

HIGHER EDUCATION CELL, CENTRE FOR STUDY OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Social Justice in Higher Education Initiative

New Technologies and Social Media Workshops completed under the Pathways to Higher Education Programme (Supported by the Ford Foundation)

The Social Justice Initiative of the Higher Education Cell, in collaboration with the Centre for Internet and Society designed the content for the nine workshops on New Technologies and Social Media that were conducted in September, October and the first week of November 2010. The design included participatory methodologies like peer learning production, spectrogram and collaborative learning environments to understand various online tools, media technologies and some software applications.

The nine colleges were from three states: Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka. About 20-25 first year undergraduate students belonging to socially and/or economically disadvantaged communities were selected from each college. The colleges were a mix in terms of their institutional and regional character. While some were minority institutions with students from rural and urban areas and varied infrastructure, some drew students from mostly rural backgrounds. There were yet others who had a culturally diverse student composition.

Students from the nine colleges were contacted and enquired about their learning goals so as to customise the workshops around their needs, expectations, exposure to skills and also to explore how different students could share their knowledge with their peers.

While the content was largely influenced by student's expectations, it was also determined by the methodology. At the end of every exercise/session, a technical skill was imparted along with its political and pedagogical potential. The workshops set out to achieve three objectives:

- To create an awareness about new media technologies (social networking and bookmarking sites, blogs, audio/video editing tools), and locate the mechanics of interaction within them.
- To explore the possibilities of self-learning and collaborative learning.
- To engage in peer-to-peer communication, and understand how expression and negotiation of meaning takes place in the context of social justice.

Students' aspirations, local environment and exposure to technology were key determinants that shaped the nature of the workshops. The workshops in Kerala were uniformly dynamic in terms of their political vivacity and existing technical exposure. On the other hand, in Karnataka, given the student's limited access to computers, the workshops were of an introductory nature.

The Maharashtra experience was varied. All the colleges showed varied interests and inclinations towards learning technology and understanding its political potential. Ahmednagar college was a case in point, where most students were interested in hardware technology, unlike students from other colleges in the state and outside the state.

Students created blogs, Wikipedia pages, learnt emailing, image/sound/video editing, sound mixing, besides exploring various social media (offline and online) tools, for lending expressions to their narratives. There were also other group activities that engaged the students in topics related to social justice, local concerns and knowledge production (including that in the digital world).

Maharashtra Colleges

The first round of students workshops on New Technologies and Social Media were conducted in Maharashtra in September 2010. There were two colleges from Mumbai and one from Ahmednagar that were selected from the state. There were 20 attendees in each workshop except in Ahmednagar College that had 24 students.

Students were contacted before the workshops to get a preliminary understanding of their expectations, computer knowledge and learning needs. While St Xavier's college students were sent emails, we spoke to participants of the other two colleges over phone. This prior contact helped us to build a rough agenda for the workshops.

We gathered different kinds of information about the students that formed the agenda: what they would like to learn from the workshop (technical or communication), what kind of knowledge/skill they would like to share with their friends, their personalities (which helped us imagine the kind of class we may enter), sometimes, we also asked them how they participate in the class at college and what barriers they faced in learning (if they did).

SIES College, Mumbai: September 6, 7

The first college, where the workshops kick-started, was SIES College. Most students studying in this college were South Indians.

Composition of students:

Most participants in the workshop were from Dharavi and Mahim areas of Mumbai, and spoke in Tamil or Telugu. One student was from Manipur. Around 2-3 students spoke in Marathi and have done their schooling in the same medium of instruction. A majority of participants were women – 15 out of 20. A majority of the participants were from the commerce department and the rest were from the arts. (No science student was present because at the time of selection, students had just enrolled and some students were leaving for professional courses.) The selection of the participants was based on the categories for reservation in higher education institutions. Except one Manipuri student (ST), the rest belonged to SC and OBC categories.

Computer knowledge and access:

Only about 6-7 students had basic computer knowledge (MS Office, emailing and used Internet to browse for information for college projects, chatting and accessing social networking sites). They had limited access to computers outside school/college mostly due to lack of affordability. The college provided limited access to computers (1-2 hours per week for browsing). The rest of the class had limited or no access to computers, with a few of them being introduced to word processing in school. One student used Wikipedia to source information for school and college projects.

Day 1:

The workshop began with an ice-breaking exercise, where the participants were asked to tell their names and describe how they were feeling in a single word.

Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras. They were allowed to explore the devices in the classroom and also the campus premises. The devices were passed on amongst the participants after an hour or so. At the end of Day 1, participants with devices were allowed to take it home and bring their recordings the next day.

