be missed sorely at OLE Nepal, we have no doubt that he will continue his mission to improve Nepal's public education system from his new position at the World Bank.