Welcome
Welcome to the first Research eLert, an electronic newsletter which aims to support evidence-based decision making across the education and training sector. The use of evidence to guide decision making is a key feature of high performing education and training providers and systems. This newsletter is one mechanism to provide access to relevant and useful research – including research conducted in our own system in Victoria.

Research eLert will be issued twice per term and each newsletter will feature a specific theme that is relevant to schools and other education providers. Research on Human Learning is the theme for this first newsletter. A background paper on this topic is available at: <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/publ/ResearchHumanLearning-rpt.doc>.

A range of research papers related to the specific theme will also be included in each newsletter. The research papers are summarised for your convenience and links to the full paper are included.

I hope you find Research eLert a useful tool that alerts you to a body of contemporary research relevant to educational policy makers and practitioners. It is developed by the Office of Learning and Teaching on behalf of the Department's Research Executive Committee. Information about the Research Executive Committee, the Research and Development Branch, and copies of Research eLert can be found at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/research/default.htm>.

Contributions to or feedback on Research eLert can be forwarded to the following email address: research@edumail.vic.gov.au

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Feature Article

Research on Human Learning
This is the first paper in a series of occasional papers developed by the Office of Learning and Teaching. The paper represents a synthesis of a broad body of local and international research on human learning and highlights considerations for education and training policy makers and practitioners.

The paper seeks to address the question, what thinking and research informs current and emerging national and international initiatives in teaching and learning?

The paper provides information on various theories of learning, the latest OECD neuroscience and brain research and the enhancement of learning through ICT.


Related Research

Early Childhood

Learning, Progression and Development: Principles for pedagogy and curriculum design
Professor Raban is currently Director of the Early Childhood Consortium at The University of Melbourne, specialising in the area of learning in early childhood. This paper reviews recent work on the neurological development of the brain in early childhood, to argue that the development of the brain is actually affected by the child's experiences. Children are also active participants in their own learning, applying reason and previous learning to new situations. Raban concludes that children's learning will therefore develop most effectively when caregivers and early childhood educators provide a stimulating range of environments and experiences, and also support children's individual learning practices and pathways.

Raban, B (2001). "Learning, Progression and Development: Principles for pedagogy and curriculum design." Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 26:2, 31-33,
http://staff.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/~bridie/articles/Rban.html

Thinking in a Vacuum
Jill Robbins is a senior lecturer at Monash University, and contributed to the Early Childhood chapter of the Environmental Scan on Learning and Teaching commissioned by the Research Unit. Robbins argues that traditional research into young children's thinking has tended to focus too much on individual knowledge, rather than looking more broadly at the child's construction of knowledge across a range of contexts. She adopts Rogoff's notion of three foci of analysis (personal, interpersonal and community) to analyse young children's ideas about rain. While her research is interesting, this paper is more useful for its initial summary of sociocultural theories of learning, and the implications she draws out from these for the practice and interpretation of research on children's learning.

http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/rob02241.htm
Schools (primary and secondary)

How People Learn

How People Learn is a book that comes in two parts. The first part, subtitled Brain, Mind, Experience and School grew out of a report into human learning commissioned by the US Department of Education. The second part, subtitled Bridging Research and Practice was then developed to explore how the findings of the first book could be incorporated into classroom practice. Chapter 2 of this book summarises three key findings of this book that have strong implications for teaching in both schools and adult learner environments. These findings address the need to engage student's pre-conceptions of the world; the importance of deep knowledge and conceptual frameworks in developing effective learning; and the usefulness of a ‘metacognitive’ approach to learning that allows students to define and monitor their own learning goals. The chapter then draws out the implications these findings have for teaching, classroom environments, and adult learners.

http://books.nap.edu/html/howpeople2/ch2.html

Building academic success on social and emotional learning: what does the research say?

CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, is an organisation of researchers and practitioners based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, who are dedicated to promoting social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools. Their most recent publication is Building academic success on social and emotional learning: what does the research say? This book has a very clear objective: to argue that SEL programs have a positive impact on academic outcomes, and it does so by presenting 'a compelling conceptual and empirical case for linking SEL to improved school attitudes, behaviour, and performance' (3). The first chapter (available on-line) defines social and emotional learning, reviews current research and identifies approaches to and characteristics of SEL programs in schools, and presents an overview of the rest of the book.

