

Response to 3rd IT in Education

Introduction

Microsoft is pleased to see the leadership and continuous commitment demonstrated by the Education Bureau on the “3rd IT in Education” strategy. Hong Kong has already accomplished significant milestones in driving IT adoption in schools, building strong foundation for Hong Kong as an international IT hub. Microsoft has supported HKSAR in IT education development through our Partners in Learning (PiL) Program. From July to September 07, we conducted a survey on “*Future Needs of Education*” under the PiL program, “*More advanced IT facilities*”, “*Coping with teaching needs*” and “*Taking care of administrative work*” are ranked highest priorities by the schools that participated in the surveyⁱ. These findings are in-line with the issues identified in the consultation paper.

In the spirit of driving the momentum that keeps Hong Kong at the forefront of the digital world, as a territory that embraces technological development together with providing best support to schools & teachers, Microsoft together with advisors sitting in our PiL Advisory Boardⁱⁱ, we wish to make the following comments on the 3rd IT in Education Strategy. We would also be highlighting some of the work that we will do under PiL that aligns well with the Bureau’s initiatives.

Referring to action plan under the 3rd IT in Education policy, we set forth our comments below:

- 1. To provide a depository of curriculum-based teaching modules with appropriate digital resources***
 - a. We agree that having such depository will address one huge area of teaching needs of schools. However, apart from building the depository, maintenance of the depository is equally important. To ensure that the depository is useful and up-to-date, and to keep the modules interactive and lively, constant enhancement of the teaching modules would be necessary. Further, each school will have its own requirements for different teaching modules according to its school based teaching model. We therefore recommend the Bureau to plan for and allow recurring budget to ensure the continuous development and maintenance of the depository to sustain this initiative.

- b. The Bureau may consider different models to leverage resources of and encourage support from the private sector to ensure the success of the depository. We believe that there should be active participation from publishers as well as the IT industry (e.g. technology providers and independent software vendors). For instance, under PiL, there is a list of curriculum (<http://www.microsoft.com/education/lessonplans.msp>) which the Bureau may leverage.

2. To continue to sharpen teachers' IT pedagogical skills

- a. In the past years, as part of the PiL program, we have provided general IT trainingsⁱⁱⁱ to address the needs of teachers. In addition, we have invited overseas scholars to Hong Kong and offer advanced IT skill trainings to teachers with higher IT skills. Through our Innovative School Program (ISP)^{iv} and Innovative Teacher Network (<http://www.hk.innovativeteachers.com>), we also hope to share best practices from schools and governments in other countries with Hong Kong. This will continue to be a focus area for our PiL program and we look forward to opportunities to cooperate with the Bureau.

3. To assist schools to draw up and implement school-based IT in education development plans

- a. Technology evolves fast since the last IT in Education policy announced in 2002/03. Besides the traditional client-server model with all equipments located in school campus, there is an increasing trend of software and Internet services seamlessly interacting with one another with the Web 2.0. Under the school-based blueprint that the Bureau is going to developed, it would be prudent to include advice to school on understanding what IT systems school may own/operate in-house and what systems schools should outsource. Commercial organizations are adopting similar strategy to gain efficiency through the use of hosting model for application usage and outsourcing model for maintenance and support. These new models would allow schools to stay up to date – e.g. using the latest hardware through leasing model, using latest software for teaching and learning through subscription licenses and outsourcing pure IT maintenance work to service companies. This way, schools and teachers would be able to focus more on teaching and coaching.

Under ISP, we have developed a technology blueprint with input from seven local innovative schools^v. The ISP blueprint lay down a foundation of School Learning Gateway that allows schools to share education applications and student data for more accurate, more secure, and more accessible information to help improve student achievement. We are happy to share the ISP blueprint^{vi} for the Bureau's consideration in developing the school-base IT in education plans.

4. To enable schools to maintain effective IT facilities – set aside HK\$200 million for providing one-off grant to schools for procuring additional hardware & software to integrate IT into teaching.

- a. With the last two IT education policy, schools in HK are well passed phase one of IT adoption, which is changing from non-digital to digital. We believe that schools are now ready to move to phase two of IT in education, which is having value-added features to existing teaching process. While one-off grant is needed to refresh their equipment, a recurring budget is also critical for schools to be able plan ahead for their IT needs.

As stated in the response to action 3 above, we believe schools would have needs to adopt hosting or outsourcing services for part of their IT needs in order to gain efficiency. A recurring budget to schools will help them achieve such goal.

5. To strengthen technical support to schools and teachers – provide IT Helpdesk with HK Computer Society for another 5 years with HK\$5 million budget. Also set up technical support team in IT Education in EB for schools.

- a. While the IT Helpdesk and technical support team can help offload a large part of IT enquiries, the Bureau may also consider making the in-house IT support staff in schools to play a more strategic role and to add more value to schools. In regard to this, we propose that schools adopt the School IT Manager concept. On top of providing routine IT support to schools, such School IT Manager, like a CIO, can also contribute on high level school IT adoption planning and deployment, selecting the right tools for teachers and students at the right time. To ensure we have high quality talents to fit this role, there should be clear qualification requirements, and tertiary education institutes may develop formal training curriculum to train, test and certify such School IT Managers.

6. To raise parents' information literacy and assist them in guiding children to use IT at home - HK\$1m to commission NGO to develop resources and programmes to empower parents to guide their children. This include IT training and internet safety education.

