System Design For Teach For India

A project for Teach for India, Mumbai

Interaction Design Project II by
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Contents

Abstract	2
Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Primary Study	5
Teach For America	5
Teach For Australia	6
Teach For India	7
Model Of Teach For India	8
Overall Process	9
Primary User Study	11
User Studies, Observations And Findings	14
Analysis And Conclusion	15
Key Issues	16
Key Insights	17
Design Conceptualization	19
Possible Design Solution	20
Design Idea 1	22
Design Idea 2	29
Final Design Idea	46
Epilogue	61
References	63

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Baba, for the courage and support in completing the task and smiling and working your way round everytime.

Approval Sheet

The Interaction Design Project II, entitled
"System Design for Teach for India" by
Ajay Mittal, 0863380 is approved for partial fulfillment
for the requirement of the
Masters Design Degree in Interaction Design.

Guide:

Chairperson:

Internal Examiner:

External Examiner:

Abstract

Complexity of a system involves in the multiple loops which bind the entire system together. Often a complex system takes a longer duration for a user to get a hold of it, which results in errors and time consumption.

When it comes to looking for a system design for a bigger organization, where multiple players are involved in the process and each one is assigned a different role to be played, the entire process becomes multi fold, and therefore it becomes essential to understand the complexity involved at each stage, and in order to create a larger impact, it is also necessary to understand the need of creating a system in first place and also the problems which it would cater to. Understanding which, would help in finding the right solution to the problem.

The model of Teach for India is a threefold process wherein major role is played by the facilitators of the organization, followed by the teachers and the students. Role of each player differs from other in some or the other way and therefore coming up with a system design, which caters to everyone's requirements and providing them with relevant information. It also requires understanding of the interconnections and links within the system.

The project aims at understanding the need gaps in the existing manual process and coming out with a new system design to facilitate the networking between the three major players i.e. The facilitators, teachers and students involved with 'Teach For India' foundation. As the entire system is currently being done manually, the project also aims at creating a new online system which could reduce the extra amount of work done in a manual process and also providing the right information at the right time along with making access to the required information and validating and authenticating it at the same time reducing the chances of flaws in the process.

Introduction

"Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour
Falls from the sky a meteoric shower of facts;
They lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill is daily spun,
But there exists no loom to weave it into fabric."

Edna St. Vincent Millay
"Huntsman, What Quarry?" 1939

Teach For India was formally established in 2008 as a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to create a movement of leaders who will work to eliminate educational inequity in the country. Teach For India is a nationwide movement of outstanding college graduates and young professionals who will commit two-years to teach full-time in under resourced schools and who will become lifelong leaders working from within various sectors toward the pursuit of equity in education.

In 2006, a group of young leaders working to reform education in India came together to seek an innovative solution to end educational inequity in the country. The group firmly believed that any change in the education sector needed to be systemic and that India needed to be infused with a large number of leaders who would work towards achieving educational equity for all children.

During this time, the group met with Wendy Kopp, CEO and Founder of Teach For America (TFA), to discuss the feasibility of Teach For America's Theory of Change working in India.

Seeking to adapt the Teach For America model to the Indian context, the group engaged with a number of stakeholders within the government, at academic institutions and at corporations and were encouraged by the favorable response they received. A few months later, a twelve week study was launched by McKinsey & Company to determine the feasibility of implementing this model in India. The study concluded favorably and at the end of the process, a plan to place the first cohort of Fellows as well as a plan to grow the movement to scale for the next five years was put in motion.

Methodology

The project was done in collaboration with 'Teach for India' in Mumbai. It was carried out by undertaking a thorough literature study of the system design in TFI's counterparts, Teach for America, Teach for Australia, Teach for All giving a rough idea of the nature of complexity to be introduced. Also a thorough user study of the similar system designs was carried out during the design process. The following process was adopted for the same:

Stage 1: Data Collection

- Understanding the project
- Initial Net and Literature Survey (Teach for America, Teach for Australia, Teach for All)
- Primary and Secondary research
- Mind mapping and Brainstorming
- Primary User study
- Stakeholder Maps
- Mappings and Analysis

Stage 2: **Design Conceptualization**

- Conceptual Mappings and Drawings
- Identifying Design Goals and Objectives
- Information Architecture
- Wireframe Development
- Design Ideation
- Final Concept and mockup

Stage 3: **Final Concept and Prototyping**

- Detailing and Structuring of Final Concept
- Paper / Conceptual Prototyping
- Testing of prototype and feedback from the users
- Design Iterations
- Final Prototype

Primary Study

Primary research started with understanding the role model for Teach for India i.e. Teach for America and its other counterparts. (Teach for Australia, Teach for All). Since at this stage it was essential to understand how the other systems are working in already existing modules, so entire process was divided under following three heads:

- Understanding working of already existing Teach for America, Teach for Australia and Teach for All.
- Understanding the working of a system in an organization.
- Stake holder study

Teach For America

To design a system for Teach for India, it was important to understand the already existing work pattern, both in Teach for India and its other counterparts. The study started with doing a brief research on all other Teach for, programs.

Since, the pioneer of all these programs was Teach for India, so the model was thoroughly studied to understand the various people and management involved within the system. Teach For America (TFA) is an American non-profit organization whose mission is to build a movement "to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort". Teach For America recruits recent college graduates and professionals to teach for two years in low-income communities throughout the United States. The goal of Teach For America is for its corps members not only to make a short-term impact on their students, but also to become lifelong leaders in pursuing educational equality. Corps members do not have to be certified teachers, although certified teachers may apply.

Uncertified corps members receive alternative certification through coursework taken while completing the program. Corps members attend an intensive five-week summer institute to prepare for their commitment. Teach For America teachers are placed in schools in urban areas such as New York City and Houston, as well as in rural places like eastern North Carolina and the Mississippi Delta. They then serve for two years and are usually placed in schools with other Teach For America corps members.

Teach For America teachers are full-fledged faculty members at their schools, receiving the normal school district salary and benefits as well as a modest AmeriCorps "education voucher".

Teach For Australia

" One of the top leadership development experiences available to top graduates"

— Guy Templeton
Former CEO of Minter Ellison

Teach For Australia was formally established in April 2009. It is a ground breaking new leadership and career development program, designed for outstanding graduates from all degree disciplines.

This structured, fully-paid program allows participants to build highly-valued transferable skills and a powerful network, whilst inspiring and motivating students in the most disadvantaged schools in Australia.

Teach For Australia Draw's on experience from nine other similar programs around the world, including Teach for America in US, Teach First in UK, and international research on their best practices, such as the McKinsey Report.

Immediate objective of Teach for Australia is to improve student outcomes in areas of educational disadvantage by attracting and supporting graduates to teach in disadvantaged schools for two years and in a longer building a network of committed alumni who are knowledgeable about education and social issues, committed to educational equity, and destined to become exceptional leaders in all fields.

Key Principles:
Recruit and select outstanding university graduates from all disciplines who, as Associates, will boost student achievement in their classes and become leaders able to affect systemic change.

- Prepare them through intensive pre-placement education.
- Place Associates to teach for two years in disadvantaged schools with responsibility for their classrooms.
- Provide intensive support to maximize classroom impact and achieve qualification.
- Partner with leading Australian businesses in all aspects of the program.
- Foster networks of Alumni committed to education and accelerate their leadership in all sectors.
- Evaluate outcomes and use results to continuously improve the program.

Teach For India

"Teach For India has the potential to transform the process of k-12 learning in our country and create a new generation of motivated youth."

— Ganesh Natarajan, Chairman, NASSCOM
Global CEO, Zensar

Teach For India (TFI) is a not for profit organization established in 2007 (formally in 2008), when a group of leaders working to reform education in India came together to seek an innovative solution to ending educational inequity in the country. During this time, they had the opportunity to meet with Wendy Kopp, CEO and Founder of Teach For America (TFA) and learn about the model.

Teach For India believes that in order for the country to achieve educational equity, we need a movement of leaders in a variety of sectors who are committed to and will work toward ensuring that every child in India receives an excellent education.

Structure:
To build the movement of leaders, Teach For India recruits India's most outstanding recent graduates and young professionals to serve as teachers in low income urban and rural schools for two years. In the short run, these young leaders acts as a source of dedicated teachers in government and low-income private schools.

TFI provides resources, training, and support to these Fellows so they can employ innovative teaching strategies and maximize their effectiveness in the classroom.

Believing that teaching is leadership, TFI Fellows go beyond traditional teaching practices, and build upon their own professional development skills, such as organization, critical thinking, management, communications, and leadership, that are applicable and highly in demand in a variety of sectors outside education.

Fellows gain important knowledge and experience of India's educational system and its challenges, which enable them to provide solutions to problems faced within their classrooms and school communities.

Upon completion of their two years of service, Teach For India Alumni collaborates through the organization's Alumni Network, and regardless of the career path they choose after their TFI Fellowship, will work toward fighting educational inequity in India.

Model of Teach For India

Teach For India model involves following components:

Talent Sourcing: Teach For India recruits the most outstanding college graduates and young professionals to teach in low-income schools for two years. Fellows go through a rigorous selection process where they are evaluated for academic excellence, demonstrated leadership, a commitment to the community, critical thinking and perseverance, amongst other qualities.

Talent Development: Prior to and during the two-year Fellowship, Teach For India provides Fellows with training needed to make them successful teachers in the classroom and to drive positive and significant student achievement. Fellows are also given adequate leadership training to ensure that they are successful leaders in any field once they complete the Fellowship.

Talent Placement: Teach For India places Fellows for a minimum of two years in full-time teaching positions in under-resourced schools where impact on student achievement can be maximized. Fellows have clear accountability for their classrooms, and are responsible for ensuring that their students reach their ambitious academic goals.

Alumni support: Teach For India builds partnerships in all sectors to ensure that participants have a clear path to leadership after the two year commitment. Through the alumni network, alumni of the Fellowship, stay connected to each other as they work hard towards Teach For India´s mission.

Overall System

The overall system at Teach for India was taken up as case study and an attempt was made to understand the entire work flow.

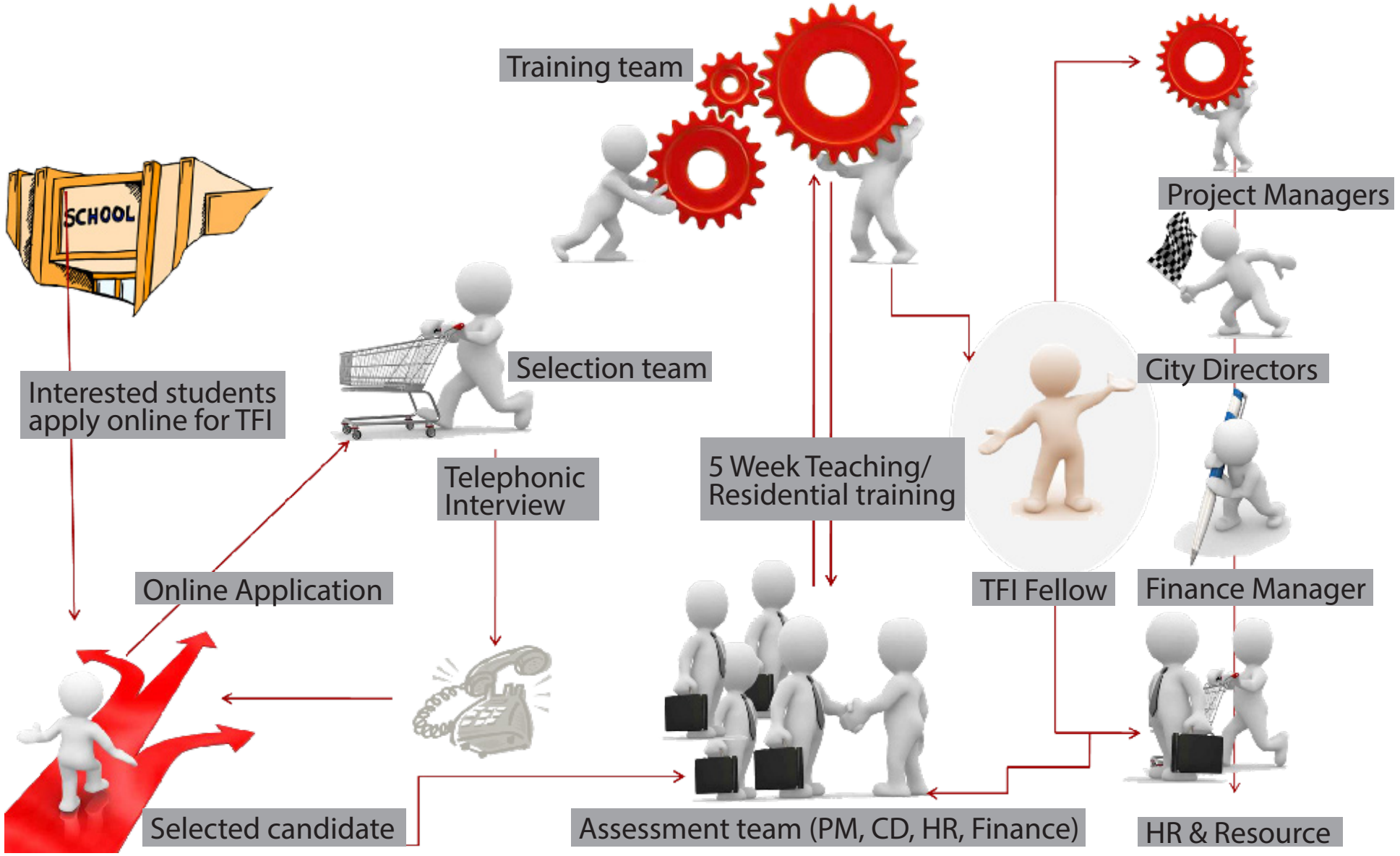
The purpose of the study was to understand how is the system working manually at present, giving an idea of hierarchy in the system and thereby making it simpler to understand it in totality.

By gaining an understanding of this framework it was possible to work out the frame of reference against which the new system is suppose to work. The diagram overleaf illustrates the overall system, starting from selection of a candidate to the various stages he goes through, alongwith the impact of the other members of the team during his tenure of two years.

To begin with Teach for India (TFI) team approaches all the reputed institutes to look for outstanding college graduates as volunteers. Once a volunteer is willing to be a part of TFI team he has to fill up the online form from the existing portal of Teach for India, giving all his details and other informations. The form is then scrutinized by the selection team which selects the candidates eligible for second round of telephonic interview.

The selected candidates are informed about the date for second interview. Once a candidate clears the second round of interview, he proceeds for final assessment to be taken by the Assessment Team comprising of HR, City Directors, Finance Manager, TFI Fellows, Project managers and other team members. The selected candidates have to go through 5 weeks of teaching and residential training in which they are made to learn new and innovative methods of teaching kids After completing the training the candidate becomes a part of Teach for India as a fellow member.

During his tenure of two years of teaching, a candidate goes through leadership and development program, which helps him in improving his performance and personality development.


Training team
Project Managers
SCHOOL
Interested students apply online for TFI
Selection team
City Directors
Telephonic Interview
5 Week Teaching/ Residential training
Online Application
TFI Fellow
Finance Manager
Selected candidate
Assessment team (PM, CD, HR, Finance)
HR & Resource

Primary User Study

The Primary User study was conducted at Teach for India where the entire system was observed in detail coupled with interviews and inputs from the team members. The processes were mapped out in a flow chart form in order to understand the proper flow of the process and the various people involved in it.

The process is described as under:
The entire process involves several heads, which works in a hierarchical order to support the entire system. On studying the entire system in detail, 4 kinds of primary users were identified:

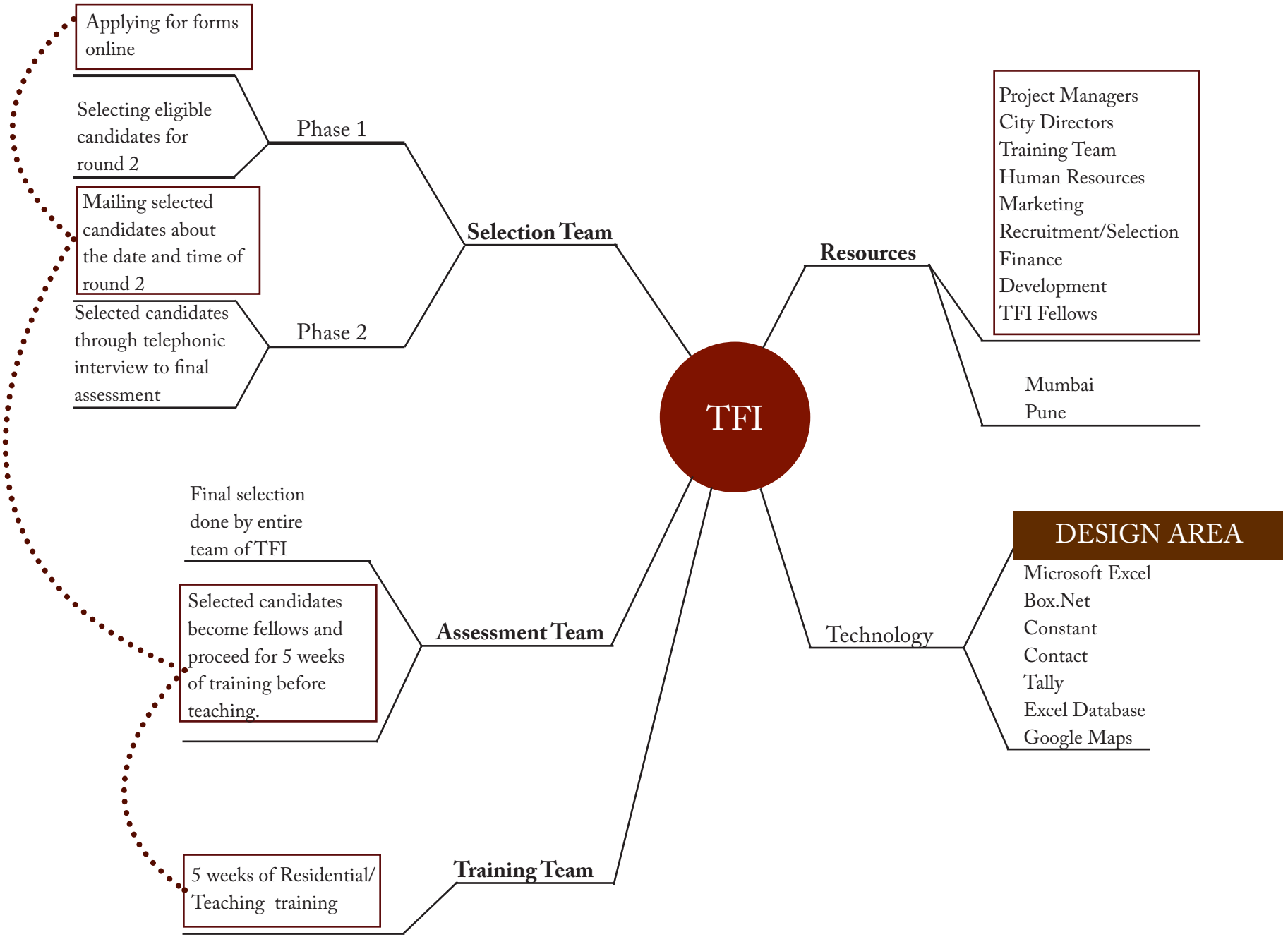
- Prospective applicant (before joining)
- TFI fellows (after joining)
- TFI vertical heads
- Alumni (no alumni since first batch is teaching at present)

