

**AITSL Submission to the Productivity
Commission Inquiry into the Education
Evidence Base**

Draft AITSL Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the National Education Evidence Base

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

The mission of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is to improve to quality of teaching and school leadership in Australia to have the maximum impact on student learning. AITSL is a Commonwealth company with an independent, expert Board. Its sole owner is the Australian Government Minister for Education and Training.

AITSL's interest in this inquiry

Consistent with its remit, AITSL is primarily interested in using data to improve the quality and impact of teaching and school leadership in Australian schools. At the national level, data on the teaching workforce is most relevant to this aim. However, this data will be more useful if it is linked to other data, particularly on the outcomes of education.

At the level of the school and the individual teacher, it is important that teachers have the capacity to use data to understand and improve the impact of their teaching. National data, such as NAPLAN data, can assist here, but in many ways data that is specific to the curriculum being taught at a particular time, and available quickly, is more useful.

School and classroom level data

Understanding the impact of teaching by assessing student learning is one of the fundamental components of effective teaching, and happens in classrooms across Australia every day. Improving teacher practice in this area was identified as a priority by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group. There is scope to provide teachers with more reliable, consistent and benchmarked data on student progress.

In New Zealand, the e-asTTle system allows teachers to construct and administer assessment tasks that are valid and reliable measures of the content being taught, drawing on a large bank of psychometrically validated items. Once students take the tests, the results are available immediately, and provide guidance on what students are ready to learn next, including links to teaching resources. Importantly, the tool is designed to provide teachers with information to

improve their teaching, not to focus on assessing students. The tool provides data that can be aggregated to the school level, and used nationally to analyse trends.

This type of tool has a great deal of potential to improve the quality of teaching in Australia. More generally, it is important that any approach to a national education evidence base concentrates on providing data that can be used to evaluate and improve teaching at the school and classroom levels.

National initial teacher education and teacher workforce data

Policy making, evaluation and research on the teaching workforce in Australia are all inhibited by a lack of consistent data. Data that could assist are held by teacher employers, which range from large government school systems to individual independent schools, regulatory authorities in each State and Territory, universities and other bodies. The data that is available is not consistent or easily combined, and some important data is collected only in a very limited way.

In this situation, it is impossible to reliably answer some basic questions such as:

- Is teacher supply likely to match demand for teachers overall and in particular locations and subject areas?
- To what extent are teachers teaching subjects in which they have no formal qualifications?
- Do some initial teacher education programs produce graduates who are more likely to remain in the profession than others?

The importance of these issues has seen work conducted over a long period of time to investigate improvements to workforce data. The National Teacher Workforce Dataset project made great progress in identifying important data and overcoming some of the barriers to sharing it. However, it did not get to the stage of establishing an ongoing data collection.

In 2015, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group found that there was currently insufficient data for workforce planning and matching supply and demand, and for assessing the outcomes of initial teacher education programs. It recommended a national approach to teacher education workforce data.

In response to these developments, the Education Council has asked AITSL to scope a National Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Workforce Data Strategy. A detailed proposal will be presented to Council during 2016. As an indication of the directions of this work, a draft of a national minimum data set is provided at Attachment 1.

It is anticipated that much of this dataset could be created by standardising and linking data from existing collections. Other data, such as graduate satisfaction with initial teacher education programs, is likely to require new collections to be available at a sufficient level of detail to be useful.

Data for improvement in initial teacher education

In December 2015, following the work of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, Education Council agreed to a new national approach to the accreditation of initial teacher education. Central to this approach is that accreditation will be based on providers of initial teacher education evaluating, interpreting and acting on evidence of the impact of their programs.

Improved national teacher workforce data will allow initial teacher education programs to more easily understand fundamental outcome measures such as graduate employment rates, retention in the teaching profession, and graduate and principal satisfaction with teacher preparation. Currently, providers have various methods for understanding these issues, but these are unlikely to be as comprehensive and efficient as a national collection.

Constraints and opportunities

A more comprehensive approach to teacher workforce data has great potential to improve outcomes for students. However, issues such as privacy, ownership of and access to the data, and consistency with the legislative basis for its collection all require resolution. The work undertaken for the National Teacher Workforce Dataset project has provided a useful overview of these issues and many of them were able to be resolved in the context of that project. The Commission's issues paper identifies these issues as important, and AITSL would welcome as an outcome of this inquiry advice on how they can be addressed in a way that facilitates appropriate use of this data.

Another major opportunity arising from this inquiry is for linkage of datasets. AITSL welcomes the issues paper's focus on linking data from a wide range of sources. In particular, the capacity to link teacher data to data on student outcomes would open up new possibilities. For example, it would provide new insight into questions such as 'what is the staffing profile of highly effective schools?' or 'what impact do school characteristics have on the retention of early career teachers?'

Future directions

This inquiry has the potential to lead to real improvements in our capacity to use data to improve educational outcomes. In summary, AITSL recommends that the Commission consider two specific initiatives:

- Improving teachers' access to reliable, valid and timely data on student achievement, through an online tool for assessing the impact of teaching.
- Providing a more solid basis for national policy making, evaluation of workforce initiatives, and improvement of initial teacher education through a comprehensive national initial teacher education and teacher workforce data strategy.

