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WhaleSongServices
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Briefing Note: Education Evidence Base



Australia has put about 14 per cent per student extra spending over the last decade and yet there are metrics that suggest that we're not making much of an impact¹.

Jonathan Coppel - Australian Productivity Commission



Background

As you would be aware, in April 2016, the Australian Productivity Commission was asked to provide advice on the national approach to collecting and using data for early childhood education and care and schools to improve Australia's educational outcomes.

In undertaking this inquiry, the Commission has been asked to use evidence from Australia and overseas to report on and make recommendations about:

- The information required to provide a comprehensive evidence base to inform policy development in early childhood and school education now and in the future.
- Current data holdings and potential additional information, including how that information might add value to the existing evidence base.
- Existing or potential barriers to sharing or accessing data, and how these can be overcome.
- The role that technology and mobile devices can play in the scope, quality and timeliness of data collection and reporting.
- The costs and benefits of options for improvements to the national education evidence base.

Process

Draft Report - September 6th

- This draft report was released on 6 September 2016.
- The public are invited to examine the draft report and to make written submissions by **Friday 7 October 2016**. [[Download from Documents Library - Federal Policy](#)]²

Public Hearing

- **A Public Hearing** is scheduled in **Melbourne - October 18th** [[See Events Calendar](#)]³
- **The final report** is expected to be handed to the Australian Government in **December 2016**.



Key Points from Draft Report

Expenditure & Benchmarks

- 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 of achievement have dropped.

Data & Evidence-based Planning

- Monitoring outcomes, performance benchmarking and competition between schools alone are insufficient to achieve gains in education outcomes. They must be complemented by the use of data and evidence to identify, and then apply, the most effective programs, policies and teaching practices.

National Evidence Base

- A national education evidence base is broader than a national data repository and requires two key capabilities:
 - (a) a '**top-down**' capability, for monitoring, benchmarking and assessing performance in achieving objectives at all levels of the system, as well as promoting transparency and accountability, and informing resource allocation
 - (b) a '**bottom-up**' capability that evaluates the effectiveness in education policies, programs and teaching practices, enabling systematic identification of ways to improve student achievement.

Streamlined Collection

- There is much education data collected, imposing a substantial compliance burden across schools and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. This burden can be reduced by collecting data more cost-effectively and making better use of it.
 - (a) Access to, and sharing of, data can also be improved through changes to privacy protections and processes for collecting, sharing and linking of data.



Lack of Evaluation

- There are some gaps in existing data collections. But the ***largest gap of all is in the evaluation of policies***, programs and teaching practices in Australian schools and ECEC services to identify what works best, for whom and in what circumstances.
 - (a) Without improving and applying evidence to policy making and teaching in schools and classrooms, there is a substantial risk that increased resourcing of schools will continue to deliver disappointing outcomes.

National Approach to Evidence

- The Australian, state and territory governments must take a shared and cooperative approach to developing a high-quality and relevant Australian education evidence base. There are already effective arrangements for monitoring and performance reporting. With respect to implementing the bottom-up capability, governments should:
 - (a) put in place a new Education Agreement (building on previous agreements) that defines the objectives of, and framework for, commissioning and applying evaluative research about what works best
 - (b) assign an institution to be responsible for the implementation of the evaluative research framework, which is accountable to, and funded by, all governments
 - (c) specify the assigned institution's governance arrangements, functions and operations.



Links

¹ Australian Productivity Commission - Sept 6 2016 - <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/education-evidence/draft>

² <http://www.whalesongservices.com.au/clientportal/>

³ <http://whalesongservices.com.au/clientportal/event/public-hearings-the-national-education-evidence-base/>

