



## **GREEN, VIRTUAL, SOCIAL: The future of Asian education?**

A survey of public sector executives across Asia Pacific  
- Summary paper of main report -

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report argues that education organisations in Asia have reached a historical crossroads where they have to decide how best to leverage electronic resources for the production and delivery of education content. Our survey indicates an appetite for experimentation – as well as a requirement for evidence that new tools will deliver measurable value. This research also records the enduring power of paper-based materials in the learning environment, suggesting that the creative use of personalisation, and on-demand services will complement the shift towards digital education content creation and online delivery.

The early part of the study chronicles the use of IT tools and applications in areas such as campus-wide communications, digital marketing campaigns to attract new students, and how universities produce education material. The study found that the adoption of digital content is a clear trend in Asia Pacific. There are small but meaningful steps to overcome the barrier of entrenched paper culture.

When asked about the obstacles in new IT initiatives and the main challenge in ensuring information security, it is shown that the majority of respondents pointed the finger towards teachers. These findings are evidence of a growing recognition of the importance of the teacher's role and the greater need for their training and orientation on IT-related matters.

One of the most interesting set of answers in this survey comes in the section on producing education material, where a predominant number of institutes are leaning towards a mix of in-house production and outsourcing. That makes sense from economic, logistic and strategic standpoints; it also shows greater openness for outsourcing solutions. The study also reveals that the willingness to outsource grows as does the size of the education institute.

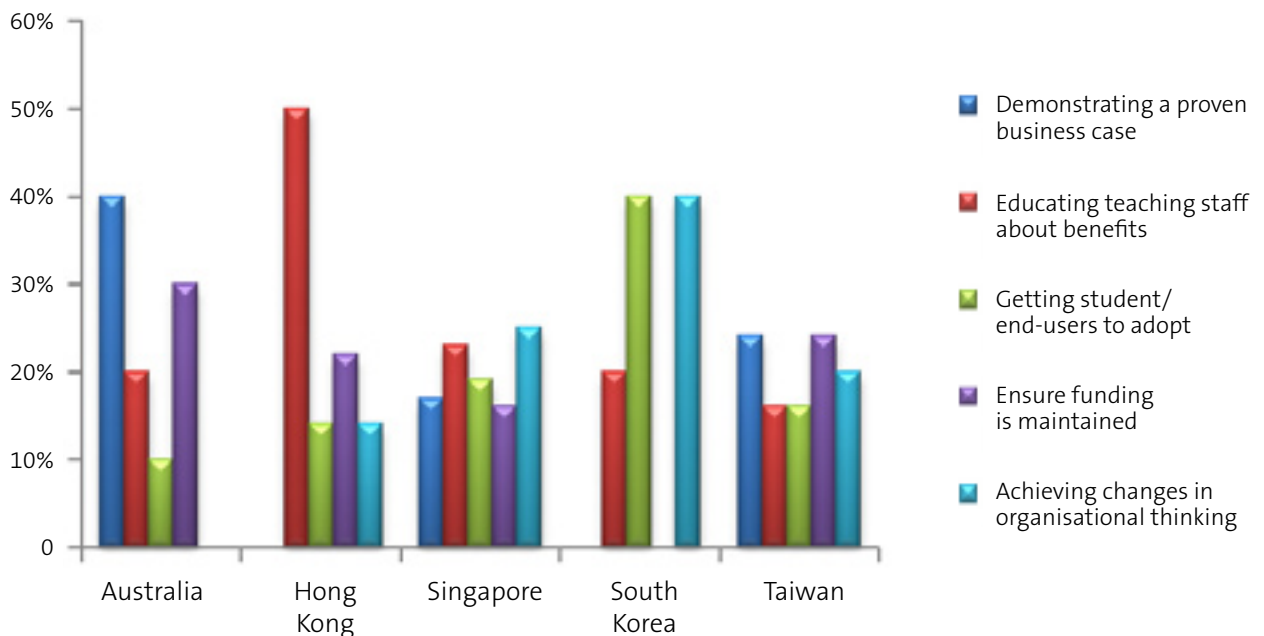
When the study analysed the data by size of organisation it shows that both the small and large institutes are ahead in adopting document management strategies – when compared to medium sized institutes. Furthermore, the study outlines the potential role of multifunction devices in providing digital document solutions in Asia-Pacific campuses.