National Minimum Dataset

Data phase	Ref #	Data Item Name	Data Item Description
Pre-Initial Teacher Education			
Preference and offer information	i	Applicant preference ordinal no.	Actual or notional ordinal position assigned to an applicant's course preference
	ii	Offer preference ordinal no.	Actual or notional ordinal position assigned to an applicant's course offer
Initial Teacher Education			
Student information	1a	Demographic information – Date of birth	Date of birth of the student/applicant
	1b	Demographic information – Gender	As per the Australian Government Guidelines for the recognition of sex and gender.
	1c	Demographic information – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	Coding that indicates if the individual identifies themselves as being of aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
	1d	Demographic information – Year of Arrival in Australia	The year in which an individual not born in Australia first arrived in Australia.
	1e	Demographic information – Language spoken at home	Coding indicating the use of a language other than English at an Individuals primary address.
		Demographic information – Country of birth	Coding representing the country of birth of an individual.
		Demographic information – Disability	Coding indicating that an individual has an impairment, disability or long term medical condition.
	2	Prior academic achievement	Coding identifying previous academic achievements both in Australia and overseas.
	3	Basis of admission	Coding which identifies the main criteria used in granting a student admission to the current course
	4	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR)	Student's Australian Tertiary Admission Rank if available/relevant to mode of admission.
	5	Unique student identifier	Mechanism to be determined
Program information	6	Provider details	Coding which uniquely identifies the Higher Education Provider.
	7	Program (field, level)	Coding that identifies the field and level of study being undertaken by an individual..
	8	Accredited ITE program	Coding identifying if the course of study forms part of an accredited ITE program.
	9	Attendance mode and type	Coding that identifies the mode of attendance by which a student undertakes a unit of study (e.g. internal, external etc.).
	10	Student status (domestic/not domestic, Govt. supported/ not supported)	Coding indicating the financial status of the student with respect to paying for a unit of study (i.e. feeexempt, foreign fullfee paying, HECS, etc.).

Item 5 – Attachment 3 – Appendix 1

Data phase	Ref #	Data Item Name	Data Item Description
	11	Subjects studied at tertiary level	Coding that identifies each course completed by an individual in a tertiary setting.
	12	Qualification/s (field, level, year)	Coding that indicates an individual's highest educational participation and last year of that participation prior to enrolment.
	13	Teaching specialisation	Coding identifying areas of teaching specialisation completed.
	14	Course satisfaction	Coding indicating student reported satisfaction with their course.
Teacher information	15a	Teacher demographic information - Unique teacher identifier	Mechanism to be determined.
	15b	Teacher demographic information - Gender	As per the Australian Government Guidelines for the recognition of sex and gender.
	15c	Teacher demographic information - Year of Birth	Year of birth of the teacher.
	15d	Teacher demographic information - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	Coding that indicates if the individual identifies themselves as being of aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
	15e	Teacher demographic information - Language spoken at home	Coding indicating the use of a language other than English at an Individuals primary address.
	15f	Teacher demographic information - Country of birth	Coding representing the country of birth of an individual.
	15g	Teacher demographic information - Year of arrival in Australia	The year in which an individual not born in Australia first arrived in Australia.
	15g	Teacher demographic information - Disability	A data ite indicating that an individual has an impairment, disability or long term medical condition.
	16	Post ITE qualification/s	Coding that identifies each course/qualification completed by an individual in a tertiary setting post ITE.
Registration information	17	Registration conferral year	The year in which a teacher was first registered in an Australian state/territory.
	18	Registration Status	Coding indicating the status of a teacher's registration in a jurisdiction at a point in time.
	19	Teaching restrictions	Coding indicating any teaching restrictions that may have been placed upon a teacher at a point in time.
Employment information	20	Employment status	Coding that indicates a teacher's employment status and manner of employment.

Item 5 – Attachment 3 – Appendix 1

Data phase	Ref #	Data Item Name	Data Item Description
	21	Teaching load	Self reported hours per week employed (paid) and hours per week engaged in school related activities.
	22	Current school employed at	A data item(s) that uniquely identify the school(s) at which a teacher is employed at a point in time.
Teaching information	23	Teacher perception of helpfulness of ITE program	Coding indicating teacher reported satisfaction with their ITE program.
	24	Employer perception of teacher classroom readiness	Coding indicating employer perception of teacher classroom readiness.
	25	Teacher perception of helpfulness of induction	Coding indicating teacher perceptions of the helpfulness of induction
	26	Nature of current teaching position: teaching and non-teaching duties	Coding indicating the nature of current teaching position and balance of teaching versus nonteaching duties
	27	Subjects and level taught	Coding indicating the subjects and levels taught.
	28	Professional development	Coding to record professional development
	29	Teacher career intentions: intention to remain or leave teaching	Coding for teachers to report intentions to remain or leave teaching within specified timeframes.
	30	Factors affecting intention to leave teaching prior to retirement	Coding for teachers to record factors affecting their decision to leave teaching prior to retirement.
	31	Unique teacher identifier	Method of data linkage to be determined