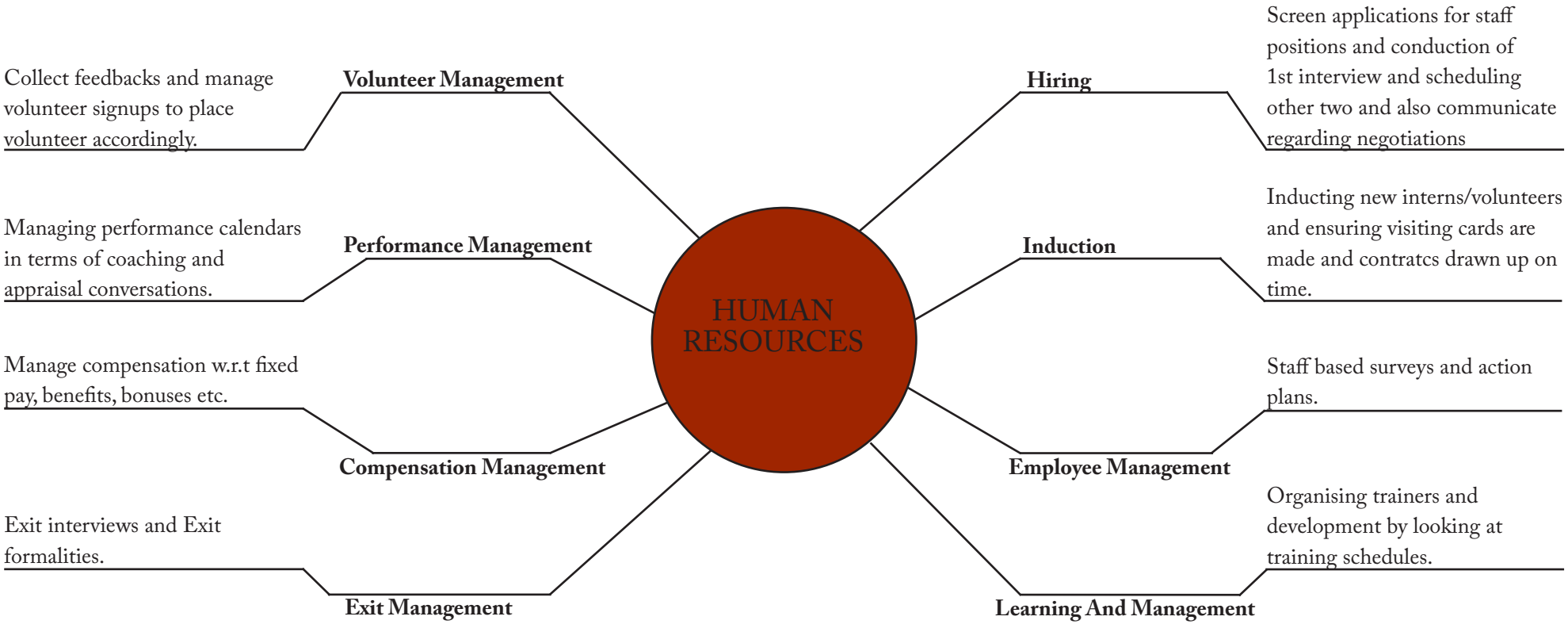
The entire system revolves around these 4 users, so understanding the work process of each of them was the initial step in identifying the goals of the problem.

To understand the work system and methodology of each individual user, firstly a focus group was conducted which gave enough feedbacks about the existing system and problems which they face while working.

To Study the prospective applicants, list of people who were willing to volunteer for the cause was made and they were being approached to understand their own reasons of joining the program. Also they were questioned about the existing system of applying and the problems faced by them while doing the same. Although the system design was to be used internally within the organization, but this ground research helped in taking a step forward in understanding the complexities which other vertical heads face once the application procedure is done.

In order to identify the need gaps all vertical heads were interviewed individually in form of a contextual inquiry. This gave many important insights regarding the system at various stages.


TFI
Selection Team
Phase 1
Applying for forms online
Selecting eligible candidates for round 2
Phase 2
Mailing selected candidates about the date and time of round 2
Selected candidates through telephonic interview to final assessment
Assessment Team
Final selection done by entire team of TFI
Selected candidates become fellows and proceed for 5 weeks of training before teaching.
Training Team
5 weeks of Residential/ Teaching training
Resources
Project Managers
City Directors
Training Team
Human Resources
Marketing
Recruitment/Selection
Finance
Development
TFI Fellows
Mumbai
Pune
Technology
DESIGN AREA
Microsoft Excel
Box.Net
Constant
Contact
Tally
Excel Database
Google Maps


HUMAN RESOURCES
Volunteer Management
Collect feedbacks and manage volunteer signups to place volunteer accordingly.
Performance Management
Managing performance calendars in terms of coaching and appraisal conversations.
Compensation Management
Manage compensation w.r.t fixed pay, benefits, bonuses etc.
Exit Management
Exit interviews and Exit formalities.
Hiring
Screen applications for staff positions and conduction of 1st interview and scheduling other two and also communicate regarding negotiations
Induction
Inducting new interns/volunteers and ensuring visiting cards are made and contratcs drawn up on time.
Employee Management
Staff based surveys and action plans.
Learning And Management
Organising trainers and development by looking at training schedules.

User Studies, Findings & Observations

Users were divided into three different categories to gather different viewpoints and findings: Applicants, Fellows and Vertical Heads

All findings gave various insights into the problem of designing the entire system and changing it from long and manual process to quick and easy to access online system, which could be controlled internally.

Findings from Applicants

- Difficult to make up mind for teaching and commit for 2 years in teaching.
- Duration is long, should be scope for volunteer teaching or should be for a shorter duration so that it's easy to get hold of the responsibility.
- Motivational factor is missing, quoted examples of 'Taare Zameen Par'.
- Difficult to fill the online form— very lengthy, time consuming, looks more quantitative, couldn't trace back the application after submitting, cannot make changes once submitted.

Findings from Fellows

- Five Weeks of teaching training helps in building confidence and innovative ideas of teaching small kids.
- Leadership programs and network programming with other leaders helps in personality development.

Findings from Vertical Heads

- The 'Chief Finance Officer' said
- "Since its in first year of its operation, everything has to be set up, including drafting of systems, processes and policies
- Performance measure becomes a difficult task (– 'Manager, HR')
- Selling up is difficult ('Recruitment Manager'.)
- Difficult to communicate our complex vision to placement heads and students. Difficult to differentiate ourselves from other NGOs with more limited vision.
- - 'SPDAs (special program development associates)'.

We as an organization should be less focused on the Fellows and more on the students.

Analysis and Conclusions

Based on the above findings and mappings several conclusions were made :

- Most of the work is manually done, from submitting documents, sending group mails, reimbursements, leave applications and other such similar functions.

- It is clearly evident that the system is interlinked with each other at some or the other point, making the entire system, interdependent

- Mapping also helped in chunking the users and their work patterns, which thereby helped in identifying the areas where system can be made online, as well as authenticated and secured.

- The system is a combination of several steps and processes, which sometimes repeats internally in a loop to get connected to some other preceding step in the hierarchical order, at a given point of time.

Based on the above findings the entire system was divided into 6 modules, to cater each module individually and thereafter finding the connections , based on the above research

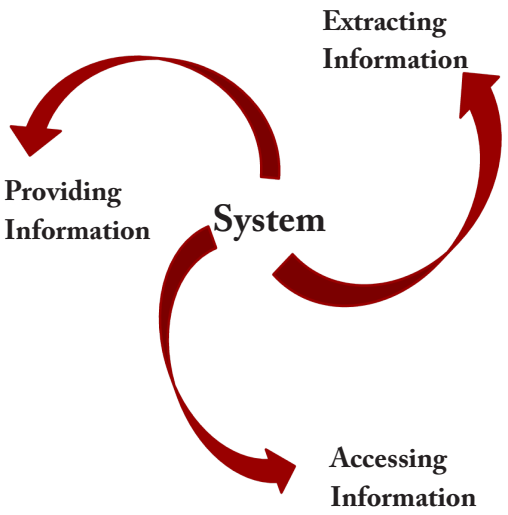
1. Impact
2. Human Resources
3. Fellow Recruitment (includes selection)
4. Training
5. Administration and Infrastructure
6. Marketing

Key Issues

Many key issues and findings which came across the course of study were of great help in framing the further course of action and deciding upon the things of top priorities.

Since the process is manual, therefore the entire system becomes slow and time consuming. Authentication and Verification of the data is one of the biggest setback in manually managed system.

Backup storage of important files and data again becomes a problem as there is no online server for data storage, and chances of loosing the data are always high.



Work division is difficult to manage as for each task, things have to be manually taken care of. Access to any information and extracting the relevant information is a tough task to do in such a system.

More chances of errors as there is no proper feedback for the information provided, which can reduce the chances of errors.

Key Insights

In a larger system, there are several sub-processes which differs in nature yet they are linked with each other.

Each sub process is generic to the entire process and thereby a small change in any of those affects the entire process in turn, thereby affecting the entire system. Hence, the user in each process behaves and works differently with respect to any other process.

Feeding information, extracting information, processing the information and validating the information are the main functions taking place in the entire system.

Some functions are of prime importance which needs to be viewed on daily basis, while others fall in secondary position for which a user can dig and extract the information

Maximum errors occur while validating and processing the information. Authentication becomes another major issue when it comes to storage and extracting information.

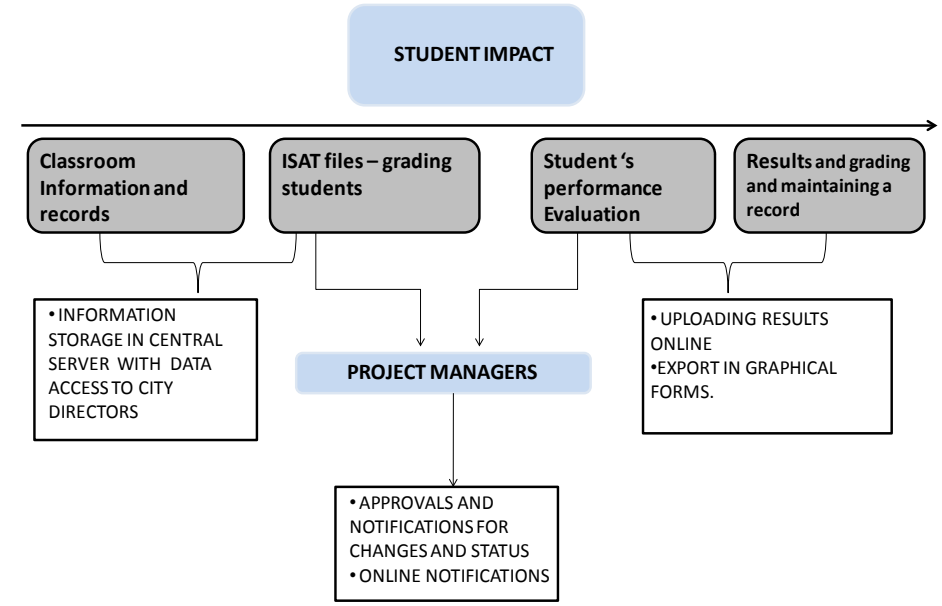
Resolving errors, once occurred is a tedious and lengthy process, which consumes lot of time and manpower, which otherwise could be used at some other job if things are in order.

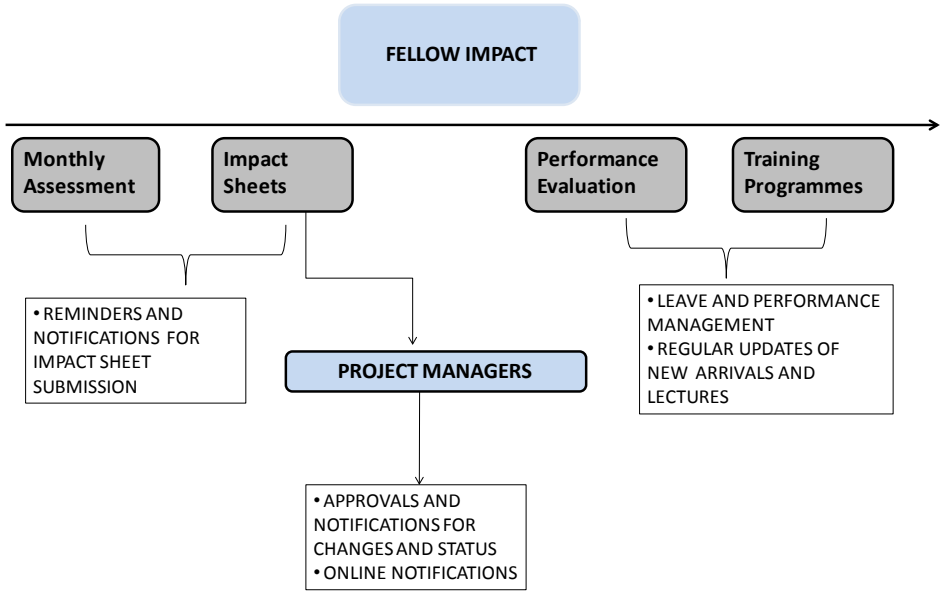
Sometimes information required for error resolution is not always available at hand and the document needs to be traced back to the source.

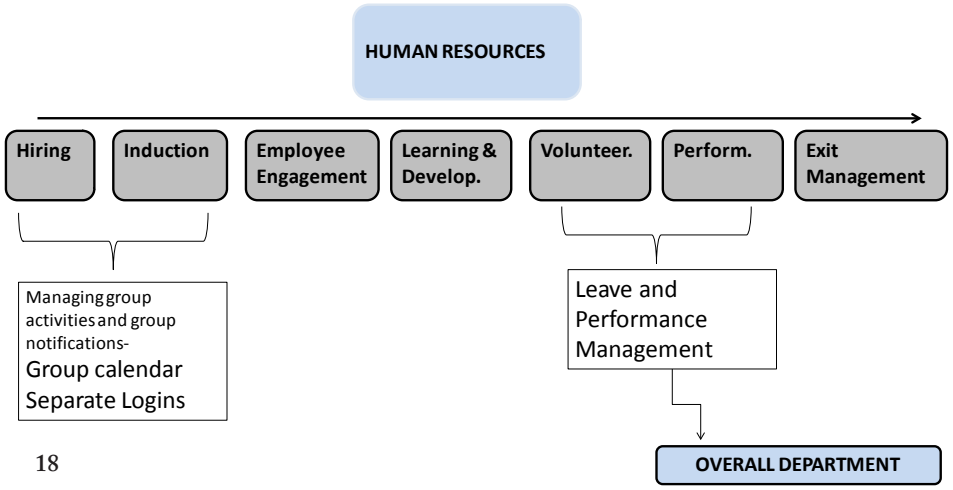
There is a certain hierarchy in the entire system, which should be followed to maintain the proper work flow and keeping all other sub processes intact.

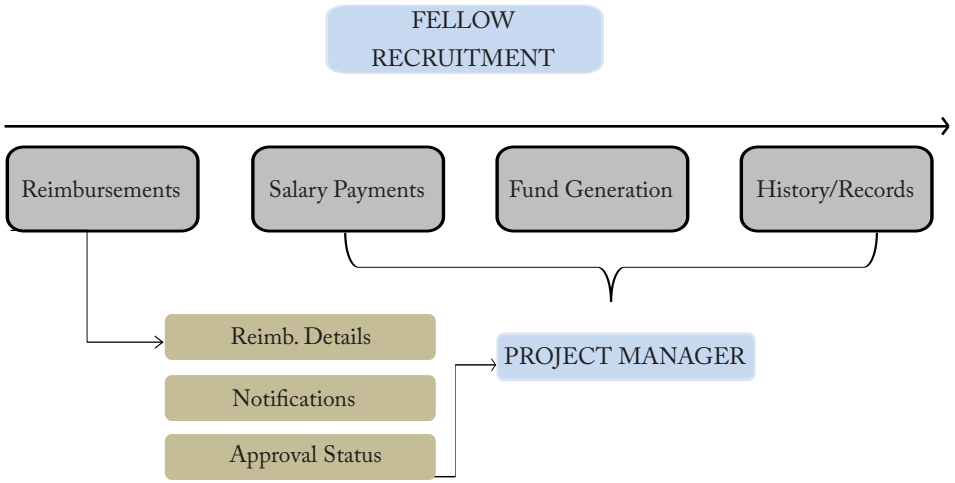
Right information to the right user at the right point becomes very essential in a larger system.

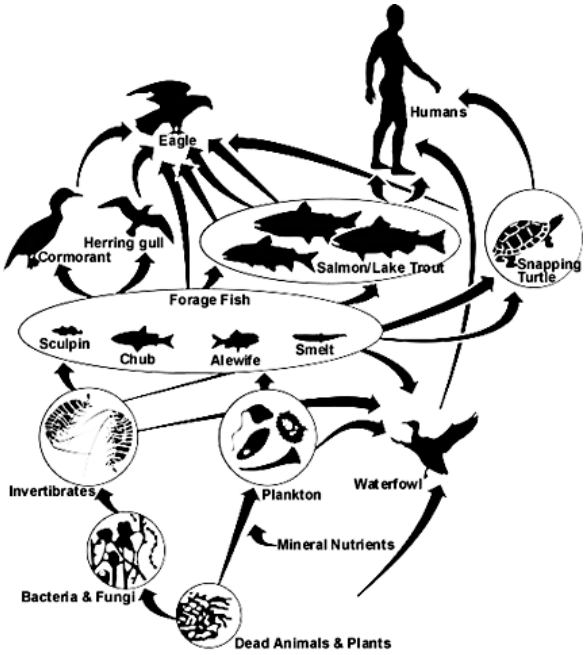
Modules


STUDENT IMPACT
Classroom Information and records
ISAT files – grading students
Student 's performance Evaluation
Results and grading and maintaining a record
• INFORMATION STORAGE IN CENTRAL SERVER WITH DATA ACCESS TO CITY DIRECTORS
PROJECT MANAGERS
• UPLOADING RESULTS ONLINE
•EXPORT IN GRAPHICAL FORMS.
• APPROVALS AND NOTIFICATIONS FOR CHANGES AND STATUS
• ONLINE NOTIFICATIONS


FELLOW IMPACT
Monthly Assessment
Impact Sheets
Performance Evaluation
Training Programmes
• REMINDERS AND NOTIFICATIONS FOR IMPACT SHEET SUBMISSION
PROJECT MANAGERS
• LEAVE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
• REGULAR UPDATES OF NEW ARRIVALS AND LECTURES
• APPROVALS AND NOTIFICATIONS FOR CHANGES AND STATUS
• ONLINE NOTIFICATIONS


HUMAN RESOURCES
Hiring
Induction
Employee Engagement
Learning & Develop.
Volunteer.
Perform.
Exit Management
Managing group activities and group notifications-
Group calendar
Separate Logins
Leave and Performance Management
OVERALL DEPARTMENT


FELLOW RECRUITMENT
Reimbursements
Salary Payments
Fund Generation
History/Records
Reimb. Details
Notifications
Approval Status
PROJECT MANAGER



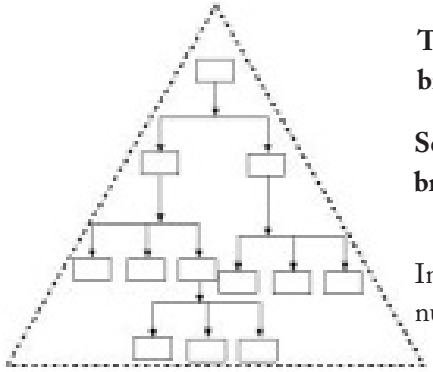
Design Conceptualization

In the current system design problem, the solution has to look and cater to the need of variety of users, so it can't be single user group centric, thereby the general approach of User Experience design has to be modified to a certain extent.

