IT Use in the English Language Classroom in Hong Kong: How Far Is Government Policy Being Achieved?

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This article reports on a survey of IT use by English language panel chairs (heads of department) in Hong Kong secondary schools. An initial overview is first presented of HKSAR Government policy where it has been stated that, by 2002, 25% of all classroom teaching must be supported by IT. Participants referred to in the article were enrolled on a brief refresher course at a local university; they completed a questionnaire in which they reflected on their attitudes and beliefs about successful IT practice in the English language classroom. As the article illustrates, the first necessity in any IT policy involves access to computers; while a number of schools have good facilities, not all do. More telling, however, are participants' views on what constitutes successful IT-based teaching. While resources exist for hardware and software, little provision has been made for curriculum development, or for coordination of IT-based teaching. Consequently, integration of IT into the English language curriculum is generally quite ad hoc. The article concludes with a warning that stipulating 25% of class time to be delivered by IT may perhaps be encouraging IT practices in the English language classroom that are less than conducive to the good teaching and learning of English.

Introduction

The genesis of the current article lies in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government policy related to the use of IT in classrooms, specifically English language classrooms. The article is centered around a study conducted with English language panel chairs (heads of department) enrolled on an in-service refresher course. The article reflects their opinions

on, and feedback about, the implementation and success of the Government's IT policy.

The impetus for Government policy stems directly from the Chief Executive's first policy address in 1997. As a reaction to the perception that Hong Kong was perhaps lagging behind some of its Asian neighbors in its use and adoption of IT (most notably Singapore, who launched their "Master Plan for IT in Education" in April 1997, where the aim is that 30% of curriculum time should be IT-based), the policy address discussed measures for IT in the following terms:

> We will launch a five-year IT education strategy to promote the use of IT to enhance teaching and learning. …
>
> Within five years, we are aiming to have teaching in at least 25% of the curriculum supported through IT. Within ten years, we aim to see IT being applied comprehensively in school life, and all our teachers and Secondary 5 graduates being able to work competently with IT tools. (Tung, 1997, paras. 46–47)

The above quote represents, of course, a tremendous commitment to education, not only in the rhetoric of the acknowledgement of the increasing importance of IT, but also in the resources that have been allocated to the development of IT facilities — multimedia laboratories, computers, technical staff, and so on. To even approach the implementation (whether successful or not is another issue) of the intended policy, the HKSAR Government has to be commended for having allocated substantial funds to IT and education.

Funding notwithstanding, however, as will be discussed in this article, two major issues arise from the above quote. The first of these concerns facilities and access to those facilities in schools by both teachers and students; the second involves how IT-ready, willing and able teachers are with regard to embracing IT as a teaching tool. The latter issue is especially vexed with regard to English language teachers, who often tend to be at the blunt end of the technology curve.

It is worth examining data from some recent studies concerning how Hong Kong is faring in its IT initiative in education. In a large-scale study commissioned by the Hong Kong Education Department, Law et al. (2000) evaluate the HKSAR's five-year strategy 1998/99 to 2002/03. They note that hardware, software and infrastructure provisions have improved markedly as compared with the position in 1998 (pp. 202–203). Many teachers have achieved the Basic level of IT competency — being able to word process, use presentation software and have basic Internet access and

usage skills. They comment, however, that many teachers still see themselves as providers of knowledge rather than facilitators guiding their students (p. 205). Too many schools "… regard IT in education as an effort to technologize education — simply replacing chalk and board by multimedia presentations" (p. 206).

In her depiction of four scenarios of "IT-competent" use (i.e., the *transmission* model, the *facilitation* model, the *liberal co-construction* model, and the *knowledge community* model), Law (1999) suggests that while all four models of IT use are present to an extent in Hong Kong schools, the predominant form is the first one, where teachers are using IT as presentation tools, resulting in "… presentation oriented, didactic classroom practices."

Lam and Lee (2000) report on a study of various teachers' opinions as to what constituted IT and successful IT teaching. They state that while a small group of teachers felt that "… IT ought to be something with interactive teaching and learning" (p. 252), for others, it was viewed as using IT to transmit information via PowerPoint, for lesson preparation or school administration purposes or from a reductionist view of involving audio-visual aids such as the overhead projector.

Beyond Hong Kong, Williams (2000) reports on an extensive study on the use of computers in U.S. schools in the five-year period 1994–1999. According to the survey, in 1999, 63% of all U.S. public school classrooms and computer labs were connected to the Internet, with a student-computer ratio of 6:1.