Respondents tell us where they stand on issues like green initiatives, use of document-handling devices, and providing education material access to students. When looking at the key challenges in the device and document management environment, the data brings some useful indicators regarding hardware, pre-print material and manual document handling. The evidence also appears to show that effective document solutions become imperative for institutes that are growing in size.

The final part of the study elaborates how this all relates to the core issues of budgets and IT project cycles, and how document budgets are positioned within this equation.

## SYNOPSIS

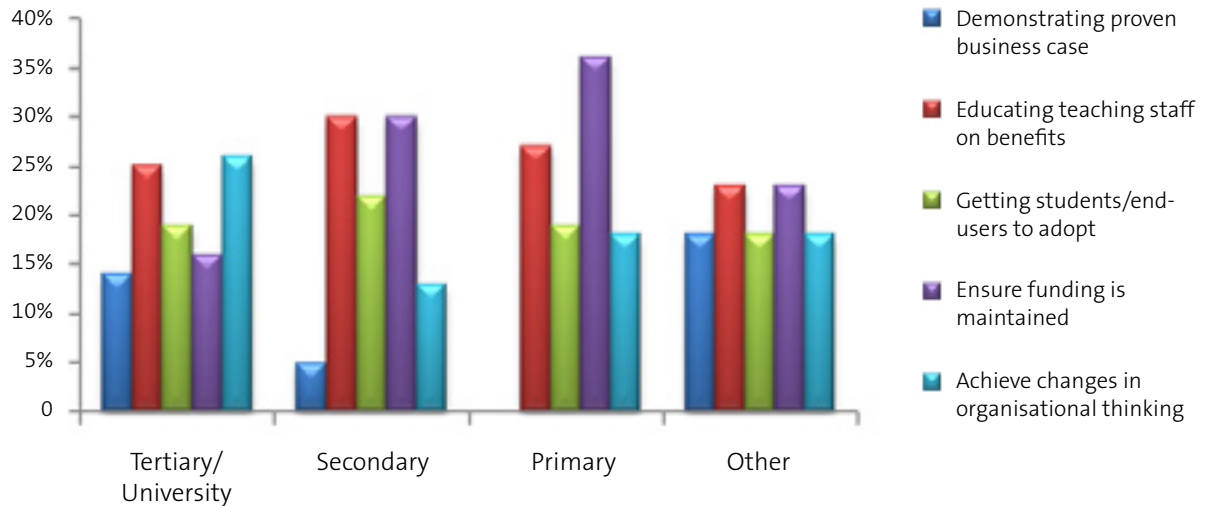
The survey findings, as shown in Figure 1, point to the critical role of teachers' in the successful implementation of IT initiatives and put an onus on them to gather behind new initiatives to achieve effective results. A senior IT teacher in a Malaysian institute revealed that during IT product demonstrations, it is quite common that one group of lecturers seems quite positive and another group doesn't. So it is quite difficult to reach a consensus on the merits and usability of a new technology. The figure below also shows how Singapore is taking a more proactive approach by putting greater emphasis on changes in organisational thinking, while demonstrating a proven business case is the top priority in Australia and Taiwan.



► *Figure 1 - Biggest obstacles to IT initiatives in developed countries*

When it comes to finding key obstacles to IT initiatives, predictably, senior management in education institutes have slightly different views of the key obstacles and issues when implementing new IT initiatives for the production and delivery of digital content in the education sector. A senior pedagogy expert in Singapore told this study that one of the biggest obstacles is cost because there is usually a large initial investment in the full-scale production and delivery of content in electronic format.

