

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## *Schools need leaders not superheroes*

Principals will ignore research into school leadership if it asks the impossible; a leading educational expert will warn a major education conference on Monday.

Professor Bill Mulford, of the University of Tasmania, says that school leaders are disillusioned by conflicting advice, and may view educational advisers as ‘itinerant peddlers extorting their latest elixirs.’

Academics must make their research relevant and realistic if they want school leaders to heed it, he says.

“Advice from the academic community may not be much listened to given the implication that nothing short of a superman or superwoman as school leader is required,” says Professor Mulford.

While there is now a growing emphasis on evidence-informed policy and practice, Professor Mulford will argue that evidence must be complex enough to come close to the reality faced by schools, and must explicitly link leadership to student outcomes.

The quality of evidence can be judged on its integrity, predictive validity, and clarity of definition in the variables employed. Professor Mulford will present two examples of best-practice research arising from detailed qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The first is a model of successful school principalship based on the evidence from in-depth case studies of Australian schools. The second is a model of leadership for organisational learning and student outcomes based on quantitative survey evidence from more than 2500 teachers and 3500 high school students.

Professor Bill Mulford is the Director of the Leadership for Learning Research Group in the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania and a member of the International Successful School Principals Research Project.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Research Conference 2007, on the theme *The Leadership Challenge: Improving Learning in Schools*, takes place in Melbourne at the Sebel Albert Park from on Monday and Tuesday.

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