

CHAPTER 2.4 SCHOOL POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The issue of school policy and implementation of IT is mainly addressed by the principals, hence the finding of this section is based chiefly on the principals' questionnaire. Upon further analysis, it reveals that the different category of schools do not show any significant difference on the views of principals. In other words, the principals are quite consistent in their views on policy and implementation of IT. Their views are therefore grouped simply under primary and secondary schools for analysis. Even here, one can see the p-values in the tables are not significant.

2.4.1 School Policy on IT

Table 2.4.1 shows that among the policy statements given, all the principals from both primary and secondary schools regard the development of students' analytical power and problem-solving ability the most important policy issues for the IT. The great majority of them (96.4% for the secondary and 99% for the primary) believed IT could make learning more interesting, and develop students' creativity (the respectively percentages are 98.2% & 98.1 % for the secondary and primary principals). Other equally important policy aims for the implementation of IT are:

- to increase students' motivation and ability to learn actively (the percentages are 94.5% & 97.1 % for the secondary and primary principals respectively);
- to develop students' independence & responsibility for their own learning (the respectively percentages are 96.4% & 96.2 %);
- to encourage more cooperative and project-based learning (the respectively percentages are 98.2% & 96.2 %); and
- to provide suitable activities according to individual students' needs (the respectively percentages are 92.9% & 95.2 %).

On the other hand, relatively fewer principals would implement IT just to satisfy parents and community expectations, or just to improve the communication and cooperation between schools, parents and the community. Nor did they do it to provide students more drilling opportunity.

Table 2.4.1 Principals' views on policy of IT (Principals' questionnaire, Q. 6)

	Primary school		Secondary school		p-value
	N	%	N	%	
e. To develop students' analytical power and problem-solving ability	105	(100.0)	55	(100.0)	0.056
k. To make the learning process more interesting	104	(99.0)	53	(96.4)	0.235
d. To develop students' creativity	102	(98.1)	54	(98.2)	0.963
b. To increase students' motivation and ability to learn actively	101	(97.1)	52	(94.5)	0.419
c. To develop students' independence & responsibility for their own learning	101	(96.2)	54	(96.4)	0.939
i. To encourage more cooperative and project-based learning	100	(96.2)	53	(98.2)	0.497
h. To provide suitable activities according to individual students' needs	98	(95.2)	52	(92.9)	0.551
j. To encourage curriculum integration and cooperation between subjects in teaching	92	(88.5)	41	(75.9)	0.041
f. To prepare students' for future jobs	91	(86.7)	52	(96.3)	0.056
a. To improve students' achievement	88	(84.6)	42	(77.8)	0.286
l. To satisfy parents and community expectations	88	(83.8)	46	(83.6)	0.978
g. To provide students with opportunities for drill and practice	86	(82.7)	42	(76.4)	0.338
m. Improve the communication and cooperation between school, parents and the community	84	(80.8)	34	(63.0)	0.015

Later, in the analysis of the school IT plan, it would be shown that the most popular aim for IT implementation is to enhance the ability of teachers to present information effectively/interestingly (c.f. section 3.2). This is consistent with the views of the principals who saw IT as effective means to make learning interesting. It suggests that the local schools believe the main purpose of IT is to enhance teaching and learning of teachers and students and to enable students to learn effectively.

During the implementation, the majority of schools (96.4% for secondary and 89.4% for the primary) provided school-based training on IT for teachers (Table 2.4.2).

Table 2.4.2 Whether the schools have provided school-based training for teachers on IT (Principals' questionnaire, Q. 17)

	Primary school		Secondary school		p-value
	N	%	N	%	
Yes	93	(89.4)	53	(96.4)	0.129
No	11	(10.6)	2	(3.6)	-

2.4.2 IT Activities in Schools

Table 2.4.3 shows IT activities as identified by the principals. Among the listed activities, most principals (98.2% of the secondary and 88.5% of the primary) reported that IT was used in subjects to assist individual students in their exercise and improve learning outcome. The secondary schools used IT in lessons more than the primary schools. The other activities which the secondary schools differ a lot from the primary schools include:

- to provide IT lessons to parents (the percentages are 77.4% & 45.2% for the secondary and primary principals respectively);
- to use IT network to work with other schools (the respective percentages are 40.7% & 12.6%);
- to organize IT exhibition to let other schools participate (the respective percentages are 24.5% & 11.7%); and
- to provide IT lessons to the community member (the respective percentages are 18.2% & 3.9%).

