

E-Learning Policy
for
Rural Institute for Community Education
Mathagondapalli Model School (RICE-MMS)

1 Overarching Context

The RICE-MMS Strategy plan for 2013 to 2015 has the following aims (numbering as per plan):

- 2.1 To provide high quality, lifelong learning opportunities which anticipate and satisfy market demand and which are supported by research and scholarly practice
- 2.2 To take a national lead in offering learning opportunities to all those who can benefit, at a range of levels and in a variety of modes to suit individual needs
- 2.3 To engage in focused and useful applied research which translates into consultancy and knowledge transfer to the private, public and voluntary sectors and encourage all our customers to be enterprising
- 2.4 To play a leadership role in the cultural, social, economic and intellectual life of the local, regional and wider communities we serve and be known for our expertise in supporting economic and social regeneration.
- 2.5 To put our students first by offering them a distinctively high quality and relevant experience which adds value
- 2.6 To forge and maintain strong partnerships with other institutions, both in INDIA and internationally, government and voluntary agencies to promote mutually beneficial opportunities for the furtherance of our mission
- 2.7 To maintain financial health and stability through income diversification and cost effective management of our resources
- 2.8 To build an agile organisation where all staff feel empowered to respond effectively and creatively to the challenges of the changing education environment

E-Learning is contributing, or has the potential to contribute, to all of these aims, but equally, its successful use is dependent in their fulfilment in the context of other RICE-MMS strategies.

This policy explicitly meets one of actions against the Schools Plan's Strategic Objectives under Aim 2.2:

Objective: *To exploit new delivery mechanisms, including networked workplace and 'e' learning, to the benefit of a wider range of students both on and off campus*
Action: *Prepare an E-Learning Policy to include information literacy, training and ongoing support.*

And is part of the Objectives under Aim 2.1:

Objective: *To sustain a pervasive culture of professional, pedagogic research and scholarly practice, supported by appropriate staff development, in order to guarantee the relevance, consistent delivery and quality of all course provision*
Action: *Prepare a new, updated Learning and Teaching Strategy to support delivery of the Lesson Plan and enhance pedagogic practices and delivery*

2 The Policy Statement

The School will use E-Learning where appropriate to support the achievement of its goals in providing learner-centred learning experiences that are flexible, responsive and effective and meet the needs of all its learners and partners. E-Learning will be used to innovate both learning and its delivery and will be delivered making effective and efficient use of all resources while maintaining the quality standards the Schools is committed to.

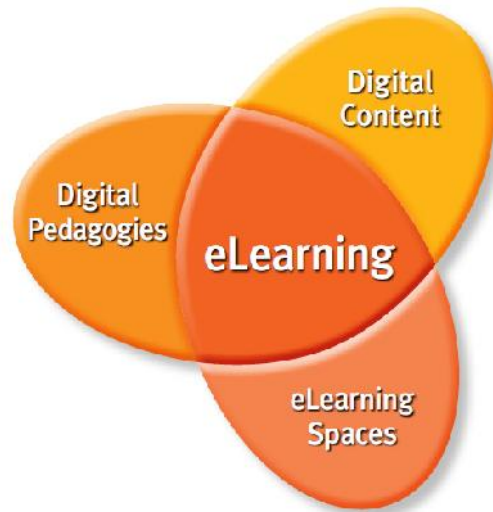
*Policy aspects pertaining to E-Learning will, where relevant, be embedded in **all** School policies and procedures to ensure a consistent and corporate approach to associated systems, processes and responsibilities.*

What is E-Learning?

- E-Learning Strategy is positioned at the forefront of transforming classroom practise and student learning opportunities.
- This approach promotes a blended model of learning featuring a balance between virtual and face to face delivery.
- The proportion of each delivery mode will vary significantly and is critically linked to the role of the teacher in facilitating learning.
- E-Learning is not confined to independent study or remote learning models; it is an important consideration for RICE-MMS and its staff.

Our E-Learning Strategy is comprised of three interrelated and co-dependent components:

1. *Digital Pedagogy*
2. *Digital Content (including E-Curriculum)*
3. *E-Learning Spaces*



1. *Digital Pedagogy*
 - New way of working and learning with ICT to facilitate quality learning experiences for 21st century learners.
 - Moves the focus from ICT tools and skills, to a way of working in the digital world.
2. *Digital Content*
 - Consists of two key components – **Digital resources** and **E-Curriculum**
3. *E-Learning Spaces*
 - Aimed on Create and Utilise Digital tools to the fullest extent.
 - Enables the creation of formal and informal spaces to **design, create, innovate, share and learn.**

These components co-exist to create the conditions for a new generation of digital learners. If one component is missing the approach is unbalanced and less effective.

3. Principles of the E-Learning Policy:

- **Principle 1:** *The School will ensure that its E-Learning provision can meet the needs of a full range of flexible and independent learning experiences. This will include on and off campus learners in local, regional, national and international settings and cover both blended and fully eLearning courses.*
- **Principle 2:** *The School will continually work towards ensuring that all systems, both manual and electronic, used in the eLearning context interoperate in the most effective way to provide learners with a effective and increasingly individualised learning environment encompassing all aspects of their experience as a student of the School, as part of a **holistic Managed Environment for Learners (MEfL)**.*
- **Principle 3:** *The School will exploit the range of technologies used in the E-Learning context to work with other Schools to assist it in meeting its goals of supporting the independent and lifelong learner and continuing professional development.*
- **Principle 4:** *The School will ensure, resources for both teachers and children, including E-Learning course content, School E-Resources, and those provides from external sources are easily accessed from point of need. In addition, it will via the use of managed repositories, ensure that School owned E-Content and E-Resources are readily available for repurposing and reuse by those entitled to do so, and will thus actively support cross discipline and Faculty developments.*
- **Principle 5:** *The School, through its quality processes, will ensure that E-Learning provision meets the standards expected by the School, funding bodies and relevant legislation, and that it is accessible, educationally sound, engaging and appropriate to its target populations, whilst ensuring that course developers and those facilitating learning have the scope to innovate and fully employ their professional skills and judgement.*
- **Principle 6:** *To ensure that the potential of E-Learning to innovate learning and meet the needs of an increasingly diverse range of potential learners is realised, the Schools will actively encourage research, scholarship and development in all aspects of E-Learning, and in particular, pedagogy for eLearning. In addition, it will, via appropriate staff development, ensure all management, administrative,*

support and teaching staff have the skills, and understanding of each others' roles, required to play their part effectively in the provision of eLearning.

