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| 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 Educaiton 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. Is 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.). |
| 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. |
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| 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. |
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| Registration information | 17 | Registration conferral year | The year in which a teacher was first registered in an Australian state/territory. |
|  | 18  19 | Registration Status  Teaching restrictions | Coding indicating the status of a teacher’s registration in a jurisdiction at a point in time.  Coding indicating any teaching restrictions that may have been placed upon a teacher at a point in time. |
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| Employment information | 20 | Employment status | Coding that indicates a teacher’s employment status and manner of employment. |
| 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. |
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|  | 31 | Unique teacher identifier | Method of data linkage to be determined |