Visual Art Education Teachers' Attitude toward Incorporating ICT in Arts Classrooms

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Abstract: Visual Art Education (VAE) is a subject that emphasizes creativity, innovation and critical thinking VAE teachers are urged to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the learning of their students so that those abilities such as creativity can be improved. Despite a plethora of literature that highlights the benefits of ICT in learning, VAE teachers were found not serious toward integrating ICT into their teaching. This paper reports a study which aimed to determine Malaysian Visual Art Education teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and their level of confidence toward incorporating ICT into art classrooms. Moreover, this study explored teachers' specific approach of ICT and factors that influence their integration of ICT into art classrooms. The participants of this study were eighteen Visual Art Education teachers from three-selected secondary schools in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. Data for the study were gathered by face-to-face interviews. The findings of the study indicated that although Malaysian VAE teachers' did posed a positive attitude toward ICT integration, but they did not fully utilizing ICT in arts classrooms. Sufficient resources, support from school administrator and continues professional development were three main factors that contributed towards successful ICT integration. In light of published research on the integration of ICT in the VAE subject area, findings of this study will contribute towards guiding school organizations, teachers training institutions and the Ministry of Education towards establishing a standard for successful ICT integration, especially in the context of the VAE.

Keywords: Visual art education, ICT integration, teachers' attitude

Introduction

Malaysia has set a long-term vision known as Vision 2020 to develop Malaysia as a developed country through its economic, political, social, psychological and intellectual growth. ICT has been identified as one of the key foundations to facilitate achieving Vision 2020 [1]. Malaysian citizens were required to be technology savvy, thus incorporating knowledge, skills, creativity and innovative thinking abilities pertaining to technology. Realizing the importance of ICT and its rapid developments, Malaysia has allocated significant resources (financial, human etc.) and instituted numerous initiatives since the last 20 years. It was expected that all teachers would have instilled a certain degree of innovation practices using ICT [2].

However, the implementation of multi-million projects has not resulted in successful ICT uptake among Malaysian teachers. Previous research revealed that teachers were not utilizing the full potentials of ICT [3]; [4]. Teachers' usage of ICT was only limited to basic applications, viz. word processing, record keeping and administrating works. Another study by Suzana [5] reported that numbers of teachers still prefer to conduct their instruction through conventional methods. Due to those findings, the present study was

aimed to determined teachers' uptake of ICT. In light of empirical published researches that highlight this issue, especially in Malaysian context, this study will guide school organization and the Ministry of Education in supporting teachers to successfully integrate ICT.

1. ICT in the Visual Art Education

Similar to other subject areas, VAE teachers have been encouraged to take full advantage of ICT in learning and teaching. As time changes, so will technology and the way VAE teachers respond towards it also need to change [6]. Through the integration of ICT, a conventional VAE classroom approach will become more contextual and meaningful [7]. This new form of teaching strategies will support and extend the VAE pedagogy and thus will promote new creative way of perceiving and practicing the arts [8]. As an important research tool for contextual studies, ICT has enabled students to be a visually literate and critical member of society [9], where they can create their own online portfolios and virtual galleries [10]. In addition, through the establishment of online museum and art gallery as a source of information, students will be lead to areas of art works, artefacts and simulations process that will develop their creative, critical and artistic thinking skills [11]. Moreover, through the emergence of Web 2.0 tools as a social networking technology in educational system, students were allowed to construct their own knowledge, meaning and solution through creating and sharing information on the web. It is expected through discussion, reflection and sharing constructive ideas with artists, teachers and peers; students would then become more matured and motivated in producing artworks [12]; [13].

Despite all listed advantages, many researchers have indicated that ICT integration in arts classrooms were far from reaching its target [14]. Rolands' [8] research on art teachers' priority level of ICT integration in the art classroom, revealed that majority (44%) of them consider ICT integration as a moderate priority, while 33% stated that it is of low priority. His findings also revealed that some teachers are not utilizing ICT as what it supposes to be. Similarly, Delacruz's [15] study found that many art teachers are not utilizing ICT as what it supposes to be. Instead of using it for supporting creativity, most teachers were reported using it for administrative works (viz. word processing and record keeping). Furthermore, research by Wang [16] indicated that many art teachers are reluctant to embrace ICT into art classrooms due to concerns that it would decrease students' creativity, artistic expression and understanding of art forms. Considering the importance of producing creative, innovative and technological literate students [17], this in-depth study will determine VAE teachers' attitude toward ICT integration. Teachers' attitude need to be appropriately mould in ensuring successful ICT integration happens, as it was noted as one of the main predictor that influence educational change. Further, factors that might influence their decision were determined in ensuring ICT will successfully integrated in arts classrooms.

