

New UK video games regulation a 'smokescreen'

August 1 2012



New legislation to stop children playing inappropriate video games will fail unless government deals with the underlying issue of irresponsible parenting, research has found.

Video games are currently given an age-appropriate rating by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) and the games manufacturers themselves using a voluntary industry framework, but critics argue these are ineffective because it does not prevent [children](#) playing games designed for [adults](#).

According to legislation being introduced this week, responsibility will be transferred to the Video Standards Council (VSC), which will rate games according to the Pan European [Game Information system](#) (PEGI).

But Dr Nick Robinson School of Politics and International Studies at the

University of Leeds, believes the new rules are just “a smokescreen” because they enable Government to look like it is acting when in fact it is abdicating its responsibilities.

He said: “The new framework will not deal with the real problem of inappropriate games getting into the hands of children. It’s politically expedient and has been developed to avoid tackling the real issue of irresponsible parenting.

“What this shows is that the issue of video games may seem rather trivial at first, but it has many implications for politicians. To really begin to sort this issue, the state would have to be prepared to prosecute parents who purchase and allow their children to play inappropriate games.”

The video games industry is expected to yield worldwide sales of hardware and software of \$87bn in 2012. Dr Robinson studied research on a major educational programme in the US in (date) designed to inform parents and children of the dangers of inappropriate video games in.

Dr Robinson said: “Experience shows us that in the US, despite a concerted effort to educate parents and children about the ratings system, which has led to high levels of understanding, a significant minority of parents still purchase inappropriate material for their children. Why should the system in the UK be any different?

“Historically, the companies that produce these games have been largely absolved from the burden of responsibility because it is seen as the job of the state and the regulator. Perhaps paradoxically, this means that this has legitimised the growth of more violent games as developers are shielded by the ratings framework.”

[‘Video game](#) and violence: legislating on the ‘politics of confusion’ by Dr

Nick Robinson appears in the current issue of *The Political Quarterly*.

Provided by University of Leeds

Citation: New UK video games regulation a 'smokescreen' (2012, August 1) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-08-uk-video-games-smokescreen.html>

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