

# research strategy



learning  
in an ONLINE world



**MCEETYA**

Australia - New Zealand



Innovative applications of technology will enable teachers and researchers to collaborate on advances in learning, and ensure that schooling sector research is easily accessible to teachers, parents and the community.



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*Learning in an online world 2003 – 06* requires a research strategy that addresses two pivotal priorities:

- establishing research principles and priorities, and a framework for evaluating Information Communication Technologies (ICT) research; and
- using ICT to make all school related educational research accessible to teachers, students, parents, educational leaders, politicians, and the community.

The research strategy draws on the vast experience of educators and researchers and supports ongoing collaboration. The ICT in Schools Taskforce has consulted with all jurisdictions, the Australian Association for Research in Education, the Australian Council for Educational Research, the Australian Research Council, the Deans of Education and the Department of Education, Science and Training.

Schools are changing rapidly and expectations are rising. Students are being educated for a world that demands continuous learning, the creation of knowledge and adaptation to new circumstances. The community expects students to be technology-competent.

Government and the community make a huge investment in school education. Investment in ICT is significant and is increasing. Education research is vital to ensuring that policy development and decision-making is informed by quality data, evidence and critical evaluation.

The Taskforce has responsibility for ensuring that the nature and role of ICT in contemporary learning is investigated and understood. The strategy presents a vision for bringing research and practice together and for fostering a culture of analysis for decision-making.

Research skills and resources are finite and need to be deployed strategically. The strategy provides an agreed framework within which to identify priorities, formulate proposals, conduct projects and report findings.

Teaching and learning is important to the public. The profession, students, parents, politicians and the community require easy access to the best knowledge that is available. Technology provides the unprecedented opportunity to achieve this access and to support collaboration between researchers and the community.

The strategy uses technology to provide, for the schooling sector, a dedicated online service similar to that currently available to the medical and legal communities. This service includes:

- storage of Australian research funded through the significant investment of MCEETYA and jurisdictions;
- connection to national research funded by the Commonwealth, Higher Education, VET and Research Associations; and
- connection to online international research.

# research principles



The following principles will stimulate thinking about research priorities; support a range of research to meet school, system and public needs; inform the evaluation of priorities; and guide the allocation of funds.

## Research contributes to the public benefit by...

- empowering stakeholders to improve the quality of performance
- informing planning, policy and decision making to support efficiency, effectiveness and equity
- guiding judgements, evaluations and accountability

## Research generates public knowledge by...

- its usefulness and benefit to the education community
- being accessible to stakeholders
- contributing to the pool of reliable knowledge and understanding

## Research demonstrates relevance by...

- connecting to knowledge and experience
- raising awareness of new knowledge and understandings
- empowering action

## Research develops education by...

- building on national and global education research priorities
- anticipating emerging trends and priorities
- creating new possibilities for learning

## Research design is governed by...

- aligning the proposal and the education environment
- capturing the intention of the proposal in questions and approaches
- ensuring ethical approaches



# research priorities

*Learning in an online world 2003 – 06* priority areas for ICT research:

- the changing nature of schooling
- student learning
- equity issues
- teacher development
- monitoring progress.

Research into the use and impact of ICT in each of these areas considers the following overlapping dimensions:

- conditions for learning – providing the conditions necessary for effective student, staff and community engagement
- learning possibilities – exploring how to transform, enrich and extend learning
- educational effectiveness – ensuring effective curriculum, pedagogy, student learning, assessment and school transformation
- equity – providing appropriate student, staff and community access, participation and satisfaction as well as improving achievement.

Consultative processes leading to the identification of ICT research priorities included collaboration with jurisdictions, the Commonwealth, national school sector initiatives and peak research associations.

The principles, priority areas and research dimensions provide a vision for ICT research for the Australian school sector. This focuses research effort and resources on current, emerging and future challenges and questions that are of key importance.

