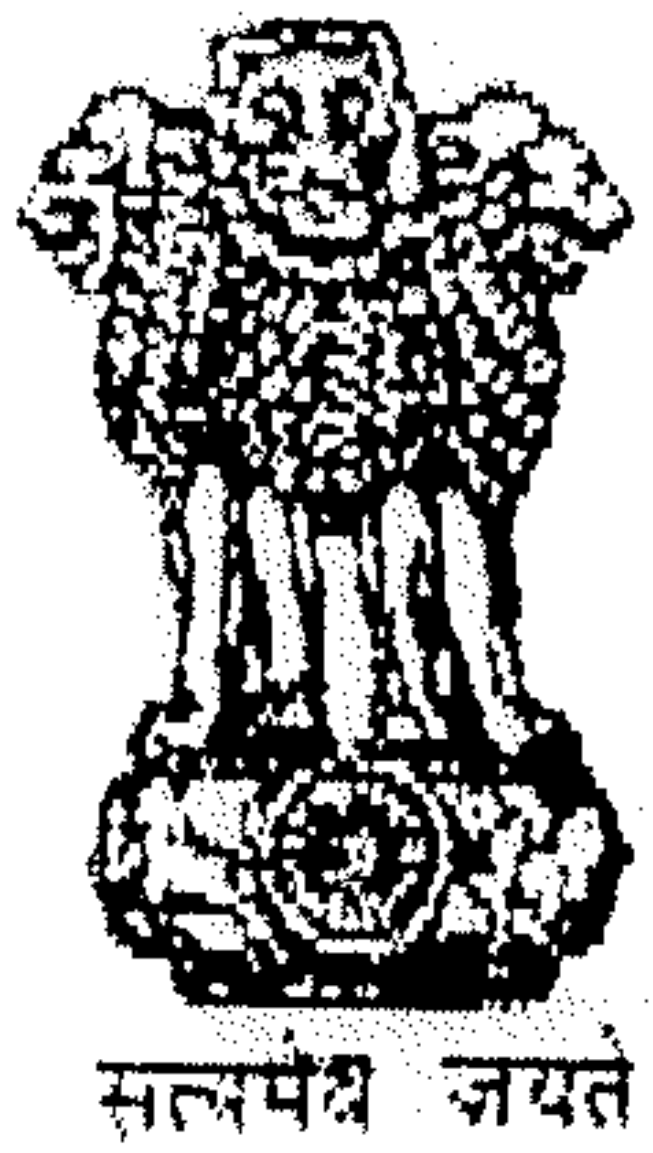




PRESS RELEASE

MIE Information Technology Kiosk Project in Cambodia

During his visit to Cambodia in April, 2002, the Prime Minister of India announced gifting of five Minimally Invasive Education Information Technology (MIE IT) Kiosks to Cambodia. NIIT-HIWEL Ltd. have been entrusted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Government of India, to commission the kiosks, which have been designed and developed by NIIT. From the Cambodian side, National Information Communications Technology Development Authority (NiDA) is the co-ordinating agency in the matter.

MIE IT kiosks have been designed, developed and established at various places in India by NIIT. Experiments conducted by NIIT have shown that semi-literate poor children can quickly teach themselves the rudiments of computers and Internet. Dr. Sugata Mitra, Head of the Centre for Research in Cognitive Systems (CRCS), NIIT, is the brain behind the experiments also known as the "Hole-In-The-Wall" experiments. The key, he contends, is that the basic computing skills can be acquired by any set of children through incidental learning provided they are given access to a suitable computing facility with entertaining and motivating content and some minimal (human) guidance. He calls this *Minimally Invasive Education* (MIE). The implications of these results are not just restricted to computer literacy but education in general.

MIE is a pedagogic method, and derives its name partly from the medical term minimally invasive surgery. The idea of MIE crystallized over a period of time based on observations and educational experiments conducted at NIIT. It was observed that, even in the absence of any direct input, mere curiosity led groups of children to explore, which resulted in learning. This, coupled with minimal inputs from peers, or from someone familiar with the situation, helped the children learn more. As the children explore their environment, they relate their new experience with their previous experience and thereby new learning takes place. Hence, *MIE is defined as, a pedagogic method that uses the learning environment to generate an adequate level of motivation to induce learning in groups of children, with minimal, or no, intervention by a teacher.* In MIE, the role of a teacher is limited to providing, or guiding learners to, environments that generate adequate levels of interest. A known example of MIE is the type of learning that takes place when an appropriate puzzle is given to children with little or no input from others. Similarly, the Internet has a great deal of material that can stimulate curiosity and learning among various age groups of children.

Based on the above assumptions, it is hypothesized that even in totally unfamiliar situations, children in groups will learn on their own with little or no input from others, provided the learning environment induces an adequate level of curiosity. The above hypothesis has been proven in experiments conducted at NIIT. In these experiments, free Internet street kiosks were provided to a group of slum children who were unfamiliar with computers and the Internet. The children learnt to use computers and browse the Internet with no formal inputs from anyone. After a careful analysis of the experiment and the group dynamics involved, the learning process was termed "*Minimally Invasive Education*" as unlike conventional pedagogic methods, there is no formal instruction by a teacher or by anyone else. In fact, there is little or no intervention in the group learning process.

It has been observed that the learning curve for children, even from the economically disadvantaged segments of the society, with very little exposure to formal education systems, has been extremely positive. Even the adults on many occasions, have felt sufficiently encouraged to explore and enquire, and thereby start the learning process, with the children becoming their teachers.

The computers used for the MIE kiosks are all Pentium PCs with colour monitors and multimedia support. The operating system is Windows and the Internet browser is MS Internet Explorer. Internet connectivity to the kiosks is provided using various methods including leased lines, ISDN lines and dial-up connections. Besides that, a host of edutainment software is installed that has proved to be quite popular.

NIIT has set up over 50 MIE IT kiosks in the following locations in India with a view to conduct the experiment in as varied conditions as possible. :

Almora (Uttaranchal); Bangalore (Karnataka); Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu);
Madantoosi (U.P.); Mandya (Karnataka); Mysore (Karnataka);
Shivpuri (M.P.), Sindhudurg (Maharashtra) & Delhi.

Detailed information regarding the MIE IT kiosk, may be seen at the website:
<http://www.hole-in-the-wall.com/>.

In Cambodia, the kiosks have been established at the following sites :

- (1) Hun Sen Sreyeap High School, **Kandal**
- (2) Mukh Neak Primary School, **Siem Reap**
- (3) Reach Bo Primary School, **Siem Reap**
- (4) Chea Sim High School, **Takeo**
- (5) Park adjoining Norodom Blvd. & Road Nos. 108/106,
near Mahatma Gandhi Statue, **Phnom Penh**

The response received from the children, teachers, scholars and others involved with academia in Cambodia has been very encouraging. The socio-economic education studies which have been carried out, reflect a positive impact of this pedagogy on the outlook, awareness and learning process of the children using these kiosks. This has resulted in generating an increased demand for creating more such kiosks elsewhere.

Copies of some articles which have appeared in the media are enclosed.

Phnom Penh
19th October, 2004

023-2112-820