- **Principle 7:** *The School will monitor and evaluate the use of all systems and practices contributing to its learners' eLearning experiences, to ensure that practice, policy and strategy are responsive to lessons learned and agile in respect of new opportunities, and will actively seek to remove barriers that impede or restrict effective eLearning.*
- **Principle 8:** *The School will ensure, assist by the use of monitoring and evaluation, that the resources required to support E-Learning, in human, technical and infrastructural aspects, are appropriate to its requirements and will allow it to provide its E-Learners with realistic definitions of the levels of service they can expect*

This policy formulation fully understands the following limitations in an e-learning environment and will make all efforts to overcome the limitations while implementing the policy.

- **Technology dependent:** learners will need access to a machine of minimum specification as dictated by the e-learning services or access to a service with a high bandwidth to transfer the course materials in a timely way.
- **Material Incompatibility:** some materials designed for one particular system will not function properly on another (for example, the Apple Macintosh and the Windows PC). Standards will help in the area.
- **Unsuitable for Certain Types of Training:** any skill that relies heavily on inter-personal contact although these courses could be supplemented by e-learning.
- **Unsuitable for Certain Types of Learners:** e-learning requires a high-level of self-discipline and personal time management. E-learners need to be highly self-motivated to take full advantage of the medium as often the online learning experience can be impersonal. Working through 'packaged' programmes can be irritating.
- **Expensive:** start-up cost of an e-learning service is expensive and the cost of production of online training materials is very high. Teachers must be confident that the extra costs are balance with the benefits of delivering a course online. Significant time needs to be invested in course set-up and in ongoing maintenance (checking links, updating course content etc.).
- **Reliant on Human Support:** e-learning is still dependent on help on either the course materials or the software.

- **Social/economic disadvantage:** can limit or prevent access by some student groups (for example, cost of equipment, online access and printing).
- **No Match for Face-to-Face Teaching:** Electronic communication does not necessarily provide a good match for face-to-face communication and is more linear than face-to-face discussion. Not necessarily based on the best science regarding “**how People learn**” and Lack of adoption to **learning style** of learners.
- **Too Reliant on IT Skills:** learners may have limited IT skills, or be uncomfortable with electronic communication and need to learn how to use the medium effectively.
- **Disabilities:** Students with visual or physical impairments may be disadvantaged.
- **Inflexible:** Flexibility may be lost as adjustments to the course in response to student reaction are not easy to make once the course is underway.
- **Pedagogically Unsound:** The electronic environment does not per se offer a pedagogically enhancing learning environment.

Policy implementation strategy:

The planning and implementation of RICE-MMS’s e-learning strategy involves multiple dimensions that need to be taken together for its successful implementation. It is therefore will use the following strategies.

A detailed study/review of the available ICT infrastructure at RICE-MMS will be done twice in an year to determine and an elaborate plan drawn by the ICT unit and implemented to provide and maintain ICT infrastructure at the campus width for all types of learners including visually impaired.

Wireless facilities will be extended to areas to have access to the **intranet** facilities offered to reduce the consumption of bandwidth needed by the e-learning system.

Educational e-learning workshops will be organised regularly for students and staff to bring awareness about the e-learning system to them.

The school has opted for the application of e-governance in its working. E-Governance is an integrated platform incorporating virtually every conceivable academic & administrative functionality of the school. It brings in a unique bonding among all the users while delivering the objectives of the user entities in the school environment. It covers the entire span of education i.e. from pre-primary to the senior-secondary education. It

focuses on all aspects of functioning of school & works for all the units of the school system:

A reward system will be developed for staff that blend e-learning into their face to face interaction as a way to motivate learners to use the e-learning system.

Adequate and well trained ICT staff will be employed to augment its existing ICT staff to help implement e-learning at RICE-MMS. The ICT unit will be headed and supported by qualified and highly motivated and skilled staff and will be remunerated at par with the corporate based on the performance appraisal system developed and implemented.

E-learning should be adopted in all the units to augment and highly impact performance of RICE-MMS.

ICT unit will need effectively collaborate with the school staff and have monthly meetings with the Principal for sharing the knowledge needed for the ICT unit and to pass on the upcoming changes in the IT world.

A well documented system will be maintained by the ICT for knowledge sharing

Conclusion:

Throughout this policy text, the emphasis has been on providing supply by building infrastructure in the teaching and learning process rather than focusing on why there would be demand in the first place. The assumption has been made in this policy that if the right infrastructure is built, people will follow. The fact is that quite a number of staff especially the teaching staff have not yet made use of the infrastructure to access resources in the teaching learning process effectively. There was no search for evidences to establish this fact also is absent.

Secondly, there was little evidence of any attempt to find out what is that the students in our school actually want in support of their educational aspirations. This point also raises questions about some of the deeper structural barriers to promoting wider access to resources that have largely been ignored in the absence of an e-learning policy. The key point is that provision of access is a complex issue and in the current move to personalise learning, more attention is required on understanding the demand side of teaching learning process.