



Miss Josephine teaches spelling to Shankiri on the school iPad while Joyson looks on, ...wondering if this is a good idea.

Should We Use The Latest Technology To Teach In Our Schools?

The choice is more exciting than ever before: there are computers, projectors and cameras, interactive whiteboards and tablets, and wonderfully colourful and scientifically contrived software. “Just think what we could do if we had one of those...” is a frequent exclamation heard in every staffroom. But do we really need all, or indeed any, of these things in our schools?

The advantages of using the latest technology appear compelling from a teaching point of view: complex problems are best explained by animations, images speak a thousand words and are more memorable, experiments too dangerous or too expensive for the lab can be demon-

strated with ease, teachers do not have to plan their lessons anymore or even **mark their pupils’ work** as the software does everything for them, and pupils are empowered to embark upon individual journeys of discovery etc..

While all this can be true, we **don’t often hear the opposing arguments**: the use of technology discourages abstract thought (Aristotle and St. Thomas gave all their teaching orally—not a blackboard in sight), too many pre-prepared images clog up the imagination and diminish creativity; educational software can lead to intellectual laziness (you just have to click on the button to get the answer); concentration span, attention

to detail and perseverance also suffer; each child becomes their own teacher and so respect for authority, communication skills and even social skills remain undeveloped. It also costs a fortune and requires time and special skills to set up and operate.

The answer to the question, therefore, would seem to be a nuanced “no”. **Technology has a peripheral role in the classroom—teaching sciences and occasionally the arts—but not for the development of critical thinking, creativity, discipline or social interaction.** It is clearly indispensable for administration and lesson preparation, but for teaching, it should be regarded as a limited tool, **not a teacher replacement.** Ω