Computer literacy of teachers

**By Dr. Amra Satharathriye**

Computers offer exciting approaches to teaching that were not even dreamed of twenty years ago, but the educational potential of computer technology will be realized remains to be seen. There is widespread belief that teaching and learning could bring advances that would improve education dramatically and result in a new era of learning. However, the computer literacy of teachers and the students is not a full picture. The impact of these investments and thereby help ensure that the intended results are met.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy of students and teachers should be measured. The Department of Census and Statistics and the Ministry of Education conducted a census of ICT literacy in Sri Lanka, the first attempt to assess the national literacy of Academic Staff of Government Schools, Approved Private Schools and Private Institutions, public and private schools.

**A teacher guides the students**

Having a computer laboratory a library and books/magazines on ICT is useful to encourage students and teachers to use ICT in teaching and learning processes. Although 72 percent of schools/pirivenas have a library, only 17 percent of schools have a computer laboratory. Books/magazines on ICT are available only in 27 percent of the schools.

Availability of hardware in schools/pirivenas was also assessed in this Census. Most of the facilities and hardware are more available in national and Navodya schools and to a similar extent in private schools. Other government schools, which are also, the small student size schools are the least well equipped with ICT facilities and hardware.

**Teacher attitudes toward computer literacy**

Teacher attitudes toward computer literacy levels of teachers and ICT related facilities and hardware available in schools. This census was conducted on 2nd November 2004 by the Department of Census and Statistics, a much lower literacy was assessed. Those were computer awareness, computer literacy. Nearly 60 of the teachers of schools/pirivenas have the computer awareness which was defined as knowing at least one use of computers. This ratio for male teachers is 63 and 68 percent respectively.

According to a study conducted in 2004 by the Department of Census and Statistics, a much lower literacy of teachers was determined. The literacy of teachers was measured as the percentage of teachers having at least one use of computers. Nearly 60 of the teachers of schools/pirivenas have the computer awareness which was defined as knowing at least one use of computers. This ratio for male teachers is 63 and 68 percent respectively.

**Technological tools and facilities available in government schools, approved private schools and pirivenas by numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Number of schools/pirivenas</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>More than 1000</td>
<td>2861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1000-3000</td>
<td>2798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3000-5000</td>
<td>2271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5000-9000</td>
<td>1021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9000-10000</td>
<td>8951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Schools/pirivenas with**
  - **Electricity (%)** 53.3
  - **Land phone (%)** 15.3
  - **Internet connection (%)** 1.0
  - **e-mail facility (%)** 0.8
  - **Computer laboratory (%)** 1.6
  - **Library (%)** 57.0
  - **Books/magazines on ICT (%)** 8.7
  - **Desktop (%)** 6.5
  - **Internet (%)** 4.3
  - **Students-computer ratio (%)**
  - **Laptop computers (%)** 0.1
  - **Scanners (%)** 0.4
  - **Printers (%)** 6.3
  - **Books/magazines on ICT (%)** 8.7
  - **Schools/pirivenas with scanners (%)** 0.1
  - **Schools/pirivenas with scanners as a percentage of schools/pirivenas having computers (%)** 0.1
  - **Schools/pirivenas with scanners as a percentage of schools/pirivenas having computers (%)** 0.1
  - **Teachers in schools/pirivenas**
  - **Self reported computer awareness (%)** 50.0
  - **Self reported computer literacy (%)** 19.0
  - **Self reported English language literacy (%)** 37.1
  - **Teacher-computer ratio (%)** 12.9
  - **Student-computer ratio (%)** 12.9
  - **Technology and Service (No. of students)**
  - **Students in school/pirivenas**
  - **Teachers in school/pirivenas**
  - **Students-computer ratio (%)** 12.9
  - **Teachers-computer ratio (%)** 12.9
  - **Internet facilities and hardware such as computers, scanners, and multimedia projectors. The levels of educational indicators such as enrollment rate, gender parity in education, gross enrollment completion rate etc is very impressive in Sri Lanka. But issues, such as gender unemployment etc are still persistent. This emphasizes the need to improve quality of education and providing equal education for all students across the country. ICT is influential in promoting equal education for all students. Even though all schools do not have required facilities, innovative thinking can bring solutions until the necessary facilities are provided. For example, without expecting teachers of rural schools to develop educational materials, standard materials can be prepared with very user-friendly multimedia tools and copies burnt into compact disks can be distributed to all relevant schools. This will promote providing equal education for all students. Covering these aspects, there is a need to prepare a ICT policy for the Education system of the country to obtain the maximum benefits of the rapid developments in ICT for teaching and learning process in the class rooms. The writer is Deputy Director, Department of Census and Statistics.