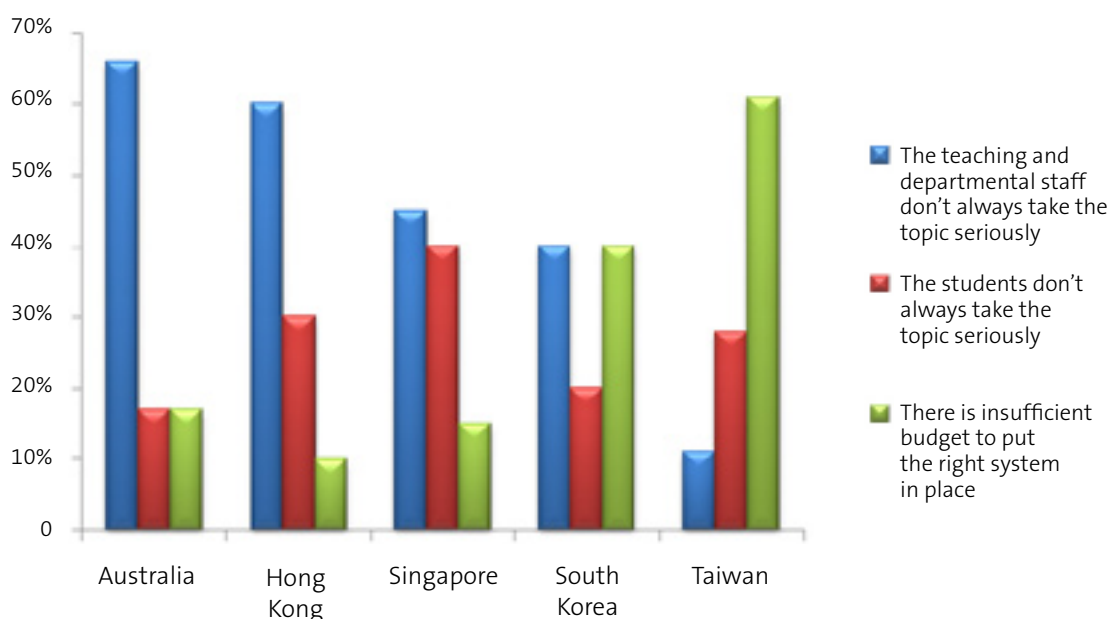
There is a broad consensus among education establishments in Asia that security will play an important role in digital content initiatives given the crucial need for procedures for classifying documents for different user levels.



► Figure 2 -The biggest obstacles to implementing new IT initiatives by type of education institute

The survey, however, reveals that the onus on ensuring information security within institutes falls on teachers and departmental staff more than anybody else. And that it is teachers - not students - who are more often responsible for security lapses within education institutes.

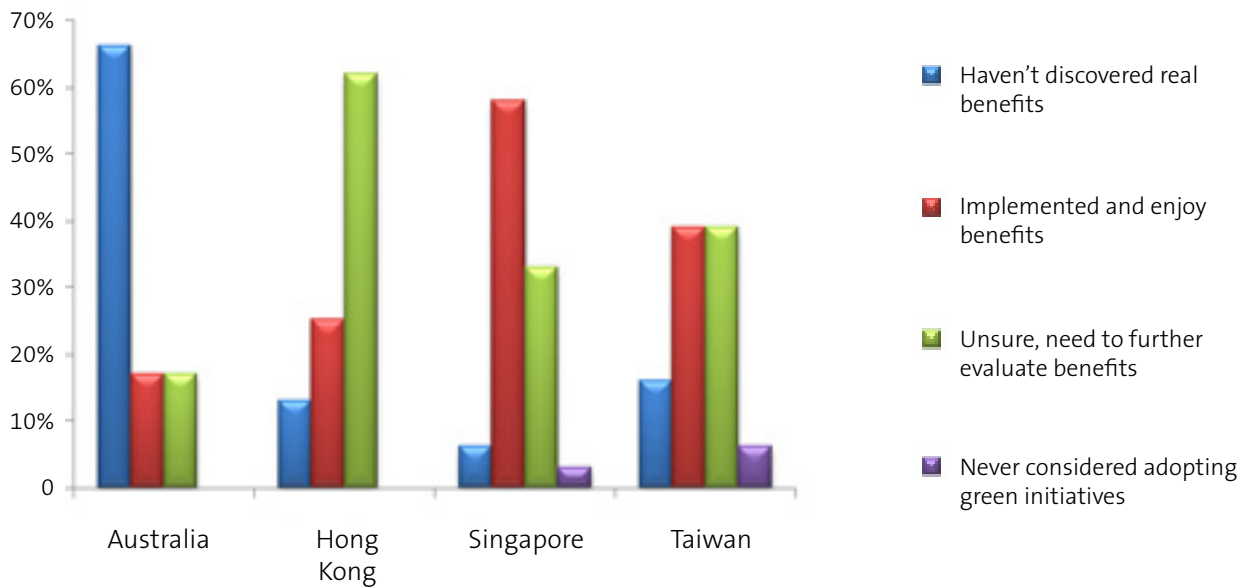
Figure 3 underscores the need for appropriate training and orientation of teaching staff.



