

MEDIA RELEASE

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English teachers split on legitimacy of digital games as a class text

More than half of Australian high school English teachers believe digital games are a legitimate text type to use in their teaching programs, but just 15 per cent have done so, Australian Catholic University research shows.

A study of 201 teachers from diverse schools has found those with less years of teaching experience were more likely to consider digital games as a valid learning tool and use them in the classroom.

But 80 per cent of those surveyed also said they had not received professional development on how to incorporate digital games-based learning into their teaching practice.

Lead researcher and ACU Senior Education Lecturer Dr Amanda Gutierrez said with digital games not listed as an example of a multimodal text in the Australian Curriculum for English, the lack of consensus among English teachers about the merit of using them in learning programs was understandable.

“There is still work to do around digital games being valued as an important multimodal text,” Dr Gutierrez said.

“Gaming is incredibly diverse, of great significance in the lives of many young people and crosses into other popular culture mediums. It would be remiss of English as a subject, which should include studies of influential and important texts, to ignore this growing area which includes such diversity of textual designs and genres.”

Data from the study, analysed by Dr Gutierrez and ACU researchers Professor Kathy Mills, Associate Professor Laura Scholes, Dr Luke Rowe, and Elizabeth Pink, and published in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, found:

- 58.6 per cent of teachers believe digital games are a legitimate text type, with 27.4 per cent unsure, and 14 per cent not considering them as valid texts for English programs.
- Teachers who viewed digital games as a legitimate text were 33 per cent more likely to have had 15 years or less teaching experience, compared with those who had 16 years or more.
- Teachers who had used digital games with their students were 260 per cent more likely to have 15 years or less experience. However, those who planned to use them in the future were 13 per cent more likely to have 16 or more years' experience.
- 85 per cent of respondents had not used digital games as a focus text in their English programs, with 74 per cent having no plans to do so in the future.
- 67 per cent said they had not used digital games to supplement other text studies, but 48 per cent reported being willing to do so in the future.
- Of those not using digital games as a focus or supplementary text, almost a quarter expressed limited knowledge of, and time to explore, how to use them in the classroom.
- 80 per cent of teachers had not received professional development on how to use digital games in their English programs, but 60 per cent had independently read articles, books, or chapters about them.

Dr Gutierrez said the use of digital games was a polarising issue for teachers and that explicit links to digital games-based learning was needed in the curriculum, with professional development made available for teachers.

“English is about understanding how texts and language contribute to multiple meanings about the world and people’s interpretations of the world. In the current context, multimodal texts are becoming the most significant way children and adolescents are engaging and interpreting their worlds,” she said.

“Cultural changes, and higher visibility and normalisation of gaming through media and events is more likely to invite English teachers to explore these types of cultural texts. We are seeing more representation of gaming, including virtual reality, in films, TV, and social media. Teachers need to be supported so that can be translated into effective and engaging teaching and learning practices in the classroom.”

Click [here](#) to access the study.

Media Contact: Mary Papadakis, 0448 491 059, mary.papadakis@acu.edu.au

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