

Background information:

The first opinion piece was published on the website of the Centre For Independent Studies, a conservative organisation dedicated to the promotion of conservative values in public debate.

The second piece appeared on the technology website Slashgear, which reviews and reports news on technology such as phones and computers.

Text 1:

Smart move is to keep smart phones out of classrooms

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Smart phones have become a big educational talking point. This year, the French government banned the use of mobile phones in schools, while the New York City department of education has recently relaxed its strict ban on mobile phones in schools. The NSW government announced a review on the use of mobile phones in schools late last week.



A review might be useful, but schools don't have to wait for a government directive to set policies about mobile phones. Numerous schools already have strong restrictions on students' mobile phone use during school hours — some do not allow students to use phones at all, while others just prohibit their use in the classroom.

There are two key questions schools need to consider when deciding on their mobile phone policy — one is the socio-emotional impact, and the other is the effect on student learning.

There are multiple studies on the link between prevalence of mobile phone use and poorer mental health outcomes for children and adolescents; with some studies showing a weak negative relationship overall, and others finding a stronger one.

Research on the effect of smart phones on educational performance also points in the negative direction. A meta-analysis published earlier this year found a small negative relationship overall between mobile phone use and academic achievement; however this included phone use both in and out of school hours. Other researchers have found that phone use in class exacerbates educational inequalities. For example, a study comparing academic outcomes over time in English high schools with differing policies on mobile phone use found a significant improvement in performance by low-achieving students in schools that introduced bans, with little effect on high-achieving students.

Several factors are likely to contribute to the negative educational impact of phones and other personal electronic devices in classrooms. One of the most powerful is **distraction**, both for the student and for their classmates. But even if phones, tablets or laptops are being used for educational purposes such as note-taking, there is substantial evidence this is not optimal for learning, with numerous studies showing that writing notes by hand leads to better **comprehension and retention** of information than typing. There is also emerging evidence that reading on screens is different in quality to reading on paper.

Students have plenty of opportunities to use their phones when they are not in class. At the moment the risks outweigh the benefits and schools would be wise to limit their use.

Text 2:

Opinion: France's total ban on smartphones in schools is too extreme

JC Torres - Aug 2, 2018

A few days ago, French lawmakers passed legislation that was written to protect children from growing up like zombies enslaved to their smartphones and tablets. Such mobile devices will be banned in schools for children up to 15 years of age, both inside and outside classes. While it's definitely easy to see this as a victory against the smartphone addiction that is plaguing society, it could actually end up doing more harm than good when these kids become ill-prepared to face the realities of modern life.

There are countless studies on the psychological and physiological effects of prolonged exposure to screens and the social problems brought by the cover of online anonymity. But there are also studies that show how the use of such devices, or rather the easy access to digital content, provides benefits to mental or even social development. A total ban doesn't take those nuances into account. It simply says "no" and requires kids to either leave their phones at home or surrender them to the safety of school administrators during school hours. It's pretty much a nationwide and legal equivalent of a parenting technique that bans kids from access to games or from going out. Parents raising teens probably know how effective that technique can be.

More importantly, laws such as these paint mobile devices as the enemy, as a bad thing that must be avoided "until you're older". It develops a mentality in impressionable children that, consciously or unconsciously, would make them shun such technologies. And when they grow up and go out into the world, they might feel not only conflicted but even unprepared. It also creates an ironic dichotomy where schools treat mobile devices as negative influences yet also offer material on technology that revolves around them.

There is no argument that smartphones, social media, and the Internet at large have had harmful effects on humans, most especially children. They are problems that

need to be solved and young minds have to be protected from their negative influences. Perhaps more than parents, schools and academic institutions are actually in the perfect position to mold the minds of future generations, to educate them on proper use of technologies, and to prepare them for the future. Indiscriminate blanket bans such as this, however, simply shoves the problem inside a locker and pretend they no longer exist, at least not until they're 15.

Text 3:

Mobile phones to be banned in NSW public primary schools

Premier Gladys Berejiklian says they are distracting and cause stress in young children.

Australian Associated Press Thu 13 Dec 2018 12.07 AEDT



Mobile phones will be banned in NSW public primary schools from next year in an effort to ‘protect’ young children, says premier Gladys Berejiklian.