On the question of teacher preparation in the U.S. for using IT, Rowand (2000) notes that in 1999, one-third of U.S. teachers felt that they were well prepared in the use of IT and the Internet. Less experienced teachers commented positively that despite their lack of experience, they were receiving adequate preparation in how to use IT. (This means of course, despite Rowand's positive spin, that up to two-thirds of U.S. teachers still feel less than prepared.)

In terms, then, of basic "connectedness" (hardware and infrastructure etc.), while Hong Kong is not quite as well developed as other nations, it is not lagging an enormous way behind. And as Law et al. (2000) make clear, however, the hardware and infrastructure part of the equation is receiving a lot of attention — and funding. For IT use to form part of a successful English language study program, especially where IT use has to occupy 25% or more of classroom time, computer use cannot, however, consist of ad hoc forays into the multimedia learning center: the use of IT has to be integrated into the English language (and hopefully broader school and

educational) curriculum (see Bull & Zakrzewski, 1997, p. 17). This is a thorny and difficult issue, as McCarthy (1999) astutely points out with regard to factors affecting, or constraining, successful integration:

> Human factors such as government educational policy, institutional vision, departmental cohesion, the teaching philosophy and practices of individual teachers, student motivation and ability interact in such a complex manner with considerations relating to hardware, software, logistics, personnel and resources in both short and long term that any accurate analysis of all the possible permutations and combinations would be about as intelligible as a circuit diagram of the London underground. (Introduction, para. 7)

The importance of the integration of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) into the curriculum has been discussed by many researchers (Allen, Booth, Crompton, & Timms, 1997; McCarthy, 1999). An interesting discussion can be found in Gillespie and McKee (1999) where they conclude with the difficulties facing them as university teachers — despite the help and support they are able to call on at university level — in achieving successful integration.

The article now moves to a discussion of the use of IT in English language education in terms of teacher training and readiness, by reference to a survey and to discussions with the English language panel chairs referred to above.

Background to the Study

In the summer of 2002, The Chinese University of Hong Kong was commissioned by the Hong Kong Education Department (ED) to run a series of seminars for secondary school panel chairs (i.e., heads of department) or aspiring panel chairs to acquaint them with new moves in educational reform in Hong Kong, in particular the new curriculum reform documents on *Learning to Learn* (Curriculum Development Council, 2000) and associated curriculum reform moves.

Panel chairs are the prime movers in secondary schools. Their attitudes and beliefs toward the HKSAR Government's stance on the importance of IT to Hong Kong and its adoption in schools, and their perception of the use and possibility of IT in the Hong Kong classroom is therefore of great importance to the successful implementation of any IT policy.

A total of eight sessions, in total catering for 253 panel chairs, were held in May and June 2002. Prior to attending the seminars, panel chairs

were sent out a questionnaire (see Appendix), part of which related to their IT competency, beliefs and attitudes toward the use of IT in the English language classroom.

The questionnaire was in three sections. The first section enquired about the situation in their own school, i.e., computer facilities, support received from the school, and the school's policy on amount of English language teaching time to be IT-based. The second section asked about their own use of IT in the English language classroom, and their attitude toward IT-based English language teaching. Finally they were asked about the extent to which IT was integrated into their English language classes in the school and how realistic and achievable they felt Government policy was concerning the use of IT.

Questions were generally posed on a five-point Likert scale, where a "5" indicated a positive attitude to the question and a "1" a negative attitude; some follow-up interviews were also conducted after the sessions with a small number of panel chairs — about two or three participants per group. While the questionnaire forms the basis of the current article, the substance of the interviews is at times also reported, together with certain written comments contributed at the end of the questionnaire.

Participants' Background

As mentioned, the program was for panel chairs, or aspiring panel chairs, depending essentially on whom the school principal nominated. Generally this was the English language panel chair, although at times it was the vice principal, and in some cases, "good" teachers had been nominated. Of the 253 participants attending the program, 237 (93.7%) were panel chairs, 245 (96.8%) were degree holders, and 247 (97.6%) had a relevant English language teacher training background.

In terms of teaching experience, 68 (26.9%) had nine years' teaching experience or less, 114 (45.1%) had between 10 and 19 years' teaching experience, and 60 (23.7%) had 20 years' teaching experience or more.