Compared with the primary schools, the secondary schools are more out-reaching, although judging from the percentage, these out-reaching activities are only organized by a minority of schools. It suggests that IT activities organized by the primary schools are very different from those organized by the secondary schools.

Table 2.4.3 IT activities (Principals' questionnaire, Q. 13)

	Primary		Secondary		p-value
	N	(%)	N	(%)	
a. Use of computers for the provision of drills and tutorials in order to enhance learning outcomes in certain subjects	92	(88.5)	54	(98.2)	<u>0.033</u>
g. Provide technology courses for parents	47	(45.2)	41	(77.4)	<u>0.000</u>
e. Collaborate with other schools through computer networks	13	(12.6)	22	(40.7)	<u>0.000</u>
f. Hold technology exhibitions for other schools to participate in	12	(11.7)	13	(24.5)	<u>0.038</u>
h. Provide technology courses for other people in the community	4	(3.9)	10	(18.2)	<u>0.002</u>
i. IT support for people other than teachers and students in the school	26	(25.7)	14	(26.4)	0.928
d. Use remedial programs to provide learning activities that individuals need.	21	(20.4)	16	(29.6)	0.195
c. Provide special software for gifted students (could be for use after school)	20	(19.4)	13	(24.1)	0.496

2.4.3 The Role of Principals in IT Implementation

In Table 2.4.4, the principals were asked about their role in implementing IT. The principals agreed that their roles are to provide students training opportunity (the means for the secondary and primary principals are 4.4 and 4.3 respectively), to plan resources adequately to support the teaching and learning of IT (the respective means are 4.4 and 4.3) and to enable teacher to use IT to improve their professional standing (the respective means are 4.3 and 4.3).

On the other hand, the least preferred choices of the role of principals in IT implementation is set as model for the IT implementation (the respective means are 3.5 and 3.5), to seek resources from other sources to help the students who have no computer at home to use IT (the respective means are 3.7 and 3.5), or to share with other schools on the experience of teaching IT (the respective means are 3.6 and 3.6).

Table 2.4.4 The work of the principals in the implementation of IT
(Principals' questionnaire, Q. 40a: In the implementation of IT, my role is to:)

	Primary school			Secondary school			p-value
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
5. Provision of training to teachers and students	101	4.3	(0.5)	55	4.4	(0.6)	0.848
6. Allocation of resources for promoting ICT teaching	101	4.3	(0.5)	56	4.4	(0.6)	0.585
2. Encourage teachers to utilize ICT to upgrade their professional status	101	4.3	(0.5)	53	4.3	(0.5)	0.623
1. To provide a vision and clear objectives for the school	101	4.2	(0.5)	54	4.2	(0.6)	0.976
4. Provision of up-to-date ICT information for teachers and students	100	4.0	(0.6)	56	3.9	(0.8)	0.841
8. Plan the integration of ICT into the school-based curriculum	100	3.8	(0.8)	54	3.8	(0.7)	0.906
7. To share the experience of integrating ICT into teaching with other schools / countries	100	3.6	(0.7)	55	3.6	(0.7)	0.729
3. To request for support from other sectors of the community in order to provide more opportunities for students without computers at home to be exposed to ICT	99	3.5	(0.9)	55	3.7	(0.9)	0.171
9. To act as a model of integrating ICT for educational purposes	102	3.5	(0.7)	54	3.5	(0.9)	0.576

The data suggest that on the whole, both principals of primary and secondary schools perceived similar role in the implementation of IT in schools.

2.4.4 Summary

It would seem that, despite the statements given by the principals that they regard the “development of students’ analytical power and problem solving ability” as well as the promotion of “active learning strategies”, the most important policy aims for the IT implementation in their schools, the actual implementation aims as reported in the IT plans (c.f. section 3.2) is “to enhance the ability of teachers to present information effectively/interestingly”. This, coupled with the evidence that the use of IT in schools acts mainly as an accessory to the direct teaching strategies hitherto used. This further indicates that the principals, despite knowing that the development of problem solving skills and the deployment of active learning strategies, do not fully grasp its meaning and the role changes of teachers that are necessary in order to implement these policy goals.

In general, principals take training seriously. The principals considered that their role is mainly to provide training opportunities and professional development opportunities to teachers, as well as to plan resources. They don’t intend to act as role models for IT implementation or to share experiences, or to seek resources to help students without computers to use IT. Whilst secondary schools are more out-reaching, these activities are only organised by a minority of schools. In general, therefore, it can be seen that many schools still behave as individual units, rather than being a member in a broader network of schools in the community, or as an integral part of the community.