SMS composition:

In the next exercise students were put in pairs and had to compose SMSs (of about 150 characters) describing their partner and what they would like to learn from the workshop. Besides being a participatory agenda setting exercise for the workshop, students began on a familiar tool of communication (ICT). Discussions on the SMS descriptions given by students were held. Themes related to social justice such as social stereotypes, perception of people (depending on the caste, religion and gender) and the forms of knowledge visible (communication skills, performance in academics) emerged in the interactions. Feedback on the use of online language was also given.

Peer production session:

Based on the inputs we received from students on their interests (technology or otherwise), a peer production session was held. This session had a format where 5 participants volunteered to teach a concept or a tool for 15 minutes to their peers.

The classes were on MS Power point, MS Excel, Google search engine, MSN chat and Wikipedia + Macro economics (the student had to explain how to use Wikipedia as a research tool for a topic; he chose macro-economics as most students belonged to the commerce section). While the volunteers/teachers remained in their seats, about 3-4 students sat in each class for 15 minutes and moved to the next class thereafter. About five classes on were held. The facilitators gave inputs in each class whenever required.

The volunteers mostly taught in Hindi and Tamil to explain concepts. Some groups used popular culture like Bollywood to explain concepts like search engines. The session also changed the dynamics of the class as some students who were otherwise quiet in interactive sessions got a chance to teach.

Group exercise:

There was a group exercise where students were given topics like equal tax slab for men and women, common wealth games and each group had to create an e-mail, a blog, Wiki-entry and a mailing list (compose a group e-mail). Modelled on the peer production exercise, students, for instance, familiar with blogging or emailing shared their knowledge with their friends.

Day 2:**Spectrogram:**

The second day began with the spectrogram exercise, where for a given statement, the participants had to agree, or disagree or stay in the middle of the spectrum. The statements given to the class were: 'Capital punishment should be awarded to Naxalites', 'Stealing a 500-rupee note on the road' and 'Stealing data (containing files, films, music, research data) from a computer'. Discussions around privacy and security of data, and human rights were held.

Peer production session:

There was another peer production exercise, where the facilitators were also involved. The classes were on audio editing, audio mixing (fruity loops software), video on phone, Windows Moviemaker.

Film screening:

There was a film screening of a short movie, 'American War *Par da*', which was a sort of music video in the documentary format. Students spoke about how the film used minimal resources (existing footage, images), humour and a short time span to convey information on a complex subject. Students were also briefly introduced to the basics of cinema drawing from examples of the videos and images they took.

E-prints:

There was a demonstration of the software E-prints to the class, to show how students could share their recordings (audio, video, text, blog, etc.) on a platform that would function like an institutional repository. This was the only session that had a lukewarm reception as the concept seemed complex and the interface looked plain.

There was a separate class on still photography for one student at the end of the workshop based on her demand. A separate class on networking was also held for some students who wanted to learn about it.

St Xaviers College, Mumbai: September 8, 9

Students were contacted over e-mail prior to meeting them for the workshops; however, there was a poor response to the email. Talking to the participants later during the workshop it was found that communicating in written English was the main cause for the poor response; also, communication over e-mail seemed too formal for them as against using social networking sites or SMSs. Some of them also said that writing an email to an unfamiliar person was difficult. Internet facility had been poor for the two

days as the MTNL lines had snapped in the rains. This made it difficult to conduct the peer production classes.

Composition of students:

Around 19 students participated in the workshop with constant movement of students for the internal assessment exams throughout the workshop. At any given time, only about 14-16 students were present. A majority of students (14) were boys and the rest were girls. While some students studied in Hindi medium, some were from the Marathi medium. A couple of students were from neighbouring towns and villages. The class was a mix of students from the science and commerce stream. The selection of the participants was based on the categories for reservation in higher education institutions. Students came from SC, ST and OBC categories.

Computer knowledge and access:

About 10-14 students had basic computer knowledge – MS Office, emailing and used Internet to browse for information for college projects and chatting. But most of them had very poor access or no access to computers outside college. There were around two students who were quite familiar with social networking sites and other forms of technology, as they were working while studying. Unlike SIES college where students mostly wanted to learn new Internet technology and softwares like Java, C++ and programming languages, here, the demand was for design, social networking, presentation skills and improving spoken English skills.

Day 1:

The workshop began with an ice-breaking exercise, where the participants were asked to tell their names and describe how they were feeling in a single word. Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras. The same procedure was followed.

