MONASH Q PROJECT

Research and Evidence Use in Australian Schools

Survey, analysis and key findings

Research and Evidence Use in Australian Schools

Q Project: Survey, analysis and key findings

Q Report 01/2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Q Project is a 5-year partnership between Monash University and the Paul Ramsay Foundation to **improve the use of research evidence in Australian schools**.

The goal of this report is to share findings from the Monash Q Project into **how Australian educators find and use research and evidence**. It focuses on:

- the types of research and evidence they value;
- how and why they source different kinds of evidence; and
- whether and how they use research within their practice.

The report draws on quantitative findings from the Q Project's first survey of educators, which was administered online to teachers and school leaders between March - September, 2020. In total, 492 educators from 414 schools across four Australian states completed the survey: New South Wales (NSW), South Australia (SA), Victoria (VIC), and Queensland (QLD).

The report is technical in nature, outlining all findings, as well as the research rationale, design and approach to gathering and analysing the survey data. An accompanying summary report focused on key insights and emerging issues and implications for educators is available [here](#).

The reported findings are derived from the eight quantitative questions in the survey. Qualitative findings derived from the additional open-text questions in the survey are not included in this or the summary report. These, along with findings from the follow-up interviews conducted with 29 practitioners in 2020, will be reported in a forthcoming Q Discussion Paper.

The findings are presented in five categories: (i) sourcing different kinds of evidence; (ii) assessing different kinds of evidence; (iii) using research in practice; (iv) awareness of and attitudes towards research use; and (v) perceived school support for research use. For each of these categories any discernible patterns of difference by respondent characteristic (e.g., role, qualification level, and years of experience) are noted, and comparisons are made between states where relevant. Statistically significant differences are also highlighted where relevant. Findings categories do not include analysis of responses by school characteristic (e.g., socio-economic status, state-based location, etc.), as discernible patterns of difference for these characteristics were not detected.

This report, and the work of the Monash Q Project more generally, come against a backdrop of growing expectations in Australia and internationally that schools and school systems will use research evidence to inform their improvement efforts (e.g., Australian Productivity Commission [APC], 2016; Nelson & Campbell, 2019; White et al., 2018). Within Australia, though, there have been surprisingly few studies to examine if and how school staff are using research evidence in their work. The role and use of research in Australian schools is therefore not well understood, but this situation is changing as new empirical studies have started to emerge (e.g., Mills et al., 2021; Parker et al., 2020). The Q Project is part of such developments.

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Key Findings

Research is Sourced and Used Less Frequently than Other Types of Evidence

- Educators access **different kinds of evidence** in **varied ways** and from a wide range of sources.

- Despite just over two-thirds of all educators (70%) reporting **using research** in the last 12 months, overall **research-related sources** are **used less frequently** (e.g., 43% consult 'research disseminated from universities'; 36% consult 'university-based advice or guidance') when compared with non-research sources (e.g., 77% consult 'student data'; 72% consult 'policy and curriculum documents').

- When research is used, it is **used in a variety of different ways**. Most commonly, research is used in a **collaborative manner** to 'discuss best practice with colleagues' (76% of overall sample indicated using research in this manner) or for **personal development** to 'improve my own knowledge of a topic or subject' (72%) and to 'reflect on my own practice' (67%).

- Nearly half (43%) of all educators believe that '**teacher observations and experience should be prioritised over research**'. These educators are **significantly less likely[1] to source research-related** evidence types (e.g., 'university disseminated research', 35% use 'often' and 'always'; and 'university-based guidance and advice', 25%) when compared with the overall sample.

Leaders Have Positive Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards Research Use

- **School leaders use research more** in practice (91% reported 'using research in the last 12 months') when compared with **teachers** (61%) and **other staff** (51%). **Leaders** are also more likely than teachers or other staff to use research in **direct** (e.g., to 'design and plan a new initiative') and **persuasive** (e.g., to 'mobilise support for an important issue or decision') ways.

- Whilst overall the majority of educators have **positive beliefs** and **attitudes towards using research**, these attitudes and beliefs are likely to be **more positive** for **school leaders** and/or educators holding **post-graduate qualifications** when compared with teachers and/or undergraduate-qualified educators.

- Educators are more likely to have **greater confidence** in their **research use capacities** if they are a **school leader,** hold **post-graduate qualifications**, and/or have **more than 5 years of experience**.

- Educators are more likely to have greater confidence in their specific capacities to **find time to access and review research** if they are a **school leader**, hold **post-graduate qualifications**, and/or have **more than 15 years of experience**.

- Educators are **less likely** to **believe that 'teacher observations and experience should be prioritised over research'** if they are a **school leader**, hold **post-graduate qualifications**, and/or have **more than 10 years of experience**.

Leaders Favour Contextual Relevance and Credibility Factors when Engaging with Evidence

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[1] Statistically significant difference reported, where $p<0.05$. Fisher's exact tests (Field, 2015) were used to test the relationship between responses to survey items and demographic variables with two levels (e.g., role). Chi-squared tests (Field, 2015) were used for demographic variables with three levels (e.g., qualification). Both this summary report and the full survey report only reference statistically significant differences in the instances where they occur.

- When sourcing and using different evidence types, **school leaders, post-graduate qualified,** and/or **more experienced** (10+ years) **educators** are more likely to be influenced by **credibility factors** (e.g., 'being backed by academic research') and/or **contextual relevance** (e.g., 'alignment with school plans').

- When assessing evidence quality, **school leaders** in particular are more likely to again use **credibility factors** (e.g., 'being backed by academic research'), as well as **'evidence of impact'** as criteria.

- When using research in practice, **school leaders** are more likely to consider **contextual relevance** (e.g., 'directly applicable to implementation').

Teachers Rely on Social and Practical Methods when Engaging with Evidence

- When sourcing and using different evidence types, **teachers, undergraduate-qualified,** and/or **less experienced** (<10 years) **educators** are more likely to be influenced by **familiarity, social,** and/or **practical considerations** (e.g., 'word of mouth' and 'previous use or experience').

- These types of factors are also used as methods to assess evidence quality, with **teachers** in particular most likely to use them.

- When using research in practice, **teachers** are more influenced by **familiarity, social,** and/or **practical considerations** (e.g., 'compatibility with my own teaching practices') as compared to school leaders.

- Teachers have **significantly stronger beliefs about 'teacher observations and experience being prioritised over research'** when compared with school leaders.

Educators are Concerned about Time and Access Issues

- Close to half (45%) of all educators **do not believe** that their school supports research use through **'making adequate time available'.** This lack of belief is stronger for **other staff** (56% do not believe) **and teachers** (51%) relative to school leaders (31%).

- Educators are likely to have **less positive perceptions** of **'available time made for research use'** at their school if they are a **teacher** and/or hold **undergraduate qualifications**.

- Educators are also **concerned** about their own capacities to **find time to access and review research**. The majority **do not believe** that they have **'adequate time to access and review research'** (76%), the ability to **'keep up with new and emerging research'** (76%), or **'sufficient access to research evidence'** (68%).

- Educators are **less likely to have confidence** in their abilities to find time to access and review research if they are a **teacher**, are **undergraduate-qualified**, and/or have **less than 15 years of experience.**

- Educators who **do not believe** that their school **provides adequate time for research use** are also likely to have significantly **less positive perceptions** of their abilities to **find time to access and review research**. The majority of these educators **do not consult research-related evidence** types **often** (e.g., 'university disseminated research', 33% use 'often' or 'always'; and 'university-based guidance and advice', 29%).

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Q Project: Survey, analysis & key findings

1. ABOUT MONASH Q PROJECT

The Q Project is a 5-year initiative focused specifically on the issue of **quality use of research evidence** in education. A partnership between Monash University and the Paul Ramsay Foundation, it involves close collaboration with teachers, school leaders, policy-makers, researchers, research brokers and other key stakeholders across Australia. The project's overarching goal is to understand and improve quality use of research evidence in Australian schools.

