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Uses of ICT in English Teaching in Primary Schools in Wei Nan City, China

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to identify the management of ICT (Information Communication Technology) in English teaching in primary schools in Wei Nan city, China. This study used a survey questionnaire on the role of ICT in primary English teaching and learning. The data obtained from the study for answering the research questions also exploring the outcomes of the use of ICT in primary English programmesr and the current challenges in exercising the use of ICT in Education. The results showed that the use of computers makes classes more vivid, motivation and effective to students.

Key words: Management of ICT, English Teaching and Learning, Primary School, China.

1.0 Introduction

ICT (Information Communication Technology) as the most dynamic innovation of science, at contemporary world to confront the challenges of 21st century. The use of ICT in education has been a priority in most countries during the last decade. There is growing evidence that increasing the level of ICT resourcing in schools can have a positive effect on young children's attainment in the 'core' subjects (BECTA 2001, 2002).

Like those of many other countries, the Chinese government has realized the significance of educational technology. In December 1999, China Ministry of Education set up the China Educational Technology in Higher Education Committee to promote technology adoption in post-secondary institutions. With regard to schools, it launched a project of Connecting Every School in 2000. This study aims to connect 90% of schools onto the internet so that their teachers and students can have access to high quality online educational resources within the following five to ten years. In order to guide the practice of using technology in schools, the Ministry released a bundle of educational technology standards for teachers, administrators, and facilitators in 2002, just a few years after the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) first developed the National Educational Technology Standards for students and teachers at the end of last century.

With the open door policy, English was not only a tool for China's modernization, but a ticket for academic advancement and individual social mobility. One needed to pass English proficiency tests as a secondary school graduate to enter universities, as a university student to graduate, and as a university academic to get promoted. English is now become important part in Chinese education.

1.1 Background

Nowadays, ICT (Information Communication Technology) is widely used in education all over the world. China is no way the exception of that. The concept of ICT in the education, as seen by China's Ministry of Education, includes three main policies ; a) ICT for all students, meaning that ICT is used as an enabler to reduce the digital gap between the schools, b) the role and function of ICT in education as a teaching and learning tool, as part of a subject, and as a subject in its own right and c) using ICT to increase productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of the management system (UNESCO, 2006)

Many researchers agree that successful use of ICT in educational practice depends on didactical competence, ICT literacy and ICT pedagogical competence (Andersen&Brink, 2002), the others point to some more components in cluding pedagogy, social and ethical issues, knowledge of technology, professional improvement and organization of teaching (Coughlin, 1999; Knierzinger et al., 2002; Resta et al., 2002). In this case ICT competence becomes necessary for a teacher.

English is an influential subject in the school curriculum as well as in people's daily lives in the People's Republic of China (PRC). As a required subject from primary to postgraduate school, it has a special status in Chinese education (Cheng 2002). From the mid 1990s, along with Chinese and Mathematics, English has become one core element in China's university entrance examinations. Ford (1989: 2) once said that there were more Chinese studying English than there were Americans, with estimates ranging as high as 250 million. Today, the number can only increase as China officially begins to implement its policy to introduce English as a standardized compulsory subject for all participants in compulsory education (Ministry of Education, 2001). According to Lai (1993) significant progress is being made. In 2001, all schools in Shanghai taught English in Primary One, for instance. Nationwide, eight million primary school pupils were studying English as a school subject for two to three hours a week, according to Hu (2002a). The goal is to have English courses available for seven to nine years of the compulsory education stage and a total of ten to twelve years for those who go on to university (Cheng 2002: 258). With an estimated total of 121.57 million Chinese primary school students in 2002, according to official statistics, the challenge of providing English language instruction to them all is likely to be a demanding one.

In order to implement the "Quality Education Project", the Chinese school leaders have made great efforts to achieve high quality education in schools. Schools in Weinan of Shaanxi Province are no exception. Primary school is regarded as the most important education stage for students. The curriculum guide for 1st - 9th grade (compulsory education) specifically highlight the importance of equipping future citizens with abilities to use modern technologies to collect and process information (MOE,2001a). Detailed objectives include using the computer programs for word recognition and typing Chinese characters (3rd – 4th), collecting information and using libraries and the Internet and other information channels for inquiry-based learning (5th – 6th, 7th – 9th). So, theoretically the school leaders need to improve their school performance and technology, in order to improve school quality. The

main question, however, do schools in Weinan consider the roles of ICT as the significance? If so, to what extent and how it works? Hence, it is imperative to conduct this study to know the situation and extent of using ICT as a tool in primary English program, particularly in primary schools in Weinan China.