All users at various points have their own set of needs and desires depending on positioning in the process chain.

The proper working of entire process depends upon the other sub processes which falls under this entire system. Changing any of the sub processes can affect the entire system in turn.

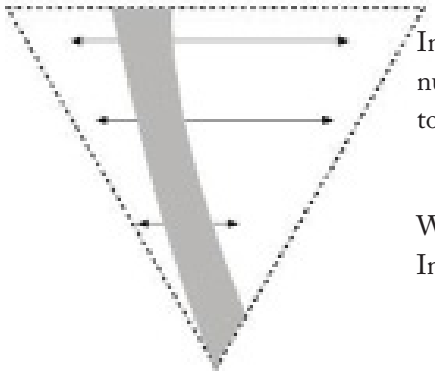
Example of food web can better explain the above statement — if even one member of the food web is removed or dislocated from its right place, then entire food web behaves differently than expected. Same is the case in this system design, which requires proper understanding and interconnections to be made for entire system to fall in place.



Top level menu branch

Second level menu branch

Information nugget/leaf



Information nugget/leaf at the top

Way to change Information Architecture

Possible Design Solutions

Tackling the entire system together, needs all sub processes to be handled simultaneously, keeping in mind the effect of one on the other. This can be done by the following three methods:

Identifying the tasks to be done by the users in each sub process and the amount of information required for that action to be implemented. The frequency of the tasks decides the point where it should be placed in the hierarchical system of the entire system.

Another solution derives its idea from the concept of 'Inverted Pyramid Approach in User Interface Design for Interactive Information Retrieval', which states that Usability studies show that users are impatient to reach the information they want. Useful information needs to be pushed upwards, towards the users from the huge information cauldron. Inverted pyramid approach helps in presenting the pertinent facts first and also reduce the stress and time associated with the tasks.

The advantages of inverted pyramid approach in user interface design for interactive information retrieval can be summarized as follows:

Users don't begin a search clueless.

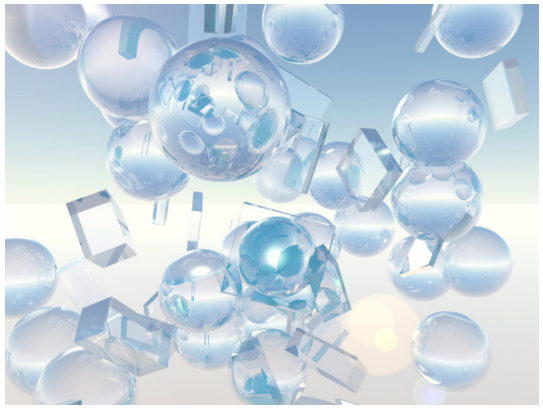
Multiple parameters can be changed at a time right in the beginning, instead of just one. User is in control of what parameters he would like to change first.

Information that users are most likely to select are presented first, rather than presenting all.

Users have already entered a menu structure.

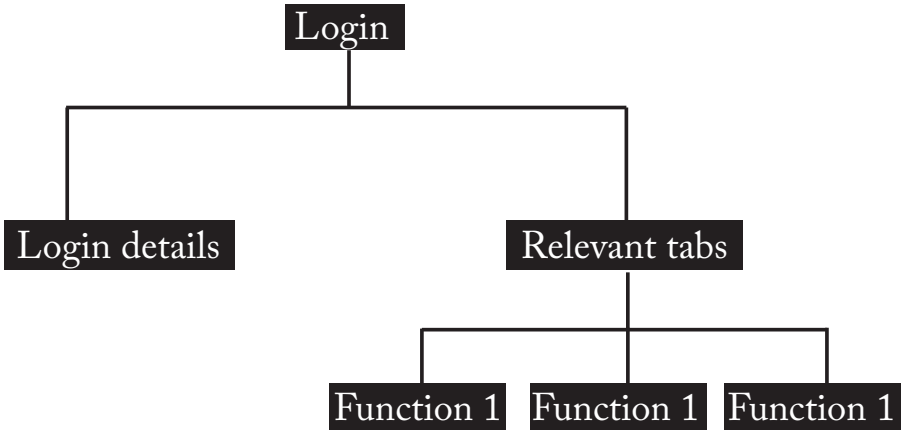
Precious user time is saved.

Introducing a minute change that can have positive impacts on the entire process.



Possible Design Solutions

Another solution to the problem was inspired by the 'Chaos Theory', which is a branch of mathematics which studies the behavior of certain dynamical systems that may be highly sensitive to initial conditions. As a result of this sensitivity, which manifests itself as an exponential growth of error, the behavior of chaotic systems appears to be random.
That is, tiny differences in the starting state of the system can lead to enormous differences in the final state of the system even over fairly small timescales. This gives the impression that the system is behaving randomly. This happens even though these systems are deterministic, meaning that their future dynamics are fully determined by their initial conditions with no random elements involved. This behavior is known as deterministic chaos, or simply chaos.



Design Idea — 1

First idea was generated, based on all six modules and the requirements generated by the people and vertical heads working within the module.

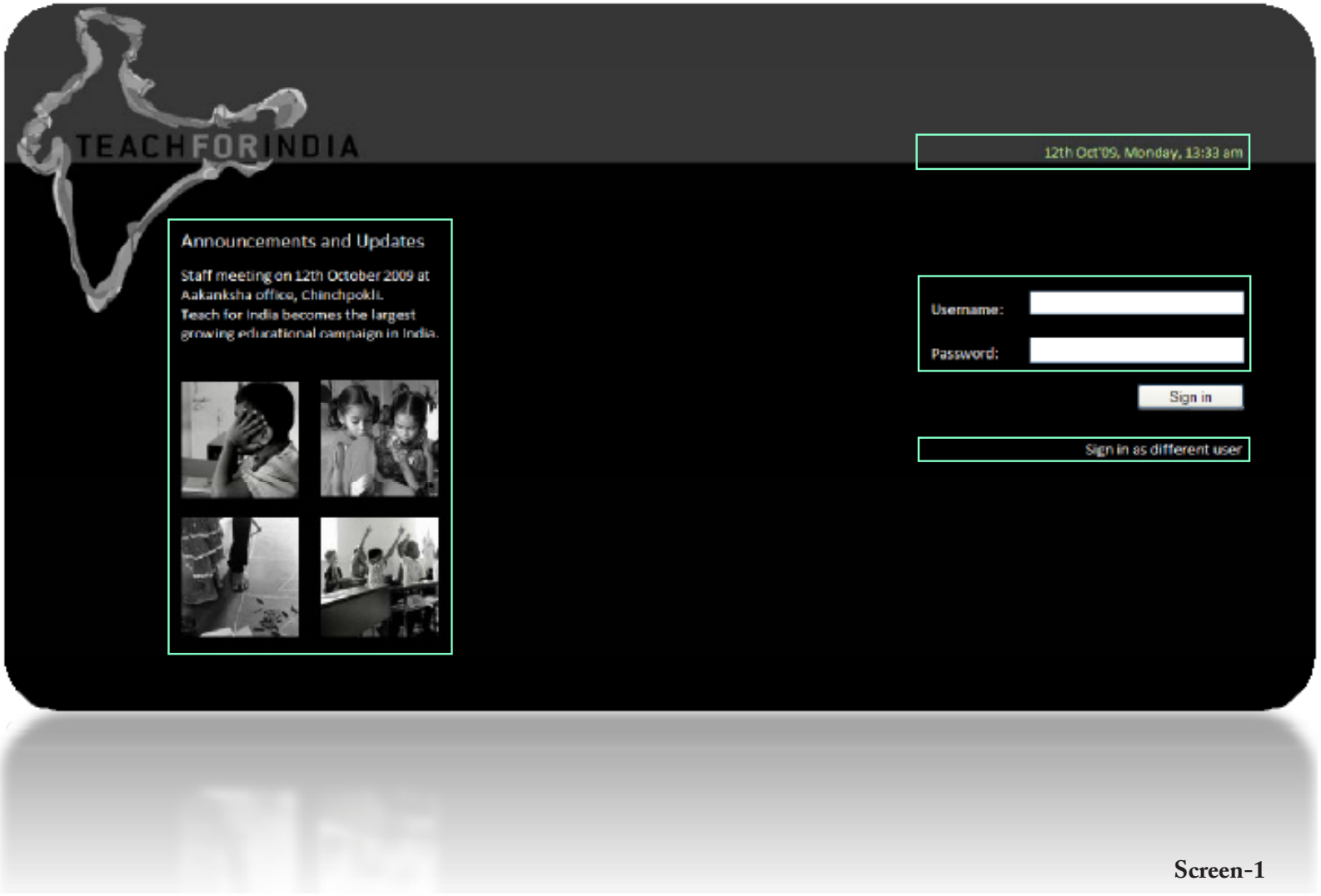
To start with, initial idea was to keep separate login system for each vertical head/ department and the login id was generated on the basis of initials of the name followed by a number sequence for e.g. AM0001.

After login, the information which appears on screen, displays all relevant information of prime importance. The breakup of information was decided on the basis of all those functions which falls under the already defined module.

Important updates and announcements are displayed on the home page, so that one could keep himself updated without logging in everytime.

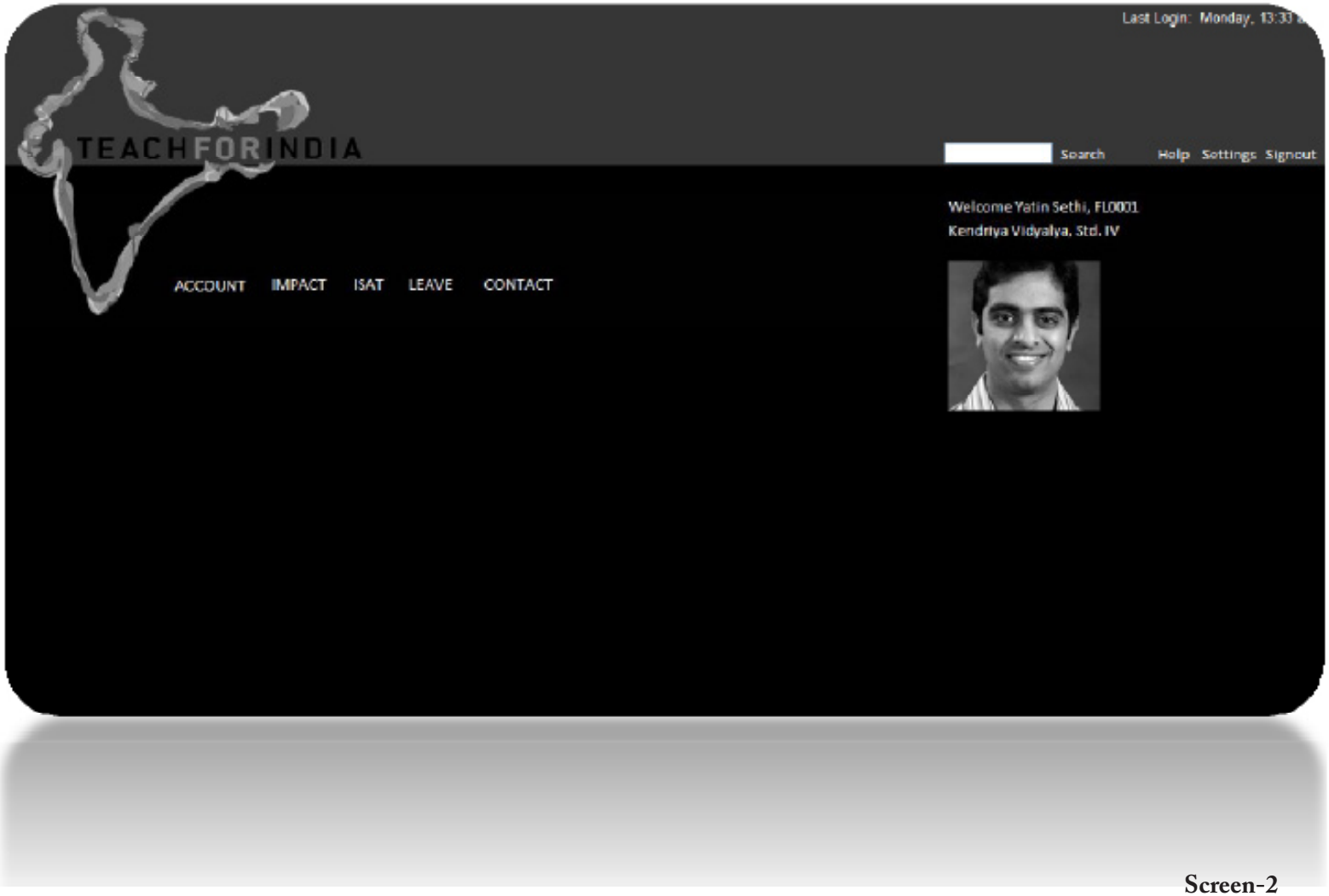
Entire design idea follows a hierarchical system when it comes to functions and information division.