Work to date has involved a systematic review and narrative synthesis of 112 relevant publications from health, social care, policy and education. The review and synthesis sought to explore if and how quality of evidence use had been defined and described within each of these sectors, in order to inform the development of a Quality Use of Research Evidence (QURE) framework for education (Rickinson et al., 2020). *Figure 1* shows this framework and its enabling components, as well as the Q Project's accompanying definition of **quality use of research evidence** in education.
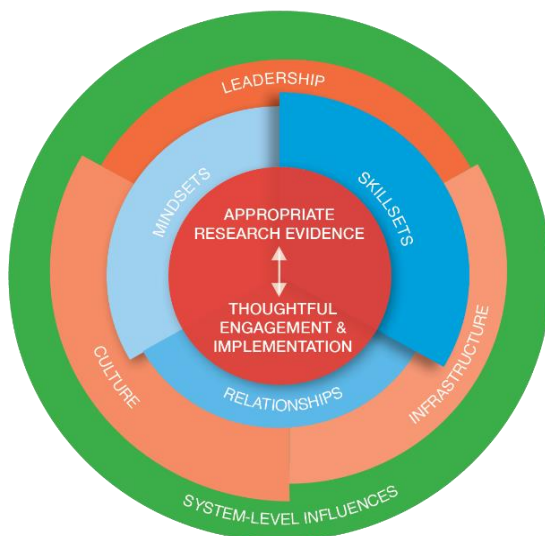

Figure 1: QURE Framework

Quality use of research evidence in education is:

the thoughtful engagement with and implementation of appropriate research evidence, supported by a blend of individual and organisational enabling components within a complex system.

It comprises:

- **Two core components** – appropriate research evidence, and thoughtful engagement and implementation;
- **Three individual enabling components** – skillsets, mindsets and relationships; and
- **Three organisational enabling components** – leadership, culture and infrastructure

The Q Project's school-based research phase commenced in 2020, with the first major activity being the design and administration of a survey to educators.

2. ABOUT THE REPORT

This report presents quantitative findings from the Q Project's first survey to educators in each of the four participating Australian states: South Australia (SA), New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (VIC) and Queensland (QLD).

The survey design, detailed in full in *Section 4* of this report, reflected the Q Project's 2020 research aim of **'listening to educators'** and started to address the key school-based research phase questions:
a) How are schools using research evidence?
b) What is involved in using research evidence well?

c)   How can quality use of research evidence be developed?

The final survey comprised five parts and aimed to build a picture of:

1.   what types of research and evidence were valued by educators, and how and why different kinds of evidence were sourced;
2.   educators' awareness of and attitudes towards research use in particular, their perceptions of school research-related supports, and whether and how research was used within their practices; and
3.   educators' initial conceptualisations of quality research use and what they considered as key associated behaviours.

The survey was administered online to educators between March - September, 2020. In total, 492 educators from 414 schools across the four participating states completed the survey. *Tables 1* and *2* provide summary demographics for the combined survey sample, with *Tables 25* and *26* in *Appendix 1* of this report outlining full sample details.

Table 1: Sample - Respondent details (*n*=492)

Respondents' State	New South Wales 149 respondents, 30%	Queensland 116 respondents, 24%	South Australia 32 respondents, 6%	Victoria 195 respondents, 40%
Respondents' Years of Experience	0-5 years 74 respondents, 15%	5-10 years 76 respondents, 15%	10-15 years 74 respondents, 15%	15+ years 267 respondents, 55%
Respondents' Role	Senior Leader 99 respondents, 20%	Middle Leader 60 respondents, 12%	Teacher 281 respondents, 57%	Other Staff Role 52 respondents, 11%
Respondents' Qualification Level	Undergraduate 273 respondents, 55%	Non-research-based Post-graduate 187 respondents, 38%	Research-based Post-graduate 32 respondents, 7%	

Table 2: Sample - School details

Type of School (*n*=414)	Primary (Prep/Kindergarten – Year 6) 205 schools, 42%	Combined (Prep/Kindergarten – Year 12) 117 schools, 24%	Secondary (Year 7 – Year 12) 156 schools, 32%	Special 14 schools, 3%
Respondents' School Features (*n*=492)	Metropolitan Location[2] 359 respondents, 73%	Regional Location 133 respondents, 27%	Low ICSEA[3] Value 179 respondents, 36%	High ICSEA Value 313 respondents, 64%

Findings reported are derived from the eight quantitative questions in the survey and are presented in five categories: (i) sourcing

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[2] The geographical classification of the school location has been made according to the ABS Remoteness Area definitions, i.e. major cities = 'metropolitan'; and inner regional, outer regional, remote, and very remote = 'regional' (ACARA, 2019).

[3] Index for Community Socio-Economic Advantage [ICSEA] is a scale developed by ACARA that takes into consideration a school community's parental occupation & education qualification base, a school's geographical location, and the proportion of Indigenous students to determine the relative socio-economic and educational advantage of a school's student population. ICSEA is set at an average of 1000, and for our sample 'low' = less than or equal to 1000, and 'high' = greater than 1000.

different kinds of evidence; (ii) assessing different kinds of evidence; (iii) using research in practice; (iv) awareness of and attitudes towards research use; (v) perceived school support for research use. For each of these categories, overall response patterns are broken down by state for comparison where relevant. Whilst data regarding the nature of schools (e.g., socio-economic status, state-based location, etc.) was collected, there were no discernible patterns detected in any of the overall or state-specific findings by school-level characteristics. These statistics and graphs are therefore not included in this report. There were discernible patterns detected by respondent characteristics however (e.g., role, qualification level, and years of experience), so for each category of findings, these are noted where relevant, with supporting statistics and graphs included. Statistically significant differences are also highlighted where relevant.

The report is technical in nature, outlining all findings, as well as the research rationale, design and approach to gathering and analysing the survey data. The report also highlights considerations and challenges associated with the research and survey designs.

The report concludes with a reflection on key findings as outlined in the Executive Summary.

The report is structured as follows:

3. **About the findings**: reports overall key findings across the five categories noted above;
4. **About the survey**: details the design rationale and challenges, development method, final structure and composition, administration, and analysis of Q's 2020 survey;
5. **About the sample**: details the overall sampling strategy, frame, intended schemes and final overall survey respondent sample;
6. **Conclusion**;
7. **References**; and
8. **Appendices**.

3. ABOUT THE FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the key quantitative findings from Q Project's 2020 survey. The findings are presented in five categories: (i) sourcing different kinds of evidence; (ii) assessing different kinds of evidence; (iii) using research in practice; (iv) awareness of and attitudes towards research use; and (v) perceived school support for research use. For each of these categories (where relevant): comparisons are made between states; any discernible patterns of difference by respondent characteristic are noted; and any statistically significant response pattern differences are highlighted. Graphs and tables include references to specific survey questions[4] (complete survey shown at *Appendix 2*).

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[4] For example, P2Q2 refers to Question 2 in Part 2 of the survey.

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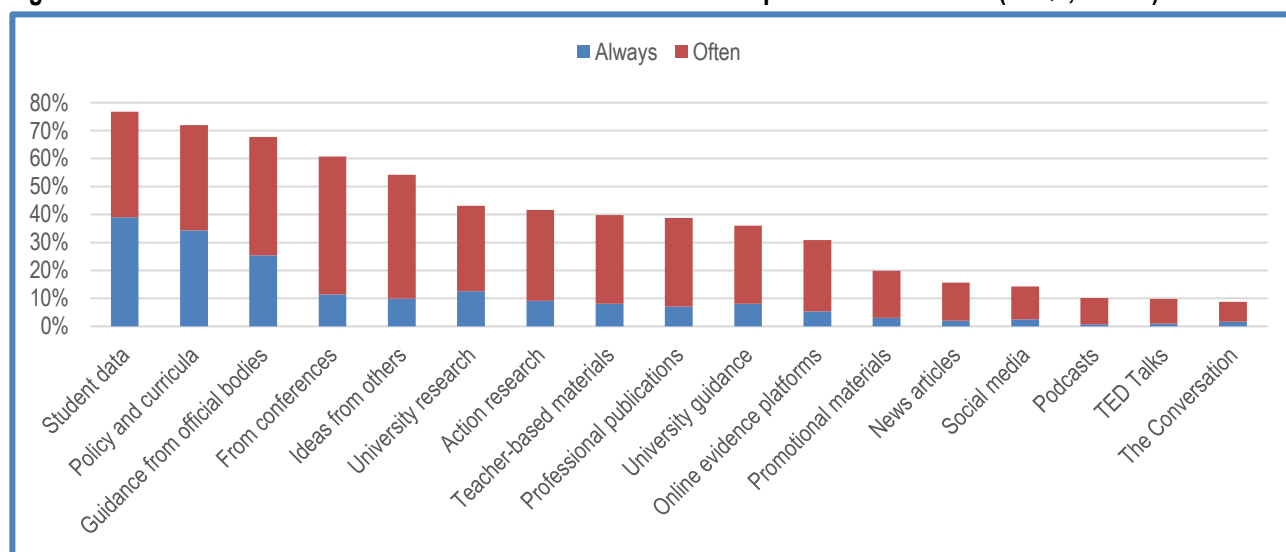
3.1 Sourcing Different Kinds of Evidence

