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Perceptions of teacher educators on studying Information Technology courses in their Masters degree programme

Effective application of technology to education depends more on how well they are managed and implemented, rather than on the features of the technology. If the potential of new technology to enhance education is to be realised, professional development of teachers and teacher educators in information technology (IT) is a crucial need. This paper focuses on a study that explored the perceptions of a group of teacher educators who followed IT related subjects for a Masters degree for their professional development. The objectives of the investigation were, to find out the progress in the development of knowledge, skills and

attitudes of teacher educators in using IT in education, to identify the activities that facilitated them and to identify the issues faced by them. The research employed survey method, and the sample consisted of 62 teacher educators. Data was obtained mainly through a questionnaire survey and interviews, supported with data from informal discussions and observations.

A majority of the participants who were mature and experienced teacher educators were novices to IT and many have not even used a computer before. After following IT subjects, many commented that they feel more confident when using the computer. However, a majority was still not confident when using the Internet. Word processing, power point presentations and spread sheets were found to be the areas in which a majority indicated a higher development of knowledge and skills. Face-to-face sessions, practical sessions, work shops and study materials were identified as the most supportive activities. Insufficiency of practical sessions and time limitations were the two common major issues indicated. All participants appreciated the inclusion of an IT component in their study programme, and commented that it provided a good opportunity for them.

The findings indicate that inclusion of IT components in a professional development programme of teacher educators was very useful to them, by ways of providing exposure to IT, developing basic competencies in using IT and developing a positive attitude by motivating them to use IT in their profession. In addition to focusing on basic functions useful to the educators, more attention need to be paid on development of competencies in using the Internet as this is an important aspect of IT. Educators who are novices to IT need support, time, practice and encouragement when adopting new technology. Thus providing opportunity for more practical experiences with guidance is very important to build up their confidence and make them comfortable in using the technology.