Case Studies of Primary School Teachers’ Portfolios on Information Technology Competency Training Program – A Reflection on Information Technology Education for Teachers in Hong Kong

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[Abstract]
The application of Information Technology in education has been strongly encouraged by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government since the outset of “Information technology for quality education: Five-year strategy 1998/99 to 2002/03” (Education and Manpower Bureau, 1998). Its primary aim was to promote information technology in education through teacher enablement, development of curriculum and software, hardware provision, and provide network infrastructure. According to the five-year strategy objectives, the promotion of IT in education is expected “to arouse and maintain our students’ motivation to learn”, “to broaden our students horizons, so as to enrich their learning experience and facilitate the development of a creative mind”, and “to encourage independent lifelong learning and instil team spirit” (1998, p.1).

As school teachers are standing at the frontier of this change, there have been extensive training courses induced by the Education Department for “enabling” teachers’ competency in using information technology in teaching and learning activities at three levels: “basic”, “intermediate” and “upper intermediate”. However, this policy has brought in controversial issues whereas many teachers training programs are ongoing. The issues include the effectiveness of ways of implementation of the training programs as well as lacking an objective and effective assessment system for assessing teachers’ information technology competency. Under the policy, assessment of teachers’ competency is only done in a school-based format, that is, every teacher has to submit a portfolio of work to the school principal illustrating their ability in using and applying information technology in their
teaching practice. However, there have been queries on the effectiveness of the training program formats as well as whether the quality of their portfolios is reflecting the teachers’ competency for meeting the so-called benchmark.

This paper thus focuses on discussing the content and quality of primary school teachers’ portfolios as a result of a particular “Basic IT” level training course ran by the Center for Enhanced Learning and Teaching, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Case study approach was adopted for the sake of a close examination and exploration of the 15 chosen teachers’ portfolios on their details. Since each portfolio consists of teaching schemes, lesson plans, multimedia teaching packages, etc., all these were analyzed with consent in terms of their subject matter, pedagogy adopted, presentation format and styles, relevancy and appropriateness to the expected teaching and learning situations, etc. Reflection report by each teacher, being part of the portfolio was also analyzed qualitatively for generating implications. Data derived from interviews with teachers also provided essential information for evaluating the training program and gaining a more thorough understanding of teachers’ learning processes during the program as well as the processes of accomplishing their portfolios.

Results of analyzing the above data helped drawing implications on: the effectiveness of the format of information technology education for teachers; the effectiveness and formats of assessment system on teachers’ information technology competency levels; the development of pedagogical strategies in relation to the application of information technology in teaching and learning activities; as well as the echoes to the general policy on information technology education for teachers in Hong Kong.

[Reference]