Highlights:

- Educators access **different kinds of evidence** in **varied ways** and from a wide range of sources. **Research-related sources** are **used less frequently** however when compared with 'student data' and 'policy and curriculum documents' for example.
- Educators appear more likely to **use research-related sources** if they are a **school leader** and/or hold **post-graduate qualifications.**
- Overall, different evidence types are likely to be used when they are **perceived as credible** and/or they are **relevant to the specific context.**
- **School leaders, post-graduate qualified,** and/or **more experienced** (10+ years) **educators** are more likely to be influenced by **credibility factors** (e.g., 'being backed by academic research') and/or **contextual relevance** (e.g., 'alignment with school plans') when sourcing and using different evidence types.
- **Teachers, less qualified** and/or **less experienced** (<10 years) **educators** are more likely to be influenced more by **familiarity, social,** and/or **practical considerations** (e.g., 'word of mouth' and 'previous use or experience').

3.1.1 Different Sources Consulted

Overall, respondents indicated that they consulted a **variety of information sources** to aid their decision-making. Strong preferences (consulted 'always' and 'often') were expressed for evidence sources such as 'student data', 'policy and curriculum documents' and 'guidance from official bodies' (see *Figure 2*). Relative to these sources, **research-related sources** were **used less frequently** (see *Figure 2*).

Figure 2: **How often do educators consult evidence sources to help inform decisions? (P2Q2; *n*=492)[5]**

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[5] For ease of reading, figures do not graph a column for summed responses of <1% or for the very small number of participants who responded 'Other'. The wording of survey items has also been adjusted for readability in the figures. This holds for all subsequent figures.

State-specific response patterns were largely aligned with those of the overall sample (see *Table 3*).

Table 3: **Percentage of respondents (by state) consulting evidence sources 'always' and 'often' to help inform decisions (P2Q2)**

Sample sizes	Overall (*n*=492)	VIC (*n*=195)	QLD (*n*=116)	NSW (*n*=149)	SA (*n*=32)
Non-research sources					
1) Student data	77%	83%	83%	68%	66%
2) Policy and curriculum documents	72%	71%	78%	68%	72%
3) Guidance from official bodies	68%	70%	70%	64%	63%
Research-related sources					
1) Research disseminated from universities	43%	48%	41%	40%	38%
2) Action research	42%	45%	35%	44%	31%
3) University-based advice or guidance	36%	42%	34%	31%	34%
4) Online evidence platforms	31%	33%	27%	32%	28%

Preferences for research-related sources differed notably by:

a) **Role** - with school leaders consulting 'research disseminated from universities' and 'university-based advice or guidance' more often than teachers and staff with other roles (see *Figure 3*). These sourcing frequency rates for leaders were found to be significantly higher[6] than those of teachers (i.e., 'research disseminated from universities', p<.001; 'university-based guidance and advice', p<.001; and 'action research', p=.013); and

b) **Qualification level** – with respondents holding post-graduate qualifications consulting research-related sources more often when compared to those with undergraduate qualifications only (see *Figure 4*). These frequency rates were found to be significantly higher[7] than those of less qualified respondents (i.e., 'research disseminated from universities', x^2=10.439, df=2, p=.005; and 'university-based guidance and advice', x^2=15.341, df=2, p<.001).

Less experienced respondents (<5 years of experience) reported a very slightly stronger preference for some research-related sources (e.g., 'research disseminated from universities' and 'online evidence platforms') when compared with more experienced respondents (see *Figure 5*). This overall response pattern was not consistently observed across state-specific samples.

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[6] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).
[7] Using Chi-squared test (x^2); significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

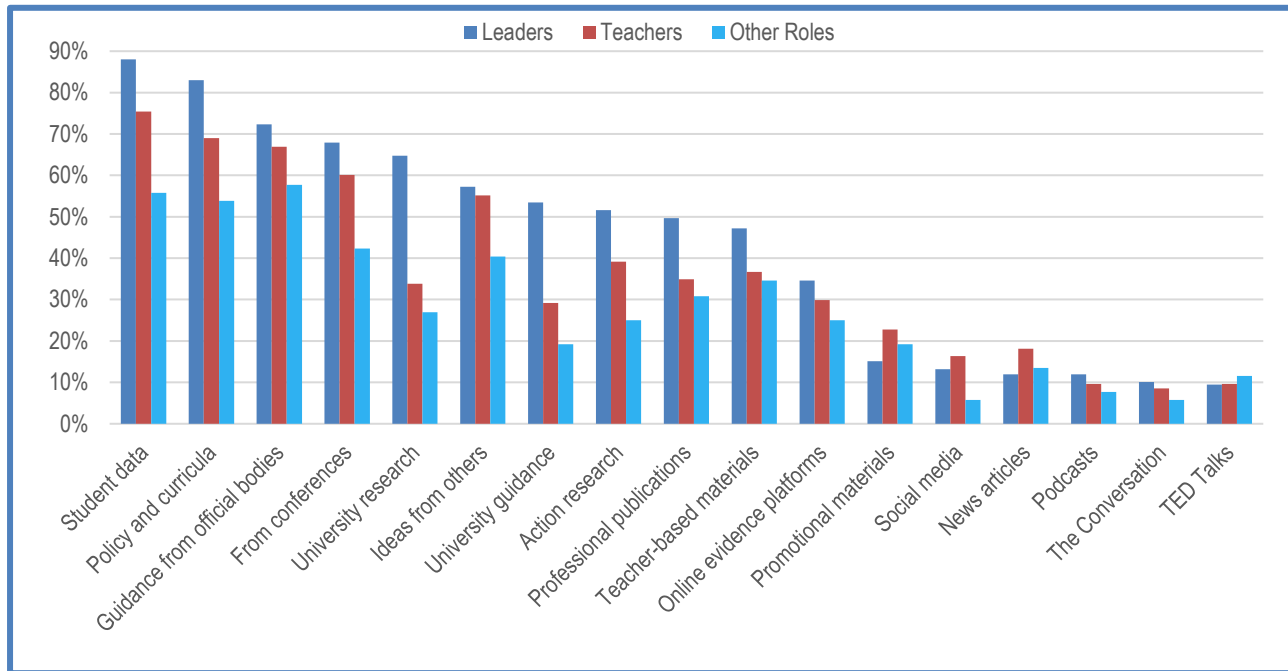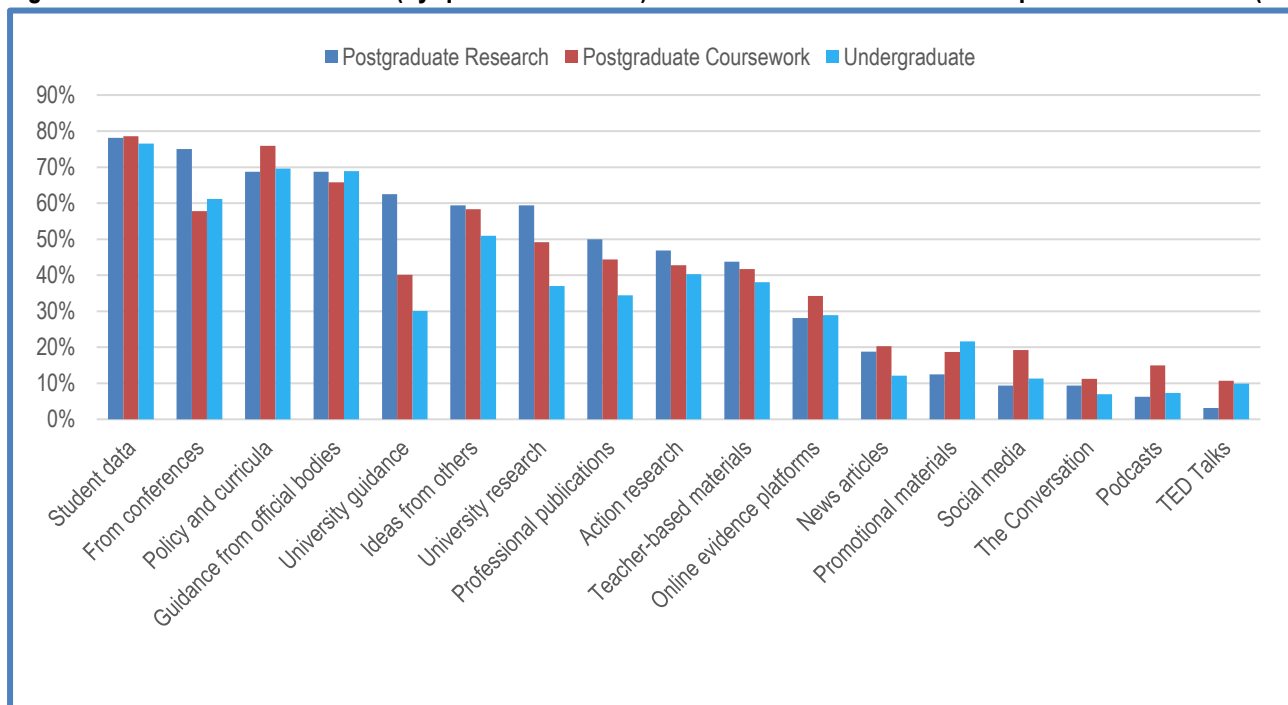**Figure 3**: How often do educators (by role) consult evidence sources to help inform decisions? (P2Q2; *n*=492)