2. Research Methodology

A qualitative method, through a face-to-face interview was chosen for this study. Through an interpretive approach, this method was determined to be the most appropriate approach in exploring the depth issues of specific topic. In addition, through a semi-structured interview technique, participants were allowed to expand their arguments based on given questions [18]. Participants were also encouraged to share their own insights toward

effective integration of ICT in the VAE subject area. In determining the depth of teachers' thoughts and opinions, a phenomenological approach was employed into this study. Through this approach, all commonalities and similar experiences of a particular phenomenon that had been mentioned by interviewees will be identified, coded and described.

This study involved eighteen VAE teachers from three selected secondary schools in a state of Selangor, Malaysia. Those three selected schools (low, moderate and high) were chosen based upon the school's rating of ICT integration. Data gathered from Selangor State Education Department was based on the Smart School Qualification Standard (SSQS) star rating scale. Ranging from one star for schools with merely basic condition of ICT integration, to five stars of advanced ICT integration schools; this SSQS outlines four major ICT integration areas in each school. Those four areas were: utilisation (40%), human capital (40%), applications (10%) and technology infrastructure (10%) [2].

The duration of between 20 to 30 minutes for each of eighteen VAE teachers (six per schools) were held to determine: (1) teachers' specific approach of ICT tools used, (2) teachers' attitudes toward incorporating ICT and (3) teachers' concerns toward integrating ICT into art classrooms. The credibility of the study was determined through feedback from three experts in both ICT education and the Visual Art Education subject area. In addition, the credibility of the data was also identified through participants' similar descriptions of events when the same questions were asked [19] and the accuracy of interpretation between participants and the researcher.

3. Research Findings and Results

3.1 Profiling the Participant

Of the eighteen participating VAE teachers, fifteen were female and three were male teachers. With respect to teachers' age, majority of them were ranged from early 20s to late 40s. As far as teachers' teaching option is concern, only two teachers were not majored in VAE subject area. As non majored teachers, the teachers were only trained to teach the VAE subject as their second option during their pre-service professional development courses. Data also indicated that most (58.9%) of the teachers were grouped as the low teaching experience teachers, where their teaching experience was reported less than ten years. Similar result was also found based on teachers' experience of using ICT for teaching purposes. Majority (83.3%) of the VAE teachers were categorized as low experience ICT user. Their experience of using ICT for teaching purposes was reported less than ten years.

3.2 Teachers' Specific Approach to ICT Use

Considerable various approaches that can be applied under the integration of ICT in arts classrooms, this study examine the VAE teachers' common ICT usage. Result shows that majority (74.6%) of the teachers, regardless of their schools' levels of ICT integration, used ICT tools as their teaching tools. Those teachers mentioned that ICT tools were frequently used as a tool for delivering and supporting their instructional. All of the teachers used LCD projector as a tool to facilitate their instruction. Majority (82.3%) of the teachers also agreed that LCD projector is a useful and important tool in arts classrooms as it can assist students' understanding. Mrs. N from the moderate integration school, for instance, commented that capability of LCD projector in projecting clear

visuals and videos throughout the whole classroom was also noted as tool that reflects the nature of VAE subject area.

Several teachers (54.2%) have also acknowledged ICT as their research tools. Such comments were made based on their frequent usage of video site, viz. YouTube. By having video during instruction process, especially in explaining a specific process, students can clearly understand a proper materials, methods, steps and procedures of art making process. Apart from strengthening teachers' explanations, this approach is useful in inspiring students' motivation to produce quality artworks. Mrs. S from the high integration school, expressing her beliefs that VAE teachers could utilize the availability of video sources by supporting teachers' instruction. She also added that VAE teachers' creativity in delivering their instruction will influence students' motivation to produce outstanding artworks and understanding toward the subject.