Identity analysis:

In the ice-breaking exercise some of the email ids of the participants were written on the blackboard and students were asked to describe what they felt about the person owning the id. Discussions around the identity (age, sex, place), perception and personality of the individual were discussed.

The next exercise was on **SMS composition**.

Poster making:

Students were given some newspaper clippings and asked to pick up a news item or a photograph of their choice and create a campaign around a poster. Most of the news items selected by the students were related to environment, urbanisation and festivals. A discussion on various components of poster design was conducted.

The **Peer production** exercise consisted of classes on audio editing, Facebook, Google search engine and Adobe Photoshop.

The Spectrogram session on Day 2 had lukewarm response here. Unlike SIES College that had a vibrant debate on the subject, widespread participation and strong political views, the students were quiet here and resisted taking positions in the group. There was a lack of awareness on the subjects given to them.

The **peer production** exercise was on blogging, movie maker and audio mixing. This class showed a lot of interest in audio and video production, and the class on Windows Movie Maker was carried out innovatively with students editing their own recordings.

Blogging:

After being introduced to blogging in the previous session, the class was now put in groups and asked to create a blog entry in Wordpress, by picking up topics from the posters they had created the previous day. A dummy Wordpress blog had been created on the Intranet and each group gave a user id. Blog posts were made on the Ganesh festival, friendship, environment. Photographs were uploaded for some posts. There was also a peer review exercise where students commented on each other's blog entry.

The feedback session on the blog posts was quite forthcoming. Students made interesting observations on textual presentation, choice of font, headline, formatting, image selection and so on. There was also a demonstration of various blogs and students were shown how to organise and share online content.

Film screening:

A Marathi film, *Agri Sholay*, that spoofed the original Hindi film *Sholay*, was screened. Students spoke of the reversal of roles in this film. There was also a class on cinema based on the recordings the students had done.

Ahmednagar College, Ahmednagar: September 13, 14

The Nagar College students were contacted over phone prior to the workshop. The students were an eager lot and most of them said that they wanted to be 'modern' and communicate effectively. Besides students from SIES College, Mumbai and Baliga College from Kumta, this batch was one of the most vivacious of the nine colleges. The workshop was conducted mostly in Hindi with the use of a few English words here and there.

Composition of students:

Around 22 students participated in the workshop with about 3-4 dropouts on the second day. A majority of students were boys (15-16) and the rest were girls. All the students were from Marathi medium and belonged to the arts and commerce stream. A majority of students came from rural areas around Ahmednagar, and were first generation college goers. Despite this, the batch generally showed tremendous confidence in discussions, raising questions in the class. About 70-80 per cent of the participants were also working in night-shifts or doing part-time jobs in repair shops, hotels, mechanical workshops.

Although the college has a diverse population with students from the North-eastern states and neighbouring districts, to bring a linguistic uniformity, all the students from the Marathi medium were selected for the workshop. The participants belonged to the SC, ST and OBC categories.

Computer knowledge and access:

A majority of this class had no prior knowledge of computers. About 6-10 students had done an MS IT course which was an introductory course on MS Office and Internet. But with poor or no access, most of them had never used the tools.

The learning needs of this batch were unlike the rest of the 8 colleges. Students were more interested in learning about hardware and networking technology than the Internet. All of them had a common aspiration of learning spoken English. While the boys aspired to set up businesses to do with mobile repairing, e-commerce or become 'managers', the girls were keen on pursuing higher education (post graduate). There were only about 3-4 students who were interested in animation and 3-D design.

Around 3-4 students were aware of Orkut, emailing, using a search engine and two students knew Photoshop. There was one student in the class who was a teacher in a computer training institute and almost took upon himself the responsibility of taking forward the class when the students found any concept difficult to follow.

Day 1:

The workshop began with the same ice-breaking exercise and this batch seemed as effervescent as the Farooq College students. Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras.

The next exercise was on **SMS composition**. During the feedback session, there was an interesting discussion on why there was a preference for spoken English over written English. Students felt that knowing written English was futile while fluency in speech would give them confidence and social mobility.

The **Peer production** exercise consisted of classes on basic computer knowledge, “typing” (MS Word), emailing, hardware and using search engines. It was interesting to note the ingenious teaching methods that the students used specially to explain word processing and basic computer knowledge. This was a common feature between the Mysore College students and these students. Both these batches had the least exposure to technology but covered most parts of simple concepts like formatting, image editing in a few minutes. Aspects of usability were dramatically different. While students from urban colleges went in great length to talk about projects and downloading (copying and pasting), students here merely focussed on the concept. The new learner in a peer production class here seemed to gain greater clarity on a tool.

