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Attitudes and motivation in teaching through ICT Among Malaysian Tamil Teachers: an overview

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Abstract

It is an accepted fact the progressive motivation and positive attitudes play significant role in attaining learning achievements. Computer based learning too is not an exception to this observation as communication and Information Technology (ICT) have made deep inroads to teaching and learning among teachers and students. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia have up-graded the language laboratories in schools and have installed sufficient computers for both teachers and students to use in the teaching and learning process. It is needless to say that the role of ICT is very important in helping learners in comprehending as ICT provides avenues through unlimited collection of text, sound, pictures, videos, animation and hypermedia (Bruner, 1986). This can support the findings of Fisher (1996), who argues that computational environment is needed to support 'new frameworks' to education. The aim of this study is to explore the attitudes and motivational levels of in-service teachers who are serving in Tamil schools. A questionnaire adapted from (Wong, 2002) will be used to identify teachers' attitudes and their motivational levels in teaching. Besides that an interview will also be carried out to further question teachers' on their attitudes and motivation. The data from the questionnaire and interview will be used to analyze the Tamil teachers' knowledge, attitude and motivation in using ICT in classrooms. This information will equip the researcher if ICT is being explored to the fullest by the teachers in Tamil schools since facilities had been provided by the Education Ministry and ICT is taught as a subject in the Tamil schools.

Introduction

During the past couple of decades Information communication technology (ICT) and its tremendous growth have made remarkable and significant inroads into almost all the disciplines. One of the instruments for the fast developments of ICT is the growth of computers. As a result, one should know very well the power and the potentiality of this medium. Subsequently, one cannot afford to be a computer illiterate in this era of globalization. Not only that, apart from the knowledge in his/her discipline the success of the person depends mainly on his/her extent of knowledge and the potentiality to use and exploit the computer technology in his discipline. The field of education is not an exception to this rule. In fact, one can assert that the field of education can contribute remarkably by exploiting the potentialities of computers and its allied areas such as, multimedia, internet, software development, need based computer assisted language learning/teaching (CALL,CALT) etc.

Schemata for the Current Study

The present study on Attitudes and Motivation in Teaching through ICT among Malaysian Tamil Schools has been viewed from two angles. The first perspective is to view from the student's point of view and the second is to view from the teacher's point of view. Seeing through these two angles is very important because there is a significant gap between the teachers and the taught as far as ICT is concerned. In other words, the teacher's attitude and motivation get reflected on the student's and the student's attitude and motivation get reflected on the teacher's. This paradigm shift gets reflected on the achievement levels of the learners as well as the teachers.

Ict and Students in Malaysia

Though the knowledge level in the field of ICT among the student population in Malaysia depends on several social, economic, linguistic and educational factors, it is an established fact that the students born after 1980 in general are considered as having digital mind and also known as N-Gen-Net Generation (Tapscott,1998). These groups of students are highly motivated and influenced with internet, computer application and have changed their learning attitudes and achievement levels (Adone et al. 2007). Subsequently, these students are more at ease in the use of computers and also have the expertise to exploit the potentialities of computers and its related areas of education and in other areas of acquiring knowledge. As a result, they are fully aware of the use of computers, multimedia packages, internet etc. They are also aware how these can help them remarkably in the form of its collection of texts, sound and pictures, video graphics and hypermedia in order to increase their knowledge and learning process. Subsequently, they use them extensively whenever necessary and their motivational and attitudinal levels are very high as far as the use of ICT is concerned.

ICT and Teachers in Malaysia

In this situation the development of the basic positive attitude towards the acceptance and the use of the computer are necessary among the teachers. Attitude here is referred to the tendency to behave positively or negatively towards an object, situation, concept or a person (Aiken 1976).