Social and emotional learning is ‘the process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks,’ and it is Zins et al's argument that academic learning (a primary measurable outcome for schools) is fostered when children learn to be aware of both self and others, and form good relationships with teachers and peers. As children and their teachers develop good social and emotional awareness, they are better able to create a supportive environment; conversely a supportive environment is conducive to social and emotional development. Zins et al identify a range of different approaches to promote school achievement; however the most important thing is for any SEL program to be integrated throughout all dimensions of the school

This book is essential reading for those serious about improving school and student outcomes, both academically and socially.

Zins, et al. "The Scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success." In Building academic success on social and emotional learning: what does the research say?
http://www.casel.org/downloads/T3053c01.pdf

Teaching and learning in a community of thinking

Yoram Harpaz and Adam Lefstein are widely regarded for their notion of 'Communities of Thinking' and the ways that they have implemented this into primary and secondary schools in Israel. In this paper, Harpaz outlines the theoretical basis for their theories of learning and teaching, and shows how this theoretical base translates into pedagogical practice. Traditional schooling conceives of knowledge as an object that can be passed from teacher to student; Harpaz deconstructs this notion to suggest that 'to learn is to be involved...; to teach is to create conditions for involved-effective learning; knowledge is a human structure...; and to be
educated is to relate to knowledge sympathetically, critically and creatively.' The Community of Thinking schools in Israel use a pedagogy that relies on 'fertile questions.' Teams of students, guided by 'teacher-coaches,' undertake research around these rich, open questions, and present their findings in a ‘concluding performance' that can take many forms depending on the learning style and inclinations of the students. This pedagogical style produces effective thinkers and learners.


VET and ACE

Contemporary vocational learning – changing pedagogy

In his paper on pedagogy and vocational learning, Clive Chappell of the OVAL Research Faculty of Education, University of Technology Sydney, notes the major impact on the Australian VET system of current changes in industry, the labour market and the workplace compounded by changing conceptions of knowledge, skill and learning. These changes have serious implications for VET provision in Australia. Minimal research undertaken to date on the impact of the changes on pedagogy and vocational learning indicates:

- a shift of focus in educational policy and practice from institutions to learners and from teaching to learning;
- a greater focus on work and workplace as significant sites of learning;
- increased emphasis on vocational outcomes that seeks to change the ways in which people engage with work beyond the acquisition of technical skills and competencies; and
- increased emphasis on the role of VET in developing people.

New understandings of pedagogy are now emerging that are learner-centred, work-centred and attribute focused. Chappell concludes that the greatest challenge facing the VET sector is to develop a workforce that can implement the pedagogical changes required in the context of contemporary vocational learning.


Evaluating on- and off-the-job approaches to learning and assessment in apprenticeships and traineeships

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) carries out a wide range of research into vocational education across Australia. This 2001 study seeks to clarify the learning and assessment experiences of apprentices and trainees in Australia.

The study finds that while many apprentices and trainees are well satisfied with their learning and assessment experiences, a significant number express dissatisfaction with workplaces and training providers in regard to these experiences.

Finally, ten recommendations are listed relating to the implementation of contracts of training and to the capacity-building of those in workplaces and of providers who assist apprentices and trainees to learn.


What's New and Upcoming Events

The 4th Biennial International Conference of the Middle Years Schooling Association Inc.
26-28 May 2005
Contributions and Feedback
Do you have or know of a research paper that you would be worth considering for inclusion in the Research eLert Newsletter?

Do you have information on new publications, upcoming events or interesting websites that would be of interest to education researchers and practitioners?

Would you like to provide feedback – including suggestions to improve Research eLert?

Please forward your information or comments to:
Research at DE&T (research@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Reflections and Action

Below are some questions to assist in reflective practice and to explore future actions.

➢ What are three important pieces of knowledge that I have gained from the research? How can this information be used to improve student outcomes?

➢ How does research in early childhood relate to my educational/training sector? How can I use this information to inform my work?

➢ What knowledge have I gained in the area of social and emotional learning? How can this learning be used to inform my work?

➢ What research information would I like to share with others? How will I do this?

Next edition

The next edition of Research eLert will be available in late March 2005 and features a review of current research on learning and teaching (pedagogy) from early childhood through to post compulsory education and training.