



Press Release

“e-Learning in Formal, Informal and Open Learning Contexts: A Policy Study for Hong Kong” Dissemination of Research Findings

The Centre for Information Technology in Education, Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong released the research findings from a project entitled “*e-Learning in Formal, Informal and Open Learning Contexts: A Study of Global Trends, Policy Options and Their Implications for Sustainable Development in Hong Kong*”. The project comprised a wide-ranging literature review and document analysis, followed by a Policy Delphi study involving key stakeholders including government officials, teachers, principals, parents, NGOs, businesses and researchers. It aims to provide policy recommendations on strategic implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) in formal, informal and open learning based on an in-depth analysis of Hong Kong’s current state and positioning within a global context. This Policy Study on ICT in Learning for Sustainable Development is funded by the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme of the Central Policy Unit of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The findings show that Hong Kong does not have effective policies in place commensurate with its state of economic and technological development in the global context. The following highlights the key policy recommendations where deviation from the global trends and development are of particular concern for Hong Kong’s future well-being and sustainable development:

In Formal Learning Context (Kindergarten to Secondary 6)

Our policy recommendations are as follows:

- Setting global and cultural awareness as a key e-Learning outcome goal (there is a serious lack of understanding of the importance of this goal even for those working in the policy arena);
- Establishing a cyber-wellness (values, code of behavior and dangers in the cyberworld) framework, implementation strategy and plan for schools and students (which is currently lacking);
- Recognising and institute Research and Development (R&D) as a top level strategy to guide research-informed, data-driven policy development and implementation (as most developed countries have done);
- Promoting public understanding and develop guidelines, legislation, infrastructure and development plans for big data and assessment innovations in education (for which there is currently a lot of misunderstanding);
- Establishing functional requirements guidelines and interoperability standards for Learning Management Systems in schools to guide effective e-Learning use, sharing and collaboration among schools; and
- Establishing mechanisms and performance indicators to ensure that policy makers and school leaders fully engage as co-learners in e-Learning innovation school networks so that these networks can truly serve as hubs for multilevel professional learning, partnership and sustainable development (whereas currently these networks are only seen as sites for teacher learning).

In Informal Learning Context (focusing on the lifelong learning for the elderly)

Hong Kong has NO Government policy on e-Learning to support informal learning of the elderly to enhance their well-being. Elderly people are often neglected in government e-Learning policy for being perceived with poor health or too old to learn. Our policy recommendations are as follows:

- Aligning e-Learning policy for the elderly with other elderly policies, such as active ageing policy and health informatics policy (as cost and acceptance by the elderly are main barriers to promoting ICT for health care strategy);
- Facilitating coordination and collaboration among different departments when developing and implementing e-Learning policies;
- Promoting the awareness, perception, and recognition of the usefulness of ICT/e-Learning for the elderly is more important than simply providing them with ICT devices and/or resources (the lack of awareness from the society, family and the elderly themselves is the major barrier to fostering the elderly to learn); and
- Developing new industry (e.g. e-business) and building telework environment to facilitate elderly re-employment.

In Open Learning Context (focusing on Massive Open Online Courses, i.e. MOOCs)

The development of MOOCs is still young. Our policy recommendations are as follows:

- Promoting pedagogical innovations that offer premium learning contents and strengthen deep learning (addressing the lack of guidelines for MOOCs development);
- Being cautious to pledge major investments in the construction of MOOCs platform;
- Local universities to lead MOOCs development and ensure its non-profit and open nature;
- Tailor-making MOOCs for local primary and secondary education, and for professional training in needy areas (addressing local needs with public monies);
- Allocating funds into the universities' regular budgets with clear accountability measures to assure quality and encourage innovation (addressing the challenge of financial sustainability);
- Incorporating MOOCs development into the existing funding schemes as one of the focal or special interest areas for development; and
- Fostering MOOCs research and practices and supporting larger-scale cross-institution collaborations.

For more details of the project and the findings, as well as the recommendations, please visit the project website: <http://pprf.cite.hku.hk>.

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