

*Faculty of Education responses to the Productivity Commission's Draft Report on National Education Evidence Base.*

### **DRAFT FINDING 1.1**

Notwithstanding substantial increases in expenditure on education over the past decade, national and international assessments of student achievement in Australia show little improvement and in some areas standards have dropped.

Understanding the reasons for this finding requires consideration of more than money invested and achievements attained. For example, the question of whether the increased expenditure on education over the past decade has been proportionate to the increased rates of disadvantage in Australia is important as is the question of whether funding has been targeted to those most in need.

### **DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 2.1**

National level data play a key role in top-down monitoring, benchmarking and accountability processes, but are insufficient to achieve improved outcomes. They need to be complemented by a bottom-up approach that generates evidence about what works best, for whom and in what circumstances.

The Faculty of Education endorses this statement; however, we would like to emphasise that teacher education providers play a vital role in upskilling initial teacher education students so that they are able to 1) conduct bottom-up teacher inquiries to generate the 'data/evidence' that is noted in the report; and 2) interpret the data that are presented in the top-down generated data sets.

### **INFORMATION REQUEST 3.1**

The commission seeks comment on whether the Australian Early Development Census could be used to monitor progress against Australia's early learning objectives.

The Faculty of Education suggests that multiple data sources be used to monitor progress. While there is overlap with the outcomes identified in the Early Years Learning Framework, the AEDC data do not map these domains entirely. It would be useful to have some comparability between data collected and international data sets to allow for comparison.

### **DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 3.3**

Australian, state and territory governments should support greater use of value-added measures of education outcomes.

The Faculty of Education supports this recommendation and urges the Productivity Commission to consider a suite of measures that are not purely focussed on quantitative

evidence of academic gain (for example maths, science and English testing) but also incorporates data related to socio-emotional functioning, attitudes to learning and other non-cognitive aspects of child functioning

#### **INFORMATION REQUEST 4.1**

The Commission seeks further information on:

- the costs and benefits of moving toward a national student identifier (compared to jurisdictional systems).
- the feasibility of using the unique student identifier system used in the vocational education and training sector to deliver more comprehensive student coverage.
- the costs and benefits of children in the early childhood education and care sector being covered by the same identifier as school students.

Further examination and exploration is required before implementing a national Student Identifier.

#### **INFORMATION REQUEST 5.1**

The Commission invites participants to comment on the operation of the section 95 guidelines in health research and lessons for other forms of research including education

The Faculty of Education urges the Productivity Commission to carefully consider the implications and ensure that appropriate processes are in place should this be implemented.

#### **DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 5.2**

The Australian Government should amend the *Privacy Act 1998* (Cwlth) to extend the arrangements relating to the collection, use or disclosure of personal information without consent in the area of health and medical research to cover public interest research more generally

The Faculty of Education urges the Productivity Commission to carefully consider the implications and ensure that appropriate processes are in place should this be implemented.

#### **DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 7.2**

The Australian, state and territory governments should pursue a national policy effort to develop a high-quality and relevant Australian evidence base about what works best to improve school and early childhood education outcomes. In particular, five activities need to be supported:

- development of research priorities
- commissioning of high-quality education research
- adoption of rigorous research quality control processes
- dissemination of high-quality evidence
- development of researcher capacity.

Definitions of 'high-quality' educational research are contested. Any decisions regarding how such research is to be identified requires input from a range of scholars and researchers. Despite this caveat, the Faculty of Education supports the thrust of this recommendation. The recommendation that one institution be assigned to take on these roles (Draft Recommendation 8.1.) raises the concern that the plurality of views will be disregarded to the detriment of educational research in Australia.

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