The **Spectrogram** exercise conducted at the end of the day touched upon topics such as what was “political” in a student’s life, ‘cheating in exams’ besides other topics. Several students who had so far been quiet were extremely articulate in Marathi. The general mood of the class was dismissive of politics but they became interested in the subject once the discussion veered towards “personal political choices” and that politics was not merely about governance. While speaking about cheating in exams, some students said that there was nothing supreme about gaining marks, and if they were forced to work while studying, it was not possible to gain knowledge the usual way – that ethics is only meant for the privileged.

The **peer production** exercise conducted the next day was on Adobe Photoshop, Orkut and audio mixing. Orkut and social networking was generally received poorly (based on the feedback). Most of them had difficulty understanding the interface and they found the communication technology too complex. The class on Photoshop was done very well.

Blogging:

Blogging was introduced to the class with a demonstration of some popular political, photo, food, literary blogs in English and Marathi. The class was put in groups and asked to create a blog entry in Wordpress (over Intranet) in topics of their choice. Blog posts were on the Marathi pride, friendship, a review of Salman Khan’s film, ‘Dabang’ and one on the workshop. Photographs were uploaded for some posts and students wrote in Marathi (typed in English). There was also a peer review exercise where students commented on each other’s blog entry.

Although the blog entries were fairly good in terms of the presentation style, the thought gone into it, uploading media, many students felt (in the feedback) that web design was one area they needed time to understand. This was perhaps the only batch where blogs had a relatively less enthusiastic response, barring a few boys and a girl who got interested in photography and use of multimedia for blogging.

Film screening:

A short film (2 min) on rain water harvesting was shown followed by a discussion. Students were also shown their videos and photos and were given feedback. They were also guided on how to use multimedia to engage with various online platforms.

Kerala Colleges

The second leg of the students’ workshops was in Kerala. There were three colleges selected from the state: Union Christian College, Aluva, Newman College in Thodupuzha and Farooq College in Calicut. There was an external resource person who co-facilitated the workshop. The workshop was conducted in English, Malayalam and Tamil.

Students were contacted before the workshops to get a preliminary understanding of their expectations, computer knowledge and learning needs through phone and e-mail. There was a consistent pattern in the learning needs among the selected students in Kerala, which was strongly technology-centred. Blogging, photography and video tools were uniformly well-received in the state, and there was a demand for greater input in web design. Spectrogram had an intense participation, given Kerala’s vibrant campus politics.

Students' computer knowledge was also relatively high compared to their counterparts from the other two states, one of the reasons being that several computer programming languages, besides basic computer knowledge, was compulsory in the high school (XI and XII) as per government rules.

Union Christian College, Aluva: September 28, 29

The UC College students were contacted over phone prior to the workshop. While the girls students aspired for higher studies and an entry into the civil services, the boys were keen on picking up skills related to graphic and web designing. Class participation was good in this workshop and the students were quite open-minded about receiving feedback.

Composition of students:

Around 22 students were selected for the workshop with about 4-6 dropouts on the second day, because of the Supreme Court judgement on the Ayodhya case the next day and campus elections. The class was a uniform mix of girls and boys, from the science, arts and commerce stream. There were about 5-7 students from Malayalam medium. There were several Muslim women in the batch, coming from varied class backgrounds. The class had a heterogeneous composition in terms of class and computer knowledge, despite the selection that was made on the basis of SC, ST and OBC categories.

Computer knowledge and access:

Almost the entire class was familiar with MS Office. About 5-6 students used the Internet for browsing and emailing. There was a student who had a brief knowledge about creating Wiki pages. Most of the students did not have access or had limited access to computers outside college. There were 2 students who were doing a course on animation and 3-D design. Around half of the class was interested in writing and web publishing which made the workshop quite successful.

Day 1:

The workshop began with the same ice-breaking exercise. Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras.

The next exercise was on **SMS composition**. This session was one of the most interesting sessions among the nine colleges. Students raised subjects on meritocracy, access to knowledge and problems in articulation in class. Students who had problems with acceptable forms of intelligence in mainstream academics participated more enthusiastically over the next two days despite English being a hurdle.

The **Peer production** exercise consisted of classes on Google, Wikipedia, Facebook and emailing. The class on creating Wiki pages was conducted very well.

Group exercise: The class was then placed in three groups and each group had to create a message using any of the ICT tool; here the tools were Facebook, Wikipedia and a group mail for a mailing list. The facilitators gave inputs on using discussions, notes, newsletters, announcements using multimedia through the three platforms. The popular subject was history and politics.