The study is going to assess the current situation concerning the use of ICT and new media for language learning, and cast light over future developments in this area. It has concentrated the use of ICT and new media in language learning in primary school. It will focus on teachers' behaviors, motivation and attitudes, possibilities for increased language learning outreach, as well as opportunities and challenges, demand and supply factors in the relevant markets.

1.3 Research question

The following research questions have been answered to achieve the aim of the study

1. How does ICT work in English program in primary school education in Weinan city?
2. How do teachers use ICT resources in English teaching in primary school in Weinan city?
3. What kind of learning objectives are using when ICT resources as a tool in primary English program in Weinan city?

2.0 Research methodology

The purpose of this study is to identify the use of ICT in English teaching in primary schools in Weinan city, China. This study focuses on China's ICT reform and depicts the related issues in order to illustrate that how ICT is being used in English teaching process in elementary classrooms. After overviewing of the growing use of computers in foreign language teaching, this paper lists and details on the roles of the computer in class (teacher, tester, tool, communication facilitator, data source) as well as on the advantages of the use of ICT. This study has concluded that the use of computers makes classes more vivid, motivation and effective to students. To verify this in the real practice, this study has used the survey method to obtain data regarding teachers' perception and students learning skills of ICT applying to English Classes. This study describes and exemplifies the methods and procedures involved in conducting the study.

2.1 Research Design

The quantitative approached has been used in this study in a form of survey. This approach can make the discovery of such information in the randomly selected primary school teachers that are comprehensive and pervasive; it is helpful for collect more information from teachers and students. Survey through internet has been the assistant method to collect data. The questionnaires were sent to 218 teachers with the total number of 1080 English teachers in public schools (Weinan education net) throughout Weinan city. The selecting of respondents is randomly chosen, 20% of the respondents were selected to be interviewed in the whole amount of primary schools in Weinan city.

2.2 Instruments: validity and reliability

The instruments were self-made. The content validity was verified by the experts and minor revisions were done in accordance with their recommendations. A pilot study was conducted

from 30 English teachers from the three schools situated in Weinan city. Necessary changes were done based on the result of the pilot study to ensure the validity and reliability.

On a single day, all the questionnaires were given out to the teachers through the email with Weinan Education net. The teachers were assured that the information they gave would be maintained confidential and used strictly for research and academic purpose only. Therefore, they were required to answer the survey questionnaire as honest and truthful as possible. Teachers (respondents) and from primary schools were given two days to answer the questionnaire completely in all the questions. After two days, the researcher collected the answered questionnaire through the email box.

After all the survey data was collected, it was analyzed to find answers to the research questions. Analysis was made using the SPSS for Windows (Version 16.0). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the data obtained.

2.3 Population and Sample

This study involves the respondent of 218 English teachers from Weinan city. With the help of District Education officers in Weinan city, the primary schools were identified. The researcher selected public schools respectively in order to explore the use of ICT supporting in English teaching procedure among schools.

The population of the study consisted some of the English teachers of the primary schools in Weinan city, China. Weinan city has 173 high classic primary schools. The sample made up of 218 English teachers out of the total population of 1080 English teachers from in Weinan city.

The sample consisted of 218 English teachers from the public primary schools. 218 questionnaires were distributed to all the teachers in primary schools. 198 questionnaires were received. The response rate was 91%. About 9 questionnaires from the sample were rejected because they were incomplete or misunderstand. The final number of analyzed questionnaires was 189.

3.0 Result and Analysis

A total of 189 responses to the survey questionnaire were collected out of a total 218 questionnaire survey forms distributed to public primary schools in Weinan city, Shaanxi Province. The results of the analysis of the data as well as their interpretations and discussions were categorized as follows:

1. Frequency statistics of teachers' view for ICT policies in China and their attitude of using ICT in English teaching.
2. Frequency statistics of teachers' demographic characteristics in each school.
3. Descriptive statistics of teachers' activities in using ICT as a tool in teaching procedure.

A total of 189 responses to the survey were collected in 35 primary schools in Weinan. The analysis in this part attempts to identify the respondents' perceptions of their general information and the use of ICT in English teaching in primary schools.

