

Submission on the Draft Report: National Education Evidence Base

Monash University welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Draft Report of the Inquiry on National Education Evidence Base.

Monash strongly supports Universities Australia submission on the Draft Report and its key recommendations concerning the need to consult widely with the university sector on the national education framework and the importance of considering the broader research system in framing recommendations. Monash is concerned about the potential to duplicate aspects of the existing research system in a new entity and this requires very careful consideration.

We wish to add the following comments. There are significant gaps in the education data on teachers. There is a pressing need for accurate and comprehensive national teacher workforce data. There is a high level of variability in data collection practices and reporting across state and territory governments. There is often reporting about the number of teachers leaving the profession but this is constructed from an unreliable evidence base that is based more on assumptions than reliable, validated data. This impacts on teacher education providers in their planning for student places to meet workforce needs and on teacher employers. There is no reliable data that identifies and forecasts when particular specialisms may be in demand.

There is a need for large scale longitudinal studies of people beginning in teacher education, following them through their degree and into the profession. These data would help to address many of the questions and issues that impact on teacher education quality and readiness to teach. Monash has been engaged a longitudinal study, Factors Influencing Teacher Choice (www.fitchoice.org) for fifteen years. This program covers two states and has followed more than 2000 teachers through their degrees and their teaching careers. It is through these types of studies that we are able to understand the factors that support or undermine teachers in particular workplaces and the consequences for students.

The availability of large scale and linked data will require rethinking of research training in the Education discipline. Monash has welcomed recent federal government announcements concerning changes to research training scheme funding and financial support for the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute PhD internship program. These types of strategic investments need to be expanded and maintained to ensure that suitably qualified people are identified, supported through their education and oriented to work with these data sets to improve our school education system.

Monash's Dean of Education, Professor John Loughran is available to discuss any aspect of this submission with members of the Commission.

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