► Figure 3 - Key information security challenges in developed IT locations

The education sector in locations with a proactive IT agenda, such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, has a clearer view of the benefits of green initiatives and they are taking an aggressive path to implementing these initiatives. A significant number of education institutes in these locations are currently evaluating the merits of green initiatives and so require necessary support in terms of awareness and proven business cases.

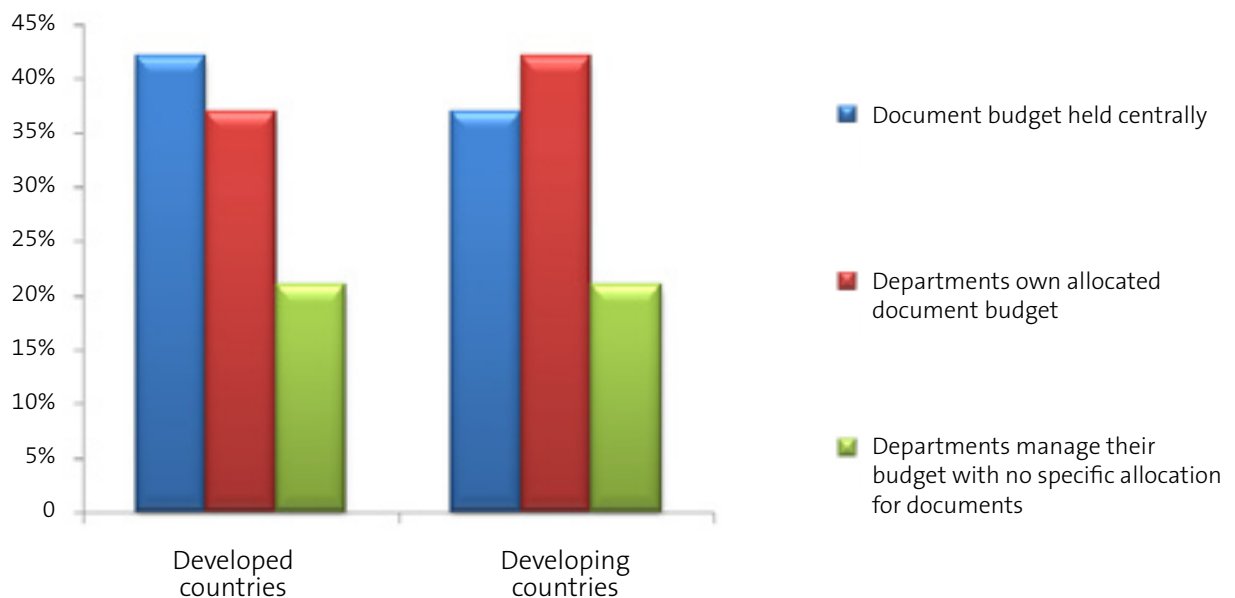
Figure 4 reveals some interesting data from Australia where most institutes seem to have a practical but unyielding view on green within campuses. This affirms our earlier finding on a more mature view of green causes: If it is expensive to be environmentally friendly, then people are not going to do it.



► Figure 4 - Investment in green initiatives in developed geographies

Lines are clearly drawn when it comes to patterns of document budget allocation in developed and developing countries. As shown in the figure below, more institutes in developed countries are inclined towards a document budget that is held centrally, while departments hold their own document budget in developing geographies.

About 20% of respondents in the survey belong to education institutes in which departments manage budgets with no specific allocation for documents. Within developed economies, education institutes without any document budget tally at around 20%. These findings clearly indicate that generally there is huge scope to improve document strategy and adopt effective digital content solutions centrally.



► Figure 5 - Comparison of document budget allocations in developed and developing IT economies

## **CONCLUSION**

The education world clearly sees digital documentation as a tremendous opportunity to minimise its reliance on paper. Digitisation can mean that education material is delivered to students in a much more efficient manner. The data in this study shows outsourcing to be a key trend for producing education material.

There is evidence of greater awareness for document strategies, and the adoption of digital tools like social networks speaks well for the potential of digital solutions. The opportunities borne out of electronic education are exciting for the education world as they allow for the better use of technology and save cost not only in paper distribution, but also in physical aspects like transportation and commuting. The main stimulus of this development is a reduction in cost, wider and faster distribution of information, faster revision of content and increased interaction that is facilitated by the Internet.

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