

World's biggest book fair studies classroom of future

October 12 2012, by Frederic Happe



Visitors look at e-books for children at the 64th Frankfurt Book Fair in Frankfurt, Germany, on October 10, 2012. The digital world is knocking at the classroom door, but it is not simply a matter of shifting from paper to screen, educational experts and interactive content producers warn.

The digital world is knocking at the classroom door, but it is not simply a matter of shifting from paper to screen, educational experts and interactive content producers warn.

While portable devices such as the [smartphone](#) and [tablet computer](#) have revolutionised daily life for millions of people by enabling access to the Internet, schools have largely remained untouched by new technology.

But children, who are one of the central themes of the [Frankfurt Book Fair](#) this year, paradoxically tend to be more savvy at handling the devices and are sometimes viewed as intuitively digital.

The fair, which attracts publishers, authors, translators and multimedia companies from more than 100 countries, can experience what a classroom of the future might look like, with biology or chemistry brought to life on a screen thanks to [3D glasses](#) and a remote control.

However, experts believe schools will not switch to digital overnight and that any transition would not be without growing pains.

US consultant on education and digital matters Ron Reed said there was "a precious limited number of minutes in a day" when meaningful interaction occurred between a teacher and a student.



Photographers take pictures Chinese author Mo Yan's 2012 Nobel Literature Prize winning book at the Unionsverlag booth at the 64th Frankfurt Book Fair on October 11, 2012. The digital world is knocking at the classroom door, but it is not simply a matter of shifting from paper to screen, educational experts and interactive content producers warn.

"So there is a requirement that the content or the tool must contribute, and it must be more than a 'nice to have', it must be 'must have' and replace something with greater efficiency and power," he said.

He warned against focusing only on a [digital transition](#) rather than a change in the overall way children learn.

"It's clearly about methodology, not just tools, and it needs to be not about products, it needs to be about practices," he said.

Even with the advent of new technology in the classroom, experts

believe the role of the teacher will not gradually disappear and will continue to be key to learning, albeit with digitalised backup.

"You still need supportive teachers and good teaching... without that, technology would become nothing more than a [distraction](#) in the classroom," said Linda Zecher, chief executive of [school](#) book publishers Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH).

First, though, steps to equip schools with the technology are needed.

Several years ago Portugal sold hundreds of thousands of computers for 50 euros (\$65) each to schoolchildren and consequently saw improvements in its school performance tables, according to Kirstin Panton of Microsoft Partners in Learning, which promotes new technology in education.

And, say the experts, teachers need the training to ensure that embracing the new technology bears fruit.

Four schools in the US state of California used a curriculum developed on the i-Pad by HMH to teach algebra, Zecher said, noting that when it was correctly implemented, students' results increased markedly, whereas no improvement was seen when it was poorly put into practice.

And Lewis Bronze, chief executive and co-founder of Espresson Education, a company offering interactive content to teachers and schools, stressed the need to follow up once the devices were in schools.

"Commercial companies which sell products to schools have the responsibility not to just sell and walk away, but to help the teachers implement the products that we sold them," he said.

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: World's biggest book fair studies classroom of future (2012, October 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-world-biggest-fair-classroom-future.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.