Site Preparation Works for Implementation of Information Technology (IT) in Education Initiatives in Schools

Purpose

To implement IT in education initiatives, schools need to conduct site preparation works. The purpose of this paper is to brief Members on the plan and progress of the works.

Background

2. The five-year IT in education strategy document issued by Government in November 1998 announced a series of initiatives to promote IT in education, including the provision of more computers and network infrastructure in schools. To this end, most schools need to carry out site preparation works, for example, constructing computer-assisted learning rooms and server rooms, and fixing trunkings and conduits for computer signal cables.

Arrangements for Site Preparation

3. The Administration reported to the Finance Committee in January this year the new arrangements for providing schools with greater flexibility in arranging their site preparation works. If schools are willing and capable to arrange site preparation works on their own, Government will provide cash grants to them. In April this year, the Education Department (ED) conducted two briefing sessions and issued guidelines to explain to schools details of how they could make the necessary arrangements by themselves. Consequently, 13 schools opted for the self-arrangement mode, while some 1,000 schools chose to have the works arranged by the two Government works departments, i.e. the Architectural Services Department (Arch SD) and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD)[Note 1]. In view of the large number of schools which look to Government to carry out

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[Note 1] EMSD will be responsible for the less complicated site preparation works which involve, for example, only fixing trunkings and conduits and constructing server rooms. Works involving more complicated structural engineering works, such as constructing transformer rooms and re-partitioning classrooms, will be taken up by Arch SD.

the site preparation works, we need to conduct the works by phases. According to our plan, Arch SD and EMSD each takes up the works for about 500 schools. If everything runs smoothly, all works will be completed before the commencement of the 2000/01 school year.

4.   To minimize disruption to teaching and learning and schools' day-to-day operation, and to ensure the safety of students, Arch SD and EMSD will discuss with individual schools the arrangements for, and the schedule of, site preparation before commencing works. Works that may cause noise pollution and generate dust will as far as possible be carried out after school hours. The progress of site preparation works may be affected by a number of factors such as -

   (a) school network design. Different networks require different time to complete their designs;

   (b) contractors' manpower deployment;

   (c) co-ordination with other works (such as school repairs) carried out in schools;

   (d) the amount of time contractors are allowed to conduct works in schools; and

   (e) whether school facilities (such as electricity supply and school building design) are different from preliminary estimates.

ED, Arch SD and EMSD hold meetings from time to time to monitor the progress of works to ensure that they can be completed as scheduled.

Progress

5.   Up to 10 September 1999, works have been completed in 342 schools; works for a further 158 schools are expected to be completed by the end of this month. We anticipate that works for the remaining schools will finish in batches by August next year as scheduled.

6.   Schools are provided with cash grants to procure computer equipment. An initial cash grant (about 30% of the total grant) was

disbursed to schools in June 1999. Schools which have completed their site preparation works and have submitted to ED their school-based IT plans may apply for disbursement of the remaining balance of the cash grant for the purchase of computer equipment and installation of the Local Area Network. Schools which have not yet completed their works may start implementing their IT in education initiatives by using the cash grants for the procurement of stand-alone or notebook computers. They could also make use of the recurrent grant distributed in June this year to connect to the Internet. In addition, schools can arrange basic IT training for their teachers by using the grant provided in August 1999.

Progress of Implementation of Other IT in Education Initiatives

7.   In addition to site preparation works, good progress has been made in the past year in implementing other IT in education initiatives (such as teacher training, setting up of information technology learning centres, and provision of IT co-ordinators). Progress report of major initiatives is at Annex.

Education and Manpower Bureau and Education Department
September 1999

Major Initiatives and Implementation Progress
(As at 10 September 1999)

Initiatives	Progress
Access and Connectivity	
Provide, on average, 40 and 82 computers for each primary and secondary school respectively	– Installation of 15 computers in each primary school and replacement of 21 old computers in each secondary school have been completed. – Schools are provided with cash grants to procure computers. An initial cash grant (about 30% of the total grant) was disbursed to schools in June 1999. The remaining balance will be distributed upon completion of site preparation works and submission of IT plans to ED. So far, about 150 schools have applied for the balance.
Establish a multi-media learning centre *(with 21 sets of computer and peripherals; as well as audio-visual equipment)* in 103 secondary schools	– Site preparation works for 29 sites have been completed. Installation of equipment is underway and should be completed by end of 1999. Site preparation works and installation of equipment for the remaining schools should be ready by September 2000.
Establish an information technology learning centre in each of the 46 prevocational schools and secondary technical schools and a computer laboratory in each of the 27 prevocational schools *(with 40 sets of computer and peripherals in each of the two types of facilities)*	– All 46 information technology learning centres have started operation. – Conversion works for 27 computer laboratories have been completed. ED will later distribute cash grants to these schools for procurement of IT equipment.

Initiatives	Progress
Provide incentive grant to schools to make available their computer facilities to students after school hours from the 1999/2000 school year	– The incentive grant was disbursed to about 370 schools in September 1999. Other schools may apply for the grant any time during the school year.
Provide some 1,000 computers in community facilities	– Installation of IT equipment in 80 centres was completed in September 1999. Computers for the remaining 45 centres are expected to be in place by September 1999.
Teacher Enablement	
Provide about 85,000 IT training places at basic, intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced levels for teachers	– Basic training for 15,200 teachers was completed in August this year. About 1,600 teachers will complete advanced training in October this year. – Schools will be given cash grant to acquire basic, intermediate and upper intermediate training and ED will arrange training at the advanced level.
Resource Support	
Provide IT co-cordinators to 120 schools which are more IT-ready and can progress at a faster pace from the 1999/2000 school year onwards. A further 130 schools will be provided with IT co-ordinators in the 2000/01 school year	– Allocation of 120 IT co-ordinator posts was announced in May 1999.
Provide contract technical support service from the 1999/2000 school year onwards	– Tenders were invited in September 1999. The service is expected to be available to schools before the end of this year.

Initiatives	Progress
IT Pilot Scheme	
Implement an IT Pilot Scheme in ten primary and ten secondary schools which are more IT-ready. These schools are provided with extra IT resources to establish good practices in applying IT in education.	– Schools are at various stages of implementing their IT plans. – Mutual visits among the pilot primary schools were held in July 1999 to share experience in applying IT in education. – Good practices identified by the pilot schools have been incorporated into an IT resource kit which will be distributed to schools in October 1999.

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