

Hong Kong Distance Education Association leverages "Fibre-to-the-school" network and HD technology to deploy Hong Kong's first High Definition Collaboration Platform, demonstrating instant benefits to teaching and learning

Fully supported by Hutchison Global Communications with provision of advanced IT applications and technical support

4 March 2008, Hong Kong — The Hong Kong Distance Education Association ("HKDEA") is committed to the promotion of distance education via information technology ("IT"), prompting students to take part in more cross-border and enquiry learning. Fully supported by Hutchison Global Communications Ltd ("HGC"), HKDEA has set up the first High Definition ("HD") Education Collaboration Platform in two member schools which have tested and applied the "HD Conferencing" and "HD Video-on-demand" applications in teaching and learning. During today's press briefing, teachers and students from the member schools demonstrated how IT in education helps to broaden the scope of distance education and enhance the effectiveness of the new 334 academic structures.

HD Education Collaboration Platform enhances distance education

The Hong Kong SAR launched several consultations on strategies on IT in education in 1998, 2004 and 2007. The 2007 consultative document, entitled "Right Technology at the Right time for the Right task", encouraged schools to draw up plans to integrate IT into teaching and learning, showcasing that IT in education has moved on to a curriculum-based integration stage.

The HD Education Collaboration Platform leverages the Dedicated School Fibre Network of HGC, the first broadband provider to have extended its high-speed fibre network directly to school campus in Hong Kong, building a strong "Fibre-to-the-school" infrastructure, providing dedicated broadband service for the education sector, covering 70% of primary and secondary schools in the territory. To cater for the rapid development of IT in education, the Company, riding on its strength of "Fibre-to-the-school" network, collaborated with schools to identify cost-effective applications and integrate them to the network, allowing schools to focus on the integration of IT in various subjects.

High speed broadband infrastructure is a prerequisite for the implementation and application of network based IT applications. The "Fibre-to-the-school" network is easily scalable to support bandwidth-demanding applications. The symmetrical upstream and downstream speed is a good fit for the recent trend of increasing uploads and downloads of information, photos and videos via the Internet among youngsters.

According to Professor P.C. Wong, Honorary President of HKDEA, the HD Education Collaboration Platform has helped to realise the vision of distance education by integrating IT applications to the network and removing hurdles in technicality and greatly reduced the total cost in deploying the same collaboration platform. HGC has helped schools to expedite the integration of new platform in teaching and learning.

"With the addition of HD features, distance education can now cater for bandwidth demanding cross-border audio and video exchanges such as anatomy and optics science experiments, arts and crafts and activities that require instant responses from partners such as debates, topical discussion and language learning. The scope and content of distance education have been widely broadened," said Prof Wong.

The HD Education Collaboration Platform on which the HD Video Conferencing and HD Video-on-demand applications are built on is the fruit of the development of broadband connectivity and IT in education.

HD Video Conferencing

Pilot school of HKDEA Yan Chai Hospital Wong Wha San Secondary School ("WWS") is active in the promotion of IT in education. The school was founded in 1999 with a mission to inspire its students to acquire new information technology and a global perspective. Since 2002, the school has started to organise local and overseas exchanges via video conferencing to broaden students' horizon. With the full support of HGC, the school today took the lead to try on the first HD Video Conferencing application. A real time cookery exchange activity dubbed "Students' Kitchen: I can cook" where the WWS team exchanged cookery tips with the students at Lok Sin Tong Young Ko Hsiao Lin Secondary School.

Built on the "Fibre-to-the-School" network, the HD Video Conferencing application supports sharp and clear HD pictures. The whole video conferencing was just like a live on-site exchange.

Prof Wong said: "The government has been promoting national education in the recent 10 years and students are encouraged to have a deeper understanding on the country. HD Video Conferencing shortens the distance among students in the two regions and provides good learning opportunities for those who cannot afford taking part in actual cultural exchanges. With the advancement in the hardware and software of distance education, students can learn outside the conventional boundaries and play a more active role in learning. This ties in with the new 334 academic structures which stress on all rounded learning."

HD Video on Demand

WWS believes that IT in education has widened the horizon for education. The school joined hands with sister schools two years ago to hold seminars for HKCEE and A-Level students. The activities were video recorded and uploaded onto the Internet for sharing. WWS, during today's press briefing, made use of the "HD Video on Demand" application to share HD video clips of science experiments filmed by HKDEA member schools to demonstrate the enormous learning space that IT in education can create.

"HD Video on Demand" is a network-based huge central system where schools can share third party educational video resources and self filmed teaching materials online. It acts like a virtual inter-school library or depository of curriculum based teaching videos. The symmetrical upstream and downstream bandwidth of the "Fibre-to-the-school" network allows speedy downloads and uploads of HD videos anytime, anywhere. It accelerates resources and knowledge sharing and also speeds up the migration of conventional campus TV to HD campus TV.

Principal of WWS and Chairperson of the Steering Committee of HKDEA Ms Au Yuet Ching said: "The uploads and downloads of HD videos require a symmetrical upstream and downstream speed. Given the increasing popularity of HD cameras and HD TVs, the user friendly collaboration platform has paved the way for a high definition campus TV in full scale. It helps to build a sharing platform and motivates students to learn and create."

Dedicated School Fibre Network

HGC customises cost-effective IT applications for schools. The HD Education Collaboration Platform achieves a saving as high as 80% in the investment cost when compared with similar applications available in the market.

Chief Executive Officer of Hutchison Telecommunications (Hong Kong) Limited Mr Peter Wong said: "We believe that quality education lays a firm foundation for the future of Hong Kong and are pleased to join hands with HKDEA to enhance teaching and learning efficiency through the use of IT in education. Our fixed business arm HGC pioneered the "Fibre-to-the-school" network in 2001, enabling schools to enjoy high-speed connectivity. With gradually matured IT hardware in education, we are excited to have brought together application suppliers and schools. The integration of practical applications for educational purpose onto our "Fibre-to-the-school" network has translated into cost-effective and high value-added services catering for the needs of schools and steering the development of IT in education."

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