Design Idea — 1



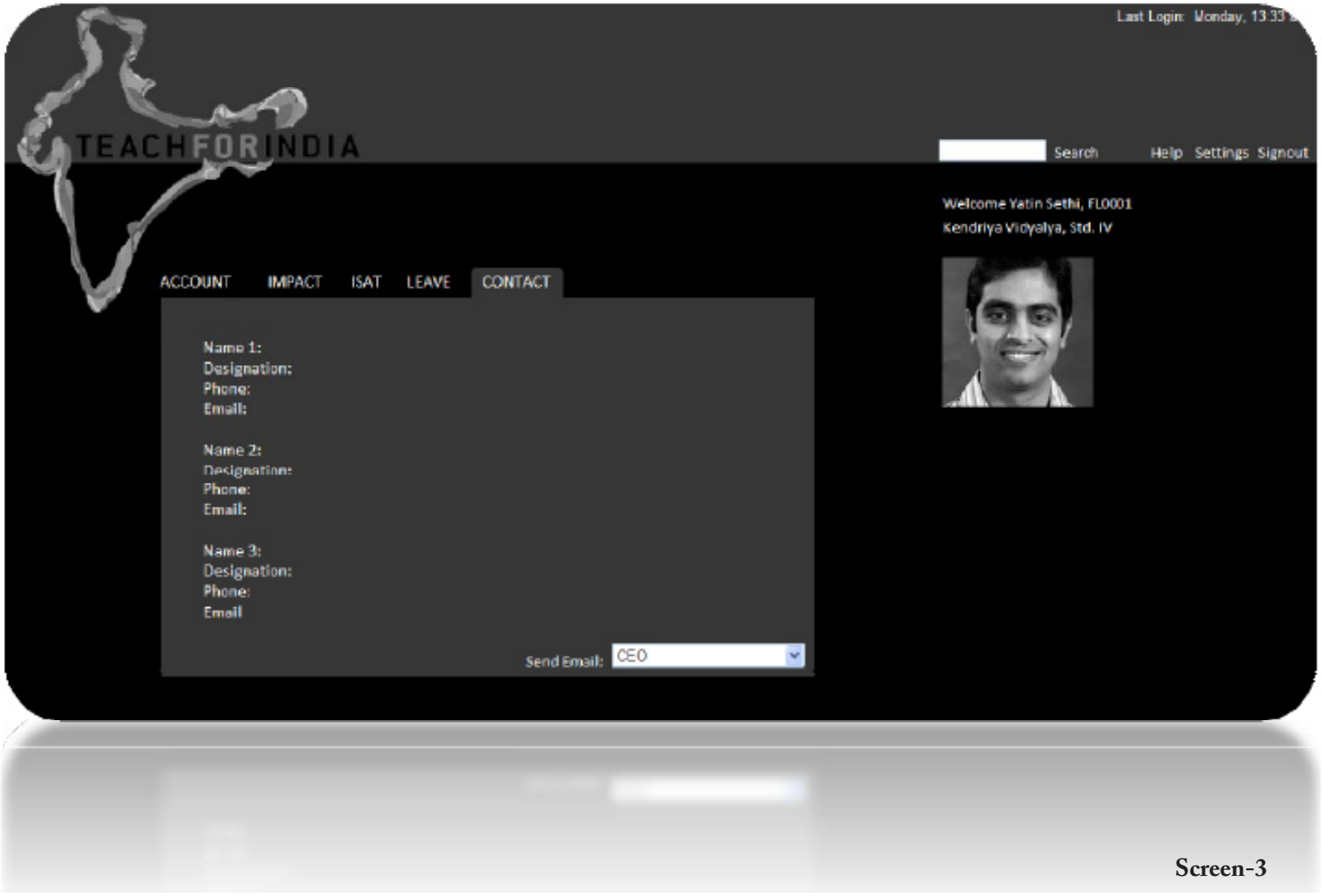
Screen-1

Design Idea — 1



Screen-2

Design Idea — 1

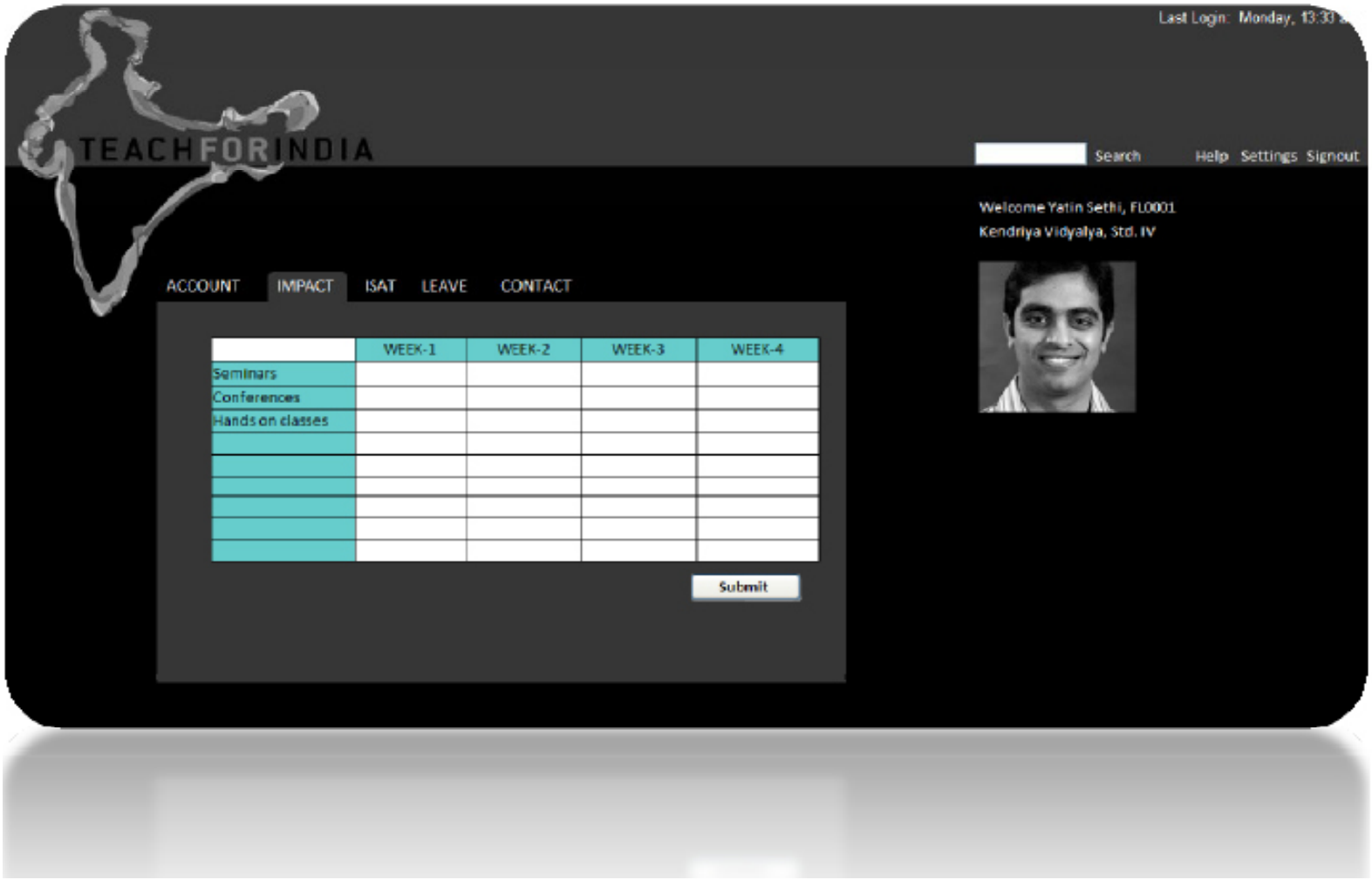


Screen-3

Design Idea — 1

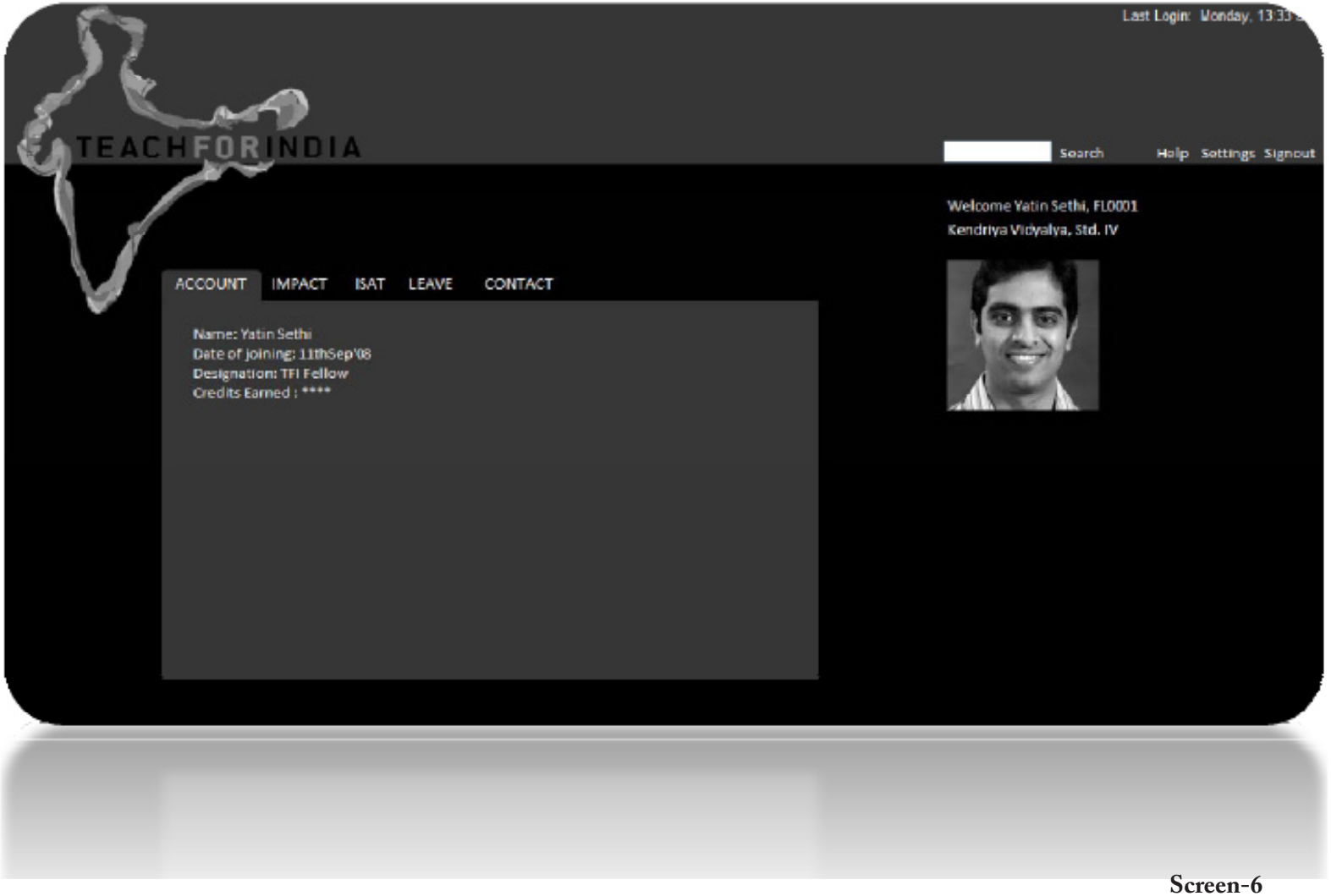
Screen-4

Design Idea — 1

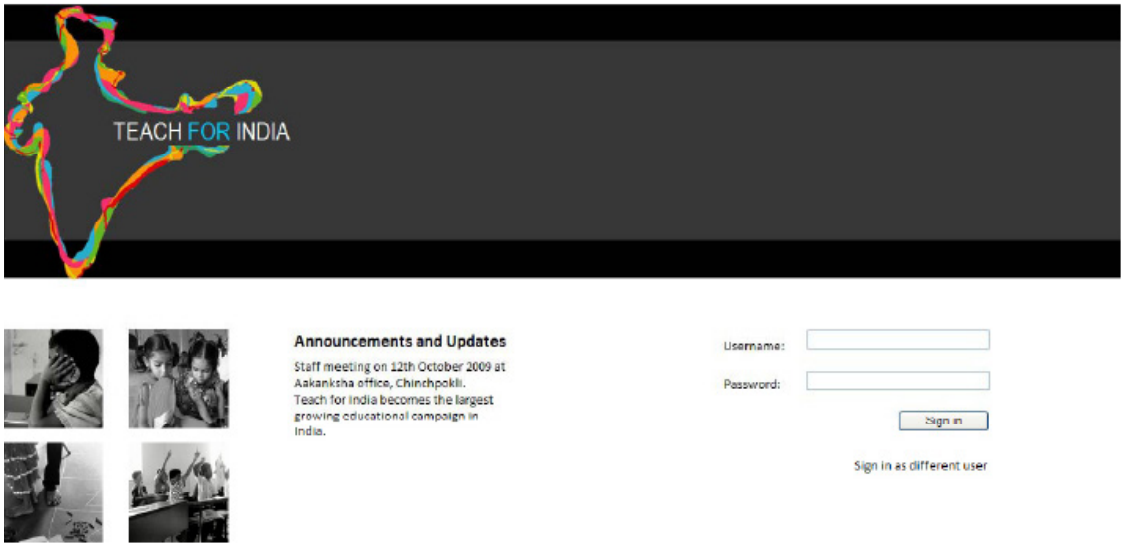


Screen-5

Design Idea — 1



Screen-6



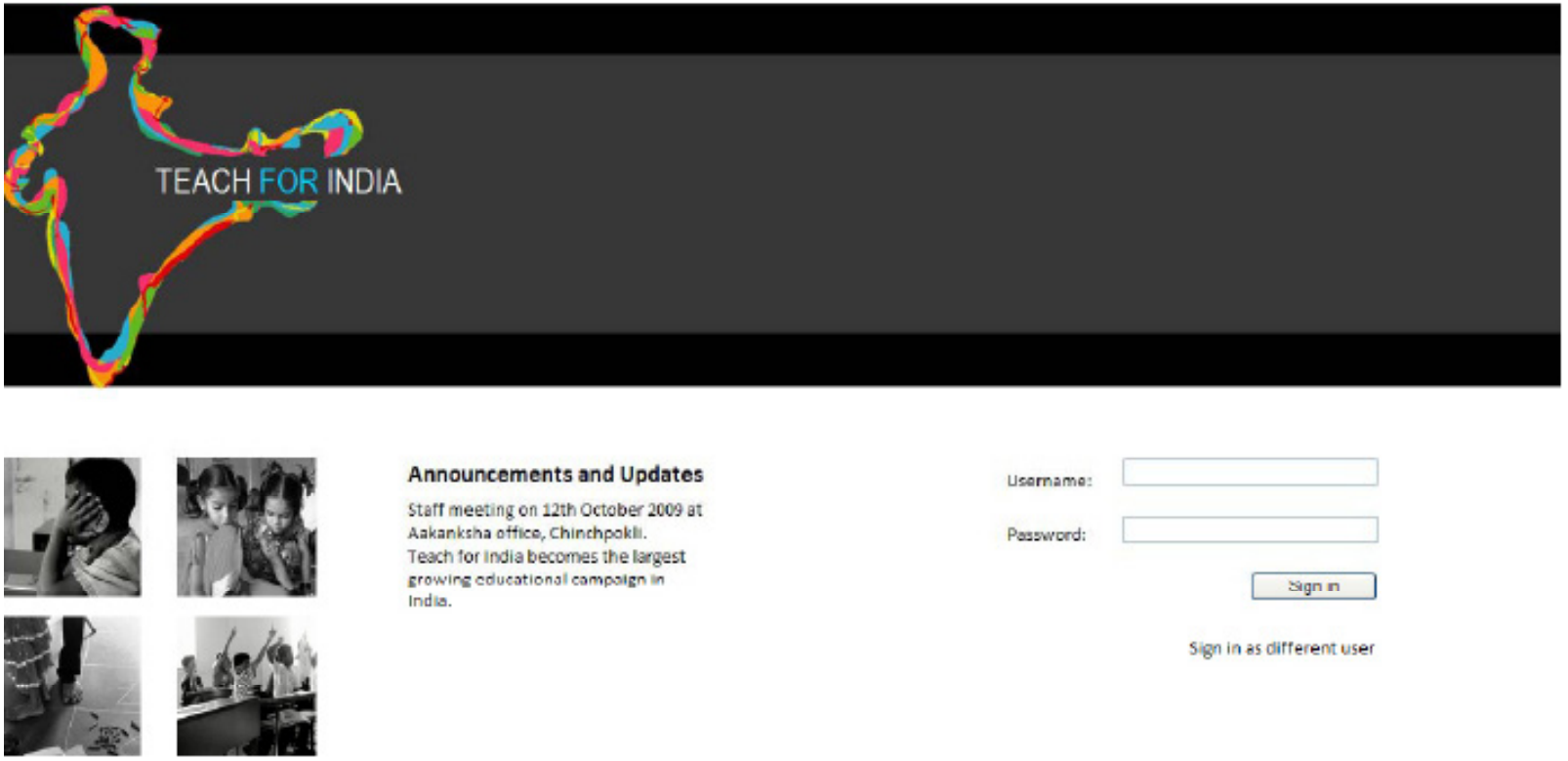
Design Idea — 2

Several issues came out of the first idea which led to the development of another idea, which could take care of all those issues. Some of the things which were found missing in first design idea based on the user feedbacks and evaluation are:

- Initial design doesn't seem to solve all the basic functionalities required within the system.
- Level of Interaction is very less which makes all the information very limited, and also overall functionality gets affected.
- Extraction of information becomes difficult due to ambiguity caused by he information scattered all over the place.

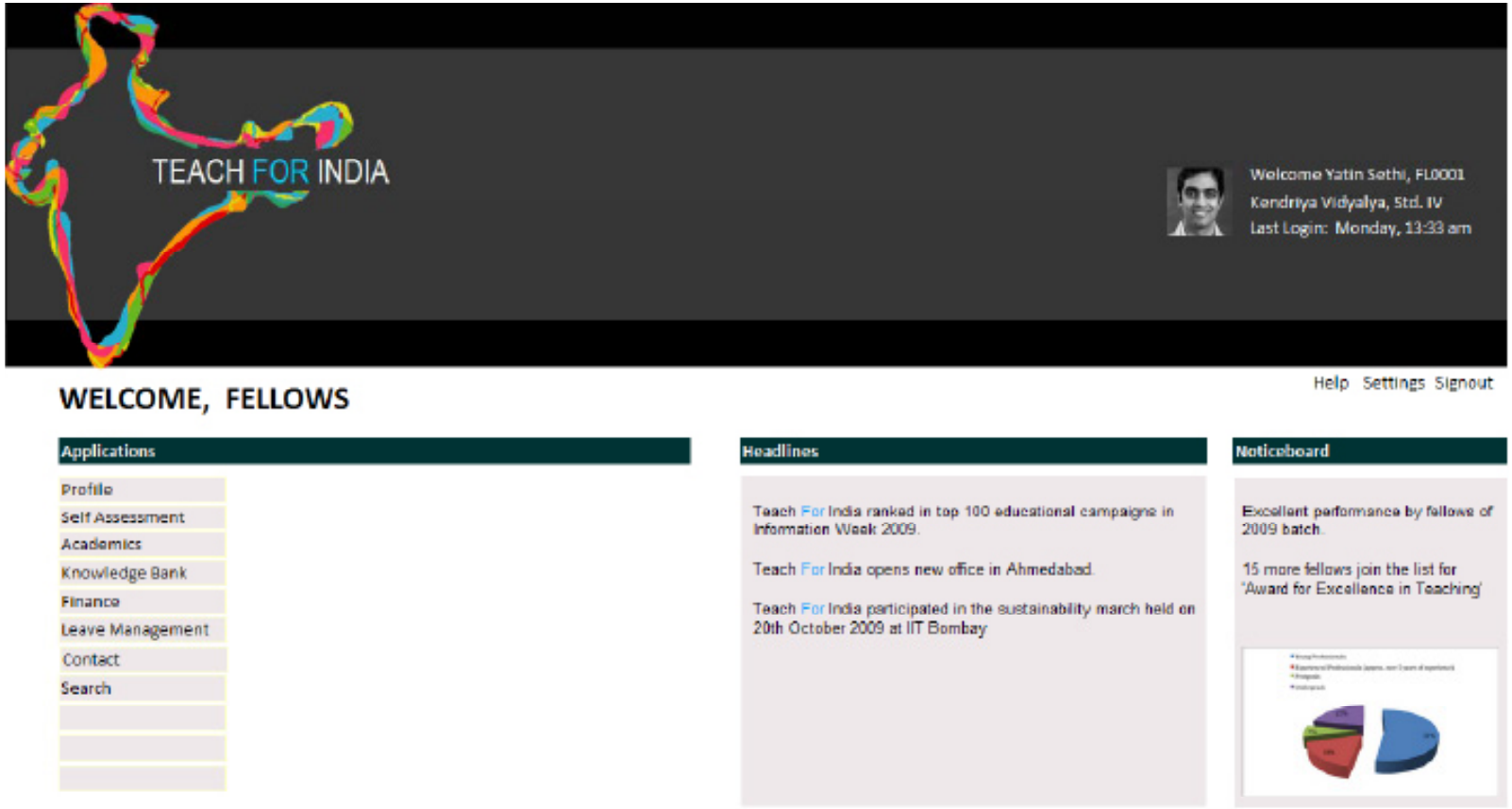
The new idea was designed keeping in mind, placing all relevant information at the upper surface of the system, making it easily accessible and creating the right hierarchy in the system. This option also takes care of the different interaction levels required within the system

