**Extract from the minutes of meeting of the
Panel on Education held on 21 June 2004**

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VII.   Information Technology in Education - Way Forward
    [LC Paper No. CB(2)2786/03-04(04)]

Retention of Information Technology Coordinator (ITC)

57.   Mr SIN Chung-kai expressed support for the funding proposal on the implementation of the next information technology in education (ITEd) strategy. He considered that the retention of the post of ITC was important for the on-going development of the use of information technology (IT) in teaching and learning, given the role differentiation between ITC and teachers in the use and applications of IT in school education.

58.   Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (4) (DS(EM)4) responded that the results of the consultation had indicated that there were divided views on the retention of ITC in the next ITEd strategy. He pointed out that while some schools agreed that provision for ITC should continue, other schools considered that the resources should better be used in other needy areas such as enhancing e-leadership in schools and helping teachers with the use of digital resources. He explained that in the next ITEd strategy, the Administration would put in place a range of multi-faceted and comprehensive support measures to help schools integrate the use of IT in learning and teaching. To provide flexibility in the use of resources on IT in education, the Administration planned to merge existing IT grants to schools amounting to $190,000 to $280,000 per school per year depending on class structure into a composite IT grant. In addition, the Administration would continue to provide schools with a Capacity Enhancement Grant in the range of $150,000 to $500,000 for primary and secondary schools in the next three school years. Depending on individual circumstances and needs, schools were allowed to deploy the funds to employ full time or part-time ITC.

59.   Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for the continued provision of ITC in schools. They considered that teachers should not be expected to perform the role and functions of ITC in the maintenance of computer hardware and software, as well as in the application of new IT developments in learning and teaching on an on-going basis.

60.   Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the merged IT grant of $190,000 to $280,000 would not be sufficient to meet the different needs of schools in enhancing the use of IT in education, including the employment of ITC, upgrading computer hardware and software, etc. He considered that the Administration

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should not delete the post of ITC in the name of re-deploying resources to upgrade IT equipment for enhancing teaching and learning in school. He suggested that apart from a recurrent allocation for schools to upgrade computer hardware, EMB should collaborate with the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to provide a one-off grant for replacing or upgrading IT equipment and facilities in each school in the light of the progress of IT developments in a period of time, say three to five years.

61.   DS(EM)4 explained that the ITC grant was meant to be time-limited when it was disbursed, and in the next ITEd strategy, the Administration would aim at developing a multi-faceted and comprehensive support system to help schools integrate the use of IT in education. Schools could make use of the flexibility in deployment of the merged IT grant and the Capacity Enhancement Grant to employ ITC to meet their individual needs.

62.   Dr YEUNG Sum asked whether the Administration was of the view that teachers were able to perform the functions of an ITC so that there was no longer the need to provide ITCs in schools.

63.   DS(EM)4 responded that the Administration had trained teachers in the use of IT in education during the implementation of the five-year ITEd strategy from 1998-99 to 2002-03 school years, and all teachers had now completed basic IT training and many of them had achieved the intermediate and upper intermediate level in the use of IT in education. Under the next ITEd strategy, a recurrent provision of $12.26 million was allocated for the provision of subject-based and school-based training for empowering teachers to integrate the use of IT in learning and teaching. He reiterated that there were divided views on the continued need for ITC, and schools were advised to make use of the merged IT grant or Capacity Enhancement Grant to employ ITC as appropriate.

Non-recurrent allocation for improving IT infrastructure and pioneering pedagogy

64.   Mr SIN Chung-kai suggested that instead of a one-off non-recurrent budget, recurrent allocations should be provided for improving IT infrastructure and pioneering pedagogy by the application of new technology developments in school education on an on-going basis. He considered that the non-recurrent allocation of $171.5 million for replacement or upgrading of IT hardware would be sufficient to meet the needs of schools for the current school year. He pointed out that according to research studies, the optimal life-span of computer hardware should be four years. He suggested that to enhance the use of IT in education, recurrent budget should be provided for replacement or upgrading of IT hardware.

65.   DS(EM)4 agreed that the non-recurrent allocation of $171.5 million might not be sufficient for improving IT infrastructure and pioneering pedagogy in school education in the next three years. He pointed out that EMB would liaise with QEF with a view to formulating collaborative schemes to help schools tackle computer upgrading and replacement issues which were capital intensive. Subject to justified

needs, QEF would provide a matching grant for schools to upgrade or replace their computer hardware to improve learning and teaching.

66.   Mr SIN Chung-kai pointed out that according to the Administration, the capital investment on the procurement of computer hardware during the five-year strategy was about $900 million. It was apparent that the non-recurrent allocation of $171.5 million would be insufficient for all primary and secondary schools to replace their IT hardware in the next three years. He pointed out that in the light of rapid IT developments, recurrent allocation should be provided for replacing or upgrading computer hardware in schools to enhance learning and teaching.

67.   DS(EM)4 responded that according to an earlier investigation, less than 30% of the IT hardware in schools had been in operation for a period of five years or over. He pointed out that instead of replacement, most computer hardware could be upgraded at moderate costs. He believed that schools would make flexible use of the merged IT grants and the Capacity Enhancement Grant to meet their different IT needs.

68.   In summing up the discussion, the Chairman said that members in general supported the Administration to submit the proposal on funding for the next IT strategy to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 2 July 2004.

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