

Rise of the screens: YouTube most popular digital content in Australian classrooms

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QUT Distinguished Professor Stuart Cunningham is pictured. Credit: QUT Marketing & Communication

A QUT report suggests Australian schools should be more flexible with the use of YouTube and other social media platforms to embrace new

trends in 'edutainment', allowing teachers to maximize the value of 'teachable' and 'in the moment' content.

The [Australian Screen Content in Education: Digital Promise and Pitfalls](#) project and report, led by QUT's Professor Stuart Cunningham and Associate Professor Michael Dezuanni, reveals YouTube is by far the single most often used source. Teachers are time-poor, report finding the right content challenging, and are sometimes restricted by school policies about social media.

But teachers also trust ABC, SBS and Australian Children's Television Foundation content and want to use it in the classroom.

"Screen content that is successful in schools is contemporary, high quality, curriculum relevant and short," said Professor Cunningham.

"Students expect screen content that is all of that as well as fun and catchy. They equate poor production values to untrustworthy content.

"YouTube is the access portal of choice and every supplier of content to schools should have a YouTube strategy. Other popular services include ClickView, ABC iView and Splash, SBS On Demand and of course the faithful DVD. "

The research project was funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Program and conducted between 2014-2016 in conjunction with project partners Screen Australia, The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the Special Broadcasting Service and the Australian Children's Television Foundation.

The report includes insights from producers and distributors, as well as interviews with hundreds of teachers, students and industry representatives, and observations of classroom practice. It contains

recommendations to further develop opportunities for Australian producers and distributors.

"Teachers are newly empowered in their search for arresting, relevant screen-based material for their classrooms and have flocked to the ubiquitous, free resources available on YouTube, despite it, and other social media platforms, being restricted in some state education jurisdictions," Professor Cunningham said.

"We found there is a definite hunger for Australian content, particularly featuring Indigenous themes. So there is an opportunity there for local suppliers but only a few have mastered the complex nature of the education market and developed sufficiently robust, user-friendly and relevant platforms which can deliver at scale.

"New methods of digital distribution and access, ever greater emphasis on screen-based curriculum content and pedagogy, together with the rollout of the Australian Curriculum and its requirement for media arts in primary education provide potentially exciting opportunities for producers and distributors, but only if they configure content and access to fit curriculum structures, themes and modes of 'edutainment' prevalent in today's classrooms."

One of the most in-depth explorations of the distribution and use of screen media in education ever conducted in Australia, the report will be presented and debated at an industry and education forum in Sydney on 31 October. It can also be accessed [online](#).

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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