In terms of IT competency levels (see Education and Manpower Bureau, 1998; see also Au, Kong, Leung, Ng, & Pun, 1999), 49.6% rated themselves at the Basic level, 44.4% at the Intermediate level, with only 6.0% rating themselves at the Upper Intermediate level. While it is understandable that so few English language "leaders" have achieved the highest level, it is perhaps surprising that almost 50% are only at the Basic level of IT competency. If schools are to be inspired, the English team leaders have to

be IT-capable, or the impetus for IT use and implementation may well lack sufficient momentum.

Results

Of the 253 panel chairs who attended the program, 154 (60.9%) returned the completed questionnaire (see the Appendix). The discussion presented below is based on the 154 returned questionnaires.

General IT Competency

With regard to the IT competency of the teachers in their schools, the picture was shown in Table 1.

Table 1   IT-qualified Teachers in Schools

Competency level	Amount of IT-qualified teachers			
	¼ or less	¼ – ½	½ – ¾	¾ or more
Basic	24.0%	21.6%	17.6%	36.8%
Intermediate	31.1%	28.2%	19.2%	21.5%
Upper Intermediate	93.0%	5.8%	0.0%	1.2%

Table 1 presents a picture of dramatically varying abilities in terms of IT in the schools. At the Basic IT level, some schools have very few IT-qualified teachers, whereas in other schools virtually all English language teachers are qualified. A similar picture, although to a somewhat lesser extent, exists with qualified English language teachers at the Intermediate level of IT competency. Very few English language teachers have achieved the Upper Intermediate level, however.

IT Facilities and Support

On the question of IT facilities in their schools, responses of panel chairs suggested that computer facilities vary widely. A small amount of panel chairs (3.2%) reported excellent facilities in their schools while a comparable number (4.5%) reported the opposite — extremely inadequate facilities. Law et al. (2000) note that IT facilities in schools have developed a great deal (since 1997) and are now, in general, adequate (p. 202). In the current survey, however, only 32.4% reported facilities as being "adequate" or better. Given that the cornerstone of IT use revolves around access to computers, it would appear that in some instances, facilities have some way to go before IT use can be termed "generally accessible."

Allied to the issue of available hardware is the important question of support. This needs to be considered from a number of angles: technical support and backup; the financial side (i.e., money for software); training for English language teachers; as well as time for materials development and for coordination of activities and IT-based programs.

Table 2 summarizes panel chairs' responses in the different areas of support.

Table 2   Amount of Support for IT Provided in Schools

Type of support	A great deal	Some	So-so	Little	Very little
Technical support	7	67	46	29	5
	(4.5%)	(43.5%)	(29.9%)	(18.8%)	(3.2%)
Financial support (for software etc.)	7	56	51	33	7
	(4.5%)	(36.4%)	(33.1%)	(21.4%)	(4.5%)
Training for teachers	5	43	84	20	1
	(3.3%)	(28.1%)	(54.9%)	(13.1%)	(0.7%)
Time for materials development	1	8	36	66	43
	(0.6%)	(5.2%)	(23.4%)	(42.9%)	(27.9%)
Time for coordination	1	8	34	81	30
	(0.6%)	(5.2%)	(22.1%)	(52.6%)	(19.5%)

It can be seen that in terms of *technical* and *financial* support, schools are faring reasonably well: attempts to help, develop, support are being made in these areas. The situation is broadly similar for *training*, where the picture is generally positive rather than negative — only 13.6% of schools report little or very little support in the area of training.

It is in the area of *time*, however, that panel chairs are not happy. In terms of time for materials development, 23.4% responded neutrally, that help was "so-so"; worse, 70.8% responded that they received little or very little support. If the use of IT is to be actively encouraged in meaningful ways, then time needs to be allocated for teachers to take this on board. Exhortations cannot result in teachers' already very heavy workload being loaded even further. A number of panel chairs reported in the sessions that they were solely responsible for putting together the English language IT curriculum / scheme of work / materials, and were getting burnt out by the amount of work that involvement in the school's IT initiative was necessitating.

A similar picture was reported with the amount of time allocated to *coordinating* IT use, where 72.1% of respondents felt that little or very little time was allocated.

On the question of whether schools had any IT coordinators — for the English panel, each year or the whole school, 38.3% did report a coordinator for the English panel; 55.2%, however, reported no coordinator at all.

