

Sing Yin Secondary School

11, ON TIN STREET, LAM TIN,
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1st February 2008

Date

Hon Jasper Tsang Yok Shing, GBS, JP
The Chairman
Education Affairs Committee
Legislative Council
Rm. 520, West Wing
Central Government Offices, Hong Kong

Dear Mr. Tsang,

Consultation Paper on the Third IT Strategy Published by the EDB

On 31 January 2008, I attended the meeting on the captioned paper. I would like to provide a written response to supplement what I have said in the meeting.

I agree with most of the strategies in the paper, but I do have different opinions in a few areas.

First and foremost is the financial arrangement. While I welcome the one off grant, I believe schools need more funds to cope with the continuing upgrade and improvement of IT hardware and software. In the OEBG or CITG, there are no provisions for this task. Schools may be able to upgrade some computers at their own expenses, but they may be unable to replace the intranet backbone, the servers, the projectors and so on, for they may cost a few hundred thousand dollars to a million dollars for complete replacement. Also, schools may not be able to employ capable IT technicians. The CITG did cater adequately for their salaries to start with. However, a number of surveys revealed that the salaries of such technicians in the private sector are rising faster than inflation. What was adequate once now becomes inadequate. I urge the government to provide additional funding amounting to \$200,000 per year under CITG for schools to keep up with the demand.

While many participants of the meeting favour absorbing the IT Technician post into the normal school establishment, I favour the additional funding approach. It gives schools more flexibility. Indeed, it allows schools to respond far more quickly to market changes than an establishment post. The former one comes with a fixed salary scale which can hardly be changed. The latter allows schools to revise the salary once every contract. This advantage outweighs the extra administrative work incurred.

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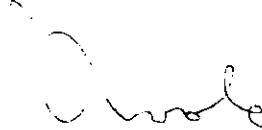
Date

Secondly, the proposed IT strategy clearly lacks direction. Schools should enjoy autonomy. But in this case, the proposal may have gone too far in giving schools complete autonomy and may hinder progress. If sufficient funds are provided, I believe it is reasonable to ask schools to reach a minimum level of IT implementation in five to seven years. For example, not all schools have a projector, a computer and a visualizer in EVERY classroom now. This or a similar goal may be set for schools to achieve. Other schools with better readiness should of course be allowed to advance much farther.

Finally, the Government should set standards to facilitate schools to adopt new technologies, like deciding on the standard for high definition TV. Many countries are planning for the use of ebooks. A few Hong Kong schools are already doing that. But standards are clearly needed for comprehensive use. Countries with a large population like the USA may wait for market force to settle on a standard. But Hong Kong is a small place. Companies may not have the capital to take on such a competition. They may defer the introduction of ebooks by many years. It is far easier for them to market ebooks once a standard is set.

A study done by HKU revealed that Hong Kong is at an enviable position. In terms of IT facilities in schools, we are among one of the best in the world. The Governments' effort in the last 10 years that allowed this achievement is much appreciated. But I fear that if the third IT strategy is not set on a better path, we may fall behind in five to seven years time. I hope the Legislative Council will help the Government to revise its proposal along my line of suggestions.

Yours sincerely,



Kwok But
Principal