Chapter 13

Designing an Online Interactive Learning Program to Improve Chinese Migrant Children's Internet Skills:
A Case Study at Hangzhou Minzhu Experimental School

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to design and implement an online interactive learning program to improve migrant children's Internet skills. With the help of the Italian Association of Media Education, the authors designed an online program (http://yzj.edulife.eu/j/?lang=en) comprised of five interactive learning modules, including an array of practice activities to support students' development of retrieving, assessing, storing, producing, presenting, and exchanging information. During the 2011 spring semester, 143 fourth and fifth grade students from Minzhu Experimental School were invited to attend the program with the guidance of three ICT educators and two researchers. Pre- and post-tests and interviews examined the effectiveness of the program. Data analysis found that migrant children's Internet self-efficacy and Internet exploratory behavior were significantly improved by attending the program. Based on observed program limitations, suggestions for improvement are proposed in the last section of the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most relevant phenomena of the last decade is the rise and development of the new digital media which brings new opportunities as well as new challenges for this generation of children. Indeed, as emphasized by the OECD (2011), access to the Internet may have qualitative, as well as quantitative, consequences in terms of educational opportunities. The ability to navigate and use the Internet effectively makes a difference for full participation in a knowledge-based society.

Those individuals who are able to access useful information from all types of media and create meaningful information for the public will have more and better opportunities to survive in the current digitalized society. In this context, media skills become increasingly important for personal and professional development. For these reasons, the concept of media literacy is drawing the attention of the public, especially among educational researchers, policy makers and school teachers.

In Western countries the reflection around the issues relating to the impact of media and technologies on literacy, education and society goes back at least to the seventies, involving scholars from different fields (e.g., cultural and communication studies to sociology, pedagogy and etc.) and raising new areas of study such as Media Education (ME).

ME is defined as the educational process that takes place inside and outside formal educational institutions through which media literacy is developed (Buckingham, 2003). Around the world, ME has more than an eighty year history. The pioneering countries include the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, the United States, Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Austria, and Switzerland. Compared with this, China is just at its beginning. The concept of ME, indeed, was first introduced in Chinese literature in 1997 (Bu, 1997). Although the first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed rapid development of ME in some Chinese urban schools (Peng & wang, 2008,

2010, 2012; Shao, 2006; Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2009), ME-related instructional programs is still very rare in the basic Chinese education system.

In this framework, this study presents and discusses the results of a web-based ME program addressed to elementary schools in Hangzhou, China, by focusing on the performance analysis of migrant children involved in a ME program named "The Chinese Way to Media Education." The study is part of a larger project called "The Chinese Way to Media Education" supported by the Italian Association of Media Education (MED). The project aims to improve Chinese elementary school students' digital and media literacy through teacher professional development and involving students in innovative practices of learning about the media.

Prior to describing the research study, we provide a brief review of the literature about media/digital literacy and relevant background information about the development of the "migrant children school" in China.

BACKGROUND

An Overview on the Concepts of Media and Digital Literacy/Competence

The term 'media literacy' first emerged in the 1970s in the United States as part of the television literacy programs within the academic curriculum (Buckingham, 2003). Today it is widely used around the world and some related expressions include information literacy, digital literacy/competence, digital and media literacy, or information and media literacy. According to a popular definition, media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, communicate and create media (Aufderheide, 1993; Tyner, 1998; Livingstone, 2003).

In a similar vein, Celot and Tornero (2008) classified the skills and capacities of media literacy

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