Figure 4: How often do educators (by qualification level) consult evidence sources to help inform decisions? (P2Q2; *n*=492)
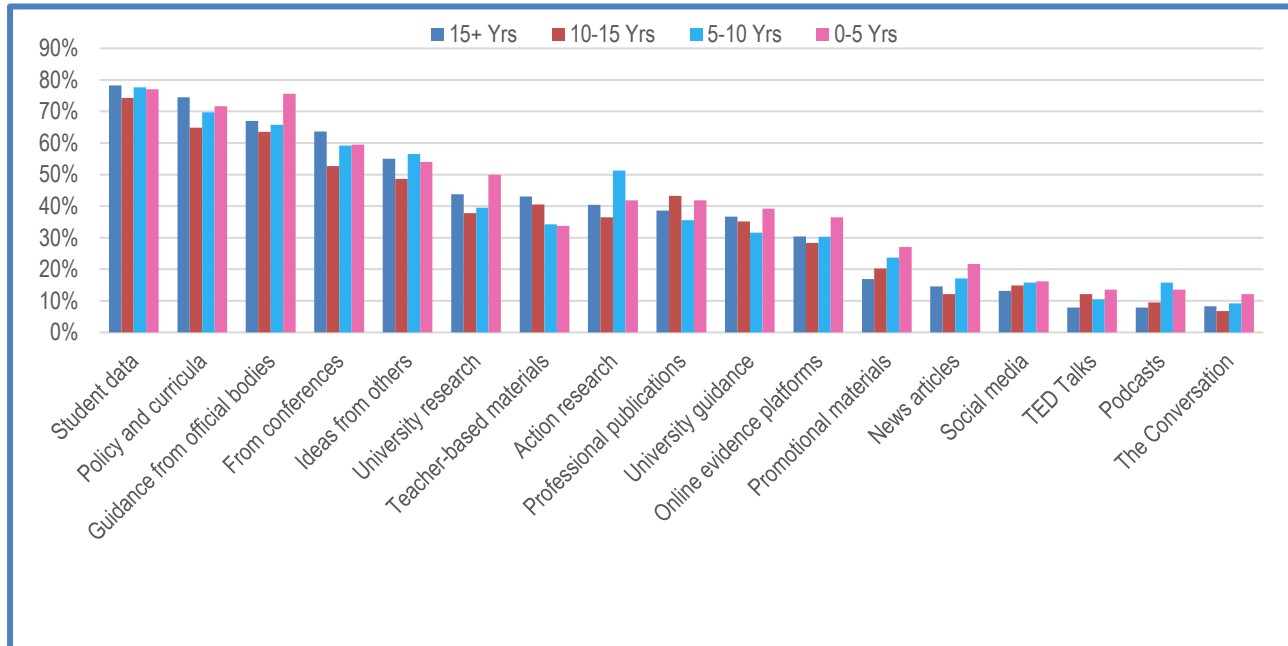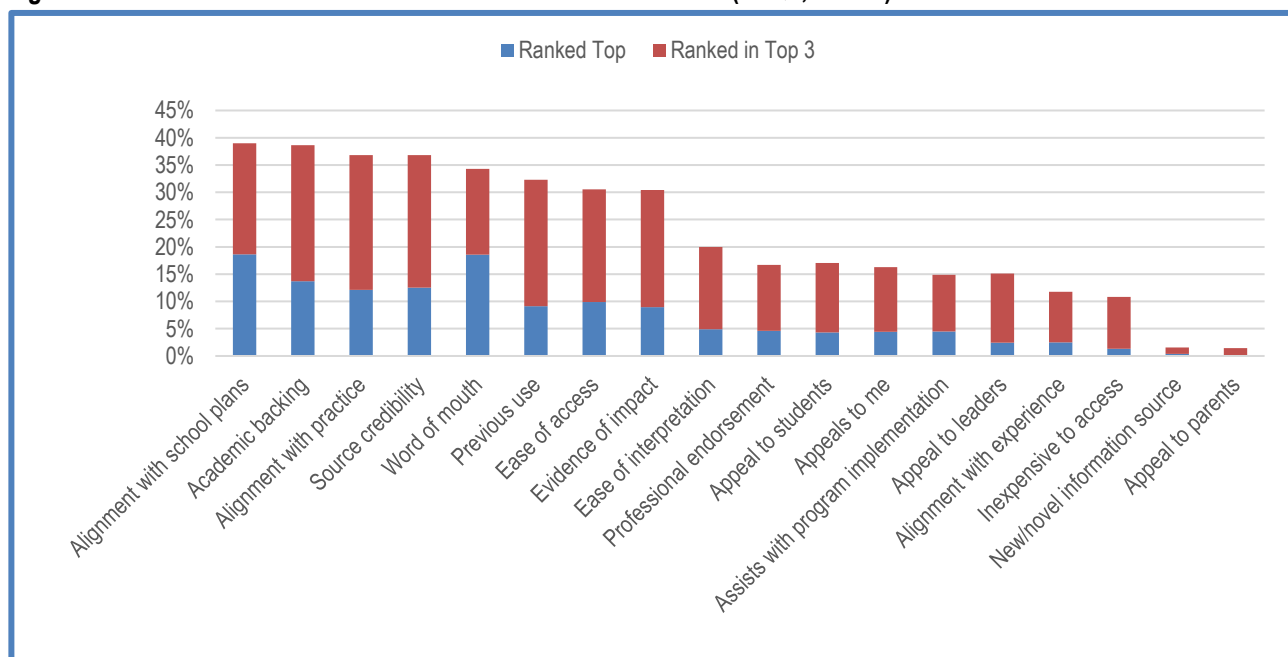
Figure 5: How often do educators (by years of experience) consult evidence sources to help inform decisions? (P2Q2; *n*=492)

3.1.2   Reasons for Consulting Different Sources

Whilst there were a variety of reasons influencing the sourcing and use of different types of evidence, **several clear themes emerged** (see *Figure 6*).