3.1 ICT work in English program in primary school in Weinan city, China

Table 1 Frequency and Percentage of ICT use in English program

Item	5	4	3	2	1
1. To what extent do you think ICT can support your teaching	SD (0%) n=0	D (0.5%) n=1	F (7.9%) n=15	A (31.2%) n=59	SA (60.3%) n=114
2. You got improvement from profession ICT training	SD (0%) n=0	D (0%) n=0	F (42.9%) n=81	A (38.6%) n=73	SA (18.5%) n=35
3. The facility support of your school	5 (0%) n=0	4 (0%) n=0	3 (0%) n=0	2 (0%) n=0	1 (100%) n=189
4. You have very motivation class when using ICT in teaching	SD (0%) n=0	D (0%) n=0	F (19.6%) n=37	A (58.2%) n=110	SA (22.2%) n=42
5. The class teaching with ICT got great effort	SD (0%) n=0	D (0%) n=0	F (14.8%) n=28	A (59.8%) n=113	SA (25.4%) n=48

The table above (Table 4.8) shows the analyze results of research question 1: How does ICT work in English program in primary school in Weinan city, China? According to the result of item 1, 60.3% (n=114) respondents strongly agree that ICT can support teaching. 31.2% respondents are agreed. Whereas still have 7.9% (n=15) perceived "fair" about this statement. And there was 1 respondents showed disagree with this statement. No teacher chosen "strongly disagree". In responding to the item 2, there were 38.6% (n=73) teachers of the respondents chosen the answer "agree". 18.5% (n=35) teachers thought they strongly agreed with this statement. It was said that the class teaching with ICT got great effort. There were 42.9% (n=81) respondents chosen the answer "Fair", they were not quite sure about the effort from ICT skill training from the government. No respondents disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. Toward item 3, 100% (n=189) of respondents chosen the first option. The first option stands for: Each classroom and teachers got ICT and new media. It shows that all the respondents' schools were very well equipment with ICTs and software for their teaching. As for the item 4, there were 80.4% (n=152) respondents chosen "strongly agree" and "agree" with this statement. Only 19.6% (n=37) teachers chosen "fair" for this statement. There was no negative answer for this item. The result shows that most of the respondents viewed that they have very motivation class when using ICT in teaching procedure. For item 5, 59.8% (n=113) respondents agreed that the class teaching with ICT got great effort. 25.4% (n=48) teachers strongly agree with this item, and another 14.8% (n=28) teachers of the respondents chosen "Fair". It shows that all the respondents agree that teaching with ICT got great effort.

