The third newsletter in March 2008 coincides with many new happenings on the political front, a new government stepping in after the general elections held earlier on February 18th. This change carries citizens' aspirations to see improved governance for their health, peace and well being. Education will continue to be at the center of public debate as the draft New education Policy awaits its final round of consultation along the corridors of the new political dispensation for its legitimate approval by the Cabinet and the Assembly.

Quality continues to be a core concern for all in all its myriad interpretations and indicators including learning outcomes. Recently the Government of Punjab formed a Working Group on Quality Education with the following terms of reference:

(i) To set vision, goals, objectives and strategic direction for the government as well as non-governmental organizations to work for 'Quality Education for All'
(ii) To discuss and decide upon the definition and indicators of quality of education in the context of Punjab
(iii) To review and evaluate the roles, functions and performance of various governmental as well as non-governmental organizations in the education sector.
(iv) To review budgetary allocations and fiscal projections for the sector, including medium term budgetary framework (MTBF) and medium term development framework (MTDF), and propose any changes, if necessary.
(v) To assign tasks to members/constituent organizations for conducting situational analysis and formulating policy proposals for improvement in various aspects of quality.
(vi) To propose interventions for improvement in quality of education in public as well as private schools of the province while keeping in view the gender dimension and classroom focused activities.
(vii) Advocacy for quality education and to ensure implementation of policies.

ITA has been included in the Working Group and it is an honor for the organization to be part of this central challenge. ITA has also been engaged in the peer review and comments on another provincial initiative on Minimum Service Delivery Standards (MSDS) for the education sector. This too is a welcome move forward by the Planning & Development Department Govt. of Punjab as minimum standards set out in the 60s and 70s mainly for construction and procurement are totally obsolete and need a wider frame of reference linked to whole school development, school based budgets, health and environment, local governance as well as inclusive education. To look up details visit www.itacec.org. ITA has furthermore worked on minimum standards for its whole school improvement program in partner schools recently and these too can be seen on ITA's website.

The newsletter continues to highlight reflective experiences of PSU summer institutes, details of the upcoming one day conference on March 27th, and important notes on what constitutes curriculum relevance, from a practitioner Mr. Arun Kapoor from Vasant Valley School, New Delhi.

We hope to continue with our conversations on quality and teacher education across 2008 and look forward to contributions from our readers and partners.
Saima Hasrat, alumni 2007
PSU 2007 Alumni
Associate with ITA, Lahore

I went to America in July, 2007 to attend a training workshop with 14 fellow colleagues belonging to different geographical areas and institutions affiliated with the education sector in Pakistan. The focus of the training was on monitoring and evaluation of 65 educators/teachers who had participated in trainings at the Plymouth State University, N.H, USA over the past three years. This training program, as since 2004 was funded by the US Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aghai is PSU’s coordinating body in Pakistan. The teacher training program began in 2004 and since then 80 participants have participated in this unique capacity building endeavour with a strong inter-cultural strand.

My experience was unforgettable! Before going to USA, we were stuck with some stereotypes in our minds but now all have vanished because we had several meetings and discussions with Americans. I think people to people interaction is very significant to remove preconceived ideas. Similarly, we also shared our values and traditions/culture with the Americans during our stay in USA, which made them rethink their own perceptions about Pakistanis and their culture.

Our training program had two aspects; one was educational and the second was cultural. It was a great learning experience to share insights about our respective educational systems and way of teaching. During our classes, one strong learning was that teachers in US are very open to new ideas and suggestion from their students. They use interactive learning methods which are very useful in terms of enhancing students cleaning ability and knowledge because it makes students think critically and analytically. It stimulates their thinking and creative process. I would like to suggest to my country teachers and fellow professionals that they too should adopt such pedagogical practices in their schools.

After coming back from USA, we started to work on our assignment. During this assignment, I got an opportunity to go and visit some schools in different areas of Punjab and observe sessions during teaching or training of PSU alumni. It is undoubtedly true that they are doing tremendous job in their respective areas and under very difficult circumstances with resource constraints. I noticed that when they enter their classrooms with a smile, children feel very comfortable to raise questions and discuss difficulties if they feel the need to understand the concepts. Their usage of A/V supplementary aids is very effective as well as they believe and act upon the principles of interactive and collaborative learning. It was truly heartening to see that many of them are working in very remote areas with the spirit of change.

