Submission to

Education Bureau,

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

on Public Consultation

on the Third Strategy on Information Technology in Education

The Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, Inc.

Hong Kong Section Computer Chapter

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Introduction

This paper is the response of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Inc. Hong Kong Section Computer Chapter on the Public Consultation on the Third Strategy on Information Technology in Education.

Comments

1. Overall, we concur with the recurrent theme of "…effective integration of IT into learning and teaching to create the greatest positive impact on students' learning outcome…" stated in the consultation document. We concur that this should be the next strategic direction for IT in education in Hong Kong.

2. Given the survey indicators shown in Box 1, it is also clear that teachers, at present, are not confident nor have the time to select appropriate digital resources to support their teaching and that the 50% of teachers frequently use IT in class, irrespective of what "use" mean, is on the low side after 9 years of promoting the use of IT in teaching and learning. We are pleased to see that the Action Plans shown in Section 3 are drawn up to address, among others, these specific issues.

3. For Action 1 and other sections, HKEdCity has been mentioned many times as a potential service provider, while this is the case, there have been many complaints about the HKEdCity in the past years from the education community, in terms of the quality of the content and difficulty of searching for relevant learning resources. We have the following concerns if the policy is to continue to put substantial amount of money into HKEdCity:

   (i) Is there any quality assurance procedure in place to ensure the quality and the usability of the digital resources currently available or that will be made available in HKEdCity?
   (ii) Is there any study to evaluate the quality and current usage of the digital resources in HKEdCity?
   (iii) Is there any study to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of HKEdCity given a huge amount of financial resources that have been put into it in the past years?

(iv) Are we confident that the current leadership or staff composition at HKEdCity has the necessary knowhow (technical, e.g. semantic web, content indexing and search, as well as educational, e.g. educational ontology) to design and implement a curriculum-based learning resource depository?

Until we have answers to these questions, the community would be concerned about providing further substantial funding to HKEdCity as stated in points 23 and 24 of Action 1.

4. For Action 2, some kinds of training can be introduced in HKIEd before the teachers graduate.

5. In point 17, it is stated that "… teachers are not doing what they think they should do to raise effectiveness of teaching.". One of the reasons may be lack of support and due recognition from the school management. For Action 3, some measures must be taken to evaluate the effectiveness of the development plan, to monitor the progress in achieving the milestones, and most importantly, to ensure that the plan does effect cultural change in the school, in particular, the management level.

6. In Action 4, we have two comments:
   (i) In point 30, it is stated that "… providing one-off grant to school to upgrade or enhance their hardware and software…" Given the survey indicators shown in Box 1, while many schools might have purchased e-learning platforms, clearly from the indicators, many schools have not really use these platforms in daily teaching and learning. We would advise to provide further grant to schools to "enhance" these platforms only when the schools could demonstrate competence in using them in teaching and learning.
   (ii) More importantly, in addition to school-based hardware and software, the grant should be extended to enable school to subscribe to on-line learning services as well as continuous professional development for teachers to integrate IT in teaching and learning. These services are also important resources to help schools to integrate IT into their teaching and learning.

7. Comments on Annex A

   Annex A lists a number of outcomes or on-going tasks, e.g. 1(b) "many schools have established e-learning platforms", 2(a) "6 learning centres have been established", 2(e) "20 approved projects on "IT in Education Partnership Incentive Scheme", 4(b) additional funding to HKEdCity to "enhance production of digital resources", etc. It is not quite meaningful to merely list out these numbers unless we have a mechanism in place to ensure the quality and the usability of these outcomes. E.g. For 1(b) how many of these schools have actually used the platform in daily teaching; is there any independent or monitoring group (e.g. composing of educational experts) to evaluate the quality of these 20 approved projects; in 4(b), is there any mechanism or study (by independent monitoring group) to evaluate the quality of the enhanced digital resources?

8. Overall, we concur with the view that Hong Kong has moved "…beyond the stage of making IT facilities available in schools", and we welcome the strategic direction of tightly integrating IT in teaching and learning. We are concerned with current lack of quality assurance mechanism to ensure the quality, correctness and the usability of existing digital learning resources available in HKEdCity, given the perceived "importance" of this portal. Similar to other government funded projects, such that those funded by Quality Education Fund, we encourage the establishment of independent monitoring groups (from IT and/or educational experts) to oversee and to ensure the quality of the many on-going projects funded through the various incentive or partnership schemes.

Conclusion

This submission has made the above recommendations for the Education Bureau, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on Third Strategy on Information Technology in Education. We hope that these recommendations will help the government to develop a strategy on the information technology in education that can improve the quality of the education in Hong Kong.

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