Further, five teachers, three from high and two from moderate integration school, have identified ICT as playing an important role in their administrating tasks. "ICT tools and its applications allow us to manage and administer our records effectively" (Mrs. SA, from high integration school). Keeping students' records is one of our routine jobs. Teachers are able to update, retrieve and present your records and data easily by utilizing ICT (Mr. S, from the moderate integration school). Only two of the teachers, both from high integration school, mentioned about the role of ICT as their art making tool. Mr. R thought it was important for VAE teachers to make use of ICT tools and applications in guiding students of becoming active, creative and critical generation.

3.3 Teachers' Attitude toward Incorporating ICT in Arts Classrooms

As a change agent of education change, teachers must posed positive attitude toward educational changed. With respect to this issue, VAE teachers' attitude toward ICT integration was determined. The result indicates that majority (66.7%) of the VAE teachers agreed ICT have a major role in arts classrooms, regardless of their different levels of ICT integration. Most (51.2%) teachers expressed that ICT integration will make students' learning process become easier and thus promote a motivated environment for the student. In fulfilling students' needs, teachers are urged to utilize the full potential of ICT tools and its peripherals. Miss E, from the moderate integration school, pointed out that students now are technology savvy and literate. Working with them required us to be parallel with their needs and expectations. Several (29.8%) teachers saw ICT as an added value in VAE subject area. Mr. M, from low integration school, for instance, noted that ICT have brought additional breadth toward the subject. Students now will understand that VAE is beyond their capability of using pencils and brushes. Mrs. ZJ, from high integration school, also believed that ICT integration in arts classrooms provides alternative for students to produce creative and quality artworks. She stressing that by producing digital artworks, students can easily modified and save their art making process. In addition, four teachers did identified ICT as important in relation to student career opportunities.

Conversely, six teachers expressed that ICT was not essential and important in arts classrooms. Most (72.3%) of them described ICT just as a tool, thus won't affect teaching and learning process of VAE. Mrs. KM, from moderate integration school, argued that teachers' instruction should not rely on ICT tools. She added that teachers' dependent of ICT might limit their instruction and block students' creativity in producing quality artworks. Her commented was supported with statement from Mr. K from low integration school. He mentioned that integration of ICT in arts classrooms might bring more challenges to them. Teachers need to consider their instruction time, availability of ICT tools, school infrastructures and students readiness. He added that without proper

planning, ICT integration might jeopardise teachers' instruction and students' learning process.

3.4 Teachers' Concern toward Integrating ICT in Arts Classrooms

Undoubtedly, there are many obstacles and factors that underpin teachers' uptake of ICT in arts classrooms. Reflected as concerns among teachers, results from the present study indicate that most (44.5%) of the teachers identified limited resources as the main factor that hinder their ICT integration. Mrs. L, from the low integration school, informed that it's impossible for her to integrate ICT with only one computer in arts classroom. Although teacher are allowed to use schools' computer laboratories, tight schedule and double-standard toward VAE subject has decreased her motivation to integrate ICT. The issue of limited number of ICT tools in arts classroom has also brought to restriction of teachers and students usage. Three teachers indicated that they refused to use ICT during instruction due to their concern that its might crash if students using it. Mrs. E from moderate integration school argued that students uncontrolled behaviour might wrecked those expensive ICT tools. She continued by saying, rather than being blame and responsible for damage created by the students, it is advisable for not using it.

A number (33.2%) of teachers also revealed that support from the school administrator is essential in ensuring successful ICT integration happens. Apart from equipping arts classrooms with sufficient ICT tools, seven of the teachers have acknowledged the school administrator role in organizing continues and relevant professional development courses for teachers. Mr. ZA, from the high integration school, believed that upgrading teachers' ICT knowledge and skills will motivate them to integrate it into their instruction. In boosting teachers' ICT uptake, Mrs. H, from the high integration school, suggested that school administrator could initiate a form of incentive to teacher who's the most effective and frequently integrate ICT. She mentioned that, teachers hard work and afford to integrate ICT should be recognized by the school administrator and other authorities. Other factors, such as restricted instruction time, lack of technical support, lack of self-confidence and fear of embarrassment were also mentioned as factors that influencing VAE teachers' decision to integrate ICT in arts classrooms.