3.2 Teachers use ICT resources in English teaching in primary school

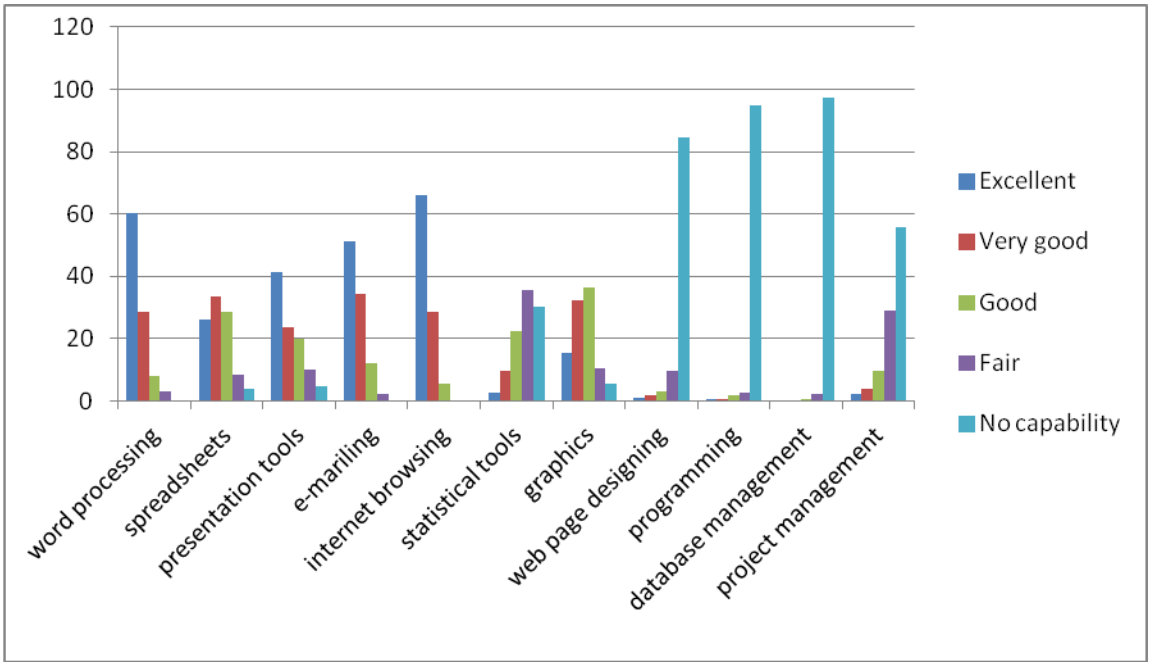

Figure 1: Frequency and Percentage of using ICT resources in English teaching

Diagram 1 shows the teachers expertise in the use of ICT and software. There were more than 50% of respondents have excellent ability in word processing, e-mailing and internet browsing, respectively stands for 60.3% (n=114), 51.3% (n=97) and 66.1% (n=125). For these three items, there were no teachers' answers "No capability". Only 2.6% (n=5) of teachers chosen excellent in the ability of statistics tools, 1.1% (n=2) teachers chosen excellent in the ability of webpage designing, 0.5% (n=1) teachers have excellent expertise with the ability of programming, 2.1% (n=4) respondents have excellent ability in project management. There was no teachers chosen excellent or very good in the use of database management. The results show that teachers in the respondents have not much ability in professional using of ICT. They can only use ICT with office software.

3.3 ICT influence learning objectives in primary English program

Frequency and percentage of item responses of the third research question of: "What kind of learning objectives are being used when ICT resources as a tool in primary English program" in aspect of "the functions of using ICT in English teaching" The functions of using ICT are a very important indicator of the application situation in the organization. That means understanding the functions of using ICT in one school that can help to find the existing problem.