The **Spectrogram** exercise conducted at the end of the day touched upon topics such as the relevance of politics in a student's life, besides other topics. The discussion mostly was in Malayalam, and the most vibrant discussion was in politics, given that an election campaign was going on.

Blogging:

Blogging was introduced to the class the next day with a demonstration of some popular political, photo, food, literary blogs in English and Malayalam. The class was put in groups and asked to create a blog entry in Wordpress (over Intranet) in topics of their choice. The blog posts (Malayalam and English) were quite ingenious in terms of their subject, content and presentation: religion and war, marriages in modern society, love poetry and so on. There was also a peer review exercise where students commented on each other's blog entry.

The **peer production** exercise was on audio editing, Windows movie maker, Adobe Photoshop and Social bookmarking (del.ici.ous)/photo sharing (flicker).

Film screening:

Two films were shown: American war *par da* and a short film (2 min) on rain water harvesting. Most students liked the latter film as they found it carrying a message relevant to their lives. Students were also shown their videos and photos and were given feedback.

Newman College, Thodupuzha: October 1, 2

Some of the students of Newman College were contacted over phone, some over e-mail and the facilitators met some of the students a day before the workshop. The class was generally tech-savvy but was too quiet and took a long time to open up and participate in the class. This was the first workshop conducted in the Pathways Cell lab (others were conducted in computer labs).

Composition of students:

Twenty students were selected for the workshop. The class was a uniform mix of girls and boys, from the science and arts stream. Although this was one of the colleges that showed tremendous enthusiasm towards the programme the selection was too warped. Barring three OBC students and one SC student, the selection was based on socio-economic state and merit. The rest of the students were from minority communities. Almost two-thirds of the class had studied in English-medium schools.

A video was taken by the faculty-in-charge and each student was found to be saying that they belonged to a minority community and that is why they were there. The facilitators were also filmed before the workshop asking them to speak about the programme. The videos have been circulated to several colleges and have been uploaded on youtube.com.

Computer knowledge and access:

At least half the class had personal computers or laptops at home. The entire class was familiar with MS Office, emailing and browsing over the Internet, barring 2 students who were set far apart from the rest of the class. Despite the skewed selection, on speaking to the English medium students after the first session, there was tremendous co-operation from the students' side to be inclusive to the 2-3 students in the class, so as to not alienate them. The 2-3 students who had hardly used a computer before also began to speak whenever they were unaware about a concept or technology.

This was the first batch which had mailed us before we went for the workshop. The students had already received some initial training in e-mail. The class was also obsessed with technology and many students, not surprisingly, wanted to learn all the shortcuts too quickly and download unlicensed products. They engaged less with the intricacies of various media presented to them.

There were around 2-3 students who were somewhat well-versed with various multi-media technologies. They started out quiet in the beginning of the workshop but were later quite articulate and mature in the discussions in the class.

Day 1:

The workshop began with the same ice-breaking exercise. Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras.

The next exercise was a mixture of analysing email messages (the ones that the student had mailed to the facilitator) and **SMS composition**.

The **Peer production** exercise consisted of classes on Google + Wikipedia (using search engines to source and download information), Facebook/orkut, audio editing and Photoshop.

Wiki pages:

There was a demonstration of Media Wiki and how to create a Wiki page. Students were then given newspaper clippings and asked to choose a news item for a subject to create a wiki page on. Subjects chosen were on the Ayodhya dispute, local politics, Malayalam cinema and one group created an interested wiki on a local leader from their region who had been little known for his work on Kasargod politics.

The **Spectrogram** exercise conducted at the end of the day touched upon topics such as the relevance of politics in a student's life, besides other topics. The discussion mostly happened in Malayalam.

Blogging:

Blogging was introduced to the class the next day with a demonstration of some popular political, photo, food, literary blogs in English and Malayalam. The class was put in groups and asked to create a blog entry in Wordpress (over Intranet) in topics of their choice. The posts ranged from romance, Tintumon (a local SMS comic hero), friendship, poetry. There was also a peer review exercise where students commented on each other's blog entry.

The **peer production** exercise was on audio mixing, Windows movie maker, youtube/torrent (downloading and uploading), and Social bookmarking (del.ici.ous).

Film screening:

Two films were shown: American war *par da* and a short film (2 min) on rain water harvesting. Once again, most of the students liked the latter film as they found it carrying a socially relevant message. Students were also shown their videos and photos and were given feedback. The film and photography class drew much interest compared to other eight colleges.

