

Ranchi Ranch

The ICT landscape at Ranchi University can be viewed as a large farm – a ranch of sorts where ranching occurs – raising of livestock – in this case educating students. Ranchi University is one of the oldest universities in Jharkhand, having been established in 1960.

If the universities is one of the oldest in the state, remarkably it is also is the one with the earliest ICT implementation, having begun ICT implementation way back in 1976, when UGC selected Ranch University for establishment of Computer Centre.

The Ranchi University had a mainframe installed way back in 1979. This was used by faculty and research scholars then. So though the hardware was there, technology in form of applications did not actually start in the early 1980s.

That started after mid 1990s when courses for computer training of teachers and staff started. In 1999 the Centre started computerisation of examination system. However it was only in 2002, entire examination process from registration to issue of final degree was being done at Centre with help of software provided by MECON.

In 2005 UGC chose Ranchi University as partner for INFLIBNET and automation of Central Library with one lakh books started. In 2011, E learning and Knowledge Centre was established near Central library. One server and 25 thin clients were installed to provide access to INFLIBNET and access to journals and internet to students.

All University Departments, Central Library, Dean's Office are linked to 1GBPS connectivity provided by BSNL link under NKN project, benefitting teachers and students. The Computer Centre has an A-View Classroom for video recording of lectures and presentation of video recorded lectures.

Since the University already has network, it is planned to use the network for e-governance with an ERP based system. Thus availability of networking is acting as a propellant for implementation of ERP.

There are some difficulties at Ranchi University, however. Shortage of funds is certainly one. Resistance to change is another. The language barrier is the third due to the content being in English.

Ranchi University needs funds and staff to do better in ICT implementation. There is assistance needed in establishment of more A-view classrooms. The network traffic is expected to be increased.

The learning from Ranchi University is that just because government invests heavily does not mean that ICT implementation will be fast. For instance though Ranchi University had mainframe in 1979, serious technology implementation only began in mid 1990s.

As mentioned elsewhere it is the horse of problem that drags the cart of technology. While investing in technology may appeal to some, unless the problem is faced acutely technology will not be optimally used for providing solution to resolve a pain area or problem being faced by an organisation.

What this means in terms of policy choice cannot be determined in a short article. However this learning is of immense use to policy makers. Investing in technology does not necessarily yield immediate implementation of technology; much less use of technology to find solution to a problem area.