

Recommended Reading: *Primary Schools and ICT: Learning from Pupil Perspectives*

Reviewed by Janice Gustafarro

Authors Neil Selwyn and John Potter of the London Knowledge Lab, a research unit of the University of London, and Sue Cranmer, a researcher for Futurelab in the UK, are interested in understanding why technology use in elementary schools has not lived up to its anticipated potential. Their intent is not to advocate for a complete overhaul of the education system in light of new technologies or to take the opposite stance of calling for the removal of technologies as teaching tools, but rather to find out what might be done to more effectively incorporate technology based teaching methods. The focus of this book is on the authors' research with elementary school children's use of and attitudes toward Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at home and at school. These technologies include word processing and presentation applications, social networking tools, and electronic games. In addition to presenting their research, the authors also provide balanced coverage of the history and issues surrounding technology usage in schools. Although British schoolchildren and schools are the subject of the research, many of the results and recommendations would be applicable in other countries.

In making their case for studying this topic, the authors describe future workforce demands, safety concerns, and the need to keep up with ever-changing technologies. The authors also point out the good fit between Web 2.0 tools and the emphasis in elementary school curricula on creating, sharing, and working in groups. Additional comments include the potential of ICT use for student centered learning and the complaint that ICT use is currently too formal and constrained to realize the possible benefits. Bearing in

mind the current student centered focus in education and the pervasiveness of technology in students' lives, the authors created a study to find out students' thoughts about and experiences with technology in and out of school.

Several hundred students between the ages of 7 and 11 from 5 elementary schools, ranging from urban to small town, participated in the study. Using a mixed methods approach, the authors collected data through a questionnaire; student-led and researcher-led focus group discussions; student drawings representing visions of future use of ICT in schools; and electronically submitted documents, images, and videos describing how technology use in school could be more like its use outside of school. Interestingly, students made little use of the electronic submission option, which, in itself, suggests that the processes for electronic submission can be too cumbersome or that some students may lack experience with creating digital content.

In some cases, the detailed results presented are not surprising. It is also possible that results would be somewhat different today than they were during the 2007/2008 school year when this research was done. However, readers may be surprised by some of the findings. For example, girls, in particular, exhibited a high level of interest in using technology to write stories and poems outside of school for their own entertainment. On the other hand, some students did not like the idea of using technology in school at all. Generally, the authors observed less enthusiasm for technology use in school than for its use out of school and attributed this primarily to the students' lack of control over technology use when in school. The authors shared the

findings with teachers at the schools studied and took the teachers' suggestions into account when making recommendations.

This well organized and clearly written book would be of interest to school librarians as well as to teachers, school administrators, and researchers working with elementary school children. Librarians, in general, would find useful the recommendations on ways to become more confident in their use of ICT in teaching information literacy. Other readers might find the children's drawings and focus group comments enlightening. Anyone interested in some perspective on the potential benefits and the difficulties of effectively incorporating new technologies in schools would find a good introduction to this topic in the early chapters of the book.

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Selwyn, N., Potter, J., and Cranmer, S. (2010). *Primary Schools and ICT: Learning from Pupil Perspectives*. New York: Continuum. ISBN 9781855395787

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