Farooq College, Calicut: October 5, 6

The students of Farooq College were contacted over email and there was a moderate response from them. The facilitators met some of the students a day before the workshop. The class was an enthusiastic lot but the peer production classes did not take off smoothly here as some students did not want to attend some of the classes. With too many power disruptions in the first two hours of the workshop, the initial zest was somewhere lost in the class. Power back-up and Internet facility arrangements were made at the last moment because of which several disruptions were caused during the 2-day workshop.

Composition of students:

There were 26 students selected for the workshop and there were no dropouts. The class was a uniform mix of girls and boys, from the science, arts and commerce stream. The selection procedure followed here was quite exhaustive. From the list of students who had come based on reservation, there were questionnaires sent to students asking them details like resources available at home, social networks available to the student and so on (the list is being forwarded).

Computer knowledge and access:

While a majority of the class was familiar with MS Office and the Internet for browsing and emailing, there were about 1-2 students who had no prior access to computers before the workshop. There were 4-5 students who were familiar with Adobe Photoshop, social networking sites like Orkut (but not Facebook; use of Fb in 3-tier towns was lower – reasons given by students were complex interface, inability to understand difference in communication modes, words like "Wall", "Poke" were unfamiliar because of cultural differences). There were some 5-6 students familiar with basic DTP technology in the class. Students were also familiarised with emailing with efforts taken by the Pathways cell before the workshop.

Access to computers outside college was poor, compared to that inside and within the Pathways cell. While communicating with students after the workshop over email, some students volunteered to mentor their friends hone skills in some of the tools. Some students from Farooq and Newman college have been actively exploring other social networking sites like hi-fi and others. Only media-savvy students and those with certain social moorings have been communicating over FB.

Day 1:

The workshop began with the same ice-breaking exercise. Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras.

The next exercise was a mixture of analysing email ids and **SMSs**. Questions related to sources of knowledge production were raised in this session.

The **Peer production** exercise consisted of classes on Google + Wikipedia, Adobe Pagemaker, audio editing and Photoshop. The class was too keen on getting into the details, similar to the students in Mysore.

Wiki pages:

There was a demonstration of Media Wiki and how to create a Wiki page. Students were then given newspaper clippings and asked to choose a news item for a subject to create a wiki page on. Subjects chosen were on Malayalam cinema, History, Farooq College and tourism.

The **Spectrogram** exercise conducted the next day touched upon topics such as the relevance of politics in a student's life, besides other topics. The discussion that mostly happened in Malayalam, was an extremely vibrant one, with women students taking centre stage.

Blogging:

Blogging was introduced with a demonstration of some popular political, photo, food, literary blogs in English and Malayalam. The class was put in groups and asked to create a blog entry in Wordpress (over Intranet) in topics of their choice. The posts ranged from romance, Tintumon once again (a local SMS comic hero), friendship, literature. There was also a peer review exercise where students commented on each other's blog entry.

A separate session on **Social Bookmarking** using the del.ici.ous tool was also introduced to the class.

The **peer production** exercise was on audio mixing and two classes on Windows movie maker.

Film screening:

Two films were shown: American war *par da* and a short film (2 min) on rain water harvesting. While some of the boys liked the first film for the dance, the girls liked it for its political content. Students were also shown their videos and photos and were given feedback.

Karnataka Colleges

The third leg of the students' workshops was in Karnataka. There were three colleges selected from the state: Vidyavardhaka College, Mysore, A V Baliga College in Kumta and St Aloysius College in Mangalore. There was an external resource person from Mysore who co-facilitated the workshop. The workshops were conducted in Kannada and English (translated most of the times).

Students were contacted before the workshops to get a preliminary understanding of their expectations, computer knowledge and learning needs through phone and e-mail. The question of access is crucial for students in Karnataka barring Aloysius College that had an unexpected poor turnout for the workshop. A majority of the students had never used Internet, even by watching their friends, specially in Kumta and Mysore.

Technology was introduced gradually in these workshops. Communication tools in the offline world were brought in to draw similarities and differences with online communication. The manner in which the students reflected and debated in these sessions was excellent. Written communication in English and spoken English was a major hurdle, just as it was in Ahmednagar College.

Vidyavardhaka College, Mysore: October 21, 22

Students from Vidyavardhaka College were contacted over phone. The facilitators met some of the students a day before the workshop. Many students who had done their PU (pre-university) in the same college said that they had never been to the computer lab in the college in their two years of PU. With poor Internet facility during the workshop, students were constantly at a loss.

Composition of students:

There were 26 students selected for the workshop and there were no dropouts. There were 24 boys and only 2 girls in this group, they were mostly from the commerce and arts stream. Most students came from rural areas around Mysore and were first generation college goers. The selection was based on their socio-economic background. It was a mix of students from the SC, Kurubha, Lingayat, Muslim and Vokkaliga communities.

