



Thursday, 16 April 2026

DECADAL REPORT RESPONSE FACULTY OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the CHARTING AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS A consultation paper inviting input into a Decadal Plan for Australian Education Research 2025–36 (The plan). We recognise the importance of this initiative for developing a shared agenda and priorities. Importantly the report provides data and analysis on the challenges, opportunities and priorities for Australian educational research and provocations through raising explicit questions. Fifteen overarching consultation questions have been developed (see Table 1). In this response we focus on educational research noting that at times the document also identifies specific issues for different education sectors (Early Childhood, Primary, Secondary, Higher Education) and policy. We endorse and hope we can support an upward trajectory in key areas the report highlights.

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH AND CHALLENGES

We support the need for national reform which is outlined clearly in the plan across 5 key areas.

- 1) **Leadership on long-term research transformation that includes a shared national vision** for education research strategy and priorities with the academic research community being fully utilised.
- 2) **Raising awareness about the significance of educational research** for the nation and its future. This will involve dedicated engagement with organisations and bodies that influence education systems and reform.
- 3) **Increased and sustained investment in education research and development** to maintain and strengthen world-class research capability and capacity. The report highlights that education research in Australia is underfunded relative to other fields and faces a declining pipeline of researchers. This includes a dedicated strategy to grow number of GRs (e.g., through scholarships) and their skill level for developing large-scale, cross-disciplinary research projects and pathways to impact.
- 4) **Improve data sharing systems and evidence infrastructure** through better utilisation of educational data often held in Government. The report identifies significant data gaps, inconsistencies, and limitations in data linkage across sectors. Along these same lines, it is necessary to address issues such as inconsistent definitions and reporting standards, limited linkage between education, health, and social data, and the lack of data on cultural diversity and workforce composition. Reducing time lags in data availability is essential to support timely policy and planning decisions. There is an oppressing need to promote better use of existing datasets and support broader measures of learning beyond narrow assessment metrics.
- 5) **Strengthen the research–policy–practice nexus** through ensuring that high quality research findings are translated into practical applications and inform policy development. This includes the way new programs are established (with control and comparison conditions) and increasing the evaluation of policy interventions and ensuring that research remains both independent and policy relevant.

SPECIFIC CONSULTATION QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

This response from the Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne is oriented to 4 questions

1. What are the key areas or issues for future research in each field or sector?

2. What steps should we take to drive short-term gains and long-term advancement in these areas?

And relatedly

13. What are the capabilities and relationships required to enable educational research to impact change over the next decade? and

15. How might a national approach increase the impact of education research and build research relationships, both across sectors and within Australian and international research communities?

1. What are the key areas or issues for future research in each field or sector? &

2. What steps should we take to drive short-term gains and long-term advancement in these areas?

The areas and issues for future educational research are informed by demographic, social and technological change. In the UoM Faculty of Education we have research projects that are expanding in the areas below because they are timely, complex and fundamental to all of our futures.

1) EDUCATION & SOCIETY with renewed attention to what society needs from its education systems including the purpose, scope and content of the curriculums. The focus is on an Australian system that grounds shared knowledge, capabilities and skills for the future and underpins support for Australia's democratic system, cohesion, livelihoods and healthy and capable societal members. A particular focus is referred to as 21 Century skills/generic competences (things the machine cannot do) related to creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking) and the teaching, assessment and verification of these qualities.

2) LEARNING SCIENCES that adopt a developmental approach to identifying the optimal conditions and experiences for healthy development and learning from birth to early adulthood but also learning as a life-long endeavour (post -VET, Higher education). Early childhood and primary schooling are of particular focus given the long-life benefits of educational settings that are caring, play-based, supportive, responsive and enable strong foundations-to-learning. New approaches and upskilling in areas of learning difficulties and disabilities that are strength-based are also areas of extensive research and applied activities to uplift skills.

3) PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS including teacher-learner-technology collaborations that accelerate effective teaching practices and learning, assessment infrastructure and work-integrated learning for Higher Education students with industry;

4) EQUITY priorities and accelerators and barriers to equity of experiences and outcomes across learner cohorts (e.g., regional, urban, inclusion, disability)

5) WORKFORCE better understanding the social environmental/organisational features of schools (school climate and leadership) and employment cycle (recruitment, training, support) that fosters a capable, engaged and expert 'teacher' workforce and healthy workplaces.

On areas 1-3 the UoM Faculty of Education is in the process of implementing a new structure and will have Schools dedicated to these three areas. Areas 4 & 5 are the priorities for a number of research projects and the offerings of professional development including for school leaders, teachers and our own higher education students.

13. What are the capabilities and relationships required to enable educational research to impact change over the next decade? & 15. How might a national approach increase the impact of education research and build research relationships, both across sectors and within Australian and international research communities?

As a leading Faculty of Education we are actively engaged in national educational research reform and as next steps we are keen to establish further coalitions and forums where there can be advancement. A short-term step is supporting and contributing to the development and implementation of this Decadal Plan.

There is also a role for this Faculty (with others) to be a convenor of cross-sector dialogues to establish more coordinated approaches to educational research priority setting. The same coalitions will be critical to advocating for and contributing to 1) the development of integrated, longitudinal datasets that span the entire education system, 2) larger and more successful funding applications to accelerate activity and 3) standards in key areas of graduate research training and the ways growth is facilitated even through resources being shared between programs for advancement (e.g. certain capabilities are advanced at certain institutions who have comparative advantages).

The report highlights the fragmentation and siloing that currently exist across early childhood education and care (ECEC), schools, vocational education and training (VET), and higher education. A more integrated “joined up” research system has the potential to strengthen partnerships with government, industry, and education providers to reduce duplication of effort and maximise research impact.

As more direct next steps, clear strategies need to be developed and operationalised that advance the below:

- The academic education research community needs to establish more trusting relationships with Ministers, policy institutions and experts.
- A strategy is needed to advocate for increased and sustained investment in education research and development including in ways that will grow graduate enrolments that are critical to sustaining future research capacity.
- There is a risk of a statistical capability ‘cliff’ in utilisation of large datasets and the fast-moving statistical landscape. There may need to be a shared and dedicated offering to ensure graduates in relevant areas of study are at the forefront.
- A more co-ordinated approach to the development of large-scale, cross-disciplinary research centres.

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We recognise that this contribution in effect endorses and supports The plan and offers additional ideas rather than concrete steps forward. We know more work is planned and we are willing to provide additional input as the project moves forward.

Your sincerely,

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Table 1: Summary of consultation questions in Decadal planning document

OVERARCHING CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What are the key areas or issues for future research in each field or sector?**
- 2. What steps should we take to drive short-term gains and long-term advancement in these areas?**
3. What mechanisms are most effective for addressing the aims of the Decadal Plan?
4. What current policy and practices enable or constrain equity and justice for all?
- 5. What research focus areas should be prioritised to improve quality and equity for all learners? Briefly describe the specific research investments, capabilities and relationships that would make this possible.**
6. What systematic changes are required to embed First Nations perspectives and practices into curriculum and learning frameworks? Please share examples of effective research-based, community-led and culturally responsive approaches that could be scaled.
- 7. How would a more integrated approach to research across sectors, disciplines and institutions benefit the experiences and outcomes for all learners?**
8. How can teachers and early childhood educators be attracted to and retained in the profession, particularly in areas in greatest need?
9. How can those from diverse backgrounds be encouraged and supported to join and stay in the profession? Please share examples and strategies to help identify successful case studies that can be learned from and scaled.
10. What are the priority areas for evaluation in educational practice? Briefly describe the specific investments, capabilities and relationships needed for effective evaluation.
11. What are the most effective ways in which cross-sector research can help address contemporary challenges in the education sector?
- 12. How would a more joined-up approach to research across different sectors, disciplines and institutions benefit the education workforce across their career?**
- 13. What are the capabilities and relationships required to enable educational research to impact change over the next decade?**
14. What is working in current approaches to research training? What isn't working?
- 15. How might a national approach increase the impact of education research and build research relationships, both across sectors and within Australian and international research communities?**

