

What is your speed on the ICT highway?

Anel Alexis, Teacher, Greaves Adventist Academy, Montreal, QC

A distinctive characteristic of every highway is its speed limit. But, how often do we break the law on highways? After my first car accident in 2001, I hoped I would learn to make a difference, but I had to wait until I met my wife-to-be to actually change. For those of you who are speedsters like me, there is hope! A limitless road: The ICT Highway!

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) highway is the road where your speed is only limited by the performance of your machines. In addition to simplifying human information and communication needs, ICT has completely transformed our ways of life.

For the last few years, there has been continuous effort to utilize ICT tools in the educational field. Findings that students taught with such support perform a lot better than traditionally taught students have fueled the development of new educational technologies, resulting in an increasing use of ICT in the classrooms. New and efficient learning systems (edutainment systems, online classes and learning communities, drill and practice software, etc.) have been and are being developed. The ways students learn is definitely changing. So should be the way teachers teach; for *slowly, yet certainly ICT is revolutionizing our classrooms!*

In January 2003 a conference was held in Melbourne, Australia on the topic: "ICT and the Future of the Teacher." The book *'Information and Communication Technology and the Teacher of the Future,'* from Carolyn Dowling and Kwok-Wing Lai presents in details the views of this international conference. According to Debra Dawson, a reviewer of the mentioned book, Education is following the current globalization trends in world markets. It is in the view of the conference that ICT be used, not as an add-on to education, i.e., a tool students use to access information and for presentations, but rather as a mechanism for the social construction of knowledge, i.e., a tool enhancing students ability to engage in learning groups with students down the street or in another country¹. Traditional pedagogy is being replaced by project pedagogy, where students are assigned projects that they can complete on their own using ICT tools. Learning becomes more autonomous, since teachers are no more the only source of knowledge.

The new 'constructivist' approach of learning is being successfully implemented at various locations in the developing world. In France, for example, the initiative has first been launched with teachers. How in fact will we get our students to engage in such practice, if it is unknown to us? Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) have been setup for French teachers' social knowledge construction. In an interesting article, Kalogiannakis (2004) carefully analyzed a VLE for the French Physics Teachers, to identify the impact on the classroom environment, and hence the change of role for

¹ *Information and Communication Technology and the Teacher of the Future. Book review.* Education and Information Technologies 9:4, 405-408, 2004. Kluwer Academic Publishers. The Netherlands.

physics teachers. The author reports that, 'As ICT becomes embedded in education, one of the most dramatic changes for teachers is loss of control.' In this context, he continues, a new role is emerging for teachers, that of 'mentor'. Teachers interviewed by Kalogiannakis say that after the French Ministry of Education introduced the TPEs (student VLEs), they feel like mere 'guides', 'facilitators', 'advisors', 'coaches' and 'mentors' for their students². Yet, the ICT conference participants hold that while the role of the teacher must change, 'ICT is simply a tool while effective teaching is still dependent upon having teachers with a passion for teaching.'

What speed does the Adventist Education speedometer show? Are we on track on the ICT Highway?

I see Adventist Education moving at light-speed! We certainly do the best to provide Superior Quality Adventist Christian Education in our schools. We have our own VLE: *Adventist Virtual Learning Network* ([AVLN](http://www.avln.org)). AVLN is a faith-based global community of learners whose mission is to promote global online collaboration for life-long learning among Seventh-day Adventists and other faith-based organizations. (To subscribe, visit: <http://www.avln.org/list.htm>)

I want to strongly encourage teachers, Adventist or not, to join the race, and collaborate in the promotion of effective use of ICT in classrooms. For we do have the mission to prepare the great minds entrusted us 'for life and eternity.' With that, hopefully AVLN will soon create subject-specific mailing lists for teachers as well as students (K-12) VLEs to adjust our speed and thereby adapt to the changing classroom reality.

² MICHAEL KALOGIANNAKIS. *A Virtual Learning Environment for the French Physics Teachers*. Education and Information Technologies 9:4, 345–353, 2004. Kluwer Academic Publishers. The Netherlands.