Design Idea — 2



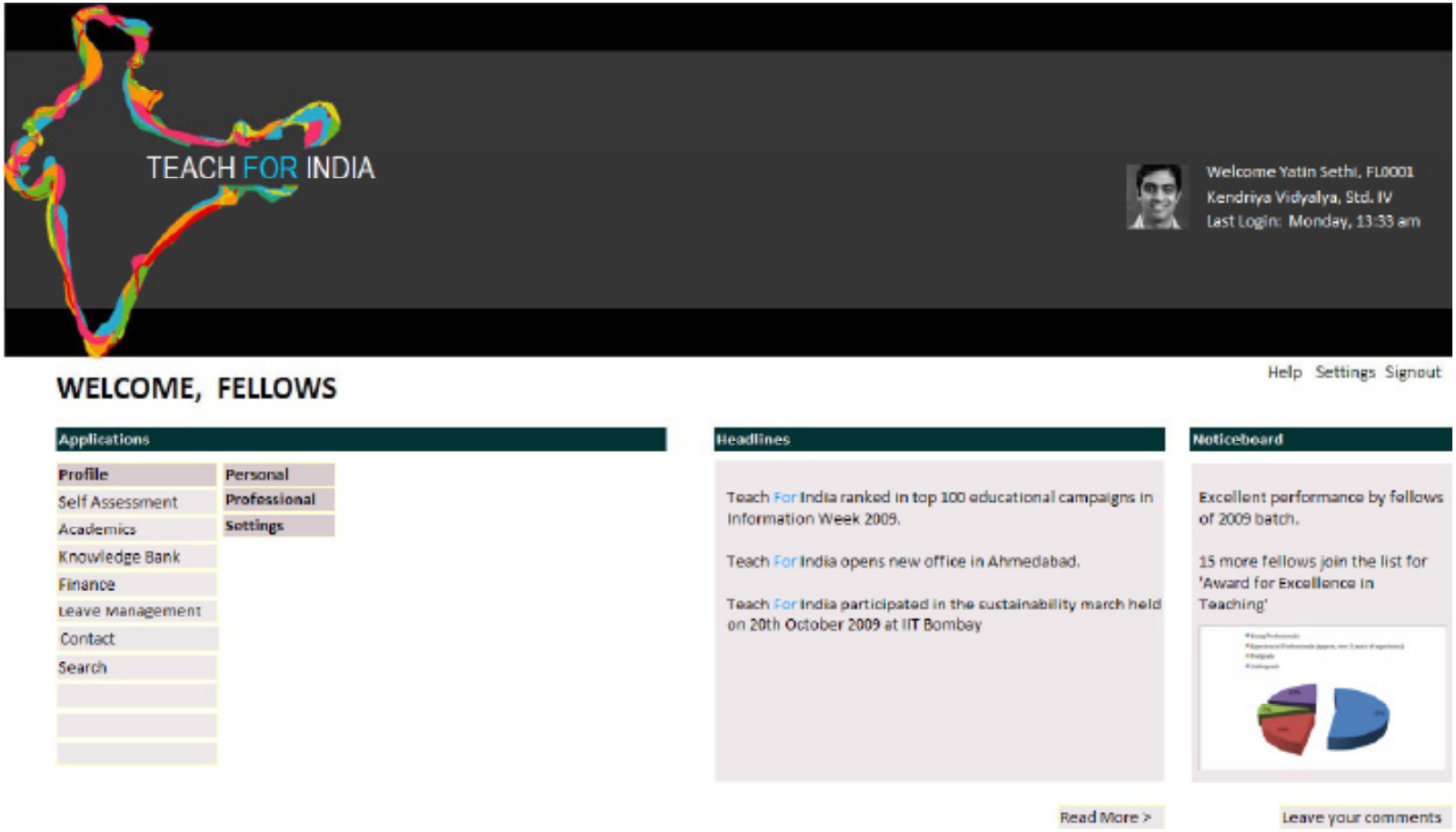
Screen-1

Design Idea — 2



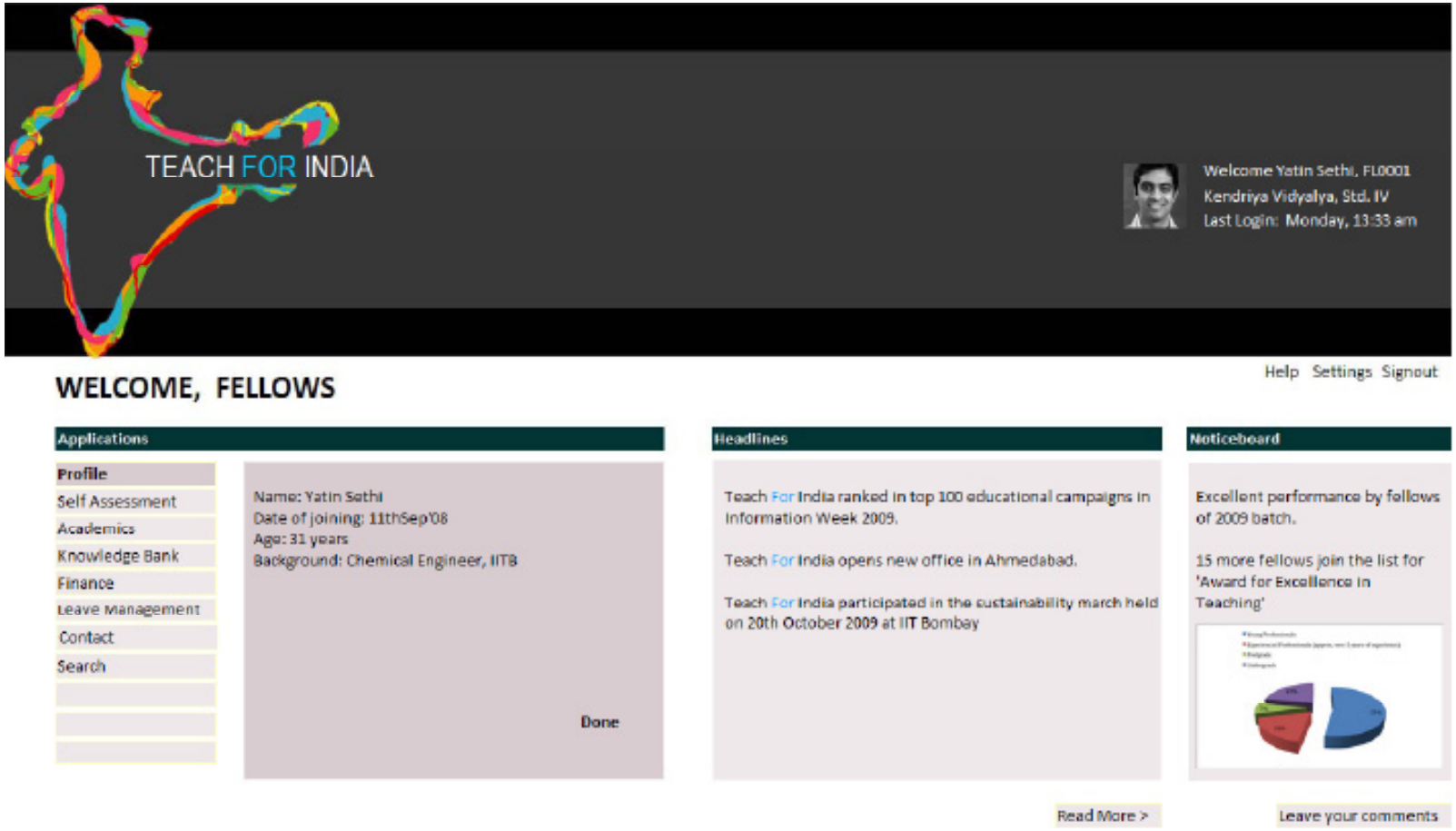
Screen-2

Design Idea — 2



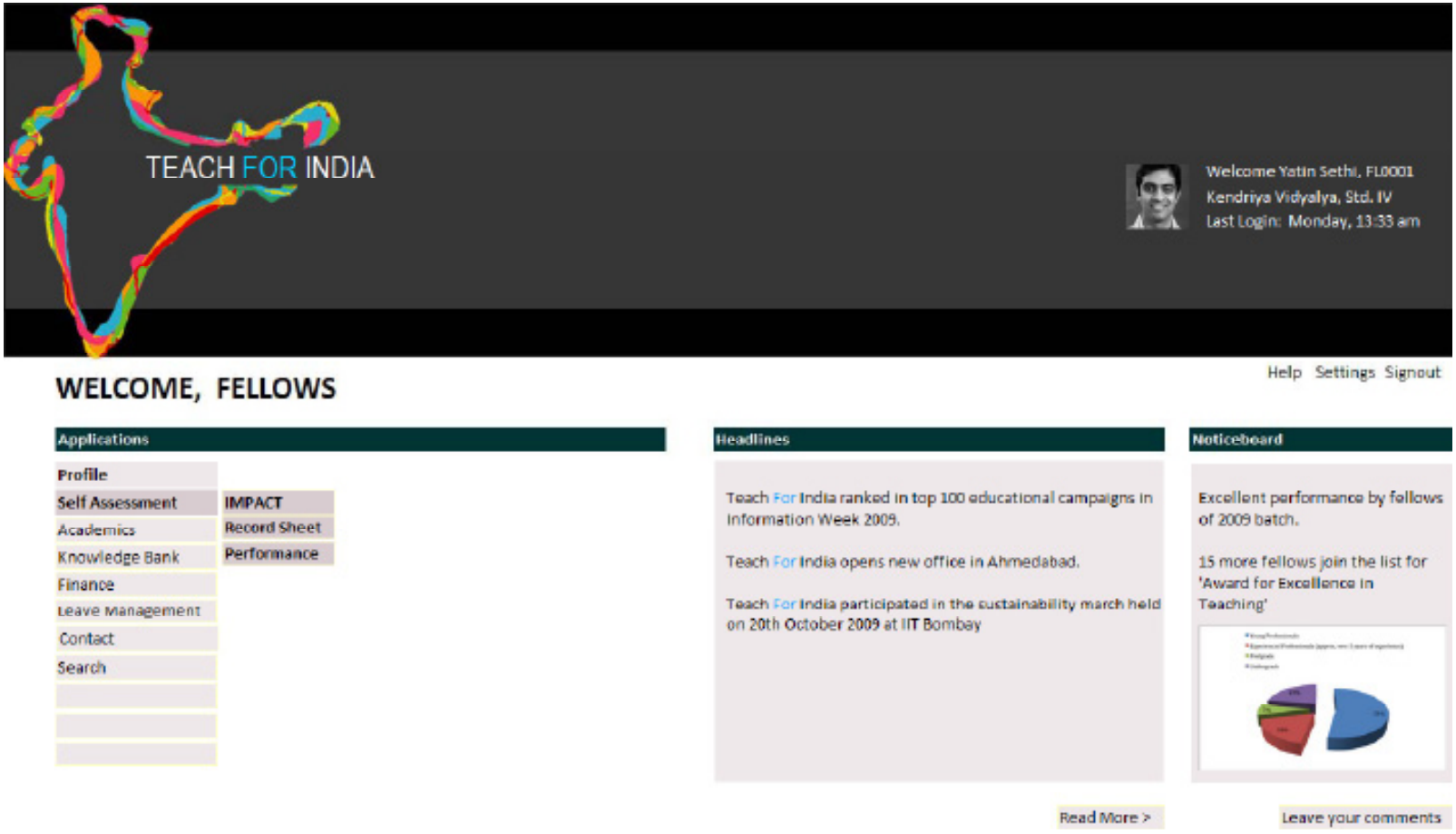
Screen-3

Design Idea — 2



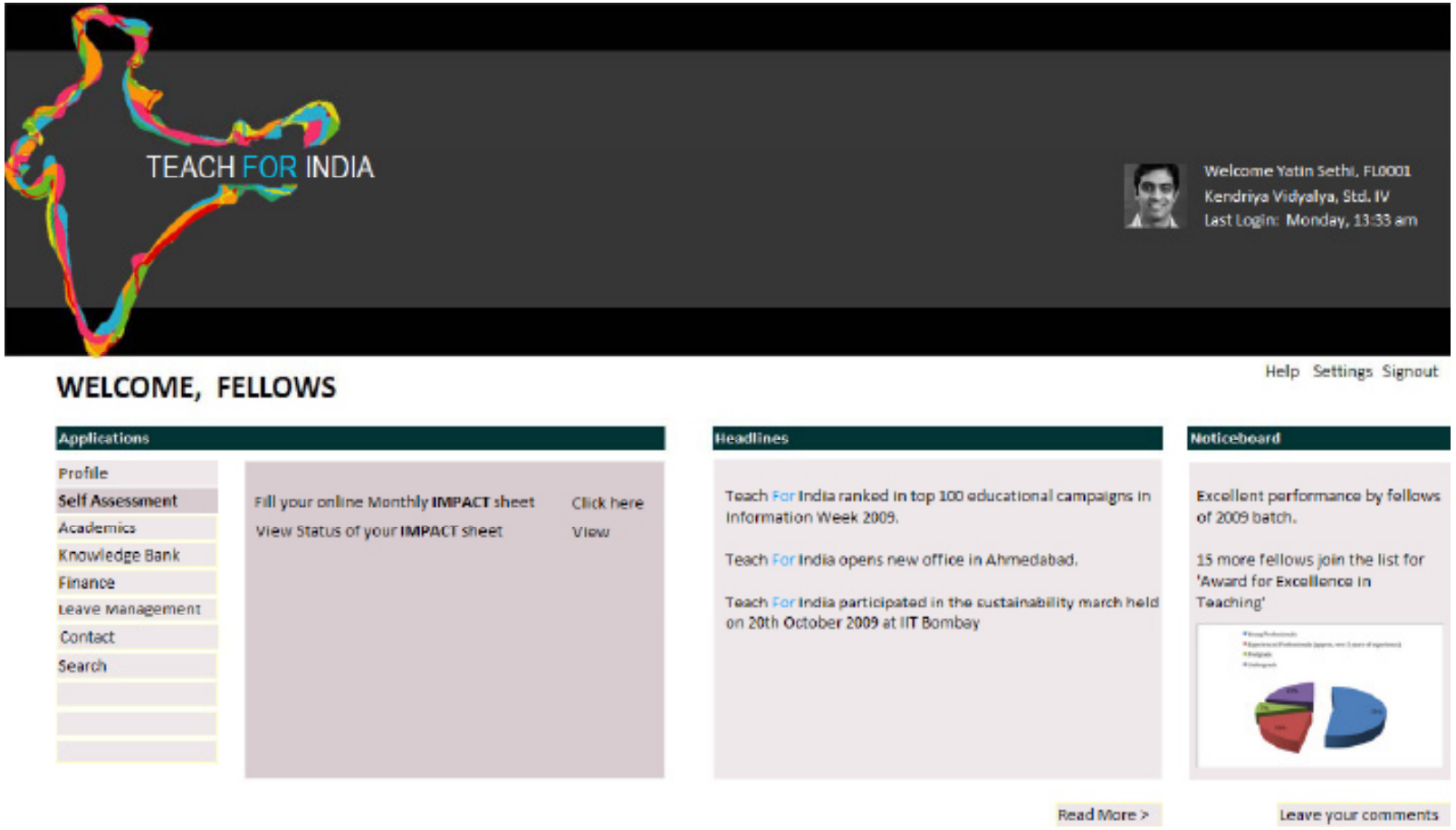
Screen-4

Design Idea — 2



Screen-5

Design Idea — 2



Screen-6

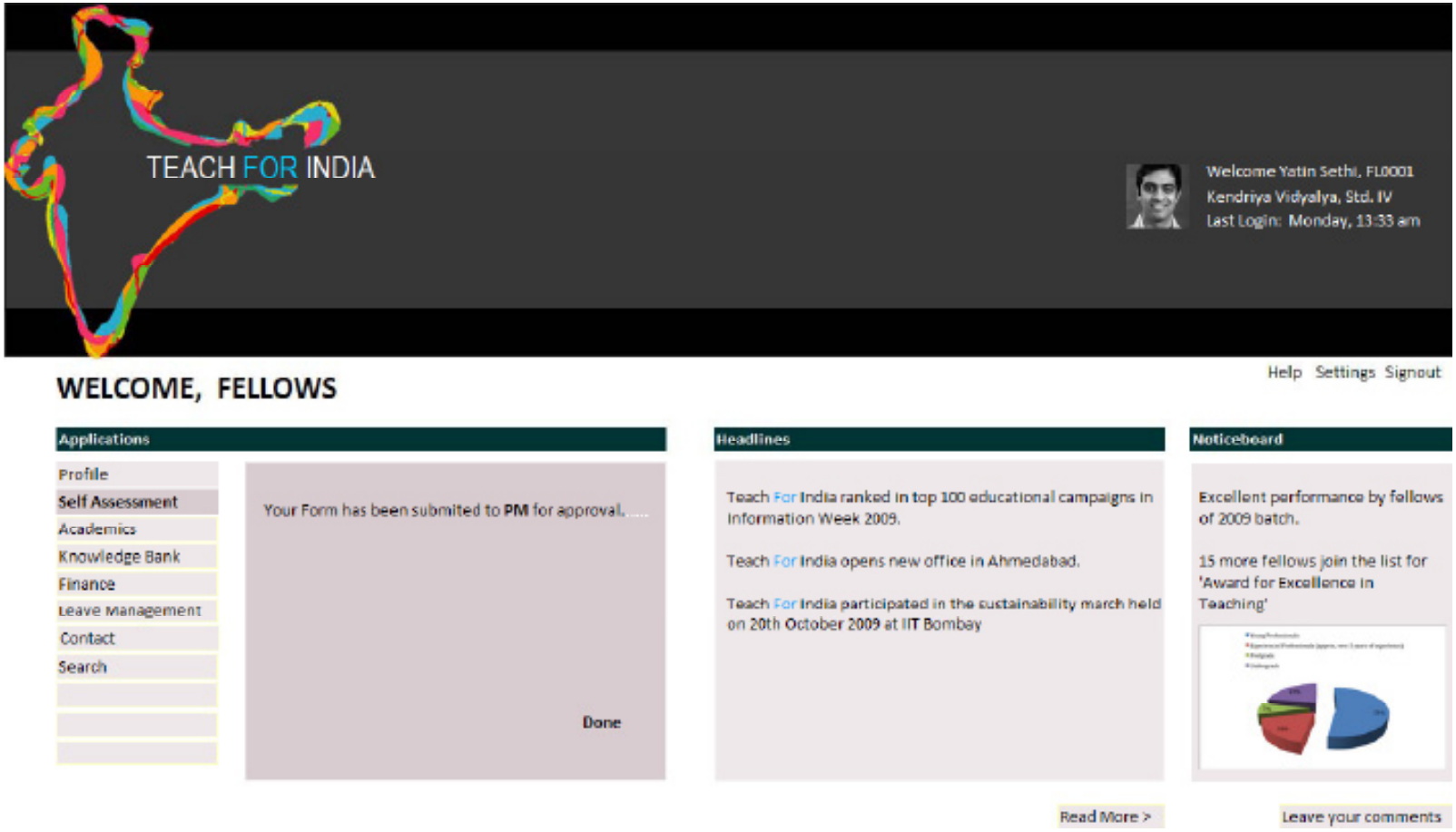
Design Idea — 2

Screen-7

Design Idea — 2

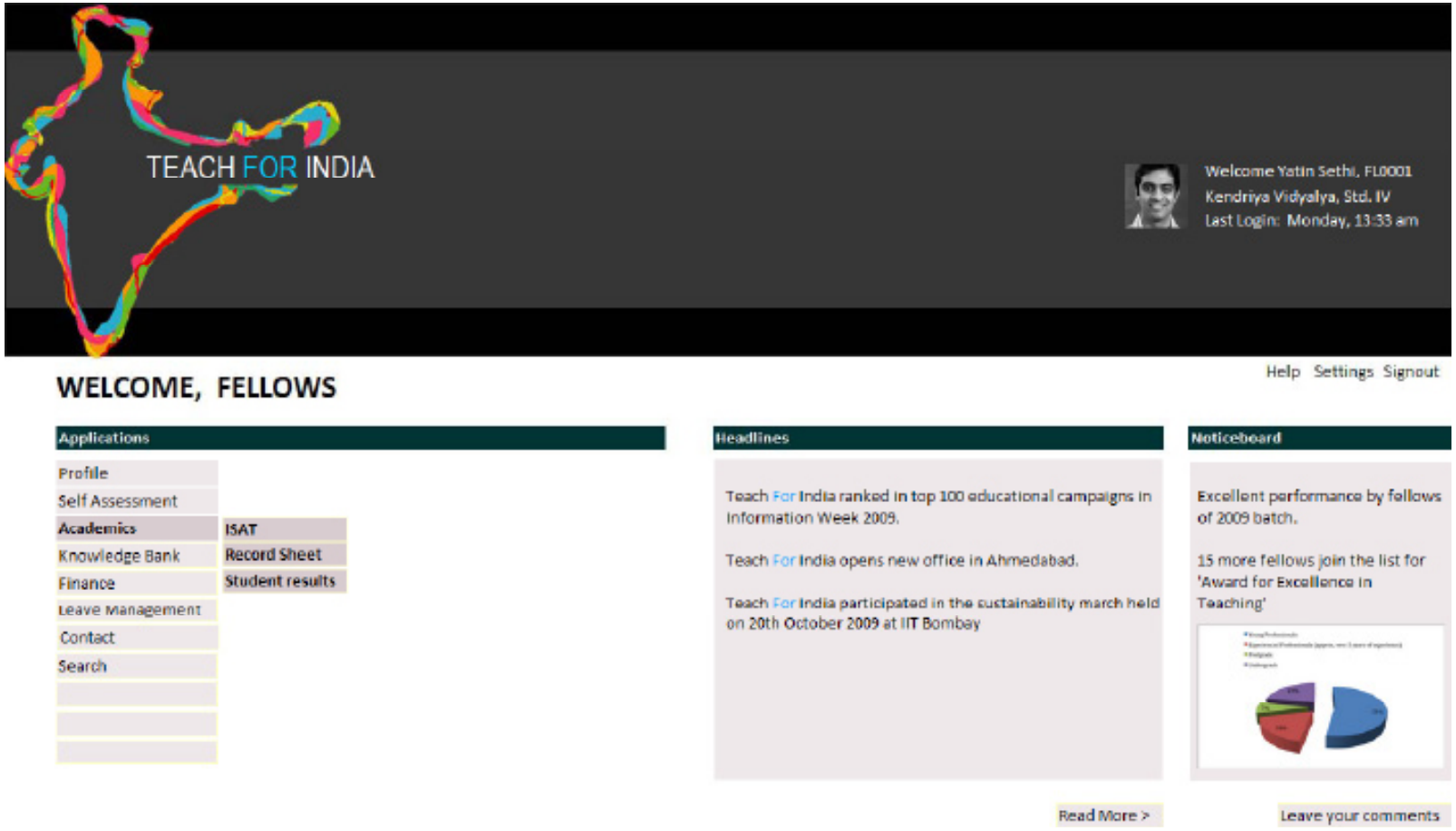
Screen-8

Design Idea — 2



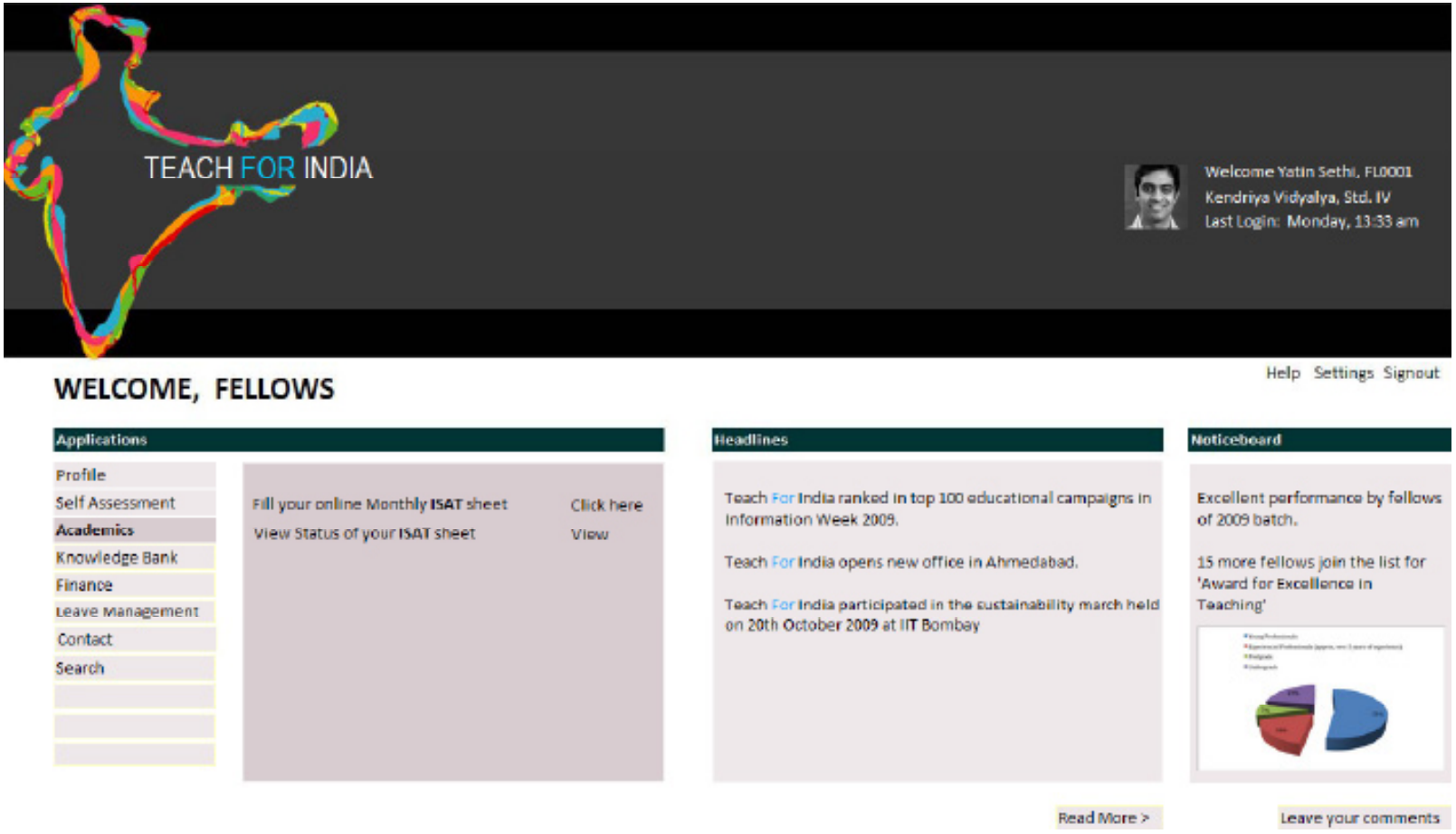
Screen-9

Design Idea — 2



Screen-10

Design Idea — 2

