

The Guardian



How has technology transformed the role of a teacher?

Technology allows students to become more independent in the classroom. But is the change from teacher to facilitator a positive move for the profession? Mike Britland is firmly in favour

Mike Britland

Tue 18 Jun 2013 07.00 BST

When I went to school it was common place for a teacher to place a text book in front a set of students and offer the simple yet daunting line, "copy that". There would be no talking to either the teacher or fellow pupils. For me lessons seemed to drag so much that I wasn't engaged in the subject material. I'm proud to say that I became a teacher in spite of the education I received; I believed that I could and would do a better job. This task was made easier through the use of technology in the classroom.

During 10 years in the profession, I've seen technology alter the role the teacher almost beyond all recognition. Teachers have undergone a Kafkaesque metamorphosis from Mr Chips to Mr Jobs; wooden, flip-lid desks have been replaced by iPads. The question we have to ask is, has this change from teacher to that of facilitator of learning been positive? Undeniably so, in my opinion.

Making use of technology to allow students the freedom to discover solutions to problems both independently and collaboratively is a force for good. As educators we strive for students to engage with our subject beyond a superficial level. We want them to be active learners,

learners who have a thirst for discovery and knowledge. Technology places the world in the hands of every student inside the confines of your classroom.

There are many ways in which technology can be used in the classroom to engage students and facilitate exciting, engaging and interesting lessons. I'm not going to ignore the fact that there is a cost attached to most things, but it's about getting more bang for your buck, as our American cousins would say. Whatever you choose to use you need to make sure that you're getting it for the right reasons.

If you're not used to allowing your students space to guide their own learning then I can see how this all might seem intimidating; don't let it be. For many of us it feels counterintuitive to allow our students the space to discover solutions as these might not be the ones that we want them to find. Allowing the use of technology in my classroom has freed me from my lesson-plan shackles. It feels strange at first but the this type of emancipation is addictive

We all feel the stresses of getting students through exam courses and allowing them the freedom to wander is sometimes too much for some to allow. However, in my experience allowing the freedom to search and discover the subject through technology has fostered a love for my subject.

The best teachers that I have seen using technology to aid independent learning are the ones who have embraced the power that is already in the pockets of students. Most students have powerful devices, primed and ready to go in their pockets - the dreaded mobile phone. If you're lucky like me, your school will see the power that these wonders hold. Allowing students to unholster these weapons is a liberating experience for both teacher and student. Filming a peer assessment or recording a group discussions and uploading to AudioBoo is yet another way of engaging students.

Allowing yourself the opportunity to do something new and using technology as the tool can open up a cave of treasures that hooks the attention of the student and once you have that it can lead them anywhere.

Mike's tips for getting started with technology in the classroom

- . Do plan how you're going to use the technology in advance. How is it going to aid the learning of your students? If it isn't going to aid teaching and learning then you shouldn't use it
- . Don't buy the latest fad product. There has been a temptation for schools to replace laptops for tablets. This might have been successful for some schools but as good as tablets are, they aren't ready to replace laptops ... yet
- . Do invest in good CPD in brushing up your ICT skills. This doesn't mean that you have to pay an expensive consultant. Simply ask your ICT department for some training or advice. Also, ask colleagues, NQTs or PGCE students for some fresh technology ideas
- . Don't give up. You might try something once and it doesn't work but don't let that put you off. Try and discover what works best for you and your students. If that doesn't work then try something else
- . Do focus on how technology can aid not hinder student progress

This content is brought to you by Guardian Professional. Looking for your next role? Take a look at Guardian jobs for schools for thousands of the latest teaching, leadership and support jobs.

Since you've been here ...

... some things have changed. Whilst advertising revenues across the media are still falling fast, more people are helping to fund The Guardian's independent, investigative journalism than ever. Which means we now stand a fighting chance. But we still need your help.

The Guardian is editorially independent. Our journalism is free from commercial bias and not influenced by billionaire owners, politicians or shareholders. No one edits our editor. No one steers our opinion. This is important because it enables us to give a voice to the voiceless, challenge the powerful and hold them to account. We keep our factual, honest reporting open to all, not just for those who can afford it. And we want to keep it that way, for generations to come.

If everyone who reads our reporting, who likes it, helps to support it, our future would be much more secure. **For as little as \$1, you can support the Guardian - and it only takes a minute. Thank you.**

Support The Guardian



Topics

- Professional development
- Teacher's blog
- Teaching tips
- Schools
- Teaching
- IT for schools
- blogposts