Integration of IT into the English Language Curriculum

On the extent to which the use of IT was *integrated* into the English language curriculum in schools, 3.2% of panel chairs responded that IT was "strongly integrated" into the curriculum and 64 respondents (41.6%) felt there was "some integration." These positive figures were offset, however, by 73 (47.4%) who felt that IT use was "fairly ad hoc" and 10 (6.5%) who felt that it was "very ad hoc." It is perhaps not surprising — given the minimal amount of time for material preparation and coordination — that the use of IT should be seen to be somewhat ad hoc, as reported by over half the respondents (53.9%). Comments were made here about students simply being shown videos in the multimedia lab, or PowerPoint comprising the "dominant use" of IT in the school. If a proper framework for IT use is going to be put together and successfully "delivered," time needs to be allocated to coordination, curriculum, and materials development and selection. If this is not considered, then at best one willing soul will be worked into the ground, albeit producing quite a coherent and successful English language curriculum. At worst, however, there will be little or no coherence to the English language program and English language IT-based teaching will be either extremely ad hoc, or, at worst, conducted in a very aimless manner.

The lack of school support for time and coordination was neatly mirrored, however, by schools' attitudes toward the use of IT-based teaching. Not surprisingly perhaps, 64.9% of schools were either "encouraging" or "very encouraging" in their attitudes. Nearly half (45.5%) of schools also had a direct policy on what proportion of English language class time should be devoted to IT-based teaching. Among the respondents who replied that their school did have a policy on IT use, responses were shown in Table 3.

Table 3   Amount of English Language Class Time to Be Devoted to IT-based Teaching

Amount of class time	No. of respondents
10% or less	22 (14.3%)
20%	37 (24.0%)
30% or more	14 (9.1%)

Possibly in the light of Government policy, a number of schools are attempting to show that they are indeed achieving the "25% threshold level" of IT use.

Evaluating the Success of the Use of IT in English Language Teaching

At this juncture, the questionnaire enquired about the extent to which IT was actually used in English language classes and how useful and successful (or otherwise) it was perceived to be.

On the issue of how much time panel chairs used IT, responses were shown in Table 4.

Table 4   Amount of English Language Class Time Devoted to IT-based Teaching by Panel Chairs

Amount of class time	No. of respondents
10% or less	75 (50.3%)
20%	36 (24.2%)
30%	21 (14.1%)
40% or more	17 (11.4%)

It is gratifying to see that panel chairs are attempting to lead the way in that the amount of time they spend using IT is generally greater than that laid out in Table 3 as schools' basic IT use requirements. This is not to say of course that the IT use is either fruitful or worthwhile: it may be the case that the use of IT is still being mistakenly equated with the use of PowerPoint. It is to be hoped, however, that this is not the case; we will take it that panel chairs are indeed leading by example.

On the question of the extent to which the use of IT was seen to be worthwhile, panel chairs responded as in Table 5.

Table 5   Worthwhile Nature of IT Use

Worthwhile nature	No. of respondents
Very worthwhile	3 (1.9%)
Worthwhile	82 (53.2%)
No opinion	42 (27.3%)
Not worthwhile	26 (16.9%)
Not worthwhile at all	1 (0.6%)

Although opinions were divided, opinion was broadly positive with 55.1% of panel chairs feeling that IT use was worthwhile as opposed to 17.5% who felt that it was not worthwhile.

When asked, however, how much they enjoyed IT teaching, feelings were less positive. A total of 38.3% responded they enjoyed using IT in their English language lessons, while 59% responded they did not. While this is perhaps a bit disheartening, it is not, of course, compulsory that teachers should enjoy using computers. At this stage, it is perhaps enough to keep experimenting. As hardware and materials become more usable and accessible, it is to be hoped that attitudes will veer in a more positive direction.

The next question asked panel chairs to rank order a number of factors to indicate how successful they felt IT lessons were and what they attributed "success" to. The factors have been listed below according to how panel chairs perceived their relative order of importance:

(1) the IT English language materials
(1) the school's IT facilities
(3) the students' attitude toward IT
(4) my own teaching ability
(5) the students' attitude toward English

Hardware and software available were, perhaps predictably, rated almost equally as the crucial elements in successful IT lessons. Surprisingly, teachers rated students' attitudes toward IT-based teaching as a more important factor than their own teaching ability. Students' attitudes toward English ranked a distant last.