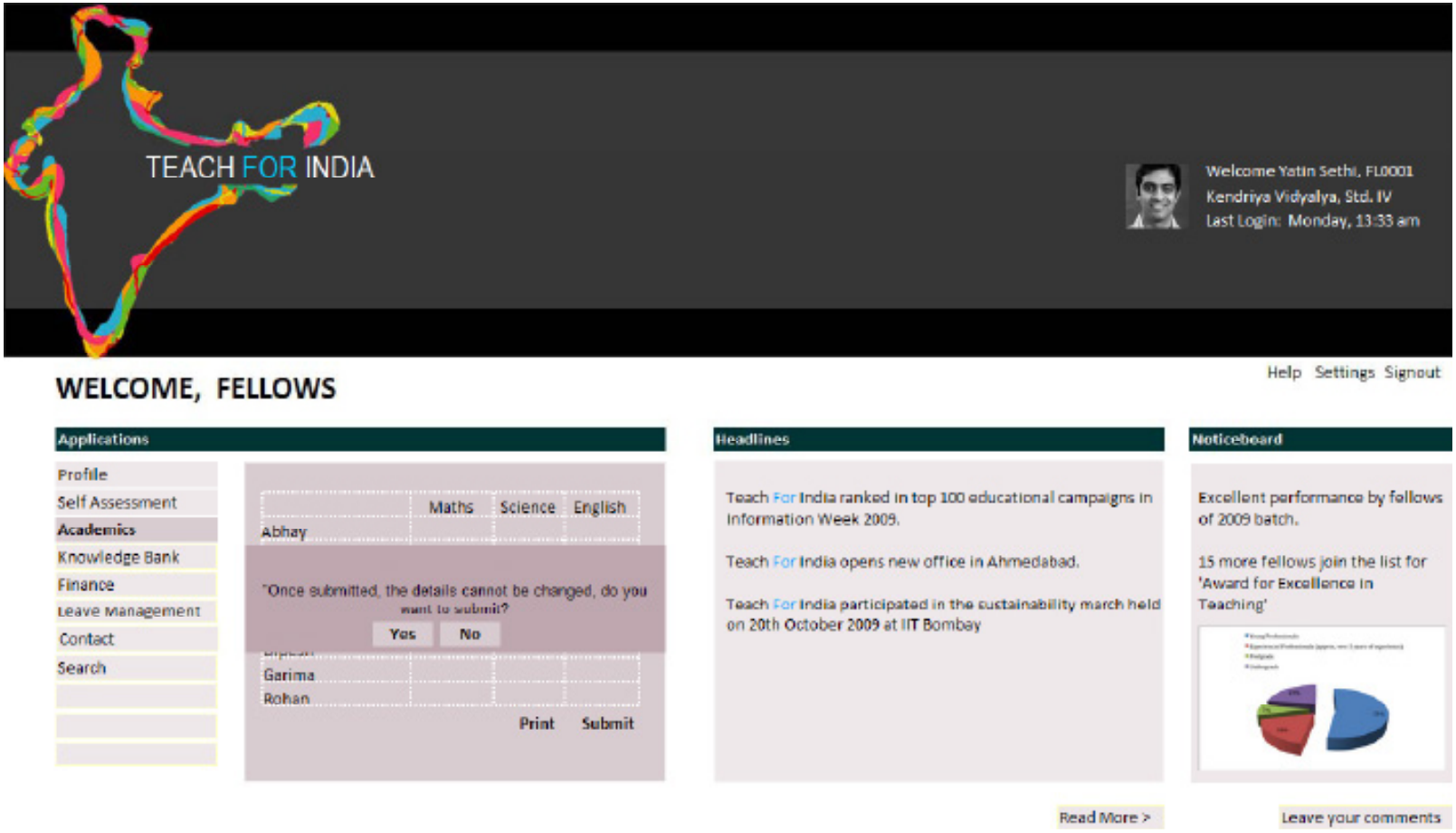


Screen-11

Design Idea — 2

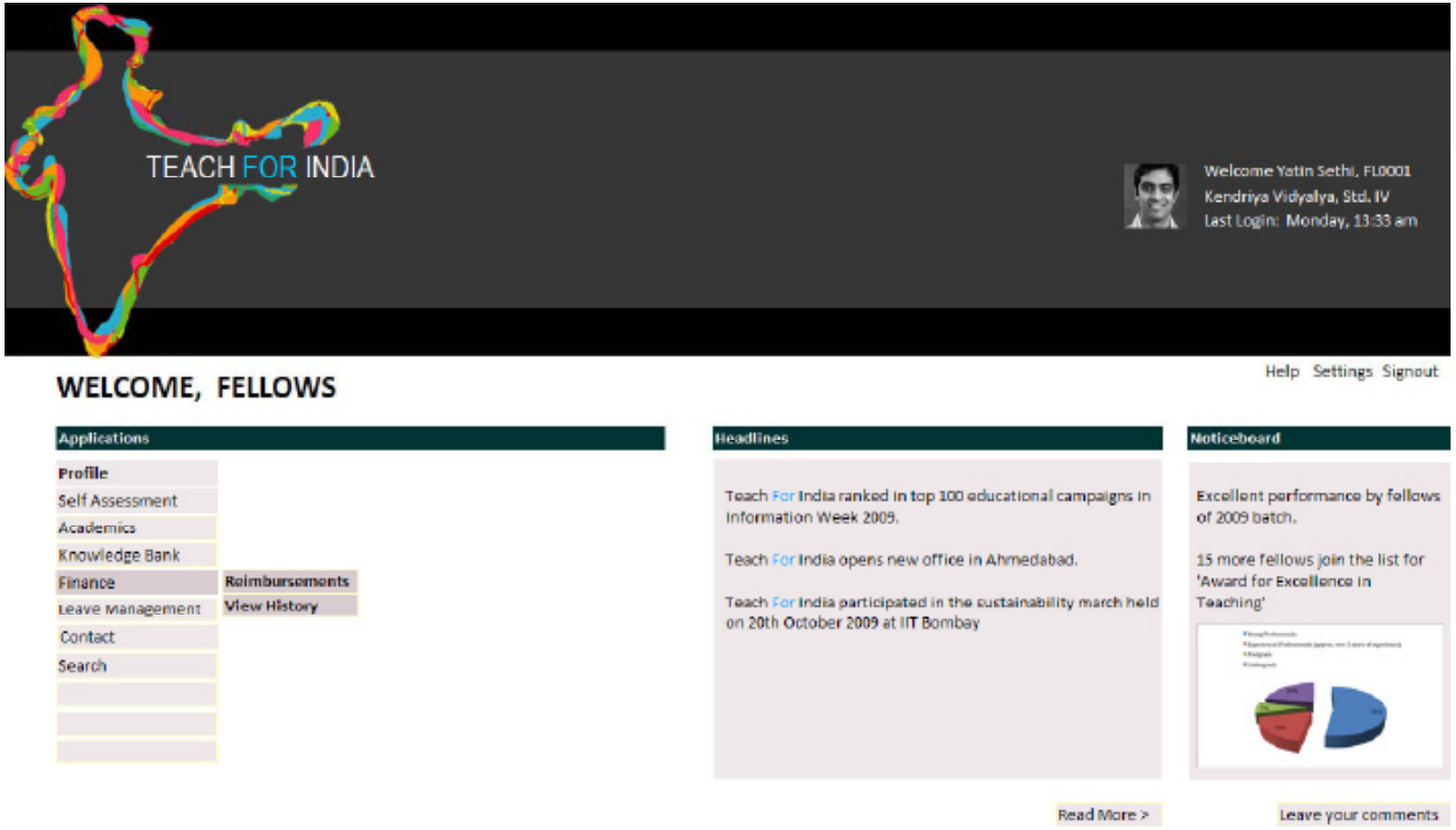
Screen-12

Design Idea — 2



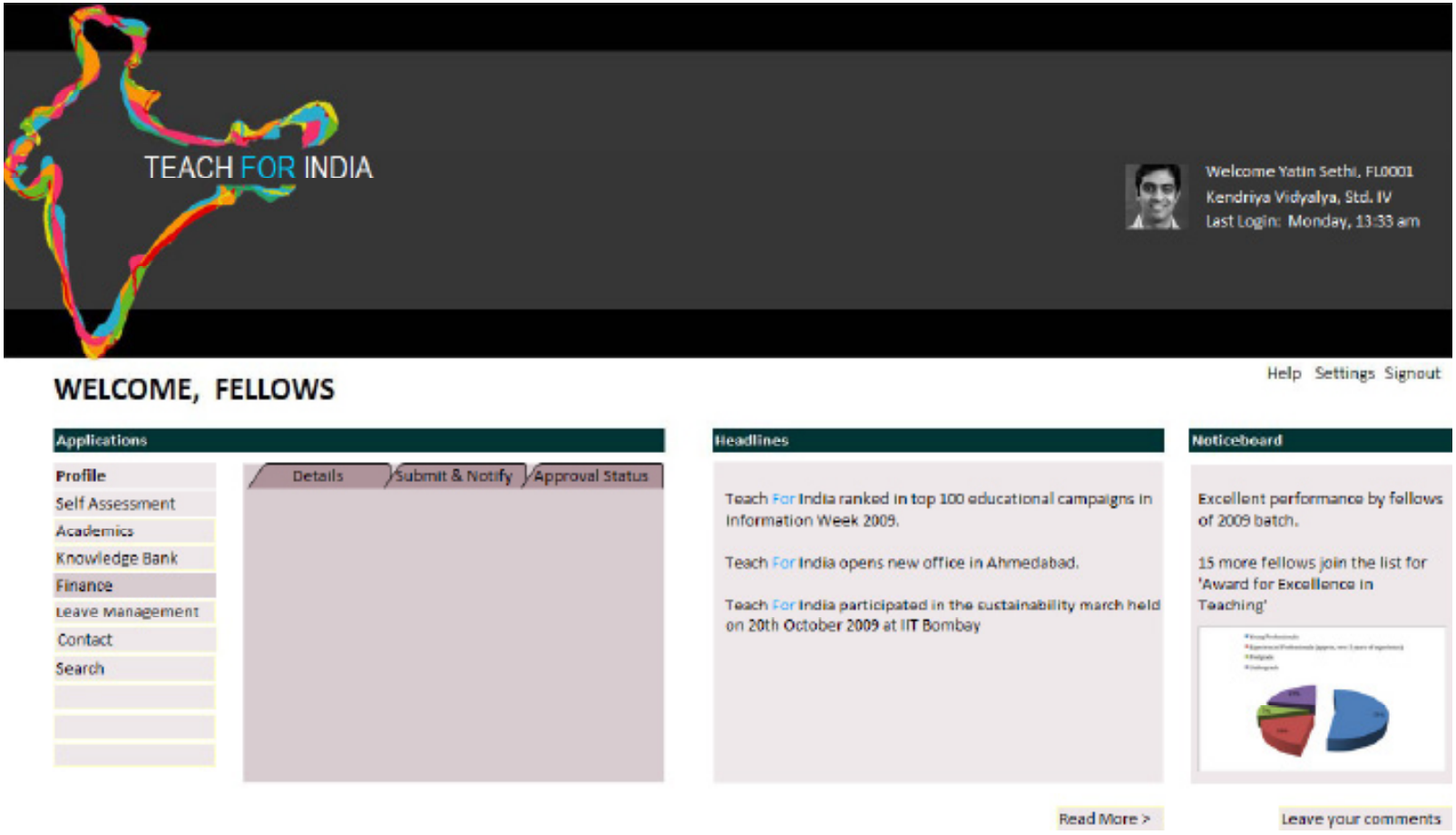
Screen-13

Design Idea — 2



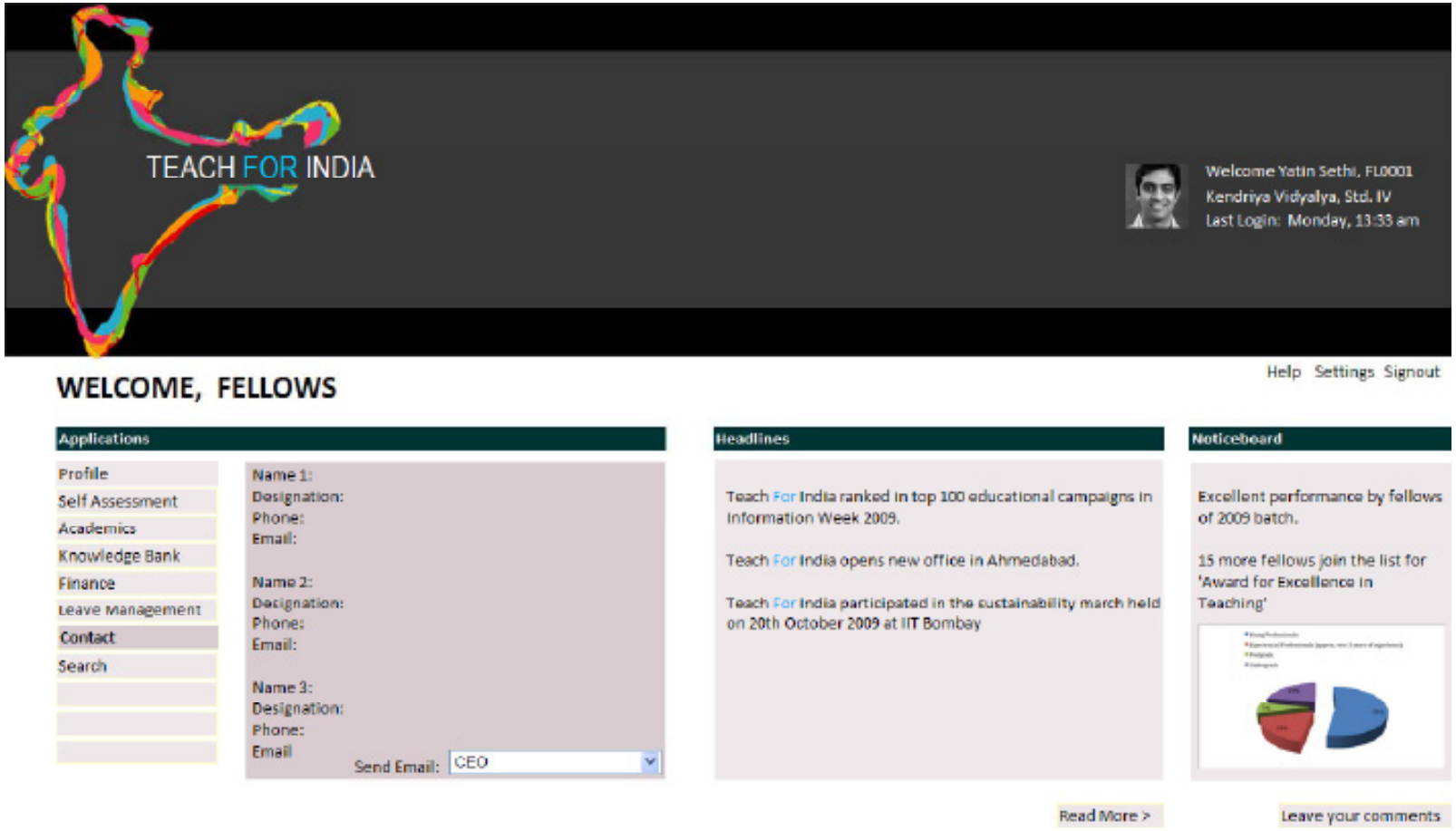
Screen-14

Design Idea — 2

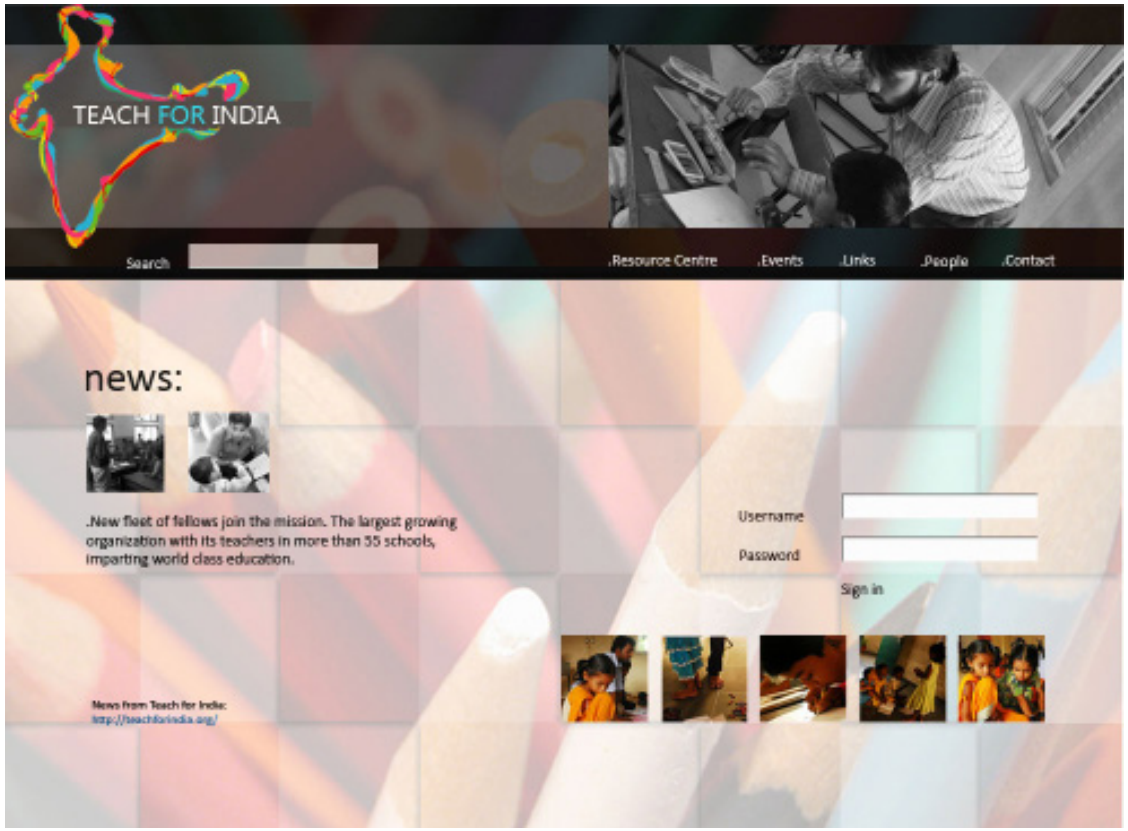


Screen-15

Design Idea — 2



Screen-16



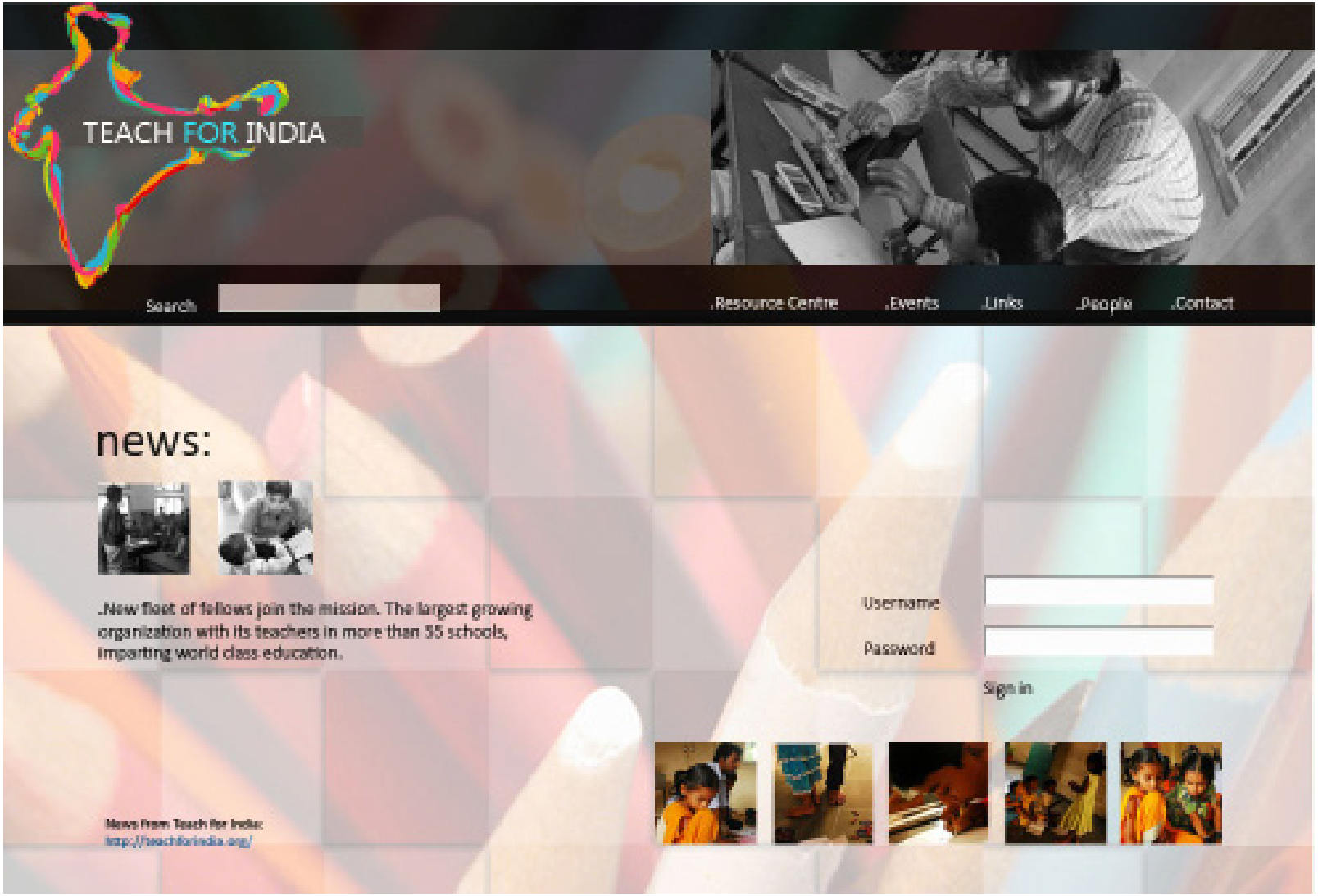
Final Design Idea

Initial testing of the ideas gave way to several other possibilities which led to the final design. The design was to reduce the complexity of the entire system making the operability and internal functioning more easy as compared to that of manual methods.

Final idea allows follows the inverted pyramid approach an all the relevant information are given priority over other informations and thus it appears first on the screen. To further simplify the work, any member of the organization sees only that information which is relevant to him, instead of going through the entire information.

Also the look and feel of the system was worked on, so that it could reflect upon the identity of 'Teach for India'. Making it more vibrant and dynamic helped in creating a separate identity for the portal.

