

MEDIA RELEASE

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



CCTV could be coming to a school near you

CCTV could be coming to a school near you, according to research by a University of Tasmania honours student.

From in-depth interviews with six school principals, early childhood and primary school teachers, UTAS Faculty of Education student Amanda Yorke found that they perceive significant advantages to be achieved by using CCTV in schools.

“They see advantages around the areas of safety for teachers and students, support for managing student behaviour and the ability to monitor teacher and student performance long-term,” she said.

“But they were also conscious of possible disadvantages: privacy issues, misinterpretation of recorded evidence and the control of access to recorded material.”

While the Australian Education Union has detailed policies on CCTV use in schools, because of these perceived disadvantages Amanda’s research recommends future policies be produced through consultation with teachers, parents, students and community.

In the UK and the US many schools originally adopted CCTV so that students, staff and property could be safe from intruders and vandalism. Increasingly there has been a transition from predominantly external surveillance towards internal monitoring.

“The number of Australian schools with CCTV is rising – but there is no research on why this is happening or for what purpose CCTV is being used,” Amanda said.

The teachers interviewed believe the **advantages of CCTV** are:

- Safety, including the ability to review incidents to gain reliable evidence of events, and observe problems with aspects of the school environment including congestion and bullying;
- Behaviour management, with CCTV acting as an inappropriate behaviour deterrent and a way of finding out reasons for an incident.

Also the ability to provide parents with undeniable evidence of their child's behaviour;

- Monitoring teacher's performance – especially for teachers themselves to learn from viewing their own teaching.

They believe the ***disadvantages of CCTV*** are:

- Misinterpretation of evidence, especially with poor quality sound;
- Possible privacy infringement;
- Control of access to recorded material
- Use for teacher assessment leading to teachers losing confidence, feeling scrutinised and unwilling to take risks in their teaching;
- Communities and parents attributing negative connotations to schools with CCTV;
- Poor effects on student behaviour such as loss of confidence from feeling watched or increased attention-seeking.

Another risk is that older students especially learn to avoid areas covered by CCTV when behaving inappropriately or intentionally blocking the view available to cameras.

“This may involve students purposely standing between the camera and the individuals behaving inappropriately, with the purpose of preventing the recording of evidence,” Amanda said.

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