Figure 6: What influenced educators to use evidence sources? (P2Q3; *n*=492)

Contextual relevance was considered a key influencing factor, with 'alignment with our school's plans' (39% of overall sample ranked in top 3; 1st ranked influence) and 'alignment with my teaching experiences and practices' (37%; 3rd ranked) highly ranked when compared to other influences.

Credibility of both the source and the evidence type were also key influencing factors, in particular: whether the evidence was 'backed by academic research' (39%; 2nd ranked), or the 'perceived credibility of the source' (37%; 4th ranked). For those respondents who ranked 'academic backing' highly as an influencing factor when sourcing evidence, they were also significantly more likely[8] (p<.001) to rank it highly as an approach to assessment of quality as well (see *Section 3.2*).

There were several differences in response patterns across state-specific samples, as shown in *Table 4*. For example, the Queensland sample were the only state-specific sample to rank 'perceived credibility of the source' in their top 3, whilst NSW were the only state-specific sample to *not* rank 'alignment with school plans' in their top 3.

Table 4: **Ranking position of key influencing factors for sourcing and using different evidence types (by state) (P2Q3)**

Sample sizes	Overall (*n*=492)	VIC (*n*=195)	QLD (*n*=116)	NSW (*n*=149)	SA (*n*=32)
Alignment with school plans	1	1	3	6	1
Backed by academic research	2	3	2	1	3
Alignment with teaching practice	3	2	4	5	2
Perceived credibility of source	4	4	1	8	4
Word of mouth	5	5	5	3	10
Previous use	6	7	6	4	7
Evidence of impact	8	8	8	2	8
Endorsement from professional bodies	11	14	11	9	5

The influence of different factors differed most notably by:

a) **Role** – with teachers and other staff ranking familiarity, social and/or practical considerations as more influential (e.g., 'previous use or experience', 'word of mouth', 'appeals to me' and 'inexpensive to access'), whilst school leaders appeared more influenced by credibility factors (e.g., 'being backed by academic research', 'evidence of impact is made available' and 'perceived credibility of the source') and contextual relevance (e.g., 'alignment with school plans') (see *Figure 9* and *Table 5*);

b) **Qualification level** – with respondents holding research-based qualifications appearing influenced by contextual relevance ('alignment with our school's plans') and credibility factors (e.g., 'being backed by academic research') more than respondents with undergraduate and coursework-based post-graduate qualifications. These latter respondents appeared to consider familiarity, social and practical factors (e.g., 'previous use or experience', 'alignment with my teaching practices' and 'word of mouth') as more influential (see *Figure 10* and *Table 6*); and

c) **Years of experience** – with more experienced educators (10+ years of experience) also appearing influenced by contextual relevance (e.g., 'alignment with our school's plans') and credibility factors (e.g., 'being backed by academic research' and 'perceived credibility of the source'). Whilst less experienced respondents appeared to consider familiarity and practical factors (e.g., 'previous use or experience', 'ease of access', 'appeals to me' and 'inexpensive to access') as more influential (see *Figure 11* and *Table 6*).

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[8] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

Whilst some slight differences in response patterns by role, qualification level and years of experience were noted, state-specific trends largely followed those of the overall sample.

Figure 9: **What influenced educators (by role) to use evidence sources? (P2Q3; *n*=492)**
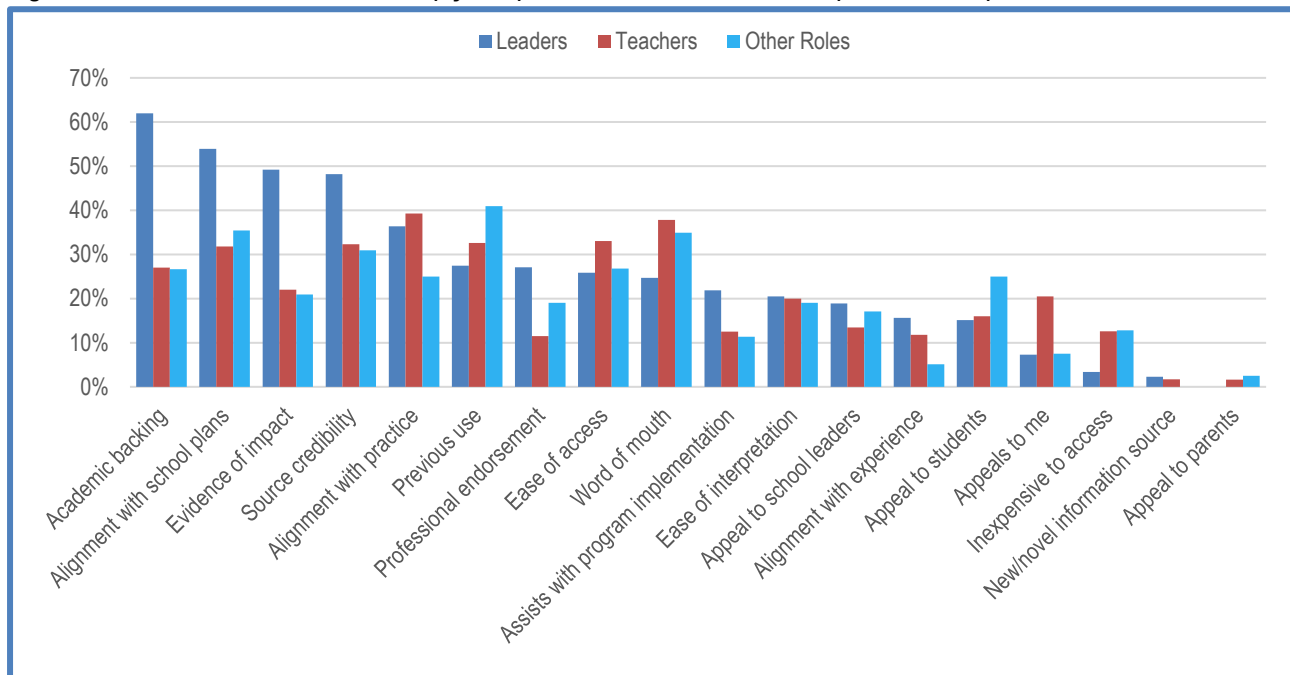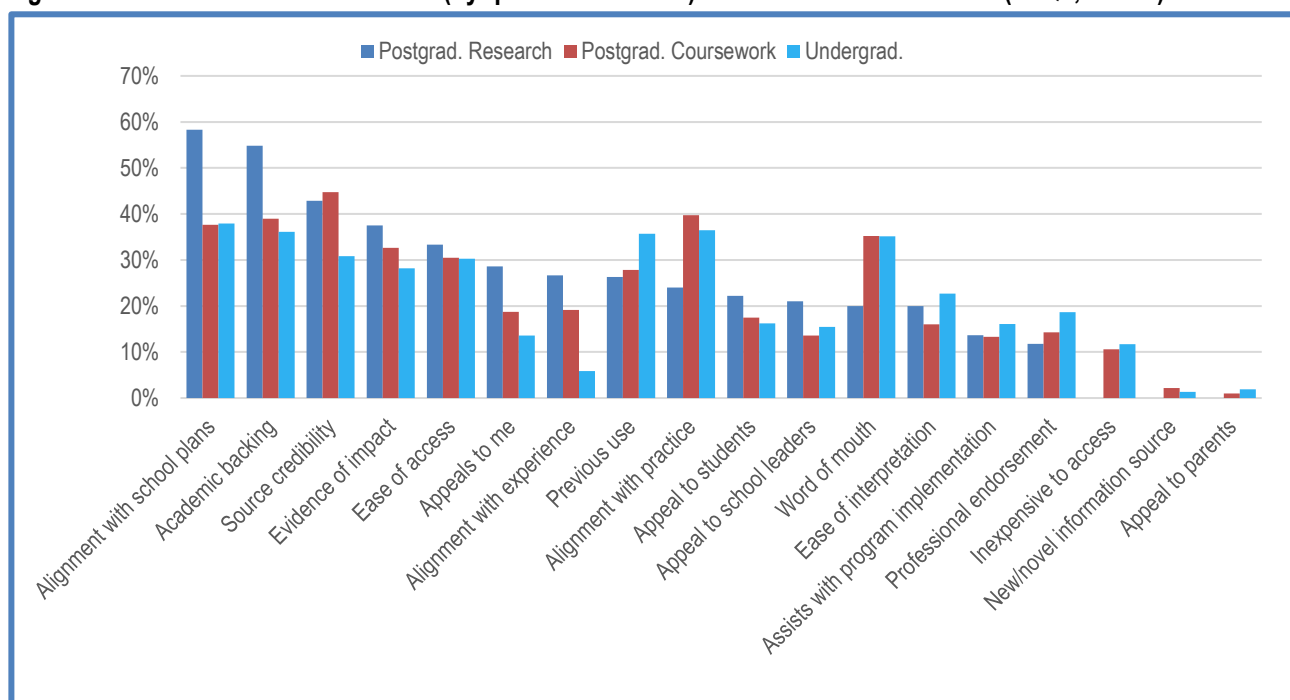