Developing evaluation tools, conducting research, collecting data and analyzing data itself has been an excellent and interesting experience for me. In the phase of monitoring and evaluation, every step was an important learning step for me.

Overall, this was a good learning experience for me.

Abida Nasreen
Lecture, Institute Of Education and Research
University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Last year I visited Pakistani Educational Leadership Institute (PELI). The purpose of program was to enhance the knowledge and skills of selected trainees on research and evaluation methods for teacher education with a follow on research component in Pakistan. I was anxious to learn from this opportunity to gain extensive knowledge and improve my professional skills. My visit to PSU provided me valuable exposure. I learnt practically about interactive approaches not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. The social and cultural interaction among Pakistani and American people promoted an environment of understanding and mutual respect. In my opinion, the
benefits of this program were diverse in nature i.e. capacity building of trainees from the public and private sector educational organizations; developing well trained classroom teachers and researchers through interactive classroom activities; conveying modern techniques of teaching; Provision of informal opportunity to discuss on social and cultural issues.

Through this program, I was able to visit world class educational institutions that included not only PSU but also Harvard University. We visited Plymouth (New Hampshire), Boston (Massachusetts) and Washington D.C. All these visits were memorable in terms of exchange of ideas, cultural experiences and exposure. Overall, this was a good learning experience for me.

I am engaged in the research project after returning from PSU, using the tools developed by the participants of PELI 2007. I think an education colored by research is one way of achieving the intellectual rigor necessary for the professional excellence. I took part in developing background theory, instrument development, data collection and report writing. I hope through the results of this research conducted by ITA, all the stakeholders will be able to know about the impact of these short training programs.

In short, the exposure provided through this opportunity not only provided me professional tools I need in order to succeed, but the necessary insight into my own inner workings. I expect, this program will continue in the coming years and will provide valuable exposure to the teachers to improve the educational standards in Pakistan.

Making Connections: Border Crossings through PSU & ITA

Kimberly Rawson

My interest in Pakistan started in college when I became close friends with an extremely strong and intelligent woman Sania from Pakistan. Sania and I would spend hours in deep philosophical discussions broaching topics from feminism to politics. She would often speak of her country with her eyes showing the pain of longing for her country. Then she would lighten the moment by telling me that I should come visit. I would always reply that I would love to, but the reality being that I would never have the resources to go. Little did I know that Pakistan was a lot closer than a wistful conversation? After receiving a grant for teacher enrichment making it possible for me to attend, I used my journey to learn more about Pakistan's rich culture and to educate my students.

First Impressions
After I stepped foot on Pakistani soil, I lost all sense of time watching day and night merge seamlessly. The bright colors used in anything from political posters to the ornate decorative busse caught my attention everywhere we traveled. Apples in Pakistan are so fragrant when you place them in your mouth you can smell them before you can taste them.

The warmth and hospitality that welcomed me was a level that has never been surpassed in my life. Despite all my fears of being from a country with unpopular foreign policy, even strangers would invite me to their homes for tea or meals. I learned very quickly the importance of familial ties and warm friendships in this society. Such bonds I found refreshing coming from a society, which prides itself on independence. I experienced these as upon arrival, we were involved with Sania's wedding preparations and Eid celebrations.

I had a wonderful visit with Beena and Baela of ITA. PSU connections have been incredible because I was connected with the Sanjan Public Education Trust school Principal Faiza Shahrubh, a 2007 PELI alum whom I had the pleasure of meeting. They also put me in touch with Saima Hasrat to develop a cross-cultural exchange between our students. This has led to recent developments working closely with Ms. Hasrat to develop communications between our students. My students have been blogging with the girls from the Sanjan Nagar School and they have been very excited about it. I hope to set up video conferencing with them by the end of the year. My students have also been writing essays on the similarities between Pakistan in the U.S. It is easy to find differences between all of us; however, we need to focus on the things that bring us together.

