Call for UK schools to embrace technologies

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Clip transcript:

Narrator:
In the majority of schools in the UK, the future has been locked out. So argues two Open University academics who are dismayed by how – despite the finance spent on tablets and computers – schools still teach predominantly using paper.

Teresa Cremin:
In my research, working with multiple teachers across five different local authorities, we noticed that lots of teachers were what we call 'digitally blind'. They found it hard to notice – or had to be helped to notice – the presence of digital media in children's lives. Part of the reason I think they find that difficult is because, in the context of schooling, the literacy is defined and framed, as arguably book-bound, as print-related. What we need to be recognising, and research and evidence says very clearly, is that teachers are in the driving seat for defining what counts as literacy in their classrooms. The profession now needs to recognise that, and take hold of that responsibility and lead with it. Not only in the moment-to-moment teaching and learning, but also in the wider assessment that accompanies that.

Narrator:
The academics suggest that this focus on books in the curriculum and assessments separates the worlds of 'home' and 'school', preventing children using their digital expertise and passions.

Peter Twining:
I've been doing research on the use of ICT in schools for the last 20-plus years. In 2013/14 we did 22 case studies in English schools, we did 13 case studies in Australian schools, and my current research is working with 18 schools across the UK. And across those schools what we're seeing is teachers reporting that there are disincentives for them to use digital technologies, so the OFSTED inspectors are expecting to see handwriting. Teachers are talking about having to have a paper trail – literally a paper trail – to demonstrate what their children have been doing, and what they've been learning. And teachers are reporting to me about how they're having to stop using digital technology before they come up to assessments, so that the children can practice handwriting, getting their handwriting muscles into shape so they can write for prolonged periods of time, and re-learning how to write a paper-based assignment. So there's lots of evidence to suggest that schools are being disincentivised and inhibited from using digital technology effectively.

Teresa Cremin:
I think the OU's particularly interested in trying to enrich what's happening in the curriculum, and support professionals and teachers, because our research is trying to feed into influencing policy and supporting practitioners in the classroom – to make a difference to young people's lives.

Peter Twining:
If I wanted to bring about change in schools, I would change the assessment system. I would change what children are assessed in doing, so that we were measuring the things that we think are really important. And if you did that, teachers would change what they teach almost straight away.