Figure 10: **What influenced educators (by qualification level) to use evidence sources? (P2Q3; *n*=492)**

Figure 11: **What influenced educators (by years of experience) to use evidence sources? (P2Q3; *n*=492)**
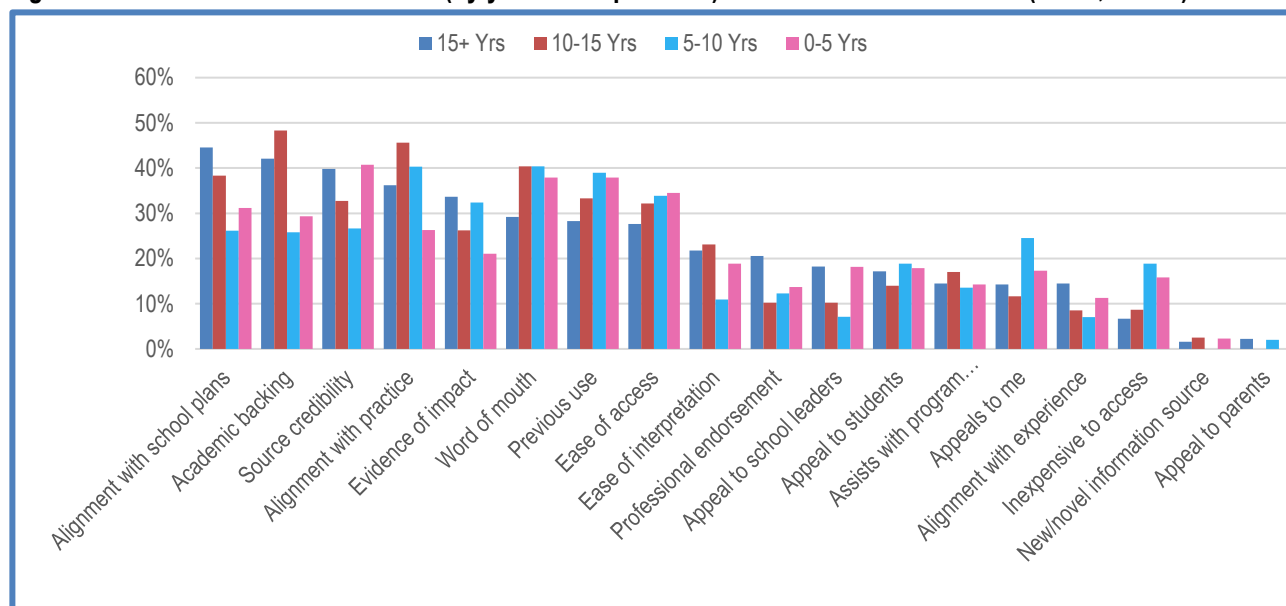

Table 5 and *Table 6* show the differences in rankings of influence factors that were found to be statistically significant.

Table 5: **Significant differences in rankings of evidence sourcing influence by role[9]**

	Influence	*p* value
Teachers were influenced by the following factors to a significantly greater degree when compared with school leaders:	Word of mouth	<.001
	Ease of access	.004
	Previous use	.012
	Appeals to me	<.001
	Alignment with practice	.022
	Inexpensive	<.001
School leaders were influenced by the following factors to a significantly greater degree when compared with school leaders:	Academic backing	<.001
	Evidence of impact	<.001
	Professional endorsement	.018
	Alignment with school plans	<.001

Table 6: **Significant differences in rankings of evidence sourcing influence by qualification level and years of experience[10]**

	Influence	Chi-square value		
		x^2	*df*	*p*
Respondents with post-graduate qualifications were influenced by the following factors to a significantly greater degree when compared with undergraduate qualified respondents:	Academic backing	8.049	2	.018
	Alignment with experience	11.746	2	.003
More experienced respondents (10+ years) were influenced by the following factors to a significantly greater degree when compared with less experienced respondents:	Academic backing	9.727	3	.021
	Alignment with school plans	9.561	3	.023

[9] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided *p* values reported; significant *p* value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).
[10] Using Chi-squared test (x^2); significant *p* value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

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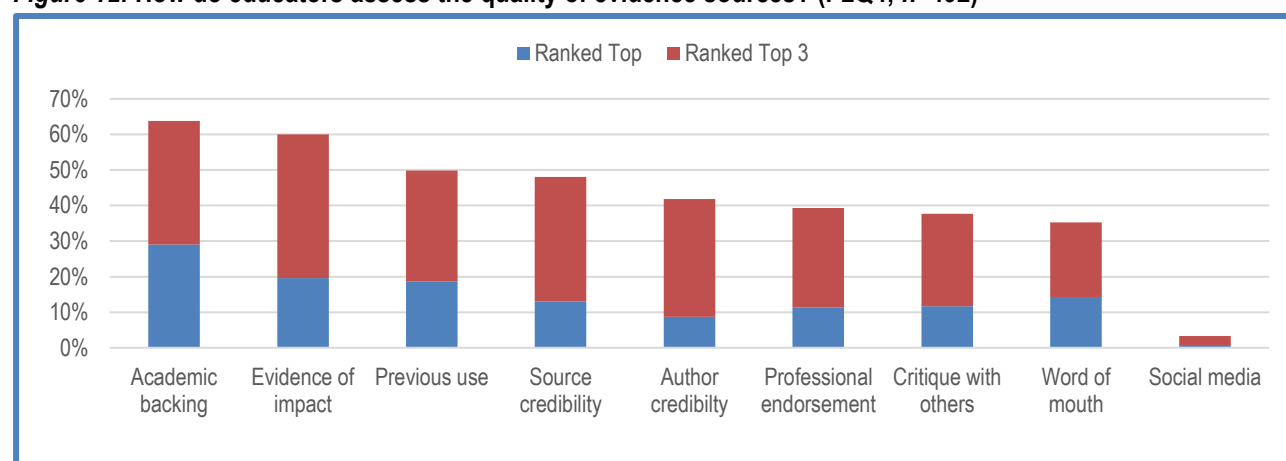### 3.2 Assessing Different Kinds of Evidence

> **Highlights:**
> - Similar to responses about what influences evidence use, educators highly rank **credibility factors** (e.g., 'being backed by academic research') when assessing evidence quality.
> - In contrast to its lower ranking as an influence on sourcing and using different evidence, **'evidence of impact'** appears a highly ranked way of assessing quality.
> - **School leaders** are likely to use **credibility factors** (e.g., 'being backed by academic research') and/or **'evidence of impact'** to assess evidence quality.
> - **Teachers** are likely to use **familiarity, social,** and/or **practical approaches** (e.g., 'word of mouth' and 'previous use or experience') when assessing evidence quality.
> - Respondents who highly ranked **'evidence of impact'** and **'being backed by academic research'** as testaments of evidence quality, were also **significantly more likely** to source and select evidence using these factors as influences.