When asked about their own attitude toward the use of IT (included as a check question against their earlier comments and as preparation for their attitude toward ED policy in general), panel chairs responded as follows (Table 6):

Table 6   Panel Chairs' Attitudes on Value of IT in English Language Teaching

Attitudes	No. of respondents
Very positive	6 (3.9%)
Positive	77 (50.0%)
Neutral	51 (33.1%)
Negative	18 (11.7%)
Very negative	2 (1.3%)

Although attitudes were divided, with one-third of respondents yet to be convinced of the potential benefits of IT perhaps, over half the panel chairs (53.9%) were positive in their own attitudes toward what IT-based English language teaching means. Given some of the obstacles faced in terms of IT implementation and support, it is almost surprising to find that opinions are generally more positive than negative.

Achievability of Government IT Policy

Table 7 presents panel chairs' attitude as to how achievable they feel the Government's IT policy is.

Table 7   How Achievable Is the Government's IT Policy

Attitudes	No. of respondents
Very positive	2 (1.3%)
Positive	23 (15.0%)
Neutral	56 (36.6%)
Negative	58 (37.9%)
Very negative	14 (9.2%)

As can be seen, on the issue of panel chairs' attitude toward ED policy, however, and how far the stated goals that 25% of English language teaching should be "IT-based," panel chairs were less positive. On this point, while just over a third were neutral, sentiment was overwhelmingly negative: 46.8% of panel chairs responded that they did not feel such a policy was achievable as against 16.2% who felt that it was.

Given that the HKSAR Government is investing a considerable amount of resources into IT training — the current program for panel chairs being a case in point — Chi Square tests were run. In these tests, the independent variable was panel chairs' self-assessment of IT competency ability, as reported in the Background section above. This self-assessment was then compared against certain of the attitudinal questions in the survey. The results are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8   Panel Chairs' Self-assessment Contrasted With Attitudes

	Chi Square values
Worthwhile nature of IT-based ELT	$\chi^2(8) = 14.18$, p = n.s.
General attitude toward using IT and ELT	$\chi^2(8) = 29.04$, $p < .000$
Personal enjoyment of IT-based ELT	$\chi^2(8) = 37.70$, $p < .000$
Integration of IT in the EL curriculum	$\chi^2(8) = 5.34$, p = n.s.
Attitude toward ED policy of "25% of ELT being IT-based"	$\chi^2(8) = 12.97$, p = n.s.
Achievable nature of ED policy	$\chi^2(8) = 19.08$, $p < .039$

As Table 8 indicates, significance has emerged in terms of general attitude toward using IT in the English language classroom, and how much panel chairs feel they enjoy using IT. Those who rated themselves with a higher degree of competency had significantly more positive attitudes on these questions. On the issue of how achievable ED policy is, marginal

significance could be seen, although in regard to attitudes over the ED policy of "25% IT-based English language teaching," no significance was apparent. Further, on the important issue of IT being integrated into the curriculum, no significant differences were seen.

Discussion and Conclusion

The cornerstone of successful implementation of Government policy such as that stated in the introduction to this article is predicated on three factors. These are: firstly, sufficient hardware resources (i.e., computers) in schools to enable the school as a whole to use IT for a quarter of the curriculum or more. Secondly, teachers need to be IT-competent enough to be able to handle the hardware and software and know what can be done with it. Thirdly, consideration needs to be given for the English language panel to form a vision of how IT can be integrated into the English language curriculum as a whole, with IT being used innovatively and creatively for English language teaching. I would like to briefly reexamine these issues in turn.

On the precondition that sufficient funding needs to be allocated to IT and education, the HKSAR Government scores very highly. Substantial resources have been provided to enable the IT policy to be able to move forward. Although some teachers are not satisfied with the facilities in their schools, Law et al. (2000), in their large-scale report on the implementation of IT in schools, notes that facilities have improved to the point where they are, by and large, adequate (p. 202). It is still relatively early days, however, and the hardware and access-to-computers issue will not be long in being resolved.

In a large number of classrooms, and in discussions with panel chairs in the current study, the major use of IT, as Law (1999) has pointed out, essentially involves using PowerPoint. The use of PowerPoint does not constitute "using IT in teaching"; it is merely an audio-visual aid comparable with the overhead projector.