PSU Connections
During the summer of 2007, I worked closely with PELI Director Blake Allen and Dr. Mary Ann McGarry. I became even more fascinated with Pakistan because I was introduced to such patriotic and intelligent people. I truly enjoyed spending time with the PELI class of 2007 at PSU. My hope is that I will see you either here or in Pakistan very soon. Please keep in touch. All the best!
A Holistic Approach towards Quality Education - Excerpts from Transforming Schools

Empowering Children
by Arun Kapoor : 2007

Curriculum
Schools need to provide relevant education. But what do we mean by ‘relevance’? The curriculum for students in any school needs to prepare them for life; therefore it needs to be relevant to what will be happening in the outside world when the student leaves school after several years.

- Education needs to be relevant to real life, so students need to interact and learn what is pertinent from the outside world.
- This relevance needs to be built into a curriculum that integrates all students.
- The main problems are irrelevant content, examination orientation and no role for the learning process.
- Through some reforms have been taken place in the recent time, these have been static, piecemeal, and non-transparent and made with no recognition with diversity of students potential and needs.
- There is therefore a pressing need to formulate a curriculum that meets the goals of preparations for life and sees all other goals as smaller components of this goal.
- The focal point of the curriculum would be the learning process based on an understanding of learning outcomes.
- Content would be consequences of learning and not the cause.
- Assessments will assess not only students, but the entire curriculum process.
- The curriculum thus becomes a dynamic set of different processes that continuously interacts with each other- in other words, an inter-linked web.

The Three Faces of a Curriculum:
The curriculum on paper,
The curriculum in action and
The curriculum that students actually learn

In a constantly changing world, where knowledge is constantly becoming obsolete, a curriculum needs to lay more stress on the process of learning than on the content of learning. The entire process of learning, teaching and evaluation needs to be interlinked at every step and constantly referred back to the purpose or vision of the curriculum.

Curriculum components /Curriculum Web
If we start with the purpose of the curriculum is to prepare students for life, then the design of the curriculum falls into place. The concept of Curriculum Web and its practice is vital. The curriculum web consists of the four main components of the curriculum learning outcomes, learning process, content and assessment. For the curriculum to be effective each of these elements must be linked to each other and a system of feedback needs to be intrinsic to the system.

Teaching Learning Process
Content and process are interrelated and cannot be developed independently of each other. How learning happens is more important then what is learnt?

Outcomes
Content is not important; what is important is the learning process. But then we need to answer the question to decide where Education is going to take us and which learning process to use in any course of study. Out comes can be categorized as individual, social and spiritual. Yet many outcomes are a combination of these, for, as in other cases, no outcome can exist in isolation.

Evaluation
Every curriculum system needs to have built-in evaluation measures. It is a fact that no curriculum is linear- it is always a cycle with several inter-dependent cogs turning within the cycle.

These ideas have been expressed by Arun Kapur in his book named

Details of the One Day Conference on Teacher Education: March 27th, 2008

ITA is going to co-host a one day conference sharing PSU outputs/outcomes in Pakistan, its impact on challenges for Quality and EFA targets.

PSU has been hosting educators from Pakistan since 2004 and has mobilized 80 active educators through the Summer Institute. The program has ranged from subject based support, to administration and research. A one day conference is to be organized on March 27th 2008 as the culmination of the fourth PSU grant to share achievements and lessons learnt. The conference is a modest one to be held at the prestigious Institute of Education Research (IER) Punjab University, attended by PSU alumni from Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, AJK and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).

Important speakers include : Dr. Munawar Mirza, V.C University of Education, Dr. Hafiz ... Director IER Punjab University, Dr. Rukhsana Zia, Director Directorate of Staff Development Punjab, Dr. ... AIOU, Professor Rafique Tahir, Director Training Federal Directorate of Education, US Embassy officials and US AID Senior Education Adviser Dr. Randy Hatfield as well as the Provincial Education Department officials. It will be a good opportunity to share ideas and knowledge with each other. Its purpose is also to inform PSU about future directions for Pakistani Institutes based on the outcomes of the recently completed research and evaluation exercise.