Credibility was a strong theme again for how different kinds of evidence were assessed for quality. Preferred assessment approaches included: 'being backed by academic research' (64% of overall sample ranked in top 3; 1st ranked assessment approach), 'perceived credibility of the source' (48%; 4th ranked), 'perceived credibility of the author (42%; 5th ranked), 'endorsement from professional associations or official bodies' (39%; 6th ranked) (see *Figure 12*). For those respondents who ranked 'academic backing' highly as an approach to assessment of quality, they were also significantly more likely[11] (p<.001) to rank it highly as an influence when sourcing evidence as well (see *Section 3.1.2*).

Whilst **'evidence of impact'** was ranked less highly as an influence when sourcing different evidence types (see *Figure 6* in previous *Section 3.1*), it was considered a strong indicator of quality by the overall sample (60%; 2nd ranked) (see *Figure 12*). For those respondents who ranked this factor highly as an approach to assessment of quality, they were also significantly more likely[11] (p<.001) to rank the factor highly as an influence when sourcing evidence (see *Section 3.1.2*).

Figure 12: **How do educators assess the quality of evidence sources? (P2Q4; *n*=492)**

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[11] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

These pattern responses were largely aligned with those of state-specific samples, although a different order of preferences was noted in South Australia (see *Table 7*).
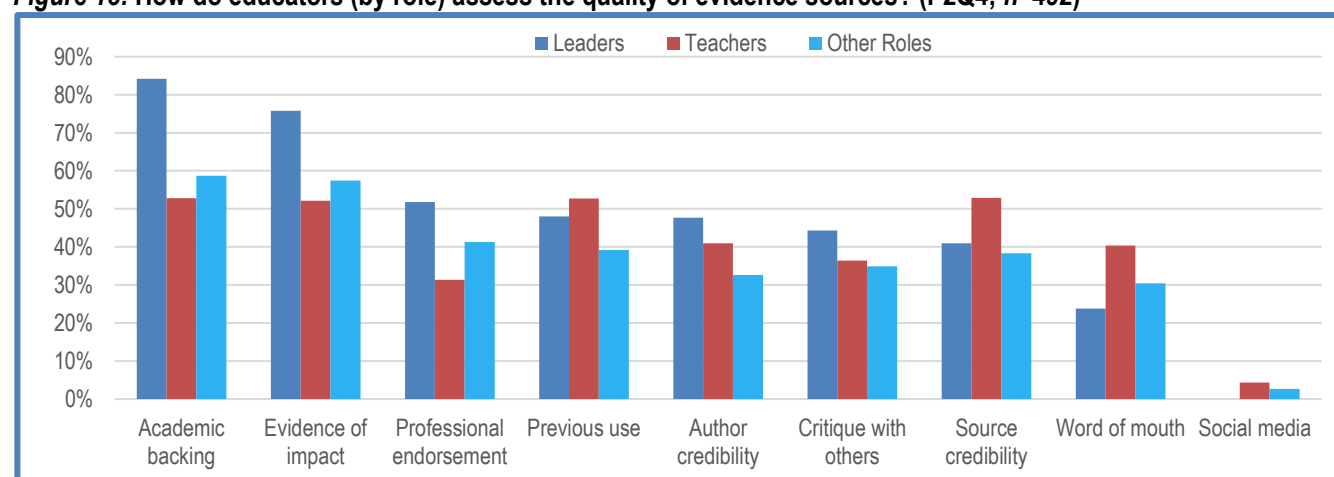
Table 7: **Ranking position of approaches to assessing the quality of different evidence types (by state) (P2Q4)**

	Overall (*n*=492)	VIC (*n*=195)	QLD (*n*=116)	NSW (*n*=149)	SA (*n*=32)
Sample sizes					
Backed by academic research	1	1	1	1	3
Evidence of impact	2	3	2	2	2
Previous use	3	2	4	3	8
Perceived credibility of source	4	4	3	4	4
Perceived credibility of the author	5	5	5	6	6
Endorsement from professional bodies	6	8	6	5	1

Preferences for different assessment approaches differed most notably by:

a) **Role** – with school leaders ranking credibility factors (e.g., 'being backed by academic research') and 'evidence of impact' more highly as testaments of quality when compared with teachers. Just over half of school leaders also considered 'endorsement by professional associations or official bodies' as a testament of evidence quality, despite its relatively low ranking for the overall sample. In contrast, teachers were more likely to report assessing evidence quality using familiarity, social, and/or practical approaches (e.g., 'word of mouth' and/or 'previous use or experience') (see *Figure 13* and *Table 8*); and

b) **Years of experience** – with more experienced respondents (10+ years of experience) indicating slightly stronger preferences for 'being backed by academic research' and 'evidence of impact' as testaments of evidence quality when compared with less experienced respondents (see *Figure 14* and *Table 9*).

Figure 13: **How do educators (by role) assess the quality of evidence sources? (P2Q4; *n*=492)**
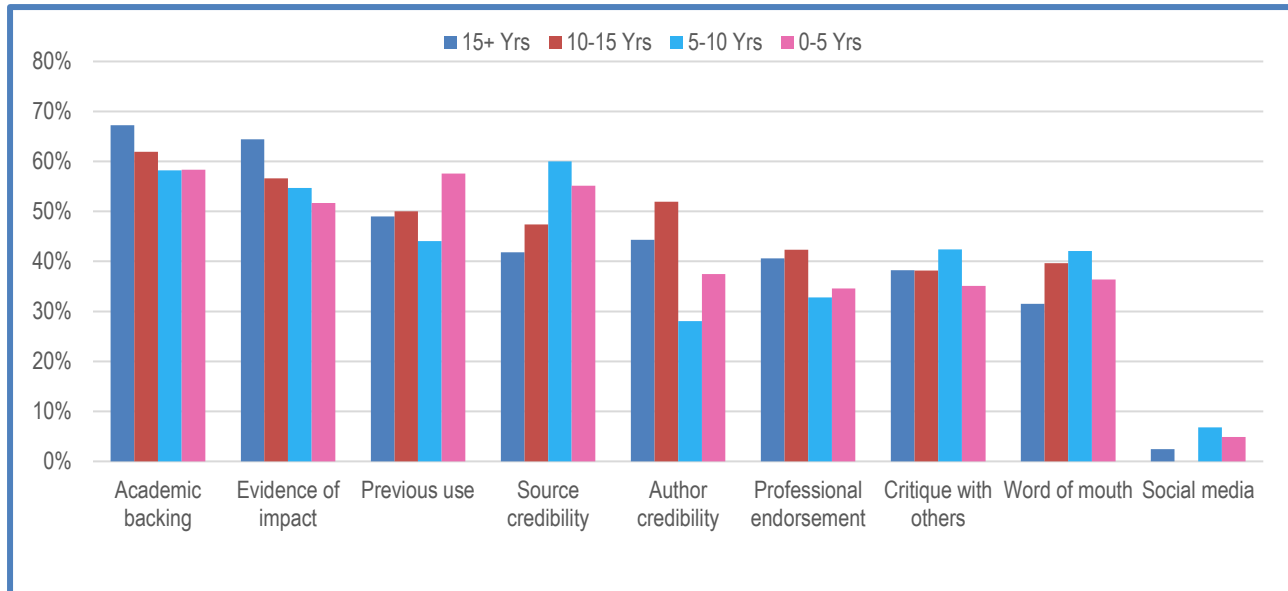
Figure 14: **How do educators (by years of experience) assess the quality of evidence sources? (P2Q4; *n*=492)**

Whilst respondents holding research-based post-graduate qualifications appear to value credibility factors (e.g., 'being backed by academic research', 'perceived credibility of the source' and 'perceived credibility of the author') more than respondents who hold undergraduate or coursework-based post-graduate qualifications, these pattern differences are slight (see *Figure 15*).

Figure 15: **How do educators (by qualification level) assess the quality of evidence sources? (P2Q4; *n*=492)**

Table 8 and *Table 9* show the differences in rankings of quality assessment approaches that were found to be statistically significant.