The issue of teachers' IT competency is one which is being tackled by the Government and by faculties of education at the universities. It is reasonable to expect teachers to be IT-aware and IT-competent. Pre-service teachers now have to emerge from their PGDE courses having been "benchmarked" for IT (Au et al., 1999). This is a good move forward and will help to upgrade the teaching profession in terms of its ability to deal with IT and to use it on a day-to-day basis. The details in Table 8, contrasting panel chairs' IT competency with certain attitudes, suggest that the

Government initiative is having some effect, with panel chairs' basic attitudes toward using IT and English language teaching being more positive the more IT-competent they are. The degree of IT-competency does not appear to result in IT-based English language teaching being better integrated into the curriculum, however, which moves us to the next issue.

The third issue concerns integration, and time for "quality IT" use. Meskill (1999) comments on the importance of using technology "well." She notes that a lot of conceptual work is necessary if we are to successfully "retrofit that technology to teaching practice" (p. 461). Using a new approach simply because it is available, she suggests, is not a good enough raison d'être, and that to see technology as a tool for the transmission of knowledge is to miss the point. This echoes the points made by educationalists arguing for the use of IT as constructivist tools (Jonassen, 1995; Matusevich, 1995; Mazur, 1997), where we look at how tasks students may use IT for fit into the larger picture of learning — both personally and from a broader perspective. McCarthy (1999) concludes with the following comment on integration, who it affects and how:

> Choosing and using CALL materials is clearly a complex process. It involves awareness, effort, liaison, time and resources; it requires a synergy between administrators, teachers and students — with the main workload and responsibility inevitably falling on the teacher. And for the time being at least, it requires honest appraisal and a willingness to engage in responsible experiment — because information technology is still in a transitional stage. … For the time being it is necessary to talk in terms of integration as a process to be achieved rather than as a state to be analysed — because although the technology is increasingly pervasive, its applications in all areas of society, including education, are still being explored. (Concluding Remarks, para. 1)

McCarthy's quote stands almost in opposition to how computers are being used in many Hong Kong schools at present where the focus is how students may fit into the demands (or limits, perhaps) made (or imposed) by specific software programs. The corollary of this point is then that even if schools do have two multimedia learning centers — physically sufficient for 25% of the curriculum to perhaps be "delivered" by IT — this may not, in itself, be worth much. Indeed, in the U.S. many schools are beginning to question whether multimedia centers are in fact the way to go: whether schools really need such large monolithic resource centers, which are expensive and become obsolete quicker than would be hoped (Technology, 1999).

Allied to the issue of integration is that of time required for planning a curriculum, developing, identifying, acquiring software, or materials, that are appropriate to an IT medium. Such a move does not come quickly; at the very least, it requires that teachers be given time to plan the curriculum, time to prepare materials, time to coordinate IT activities. As can be seen from the response of panel chairs in the current study, very little, if any, allowance at all is made for these factors.

Law et al. (2000) recommend more support for panel chairs in school to enable them to provide *leadership* in a manner that might be expected of a head of department (p. 210). Another recommendation is that curriculum resource development efforts be made so that IT resources use can be built around skills and concepts more important for students than using IT time to develop essentially expository materials that simply mirror existing textbooks (pp. 209–210). This echoes an earlier comment by Law (1999) concerning the call for leadership to move IT education in Hong Kong beyond a static "transmission paradigm." While she acknowledges that the HKSAR Government's five-year strategy (Education and Manpower Bureau, 1998) has allocated a tremendous amount of money to the IT education initiative, she warns that unless the possibilities offered by IT encompass a vision of the community as a whole, it is possible the IT initiative may end up with a "… proliferation of 'technology rich' but educationally poor schools and classrooms" (p. 8).

As Law et al. (2000) note, the late 1990s saw a great deal of resources being allocated to IT in schools. With a less favorable economic climate facing us as we move into the 2000s, it is perhaps worth considering how IT might be moved forward in light of a shrinking resource base. Currently, many schools are developing their own independent strategies for IT (to an extent, therefore, reinventing the wheel). Despite the existence of worthwhile Hong Kong-based Websites such as the Education and Manpower Bureau-sponsored *HkedCity* (http://www.hkedcity.net), little cooperation or collaboration takes place between schools. This is a gap which could be lessened since the opportunity for networking which the Internet, and such locally based sites as *HkedCity*, offer have substantial potential. A lot of material exists, and if schools could "cluster," collaborating to create organizational frameworks for sharing in areas of mutual benefit (age, ability levels, for example) much might be achieved. Further, given that schools are generally quite textbook-based, the Website support provided by major publishers (see, for example, http://www.oupchina.com.hk) could also be drawn upon and made use of. Nonetheless, as I have mentioned, cooperation

and collaboration such as these require the input of staff time in conceptualizing and planning — for which provision would need to be made.

