

MEDIA RELEASE

School improvement not enough, expert warns

ACER Research Conference 2012

28 August 2012: School improvement initiatives should occur within an innovative ‘learning ecosystem’ that engages a wide range of providers and partners, and would locate learning in a new variety of spaces and places, an international expert will tell delegates to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference today.

In the final keynote presentation of the conference, Board Director of the London-based not-for-profit, Innovation Unit, Ms Valerie Hannon will argue that the pursuit of school improvement is insufficient to address the challenges facing the world if it is to provide equitable, effective learning systems for all its citizens.

“School improvement is not enough. It is necessary, but not sufficient,” Ms Hannon said, speaking ahead of the conference.

Ms Hannon suggests system leaders and policy makers take a ‘split screen’ approach whereby, while school improvement continues to be pursued, simultaneously they create the conditions in which an innovative learning ecosystem can flourish. Such a mutually supportive system would involve existing and new education providers operating in both formal and informal contexts.

“Some innovators in education are questioning the idea of schools as the solution to the challenge of educating their young people,” Ms Hannon said.

Ms Hannon said a number of factors are forcing a change in the shape of schooling, including:

- Digital technology – the increased volume of knowledge; the ease of access to it; and transformed communication, collaboration and connectivity.
- Economic recession – education budgets across the developed world are contracting, while developing countries have no possibility of the kind of investment in public services historically enjoyed by the developed world.
- Globalisation – communities, economies and education itself are now globally connected.
- Demography – rapid population growth in developing countries is increasing demand for education, while the developed world’s ageing population will require lifelong learning.

“Conventional education systems are, on current trajectories, unlikely to be capable of the kind of change that is urgently needed,” Ms Hannon said.

“A thriving, innovative learning ecosystem would enable systems to strike a balance between improving today’s schools for today’s children with more radical shifts for the future,” she said.

The ACER Research Conference 2012, on the theme *School Improvement: What does the research tell us about effective strategies?*, takes place in Sydney from 26 to 28 August.

Further information is available from www.acer.edu.au/research-conference

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