The strategic direction provided by *Learning in an online world 2003 – 06* ICT research principles and priorities will inform the allocation of MCEETYA, Commonwealth and jurisdiction funds; and the development of university research proposals. It strengthens the collaboration between research bodies and jurisdictions.

The strategic direction supports the development of a pool of Australian research which significantly contributes to the understanding of teachers, administrators, the education community and Ministers for Education and Training. The evidence will inform teaching practice, policy development, implementation and evaluation.

The research priorities for ICT are consistent with the thrust of national strategic initiatives including the MCEETYA National Fund for Education Research (NFER), the National Research Priorities (2002) and Backing Australia's Ability (2001).



# evaluating proposals



These questions will form the basis for assessing the quality of research proposals.

## Will the research contribute to the public benefit?

- In what ways will the research empower stakeholders to improve the quality of performance?
- Will the research inform policy and planning decisions?
- Will the research improve efficiency, effectiveness and equity?
- Will the research inform judgements, evaluation and accountability?

## Will the research generate public knowledge?

- Will the knowledge that is generated be accessible to stakeholders?
- Will the research contribute to the pool of reliable knowledge?
- Will the research findings benefit the education community?

## Is the research relevant?

- Will the research connect with stakeholder knowledge and experience?
- Will the research help promote new knowledge and understandings?
- Will the research empower stakeholder action?
- Will the research progress relevant MCEETYA priorities?

## Will the research develop education?

- Is the research linked to other national priorities?
- Will the research progress these priorities?
- Is the research orientated to meet present and future needs?
- Will the research suggest new opportunities for learning?

## Is there evidence of quality research design?

- Is the research proposal appropriate to the current education environment?
- Do the research questions match the intention of the research?
- Is the research methodology sound and clearly articulated?
- Is the methodology appropriate to the intention of the research?
- Is the research proposal feasible given timelines and budgets?



# education research a public resource

*Learning in an online world 2003 – 06 gives priority to the use of technology's capacity to increase public access to knowledge developed through school-related education research.*

Education research underpins policy, operational and strategic decisions at all levels of schooling.

Governments make significant investments in school related research through contributions to the MCEETYA National Fund for Education Research and to jurisdiction research projects.

Research is crucial to the success of schools, to the work of MCEETYA and its taskforces and to the economic and social well-being of the community. Government funded research and relevant research contributed by the Australian research community is a public asset.

The Commonwealth *Review of Teacher Education* (2003) stresses the imperative for ongoing, innovative professional development. Teachers require timely and easy electronic access to new knowledge to inform their pedagogical practice.

Parents, caregivers and the community support students in their learning. They expect digital access to current, relevant information and research.

Education policy needs to be informed by the best available evidence. Educational and political leaders require just-in-time research.

To maximise and add value to publicly funded school-related research, the school sector needs an online service that:

- provides the education community with school sector research
- enables informed professional and public debate
- builds relationships between researchers and the school sector
- connects to relevant research funded by the Commonwealth, VET, Higher Education, Research and Professional Associations.

The online service should operate in the public interest, providing a free service to the community and a real opportunity for policy and decisions to be informed by quality research. The service should also connect to online international research.

The Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs Report (2000) *The Impact of Educational Research* highlighted that, while mainly publicly funded, education research is neither easily discoverable nor marketed to educators and consumers of education services.

The Commonwealth Research Information Infrastructure Framework for Australian Higher Education (2003) initiatives will provide researchers with an information infrastructure comparable to that available to their international peers.



# education research a public resource

Collaborative partnerships and the intelligent use of digital technologies provide unique opportunities to make school-related research easily accessible to teachers, parents and the community.

The online service will seek opportunities to connect to and leverage from existing national and international projects and specialised research data bases.

This will provide services comparable to those available to the legal community in Australia and to school education communities internationally.

The ICT in Schools Taskforce is:

- building stakeholder commitment and cooperative arrangements
- identifying funding sources and partnerships
- developing business models and research grant proposals
- articulating sustainable processes.

Ongoing commitment by MCEETYA and the whole education community to making research publicly available in accessible formats is fundamental to the online service.

