Oh ! Calcutta

Professor Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay, University of Calcutta explains ICT implementation at University of Calcutta in form of typology. This involves – Policy, Connectivity, and Information to deliver E-Administration, E-Services and E-Participation. The confluence of these three delivers Democratic Governance. The enablers are process, people and technology. ICT offers information to empower stakeholders and enables their participation in governance, he explains.

On more practical level, ICT implementation at University of Calcutta revolves around Edusys, an educational ERP package. It is used for order processing and bill processing. It is also used for payroll and receipts. Edusys was initially installed in Finance department and was later extended to all departments.

The student database part of Edusys looks after admission, registration and examination. Whereas teacher database part of Edusys looks after promotion, leave and retirement.

ICT implementation at University of Calcutta has not been in form of Big Bang approach. Instead it has been very slow incremental augmentation beginning way back in 1985 and slowly adding various modules. For instance, examination result processing began way back in 1985. Student registration module was added in 1995. Salary processing was introduced in 1997 and PF fund management in 2001.

Even in limited area of examination management, augmentation has been incremental from 1985, with speed being picked up only in early part of the century. The Library has begun computerisation with library management and digitisation beginning much later. The Calcutta University website – www.caluniv.ac.in – is source of different information, such as departmental profiles, admission information, events and conferences, tender notices, access to ebooks and journals, emails for teachers and officers – and has around 200,000 hits per day. The email system itself evolved from dialup email through ERNET in 1996 to University email in 2004.

There are several challenges in implementing technology. The chief one is the existence of heterogeneity between various affiliated colleges. The second challenge is in integration with legacy systems. To bridge such digital divide requires increased financial resources and appropriate trained resources.

Professor Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay points to other areas of concern in ICT implementation and that is the fact that ICT may create a digital divide between those comfortable with technology and those not. Second concern being expressed is that ICT may create divide between teacher and student. In some sense questions are being asked if ICT would reduce teacher's role to that of a robot

There are also concerns being raised about cost of training on ICT. Concerns related to less attention being paid to revision of lessons are also being raised. Other

concerns being raised are that ICT may promote individual learning and reduce interaction with peers. Concerns are being raised if ICT would increase alienation from real life and greater integration with virtual life. The cost of hardware and software is certainly a matter of concern.

Understanding ICT implementation at Calcutta University provides one with perspectives that are readily not available from other educational institutions. These perspectives must be kept in mind as institutions implement technology.