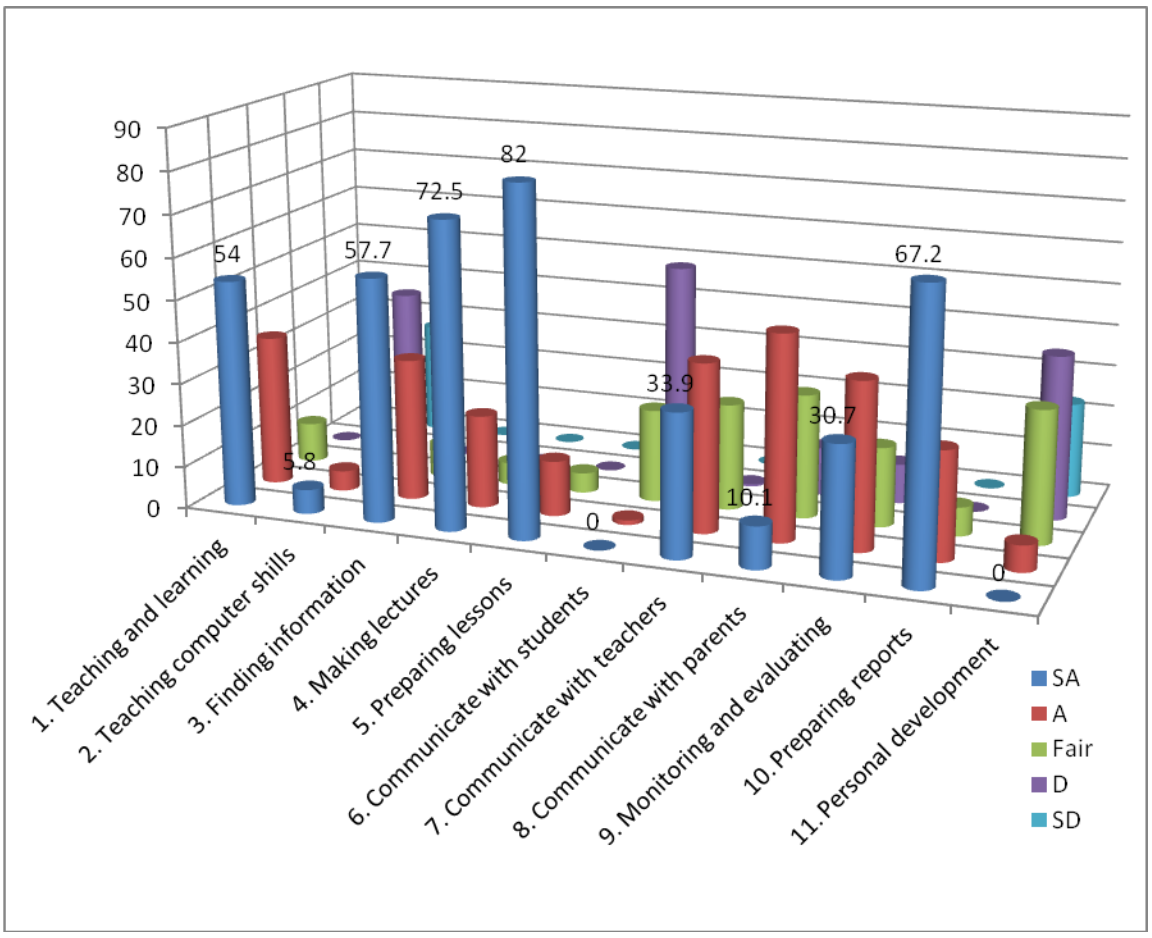

Diagram 2: Type of learning objectives being used in ICT resources

Based on the results from Diagram 2, 54.5% (n=103) teachers of the respondents strongly agreed that they use ICT in teaching and learning process in English program. 36% (n=68) respondents agree with this statement. Only 9.5% (n=18) respondents have chosen “Fair” for this statement. None respondents felt disagree of strongly disagree.

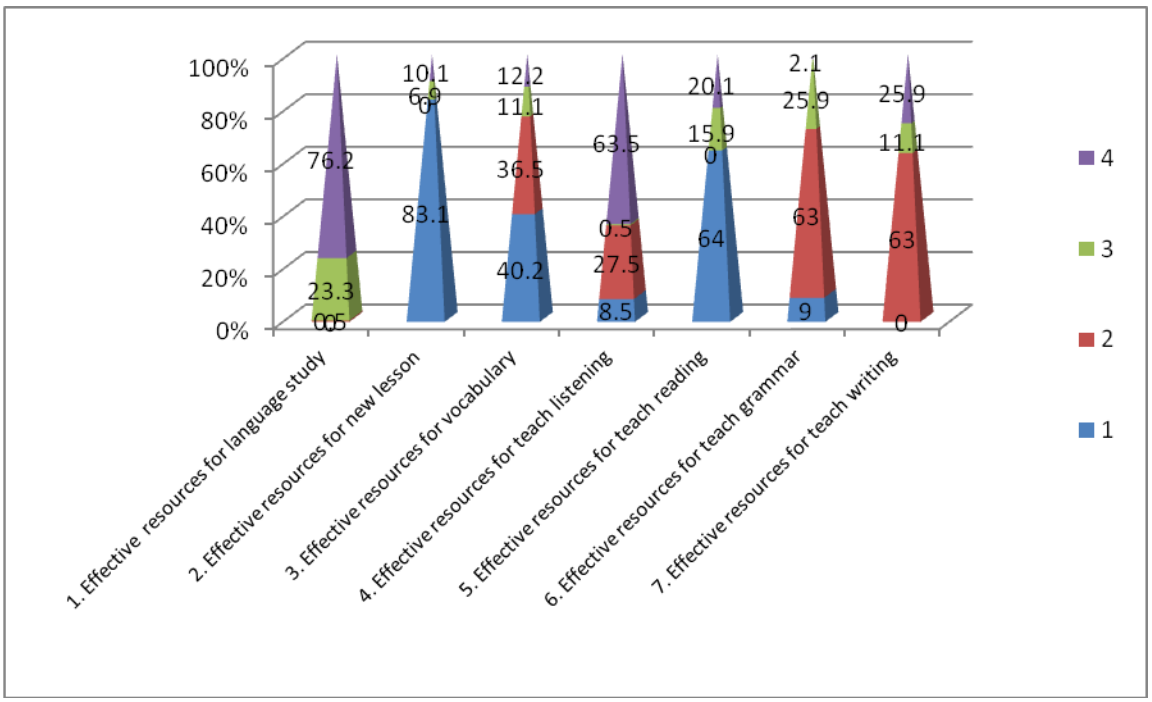

Diagram 3: Effectiveness of Resources

There were 0.5% (n=1) teacher thought that during language study, sounds for the learning materials are more effective. 23.3% (n=44) teachers claimed that using cartoons for language study are more effective. In addition, another 76.2% (n=144) respondents supported that using video's and follow up are more effective during language study.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has presented the data analysis and results of the findings of the study, according to the research questions using the appropriate statistical analyses on the data captured from survey questionnaires from respondents in the use of ICT in English teaching in primary schools.

Comparatively, this study found that in general the use of ICT in English teaching in primary schools in Weinan city is highly prevalent. It means that most statements about the research questions of the use of ICT in schools were positive and 'high' from teachers' perception.

Implication and Suggestion

From the survey questionnaire, this study found that there are still many more places where steps to be taken to improve the quality of education and services in the selected primary schools. Other schools should follow the initiatives and programs for using ICTs into teaching and learning procedure that have been done by the school of the case school in order to enhance student development, quality of education, teacher development, and school development.

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