Computer knowledge and access:

Barring 5-6 students most students were remotely familiar only with MS Office. There were 1-2 students who did not know how to operate the computer. Except 2-3 students nobody had an idea what an email was. Therefore while asking them about their learning needs over phone, most students were unable to say what they would like to learn.

Access is a crucial question as most of the students don't have access to computers outside college and access is barred most of the times for these students even in college.

Day 1:

The workshop began with the same ice-breaking exercise. Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras.

The next exercise was on **SMS** composition. Questions related to perception of knowledge were discussed in this session.

The **Peer production** exercise consisted of classes on MS Word, DTP (basics on image editing-Photoshop), Google and email. With too many Internet and server problems, this session was disrupted several times. It was only when the facilitators took a separate class for one or two students during lunch break on basics of computer and emailing during lunch hours, it became clear that a majority of the class was struggling to understand how an email was sent over the Internet.

Poster design:

Students were then provide with newspapers and asked to choose clippings and design a poster. The poster session was an elaborate one with intense debate on the themes: Karnataka politics, Mysore Dussera, environmental issues, urbanisation and so on.

The **Spectrogram** exercise conducted the next day touched upon topics such as is it ok to move to Bangalore for better jobs and saving money, besides other topics. Barring 4-6 students, most students were not for moving to the city for better opportunities in one of the debates.

Blogging:

Blogging was introduced with a demonstration of some popular political, photo, food, literary blogs in English and Kannada. The class was put in groups and asked to create a blog entry in Wordpress (over Intranet) in topics of their choice. The posts ranged from romance, poetry, Mysore tourism and so on. There was also a peer review exercise where students commented on each other's blog entry.

Facebook:

A demonstration of the social networking site Facebook was done in the class. Explaining the very first step such as "login" took some time for the students to understand. The interface was too difficult for the students to comprehend and many students wondered why one would post private thoughts in a public forum even if were to friends. So, although the students aspired for "modern" language and acquiring modern communication skills, the facilitators felt that the online environment, in terms of the language (lingo) was quite alien to them and seemed irrelevant to their lives. This was true of at least 4-5 colleges.

Film screening:

Two films were shown: American war *par da* and a short film (2 min) on rain water harvesting. There was an equal share of students liking both the films. Some students observed that imperialism was a universal problem and that it could affect even us just like Afghanistan; therefore it held as much relevance as the rainwater harvesting film, which was “just” an environmental film. Students were also shown their videos and photos and were given feedback.

A V Baliga College, Kumta: October 29, 30

Students from Baliga College were contacted over phone. The facilitators met the batch a day before the workshop. Due to an unfortunate death of a participant before the workshop, the college was closed the next day and the workshop was postponed by a day. The facilitators expected that the students, who were otherwise very enthusiastic, would have a low morale. But students somehow managed to raise their spirits and the workshop ran smoothly.

Several students in the group were from a theatre group and the facilitators had planned several exercises around this sort of interaction. But the idea had to be dropped because the deceased student was also part of their group and it was felt that memories of her would resurface during the workshop.

Composition of students:

There were 22 students selected for the workshop and there were no dropouts. There were 19 girls and only three boys in this group, and they were mostly from the arts and science stream. Most students came from rural areas around Kumta and were first generation college goers. The selection was based on their socio-economic background. There were mostly from the reservation categories – SC, ST and OBC.

Computer knowledge and access:

Barring 5-6 students most students were remotely familiar only with MS Office. Even students who had an email id had difficulties composing an email and sending it. There was one student who was familiar with DTP and around 3-4 students had browsed the Internet a couple of times for their studies. Rest of the class had almost no access to computers.

Access is a crucial question once again in Kumta as most of the students don't have access to computers outside college and have very limited access within college because of their stream of study.

Day 1:

The workshop began with the same ice-breaking exercise. Students were then provided with audio recorders, still cameras, and video cameras.

The next exercise was on **SMS** composition.

The **Peer production** exercise consisted of classes on MS Word, Photoshop, Google and email. The experience in the Mysore college was repeated here with respect to emailing. Generally, Internet technologies were quite less understood here but as the students were quite sharp, they picked up the skills faster here. Many students were quite proactive in practising what they had learnt during the breaks.

Poster design:

Students were then provide with newspapers and asked to choose clippings and design a poster. The poster session was very interesting with this batch with a variety of subjects and treatment of ideas: politics, modernisation, urbanisation, and the students were quite articulate in their depiction of ideas.

