



Since 2006
COALITION OF EDUCATION-CONCERNED PARENTS
家長關注教育政策聯盟
www.cephk.org

E-textbooks & e-learning

Overview

“To develop our children’s potential to the full” (EDB Mission Statement), we need to enhance, among other things, their ability to learn and to make them want to implement the fruits of their learning in accordance with our basic values. This paper summarises our views on only one factor in the development of children’s full potential: enhancing learning ability through electronic tools (‘e-learning’).

We believe that the development of learning ability must rest on proven principles of how people learn. Based on these principles and delivered electronically offers the best prospects for customizing learning, and individualizing education. This, in turn, will benefit many of our students and especially those who for a variety of reasons do not respond well to conventional, class-room based, one-size-fits-all learning environment.

We support the development of electronic tools and innovative learning strategies as a necessary pre-condition in its own right to achieve this goal, and as a much-needed supplement to the lack of adequately qualified, motivated, and inspiring teachers and school management.

Core principles

1. Ends vs. Means

The textbook, printed or electronic, is a medium; a means to an end, not the end in itself. Our goals are better learning through better instruction. Slick and gimmicky e-learning promises will not make children smarter if the contents are not relevant, if they cannot be utilized by teachers, and if these are not based on valid principles.

2. School-based implementation

Schools should have the autonomy to decide whether and when to implement e-textbooks or other e-learning tools as an option. Even if students from a young age may be extremely receptive & adaptive to digital learning, each school will still have to assess its unique circumstances such as the readiness of its teachers, affordability by parents, school resources, etc.

3. Age appropriate

Reliance and use of e-textbooks should be based on age levels and applied incrementally, depending on the subject content and level of learning.



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CEP-HKUPOP Survey

In May/June 2009, we had commissioned Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme to conduct the 7th research to gauge parents' views on HK education issues. In addition to the 2 standard questions to give ratings on Secretary for Education and on HK's education system, we asked parents whether they support the idea that textbooks should be included as subsidized expenditure for the 12 years of universal education. Of the 519 parents surveyed, 84% supported the idea and 12% were against it.

Recommendations

1. A centralized resource hub steered by Government

Our vision is of an Internet hub for home-learning. Government initiates the creation of a prototype e-platform. As a start, EDB can select a few key publishers to give their copyrights on e-learning & teaching materials and load them onto this "hub". This will be a centralized resource hub whereby all teachers can utilize these resources as well as encouraging them to share their best teaching practices with other teaching professionals, either within their schools or gradually extended to related schools and then the wider community.

The hkedcity.net or similar platforms may serve as a start. These platforms currently do show commendable administrative and technical standards. However, they will need to enhance their content quality to meet the varying development needs of students, as well as provide more interesting and educationally challenging learning materials for students. We believe that professional input from education psychologists on best ways of inspiring interest and stimulating learning will provide the necessary link between the book and the transfer of its content to the learner.

2. Incremental approach

The success of the interactive learning model rests on a number of factors such as readiness and commitment of school principals, teachers, and students themselves to embrace it. Implementing it in its entirety, no matter how well-intentioned, and without due consideration to the success factors will only create a negative backlash. Teachers, especially, will need help and time to understand and assimilate this new teaching approach.

3. Accessibility & affordability by all students

Quality education is the right of all children in HK and our society has a responsibility to ensure all students, irrespective of their socio-economic background, can afford and have access to quality learning tools. We support the inclusion of textbooks (printed or digital) as subsidized expenditure for 12 years of free and universal education.



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4. Bi-lingual learning materials

It goes without saying that e-learning & e-textbooks can also be used extensively as medium for enhancing bi-lingual/multi-lingual education in Hong Kong. Government should take the lead in encouraging the presentation of learning material, wherever appropriate, in a bi-lingual format. Direct and immediate availability of bi-lingual text in the context of customised learning and individualised education that we referred to earlier offers exciting prospects for widespread proficiency.

Conclusions

The development of learning ability is an essential aspect of developing full potential. Utilization of electronic means and based on valid instruction principles offers the best prospects of benefiting students according to their capabilities and we hope that Government will keep our thinking, as set out above, in mind.

**Coalition of Education-concerned Parents
August 2009**