- a. As what PiL program has delivered in the past few years, we will continue to provide internet safety curriculum to teachers and parents^{vii}. We will also seminars and workshops to train teachers, parents and students the correct concepts in using the internet.
- b. Microsoft Hong Kong has been working with NGOs through our Unlimited Potential Community Technical Skills Program in setting up community technology learning centers (CTLCs), targeted to enhance accessibility and provide training to the underprivileged. Microsoft has granted around HK\$23 million (in cash and in kind) since 2003 to support the establishment of 34 CTLCs

(by end of 2007) in different districts^{viii}. By end of 2007, 50,000 individuals will be trained and 340,000 individuals would have indirectly benefited from the program. We believe that there could be synergy to work with these NGOs in offering appropriate training to parents under the Strategy. We would be most happy to facilitate such discussion between the Bureau and the participating NGOs in this regard.

Conclusion

Joining forces with partners, educators, government, Microsoft is committed to increase access to quality education through dynamic, learner-focused technologies and resources, so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning and help teachers and students learn valuable new skills. We look forward to hearing your response to our comments above.

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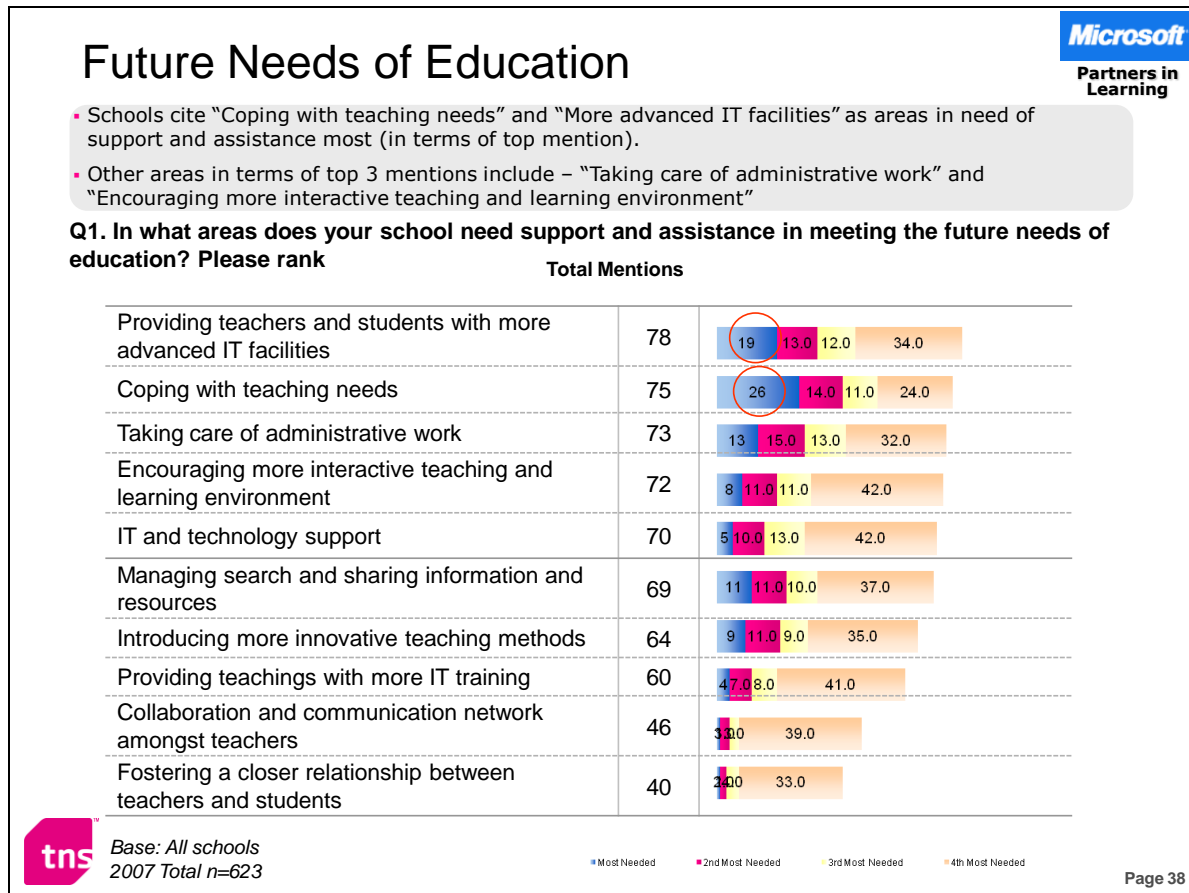
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Footnotes

ⁱ Table showing the response of schools surveyed on “Future Needs of Education” conducted under PiL program from July to September 07. For full report on the survey, please contact v-niho@microsoft.com.



ⁱⁱ For more details of the PiL program, please visit <http://www.microsoft.com/hk/education/chinese/PartnersInLearning/default.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ For examples of such training, please see <http://www.microsoft.com/hk/education/chinese/partnersinlearning/training/default.aspx>

^{iv} For details of the Innovative School Program, please visit <http://www.microsoft.com/Education/SchoolofFutureVision.aspx>

^v The seven local innovative schools are – <http://www.microsoft.com/hk/education/chinese/partnersinlearning/innovativeschool.aspx>

^{vi} For general information about the ISP blueprint, please visit <http://www.microsoft.com/education/blueprint/default.aspx>

^{vii} Please see http://www.microsoft.com/hk/education/chinese/PartnersInLearning/curriculum_youth.aspx for details of our security curriculum under PiL.

^{viii} Map showing locations of Unlimited Potential CTLCs in Hong Kong.

