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Greig White

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Why China's schools were pandemic ready: Children ill from school can still participate in learning via avatars

Dr Ryan Thomas Williams

China are leading the way in the digital revolution happening right now in education. Children too ill to go to school now have access to technology where they can watch lessons from home and participate using their tablets. The Financial Times reports this technology "enhances learning experiences for teachers and children".

This video has been embedded using this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJzVXwacRA>

Here are some interesting articles which relate to the development of technology in China's education system:

- Classroom robots stand in for children too ill to go to school- <https://www.ft.com/content/238d56e2-077f-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5>
- Inside China's surveillance state- <https://www.ft.com/content/2182eebe-8a17-11e8-bf9e-8771d5404543>

In the U.K. we are pushing similar aids. It is acknowledged by practitioners that new technologies are allowing literacy gaps to be bridged. Dankova and Gina (2011) describes technology as instrumental in allowing children who are unable to access the curriculum, to actively become involved. Much of this was expediated during the pandemic and period of remote working.

Many sceptics say the very fact this robot is marketed as "combatting isolation", confirms the fear of modern technology being detrimental to our social skills.

Sharon Linde, a researcher from the U.S. claims computers in classrooms prevent children from developing social skills such as leadership, empathy and conflict resolution.

My opinion on this remains consistent. For 3 years, I have been advocating the use of more technology to be integrated into our classrooms. Not only as an aid but almost to the extent that technology can dictate the curriculum. Why are we devoting time teaching children basic metal and woodwork skills (industries which are in decline in the U.K) and no time teaching children coding and software skills (the fastest growing IT sector and part of a £180billion industry)?

In essence, technology is ready to be fully integrated in our classrooms. Why aren't they? **a) funding, b) accessibility & c) teachers do not know how to use them effectively.**

Sharon's argument about computers hindering social skills can easily be broken down. Firstly, we know that social media can act as therapy for young people. It can alleviate stress, enhance confidence and decrease anxiety. In response to it being detrimental to conflict resolution, I must disagree. By teaching children the importance of posting online, it makes them more accountable. This is hugely important when involved in conflicts online.



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