Final Design Idea



Home Screen

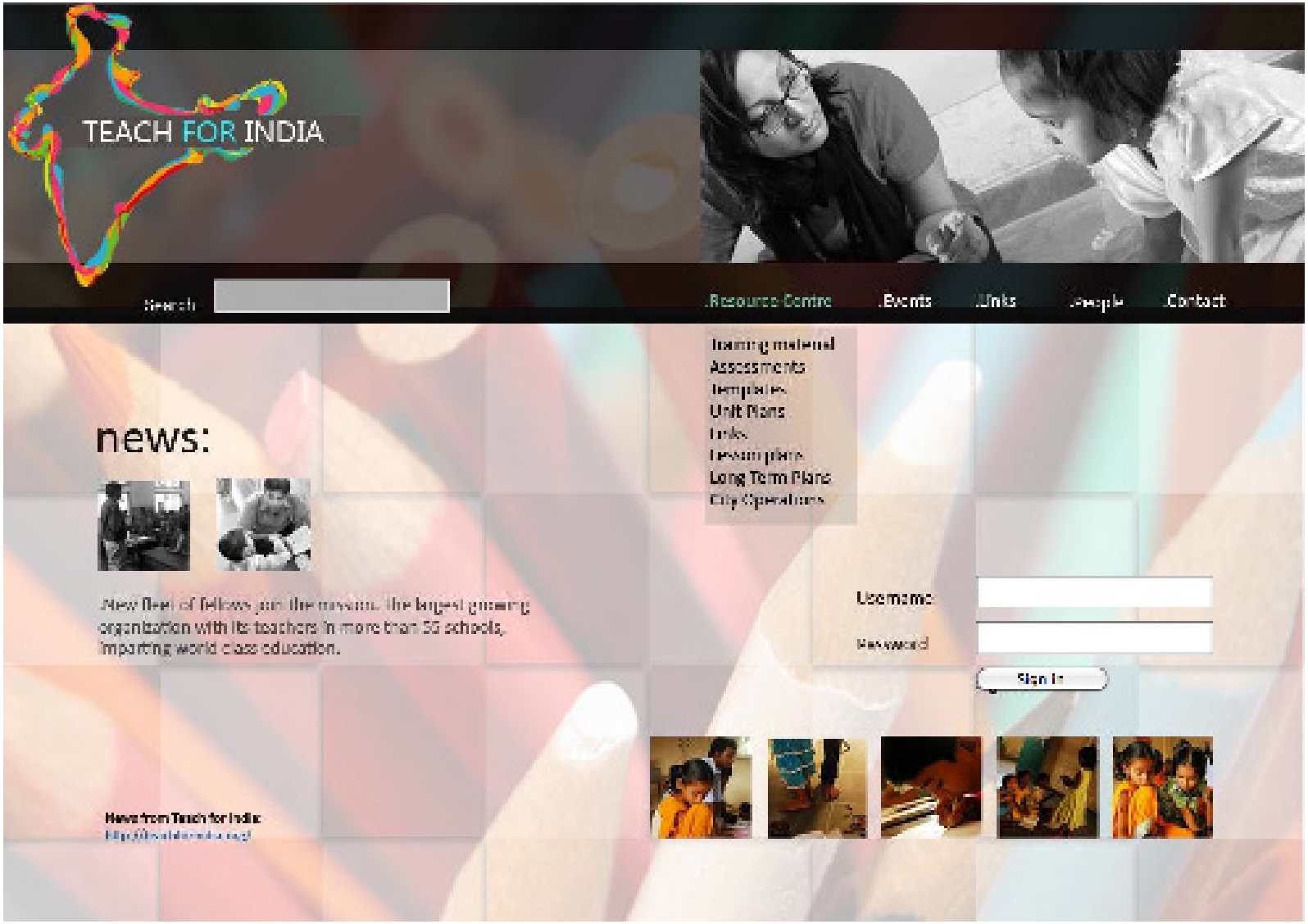
Final Design Idea

After Login

Final Design Idea

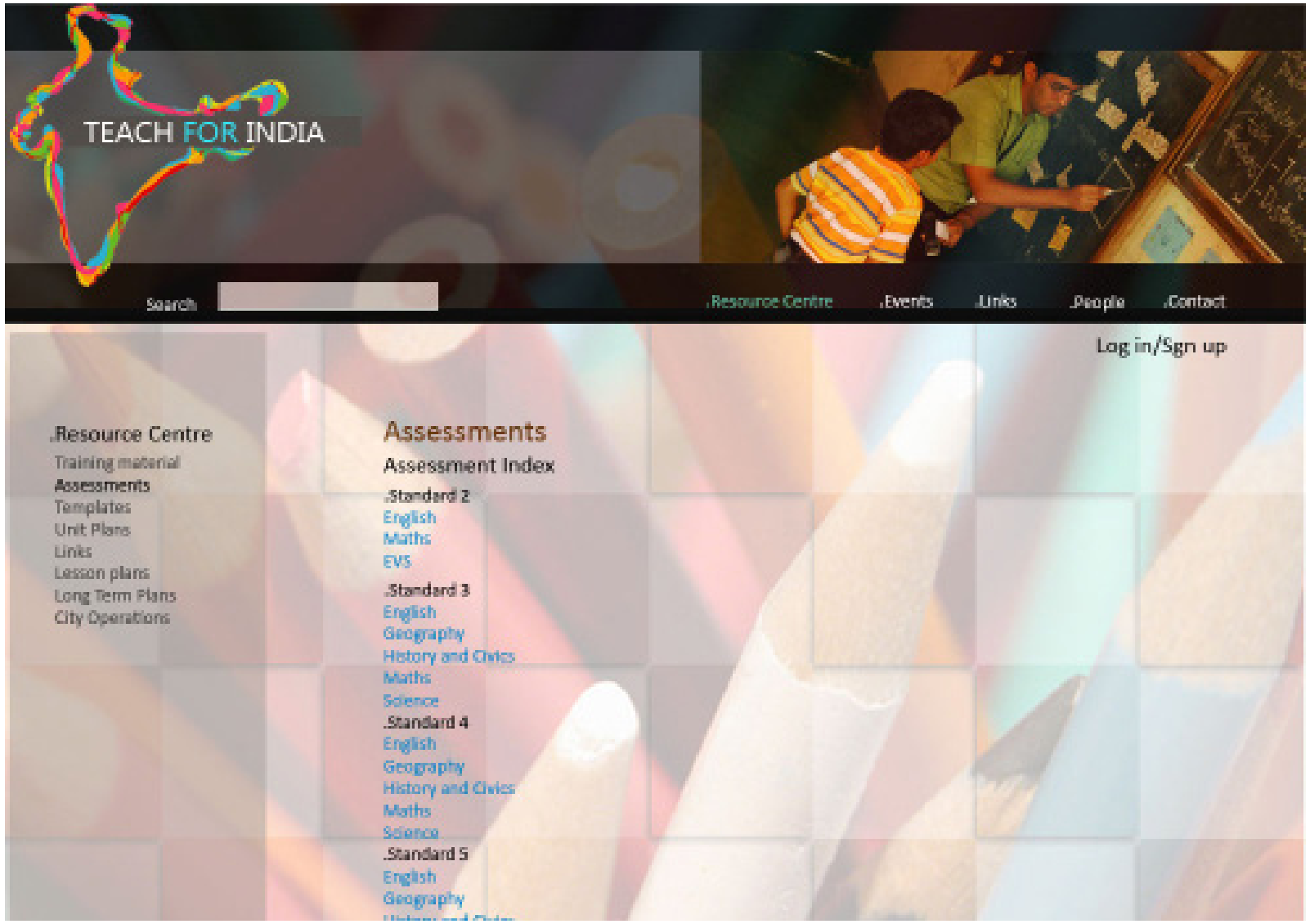
Documents

Final Design Idea



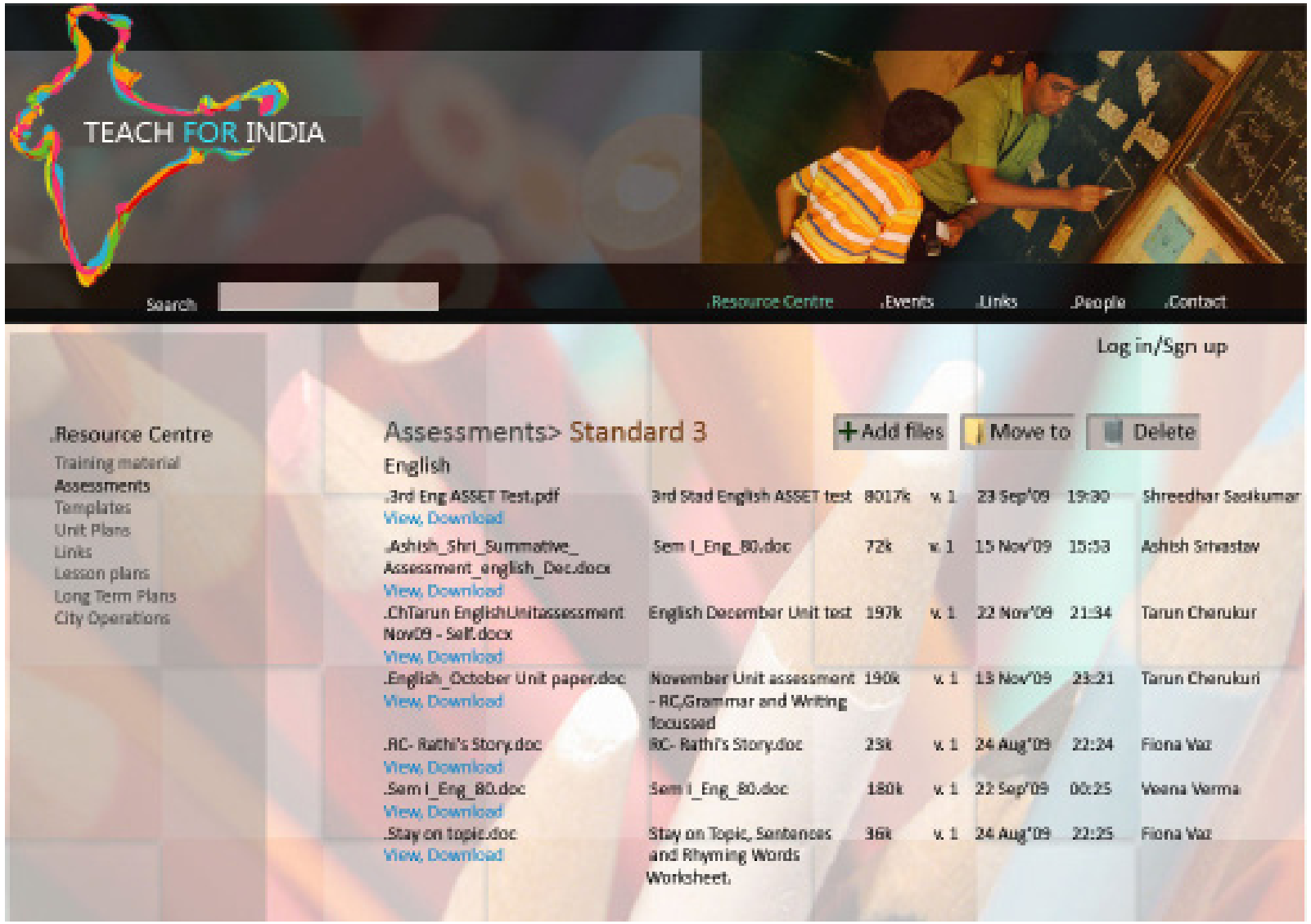
Resource centre

Final Design Idea



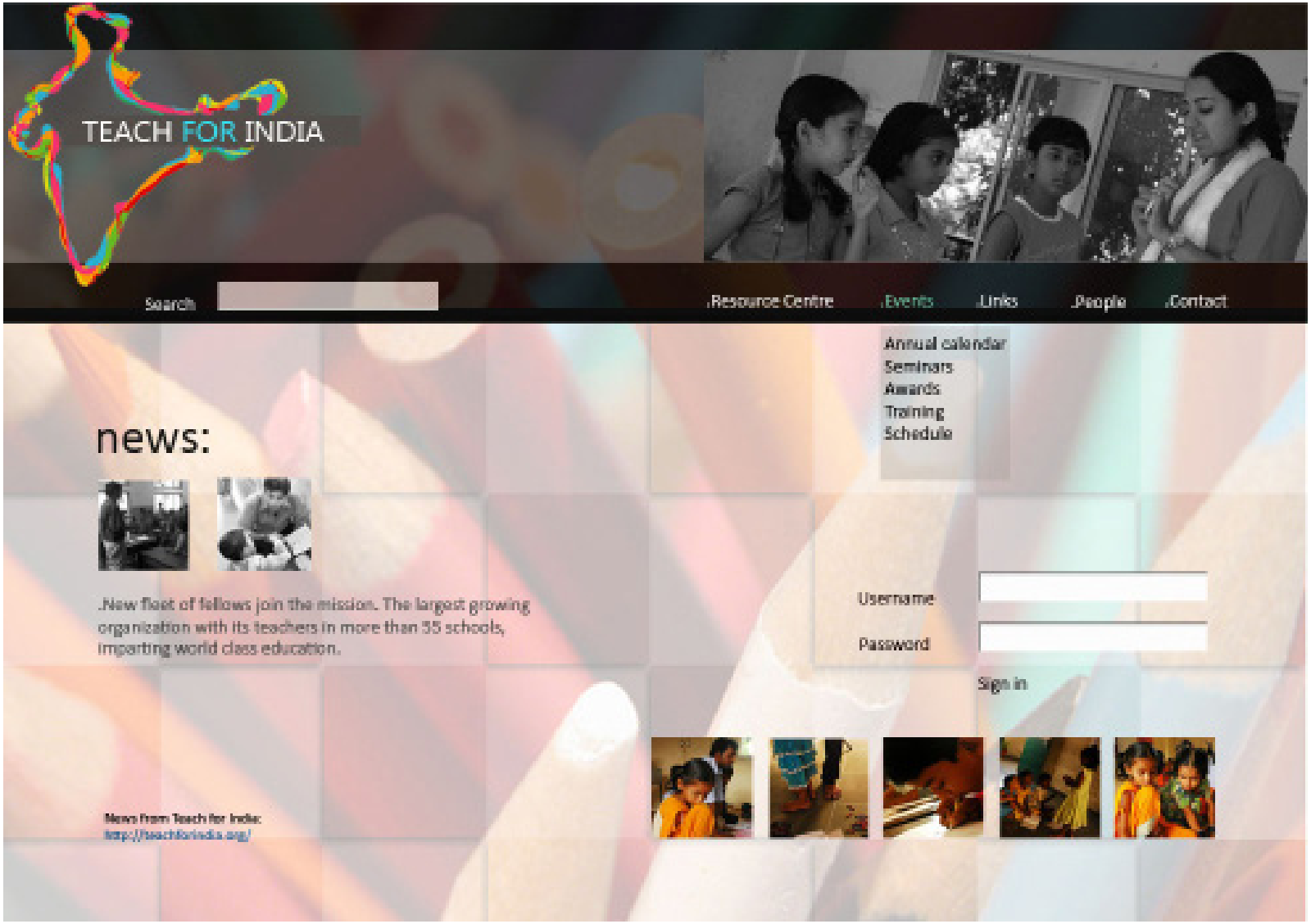
Resource centre

Final Design Idea



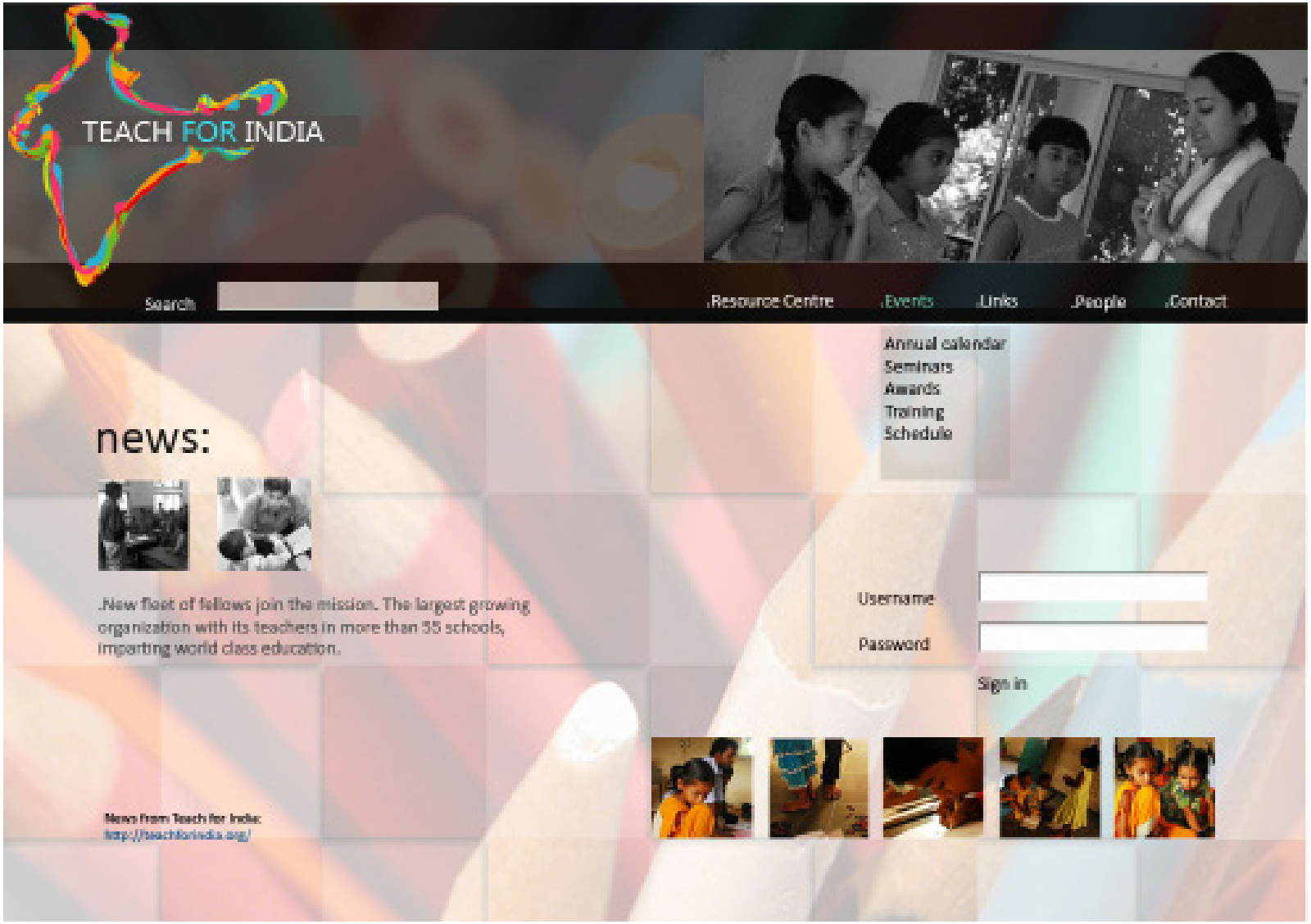
Resource centre

Final Design Idea



Events

Final Design Idea



Events

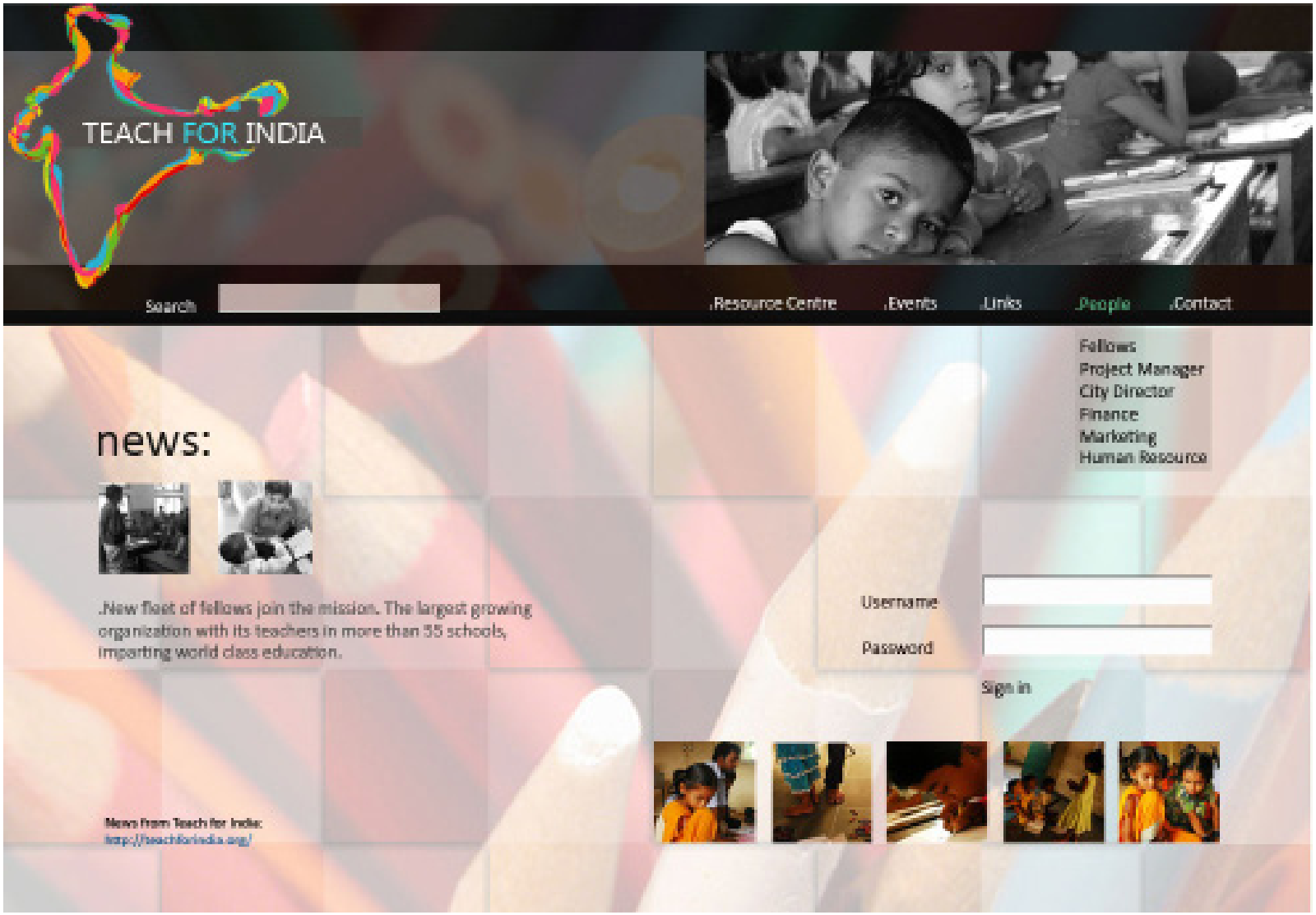
Final Design Idea

Events- schedule

Final Design Idea

Links

Final Design Idea

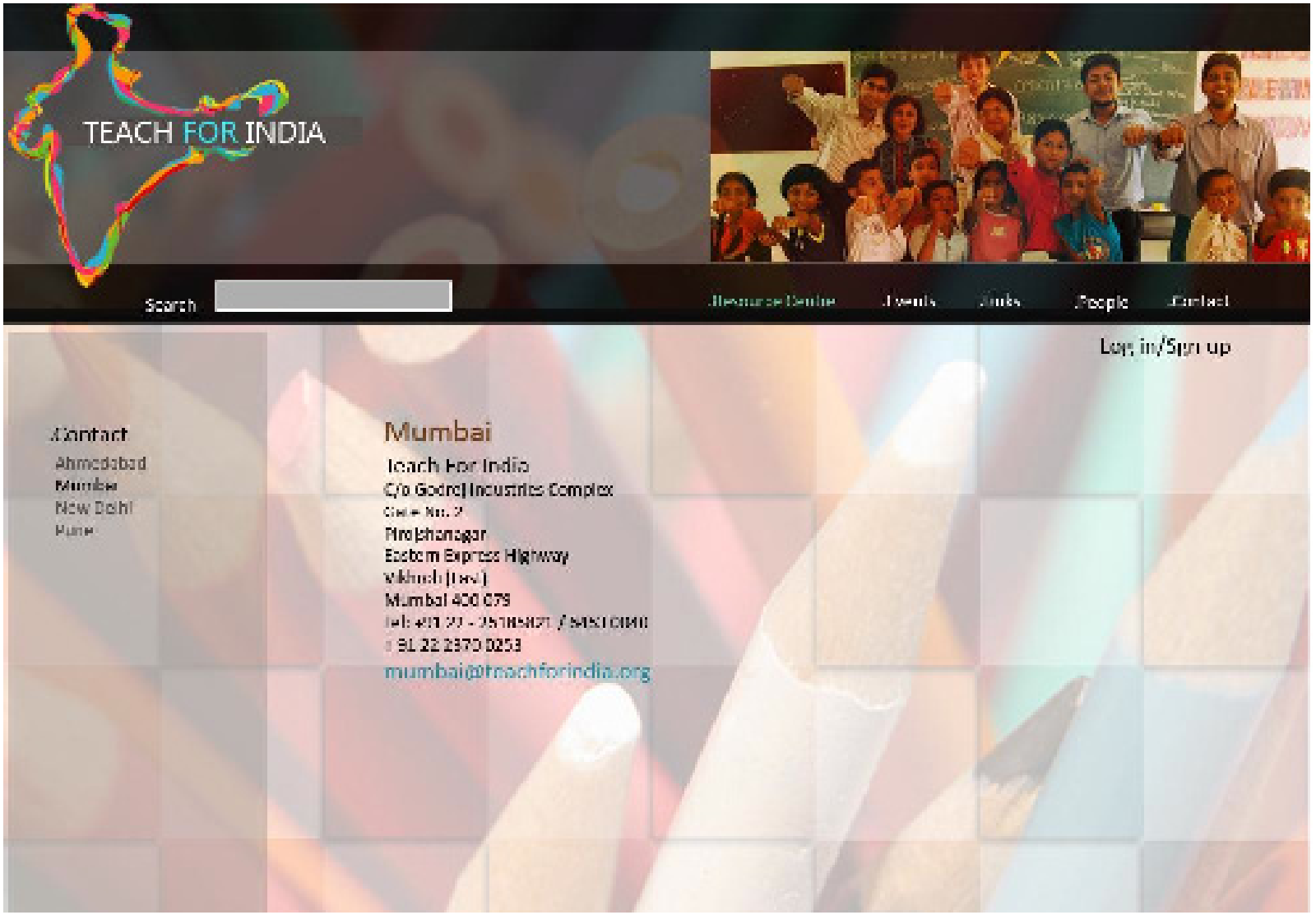


People

Final Design Idea

People- Fellows

Final Design Idea



Contact

Epilogue

System design solution proposed differs from other existing systems in various ways, the main one being the inverted pyramid approach which allows the user to access the right information at the right time rather than digging for the relevant information out of the entire information architecture.

System design is a complex task as there are several players with different roles assigned, looking into every player's requirement and knitting the information together to make a complete web of information with easy access to information is always the challenge to be met.

Proposed solution looks into all the complexities of a system design making the final output more effective and rich with information, without missing on any of the inter connections.

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