4. Discussion

The above findings indicated that eighteen VAE teachers in Selangor have exhibited high positive attitudes towards ICT integration in arts classrooms. This significant result was clearly expressed through their acknowledgement toward students' needs. Majority of the interviewed teachers agreed that ICT integration will increase students' understanding, satisfaction and motivation toward the delivered instruction. This finding is in accord with those from previous research that highlighted the importance of teachers' attitude toward successful educational change [20]; [21]; [22]; [23]. It is reasonable to infer that teachers' positive attitude towards ICT will reinforce their intentions to integrate it into their instruction. The introduction of mentoring system is suggested in improving teachers' attitude to integrate ICT. This suggestion has been proven by previous researchers [24]; [25].

A significant diversity was discovered through teachers' specific approach of ICT uses in arts classrooms. Majority of the interviewed teachers have acknowledged ICT more as a teaching tool, as compared to other approaches of ICT used, viz. administrating tool, research tool and art making tool. This basic use of ICT among VAE teachers has

created concerns among previous researchers [14]; [27]. Teachers were urged to take the full potential of ICT in supporting the VAE subject area. Teachers are also required to explore and experience with latest technologies in developing students' knowledge and skills. These findings suggest that continues and comprehensive professional development courses on the effective way of integrating ICT in arts classrooms would be the priority. In addition, teachers training colleges and universities must take full responsibility in ensuring teachers will be more knowledgeable and skilful toward integrating ICT into their instruction.

Finding from this study also revealed that sufficient resources, full support from the school administrator and continues professional development courses are factors that might influence VAE teachers decision to integrate ICT in arts classrooms. The effects of those mentioned factors toward teachers' decision to integrate ICT have been found in many studies [24]; [26]. Pelgrum's [27] reports that insufficient number of ICT tools and its peripherals has been the most frequent mentioned barriers that hinder ICT integration among 26 countries school teachers. Although issue pertaining to limited numbers of ICT tools in school has been slowly resolved, the ratio between number of students to computer and misconception toward its necessity toward certain subject has jeopardize VAE teachers' intention to integrate ICT in arts classrooms.

Further, supports from school administrators were also crucial in ensuring successful ICT integration in arts classrooms. Most of the interviewed teachers indicated that school administrators' unsupportive and misunderstanding toward the nature and need of the VAE subject has demoralized them for integrating ICT. The necessity for continuing and relevant professional development related to ICT-related courses, have became a demand from a few interviewed teachers. As addressed by previous scholar, most professional development courses were only highlighted skills to operate computer application [28]; [29]. Hajar's [30] research has found that professional development courses that are based on knowledge and skill transmission oriented have jeopardised teachers. Instead of acquiring basic ICT and technological skills, ICT professional development courses were required to include a comprehensive pedagogical content [31].

5. Conclusion

This study is an attempt to understand VAE teachers' attitudes toward ICT integration. In relation, teachers' specific approach of ICT and factors that might influence their successful ICT integration; were also explored. From the study, it appears that VAE teachers have demonstrated a high positive attitude towards ICT integration in arts classrooms. However, this finding does not reflect teachers' full usage of ICT in arts classrooms. They commonly used ICT as a tool for teaching, especially in delivering their instructional materials. Insufficient resources, support from school administrator and professional development courses were frequently mentioned as factors that influence their decision to integrate ICT.

As the heart of any education change, teachers have ultimate power to ensure that successful ICT integration happen. The needs of their positive attitudes and beliefs towards it were demanded. Comprehensive professional development courses must be offered to teachers continuously. It is indeed hoped that through relevant professional development courses, teachers will be exposed to more meaningful and creative use of ICT in arts classrooms. Apart from enhancing teachers' confidence level, this initiative needs to be considered as one of the mechanisms in ensuring full potential of ICT used among teachers. Further, cooperation from school administrators and continual full support from the Ministry of Education in ensuring the availability of ICT-related facilities

is essential in making sure successful ICT integration happen. They need to possess an instilled positive mindset towards integrating ICT in guaranteeing that a cutting edge ICT-mediated teachers and students will be produced.

As a conclusion, successful ICT integration process needs to be done gradually and continuously. It is not an easy task as it requires a full support from many parties. A deep rooted issue needs to be untied in ensuring successful ICT integration in VAE subject area will be achieved. Continues research, in relation to ICT uptake among VAE teachers need to be done, especially in different contexts. Accessing towards larger samples and broader scopes will determine better understanding of teachers' attitudes toward incorporating ICT in arts classrooms. It is hoped that through all the hard work, supports and initiatives, the Ministry of Education's aim of making sure all schools will be ICT-mediated intuitions by the year 2015, will be realized.

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