

MEDIA RELEASE

Achieving educational quality for all

Research Conference 2014

5 August 2014: Achieving educational quality for all requires a focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners, according to research findings presented at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference in Adelaide, addressing the theme, *Quality and Equity: What does research tell us?*

Large-scale international surveys suggest a gender difference persists in favour of boys, ACER Director of Educational Monitoring and Research Dr Sue Thomson told conference delegates yesterday.

“The most recent OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey shows that Australia’s teenage girls have significantly higher average levels of anxiety about maths and significantly lower average levels of confidence and positive self-concept than boys,” Dr Thomson said. “If we are to improve the achievement of girls and increase their participation, focusing interventions on their motivation and interest may have little impact without addressing their confidence and self-concept.”

Dr Sara Glover from Victoria University reported on her research with Professor Stephen Lamb and Anne Walstab showing that the educational challenges facing regional and rural students arise from community characteristics but also school characteristics that influence available resources, staffing, specialist support and teachers’ access to professional development.

The University of Queensland’s Professor Robyn Gillies reported on the factors that contribute to the success of cooperative learning, including recent research in neuroscience explaining why cooperative learning supports improved student achievement in reading and writing, conceptual understanding and problem-solving, higher-level thinking and reasoning, and better interpersonal relationships among students with diverse learning needs and from diverse backgrounds.

Professor Petra Stanat from the Humboldt University of Berlin will today describe research based on PISA revealing that first- and second-generation immigrant students in Australia achieved significantly higher scores in the PISA 2012 mathematics test than their peers from native families, suggesting that the integration of immigrant students is ensured at the system level.

Professor Jennifer Gore from the University of Newcastle will today describe research showing that professional development that defines and maps quality in teaching has a positive impact on equity.

“The research shows that when students receive better quality pedagogy, there are improvements in student performance and a narrowing of equity gaps for disadvantaged students,” Professor Gore said, speaking ahead of her presentation.

Associate Professor Helen Askell-Williams from Flinders University will report on research showing that students show little evidence of more frequent use of good-quality learning strategies as they progress through high school. The finding suggests the need for explicit cognitive and metacognitive strategy instruction in secondary school, Professor Askell-Williams said.

Research Conference 2014 takes place in Adelaide from 3 to 5 August.

Further information is available from www.acer.edu.au/rc

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