As opposed to the highly motivated and with positive attitude of the general student population in the use of computers and other ICT applications, the teacher's population can be grouped into three categories on the basis of their age, education level in computer application and the number of years of exposure to computers and its applications in general and education in particular. On the basis of the three factors mentioned above the teachers in Malaysian educational context are concerned there are four dimensions which act on them in the formation of attitudes towards ICT. They are, age, background of the teacher, belief and the teacher's extent of exposure to ICT. Age can be divided into two categories namely, those who are above 50 and those who are below 50; background or the opportunity to acquire the computer related knowledge; the extent of exposure to the computer application coupled with the opportunity to use the ICT applications and overall belief system among the teachers. These are the four dimensions which contribute towards the formation of the teacher's motivational factors in ICT. On the basis of the four dimensions listed above the motivational factors for attaining confidence, development of computer based supporting skills, building positive environment around them and the varying degrees of anxiety which affect the formation of motivation will be determined.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are,

- To identify the attitudes of the teachers towards teaching through ICT
- To identify the motivational factors which contribute for teaching through ICT
- To identify the relationship between the attitude and motivation in achieving the goal of teaching through ICT

Hypotheses

- Exposure to ICT contribute positively for the development of positive attitude towards teaching through ICT
- Higher the age group lower the motivation to use ICT in teaching
- Lower age coupled with higher exposure to ICT has a positive role to play on the development of efficient teaching strategies

Methodology

This study which is mainly focusing on the quantitative approach to the study of attitude and motivation will be undertaken in the 10 Tamil schools situated in Klang Valley, Peninsular Malaysia. Five teachers (including ICT teachers) from each Tamil schools will be taken as the subjects of the study (n=50). These teachers are directly involved in teaching ICT in schools. A questionnaire adapted from Wong (2002), will be used to identify teachers' attitudes and their motivational levels in teaching ICT in the selected schools. The questions in the questionnaire are classified under two categories namely, the attitudinal questions and the questions related to motivational aspects. Each category mentioned above has 4 dimensions. For attitudes, the selected teacher's background, age, belief and exposure to ICT are included. In order to obtain information regarding motivational aspects of the teachers the ways through which they gain confidence, attain teaching skills and manner through which the teachers try to avoid the mounting pressure on them which result into anxiety. The data will be analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive and inferential analysis such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation will be used to describe the general data of the study. Besides this, analysis such as independent T-test, ANOVA and Pearson Correlation will be employed to discover any relationship and differences between the dependent and the independent variables of the study.

Framework
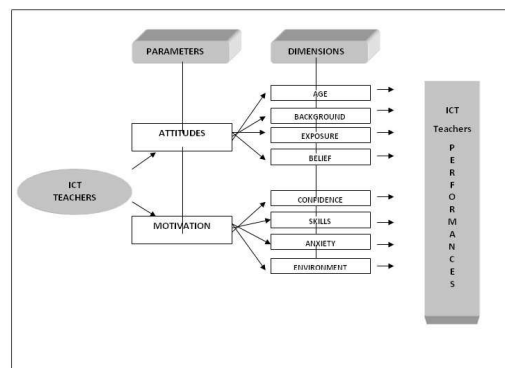
The study will look at ICT teachers' performances toward teaching ICT from two parameters and eight dimensions. The two dimensions are teachers' attitudes and motivation towards imparting ICT knowledge to their students. To measure teachers' attitudes several information based on their age, background, exposure and belief in ICT will be gathered through a specially designed questionnaire. The other dimension is motivation. Teachers' confidence, skills, environment and anxiety in using computers will be analysed. These information will reflect ICT teachers performance in their classrooms.

Conclusion

The achievements of using ICT in all the Tamil schools nationwide in Malaysia does not depend only on the ICT laboratory which are well equipped and other facilities provided by the government but also on teachers involvement. Teachers' attitudes and motivation towards ICT teaching plays an important role in promoting and imparting ICT knowledge to students. Therefore, this study looks into how teachers' attitudes and motivation helps in promoting ICT usage in all the Tamil schools.

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