

MEDIA RELEASE

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Social networking provides new opportunities for learning

Information Communication technologies (ICT) including social networking and games provide new opportunities for education a review of research released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) argues.

But, according to Australian Education Review 56, the ‘off the shelf’ mentality which currently underpins the provision of computers in Australian schools may be stifling rather than enhancing innovation.

The review *Building Innovation: Learning with technologies* by University of Canberra academic Kathryn Moyle explores national and international policy priorities for building students’ innovation capabilities through information and communication technologies (ICT).

Releasing the review ACER’s chief executive Professor Geoff Masters noted that the importance of ICT literacy is now widely recognised in education policies across the world.

“ICT literacy is increasingly being given the policy status previously allocated only to literacy and numeracy,” he said. “We need to use the research to make the necessary changes to enhance the capabilities of students and teachers in this vital area of learning.”

The review’s author Kathryn Moyle said when used well technologies such as Web 2.0 social networking sites can help to develop literacy skills, critical thinking, teamwork and problem-solving skills.

“They can also provide students and teachers with opportunities to include social and explorative aspects in their learning,” Moyle said. “Despite fears to the contrary, children could well be reading and writing more than their peers 20 years ago, albeit through a variety of media.”

The review argues that ICT must be used in learning environments in which students can take risks and experiment. It is critical of the largely unquestioned use of proprietary and off-the-shelf software packages.

Moyle argues for greater use of open access software and calls for recurrent funds paid for software licences to be redirected away from commercial vendors to the professional development of educators.

“This would create more innovative and creative education environments than we have in our schools at the moment and put money and resources where it is urgently required – into the development of the human infrastructure of schools.”

Kathryn Moyle is Associate Professor of Education at the University of Canberra. She has published extensively in the fields of technologies and their implications for school reform, curriculum assessment, teaching and learning, and school leadership.

Australian Education Review number 56, *Building Innovation: Learning with technologies*, by Kathryn Moyle, is available for download from the ACER website at <http://www.acer.edu.au/acer>. Print copies can be purchased from ACER Press. Contact customer service on 1800 338 402 or via email on sales@acer.edu.au

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