The **Spectrogram** exercise conducted the next day touched upon topics such as is it ok to move to Bangalore for better jobs and saving money, besides other topics. This session surprisingly did not evince much interest in this batch although it went fine.

Blogging:

Blogging was introduced with a demonstration of some popular political, photo, food, literary blogs in English and Kannada. The class was put in groups and asked to create a blog entry in Wordpress (over Intranet) in topics of their choice. The posts ranged from poetry, movie review and tourism. As the tool was complex for the students, they spent less time engaging with the topics and presentation. There was also a peer review exercise where students commented on each other's blog entry.

Facebook:

A demonstration of the social networking site Facebook was done in the class. The experience was similar to that of Mysore, only that students picked up some concepts far more quickly here. Besides literacy in the region, the better reception here had possibly to do with the fact most students were from literature, sociology and other humanities disciplines, which helped them acquire some sensibilities located outside their world.

Film screening:

Two films were shown: American war *par da* and a short film (2 min) on rain water harvesting. There was an equal share of students liking both the films. Students were also shown their videos and photos and were given feedback.

St. Aloysius College, Mangalore: November 2, 3

This workshop was almost a washout with the lowest turnout of students. The college authorities had not communicated that there was a month-long semester break when the workshop had been scheduled. Only eight students turned up for both days of the workshop, despite mails and phone calls by both facilitators and faculty.

The peer production exercise naturally did not have the same energy, despite having two of them, where the technical support person and the facilitators conducted the sessions. The peer sessions were on networking, emailing, sourcing information using search engines and Wikipedia, audio editing and Adobe Photoshop. Classes on blogging and film making were conducted.

Note: At the end of every workshop, the students were told about the programme's objectives, the special regional workshops and how the skills and knowledge acquired in the workshops would feed into the campus programmes of the Pathways Cell. As a lot of students felt that they had less time to pick up some of the skills in the workshop, the special workshops would help them hone those skills in the areas of their interest.

Recommendations:

1. The community building exercise needs a different strategy in the Kerala colleges as the campus environment already has a strong sense of bonding among students from different communities. Perhaps students need to be provided spaces where their personal quests help them engage themselves outside the classroom and campus. This may seem a daunting task for first year students for whom the college already brings several challenges in their lives. Therefore, the community building exercise may require the students to reflect on the curriculum itself and extend it to larger projects outside the academic structure.
2. What does the community building exercise attempt to achieve? The objectives in the proposal talk of the online engagement and the campus initiatives as a means to bring students from the socially disadvantaged communities participate and therefore bring in their own narratives. However, the perception of a majority of students (all colleges) towards the online tools is that the tools may not be of any immediate 'use' or 'relevance' to their learning period in college. Therefore the incentives for students to engage online are quite low.
3. There is a perception about technology itself among the students irrespective of whether the knowledge is being imparted for becoming more employable or for reasons of "empowering" (expressing,

communicating etc.) them. While blogs, use of multimedia tools (audio, image, video), social networking, Wiki page creation and other Internet technologies *seem to them* interesting “soft” tech-skills, but not necessarily relevant, there is a feeling that learning “hard” technology like networking, programming languages, hardware technologies will be of more help to them. The workshops and their design need to address this perspective in the coming years.

3. It is mostly existing users of technology who have explored the new tools introduced to them in the workshops. The reticence in participation on the part of new users is primarily due to absence of access to computers and also lack of constant mentoring within the campus. The Pathways Cell must provide computer access and guidance from volunteers or students from the selected group.

At the same time, students who may not be quite interested in technology should also have other kinds of spaces in the Pathways cell. This raises the next challenge about the extent of using technology in the Pathways programme.

4. Is familiarising with technology a major determinant in tracking the progress of the programme? This component was introduced to integrate the students better into mainstream college education and also enhance classroom learning by providing certain set of skills.

- The technological penetration in classroom teaching is not uniform among the selected colleges and as seen above, student knowledge and access is also varied. Therefore, just as the workshops were varied, so should the level of the technological component in the Pathways programme for each be.
- While we are delivering skills to students for effecting a certain shift in pedagogic change in classroom learning, this radical shift may not have the desired reception by the faculty and institution within the time frame of the Programme.
- Else, if the tech component is introduced to also facilitate other forms of knowledge creation outside the classroom or college, then it may well suggest that it is part of the student’s private domain of knowledge access and creation. Given the technological framework of learning, this is the most plausible means of the knowledge construct we can give to the student. (Of course tracking ‘progress’ would become difficult. But the knowledge can be evidenced in the ripples it leaves in the classroom.)