Chapter 14
ICT in Vietnamese Education: Development and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

It is important that your abstract clearly states the purpose of your chapter and summarizes the content. Unprecedented developments in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) have currently pervaded educational settings the world over. Under the push towards innovative betterment and global connectivity, multiple forms of ICT, especially computers and the internet, have been frantically implemented in educational systems in developed and developing countries alike. Prophecies of an educational evolution brought about by ICT, however, have not been fulfilled as there persists a great discordance between rhetoric and reality. Research into this field suggests that major challenges are often locally specific and strategic ICT approaches are to be made with contextual as well as socio-cultural considerations. This paper, therefore, aims mainly to investigate the development of ICT integration in Vietnamese education against the contemporary international landscape. It provides an overview of the current ICT-based educational advancement in Vietnam, followed by a detailed discussion of major challenges ushered in by the new-versus-old tensions and discourse conflicts. Practical implementations are also offered in an effort to actualize ICT promises in enhancing and transforming the educational system in Vietnam. This discussion could be relevant to any other developing countries, which have just embarked on and yet are committed to the process of evolutionizing their education via ICT.

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INTRODUCTION

Information Communications Technology (ICT) nowadays is essential to our globalizing world in as much as arteries and veins are to the body, enabling the movement of nutrition to its every extremity. Its ubiquity as an efficiency enhancer and advancement driver is evident when almost every innovation in different aspects of life is associated in some way with ICT. Breakthroughs and evolutions can be seen in many areas such as business, healthcare, entertainment, etc. Nevertheless, the long-awaited and much-expected evolution in education has yet to be witnessed (Selwyn, 2007) despite unceasing global efforts to turn ICT promises into actuality. Although winds of change have been blowing, they are apparently not vehement enough to uproot the long-standing traditional practices in local educations, causing conflicts in various levels and to various extents. These short-of-expectation results have prompted a growing visibility of research in education, seeking to explain for the “slow uptake of ICT” (Peeraer & Van Petegem, 2009, p.2), especially in less developed countries. Many factors have been found to be attributable to the whole ICT landscape, including policy and regulatory environment, management and financing, ICT visions and strategies at school level, infrastructure and connectivity, technologically skilled staff, and the list goes on (Ping, 2003). These parameters, however, need to be taken into considerations in conjunction with all the localized specifics because as a social phenomenon, ICT integration in education (ICTE) lends its success to the subtle socio-cultural variations of human interaction and mentality.

Against this backdrop, this chapter firstly seeks to examine the dichotomy between rhetoric and reality in ICTE by reviewing related temporary literature. It then closely investigates the current diffusion of ICT in Vietnamese educational system with regard to the extent and level of ICTization. Emphasis is finally placed upon the challenges arising from conflicting educational discourses, which ostensibly account for much of the global failure in ICTE. In-depth reflections and context-specific implications are offered with a view to bridging the notorious gap between visionary promises and actual progress in ICTE in Vietnam.

BACKGROUND

Forms of ICT in Education

The global educational landscape is contemporarily dominated by emerging forms of ICT development in a multiplicity of variations. By definition, ICT covers a diverse range of tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information, currently including broadcasting technologies (radio and television), telephony, and newer digital technologies (computers and the Internet). Although the radio and television have been utilized for educational purposes long ago, the impact of ICT on global education only becomes markedly profound with the advent of computers and the Information Superhighway. The widespread proliferation of computers and the Internet have facilitated the diversification of educational delivery and learning methods the world over. Its multimedia, interactive and hypertext capabilities have rendered ICT the enabler of new learning modes such as e-learning, blended learning, distance or open learning. Various computer-based applications, including email, chatting, synchronous and asynchronous teleconferencing, to name a few, are being creatively harnessed in education. These new forms of technologies are so grounded in the what, where, when and how individuals go about learning that the learning process of all forms these days can hardly be efficiently carried out without ICT. Video demonstrations, for example, help add authenticity to the exploratory learning experience. Simulations (virtual realities) and multimedia programs can enliven and validate the experiential