I would like to conclude with a comment made by one participant at the end of her questionnaire:

> I've observed many English lessons in this academic year. The best lessons can be non-IT based. The good lesson that is IT-based is almost like a show for a Cert ED assignment and school observation. We can't have shows all the time.

It is a telling comment with regard to the place of IT in the Hong Kong English language curriculum. Although the hardware is in place in many schools, IT lessons are still being viewed by many teachers essentially as performances to fulfill their IT quota of 25% class time. Although the Government may be able to stipulate 25% IT time in terms of *quantity*, militating on *quality* is perhaps not so easily achieved.

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Appendix   Questionnaire to Panel Chairs — IT and English Language Teaching

Please tick, circle or enter details as appropriate.

1. How would you rate the facilities in your school for conducting whole-class IT-based English language teaching?
   [ ] excellent   [ ] adequate   [ ] so-so   [ ] inadequate
   [ ] extremely inadequate

2. (If you have an MMLC), how many computers do your students have access to in the MMLC? _____

3. How well is IT-based English language teaching in your school supported in terms of …. (circle)

	A great deal				Very little
technical support and backup	5	4	3	2	1
the financial side (money for software)	5	4	3	2	1
training for teachers	5	4	3	2	1
time for materials development	5	4	3	2	1
time for coordination	5	4	3	2	1

4. What is the position concerning IT coordinators for English language?
   [ ] one for the whole English panel   [ ] one for each form
   [ ] no IT coordinator

5. What is your school's policy on encouraging the use of IT in English language classes?
   [ ] very encouraging   [ ] encouraging   [ ] neutral
   [ ] not very encouraging   [ ] not encouraging at all

6a. Does your school have a policy on how much English language class time should be IT-based?
   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

6b. If "yes" above, what percent of your school's English language teachers' class time is supposed to involve the use of IT? (circle as appropriate)
   100   90   80   70   60   50   40   30   20   10   0

7. This term, what percent of **your own** English language teaching would
    you say has actually involved the use of IT? (circle as appropriate)
    100   90   80   70   60   50   40   30   20   10   0

8. In general, how worthwhile do you feel IT-based English language teaching
    is?
    [ ]   very worthwhile   [ ]   worthwhile   [ ]   no opinion
    [ ]   not worthwhile   [ ]   not worthwhile at all

9. How much do you yourself enjoy IT-based English language classes?
    [ ]   very much indeed   [ ]   quite a lot
    [ ]   not much   [ ]   not at all

10. How much do your students enjoy IT-based English language classes?
    [ ]   very much indeed   [ ]   quite a lot
    [ ]   not much   [ ]   not at all

11. What do you feel IT-based lessons' success (or lack of it) have been due to?
    (Rank order from "1" to "6," where "1" indicates most important and "6"
    least important.)

the IT English language materials	
the school's IT facilities	
my own teaching ability	
the students' attitude toward IT	
the students' attitude toward English	
other factor: _____	

12. How would you rate your general attitude toward using IT in the English
    language classroom?
    [ ]   very positive   [ ]   positive   [ ]   neutral
    [ ]   negative   [ ]   very negative

13. To what extent is the use of IT **integrated** into the English language
    curriculum in your school?
    [ ]   strongly integrated   [ ]   some integration
    [ ]   IT use is fairly ad hoc   [ ]   IT use is very ad hoc

14. How do you feel concerning the ED policy that "25% of English language teaching should be IT-based"?

[ ] strongly agree   [ ] agree   [ ] no opinion

[ ] disagree   [ ] strongly disagree

15. How achievable do you feel the ED policy is that "25% of English language teaching should be IT-based"?

[ ] very achievable   [ ] achievable   [ ] no opinion

[ ] unrealistic   [ ] very unrealistic

16. How would you rate **yourself** with regard to the "IT competency levels"? (see other side)

[ ] Upper intermediate   [ ] Intermediate   [ ] Basic

17. What percent of the English language teachers on your panel would you place at the different "IT competency levels"?

[%] Basic   [%] Intermediate

[%] Upper intermediate