Table 8: **Significant differences in rankings of evidence quality assessment approaches by role**[12]

	Assessment approach	*p* value
Teachers preferred the following quality assessment approaches to a significantly greater degree when compared with school leaders:	Word of mouth	<.001
	Perceived credibility of the source	<.001
	Previous use	.002
School leaders preferred the following quality assessment approaches to a significantly greater degree when compared with school leaders:	Academic backing	<.001
	Evidence of impact	.001
	Professional endorsement	.006

Table 9: **Significant differences in rankings of evidence quality assessment approaches by years of experience**[13]

	Assessment approach	Chi-square value		
		x^2	*df*	*p*
Less experienced respondents (<10 years) preferred the following quality assessment approaches to a significantly greater degree when compared with more experienced respondents:	Perceived credibility of the source	11.843	3	.008

3.3 Using Research in Practice

> **Highlights:**
> - Research in particular is **used in practice by the majority of educators**. When research is used, it is done so in **varied ways** including in direct and indirect ways, as well as by individuals and in groups.
> - **School leaders** report **using research more** than teachers and other staff. They also appear more likely to engage in **direct** and **persuasive uses** of research.
> - **Contextual relevance** (e.g., 'directly applicable to implementation') is a highly ranked reason for using research in practice, particularly for **school leaders**.
> - In contrast, **teachers** appear more influenced **by familiarity** and/or **practical considerations** (e.g., 'compatibility with my own teaching practices') when using research in practice.

3.3.1 Incidence of Research Use

The majority of respondents indicated **using research in the last 12 months** (70% of overall sample responded 'yes'; *n*=342). Similar patterns of use were observed across state-specific samples (72% of VIC sample; 70% of QLD sample; 66% of NSW sample; and 66% of SA sample).

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[12] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided *p* values reported; significant *p* value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).
[13] Using Chi-squared test (x^2); significant *p* value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

Respondents' research use differed notably by:

a)   **Role** - with school leaders using research more than teachers and staff with other roles (see *Table 10*).

Other respondent characteristics, such as **qualification level** or **years of experience**, exerted some, albeit inconsistent, influence over response patterns (see *Table 10*).

Table 10: **Incidence of research use by respondent-type (by state) (P4Q2)**

	Overall[14]	VIC	QLD	NSW	SA
Indicated using research in the last 12 months					
School leaders	91%	93%	90%	90%	91%
Teachers	61%	63%	60%	58%	56%
Other roles	51%	53%	45%	58%	40%
Indicated using research in the last 12 months					
Research-based post-graduates	81%	75%	90%	80%	100%
Coursework post-graduates	78%	79%	84%	71%	85%
Undergraduates	62%	65%	61%	64%	50%
Indicated using research in the last 12 months					
15+ Years	72%	69%	77%	71%	74%
10-15 Years	73%	77%	81%	65%	50%
5-10 Years	67%	77%	44%	69%	75%
0-5 Years	61%	74%	59%	48%	40%

An inconsistent research use response pattern was noted for: **respondents who agreed that 'teacher observations and experience should be prioritised over research'** (see Section 3.4.1). Whilst over half of these respondents reported using research in the last 12 months (57%), they were significantly less likely[15] to source research-related evidence types often (e.g., 'research disseminated from universities', 35% use 'often' or 'always'; 'university-based guidance and advice', 25% when compared with the overall sample (both p=<.001).

3.3.2   Different Uses of Research

When research was used, it was **used in a variety of different ways**. Most commonly, research was used in a **collaborative manner** to 'discuss best practice with colleagues' or for **personal development** to 'improve my own knowledge of a topic or subject' and to 'reflect on my own practice' (see *Figure 16*).

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[14] Incidence of research use represents the percentage of respondents for each demographic group by state who selected 'yes' to 'having used research in the last 12 months'. Sample sizes for each demographic group by state are noted at *Tables 25* & *26* in *Appendix 1*.
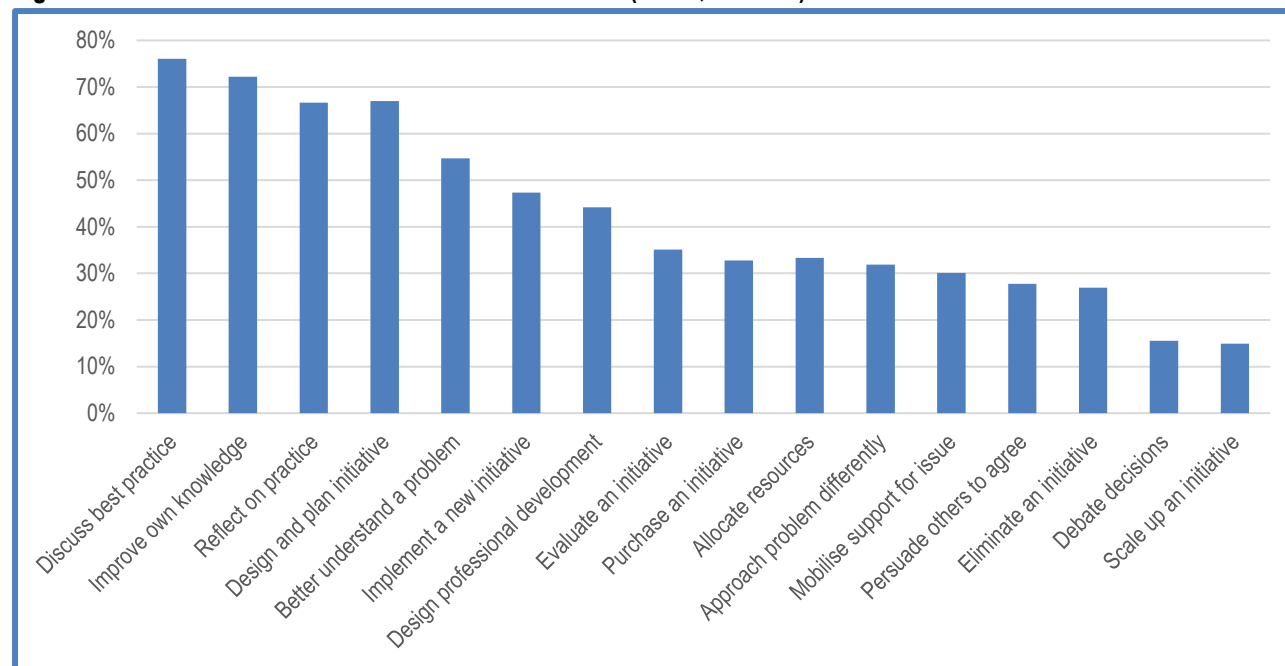[15] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

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Figure 16: **How do educators use research evidence? (P4Q3; *n*=342[16])**

Similar patterns of use were largely observed across state-specific samples (see *Table 11*).

Table 11: **Percentage of respondents (by state) using research in particular ways (P4Q3)**

	Overall	**VIC**	**QLD**	**NSW**	**SA**
Sample sizes	(*n*=342)	(*n*=141)	(*n*=81)	(*n*=99)	(*n*=21)
1) Discuss best practice with colleagues	76%	81%	81%	69%	86%
2) Improve own knowledge of a topic	72%	77%	79%	66%	76%
3) Reflect on my own practice	67%	71%	65%	63%	86%
4) Design and plan a new initiative	67%	67%	77%	67%	57%
5) Better understand an issue or problem	55%	62%	53%	49%	57%

The ways in research was used in practice differed notably by:

a) **Role** – with school leaders more likely to use research in direct or 'instrumental' ways (e.g., 'to design or plan a new initiative', 'to design or provide professional development', 'to implement a new initiative' and 'to evaluate an initiative') than teachers and staff with other roles. School leaders also reported higher instances of using research in persuasive ways (e.g., 'to mobilise support for an important issue or decision' and 'to get others to agree with my point of view) when compared with others (see *Figure 17*). The only 'use' that is reported more frequently by staff in other roles, when compared to leaders and teachers is using research 'to better understand a problem'; and

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[16] Total respondent sample who selected 'yes' to 'having used research in the last 12 months'. This holds for all subsequent figures and tables where *n*=342.

b) **Years of experience** – with more experienced respondents (10+ years of experience) more likely to use research in direct or 'instrumental' ways (e.g., 'to design or provide professional learning' and 'to evaluate an initiative'), albeit the patterns are slightly different to those of school leaders (see *Figure 18*).

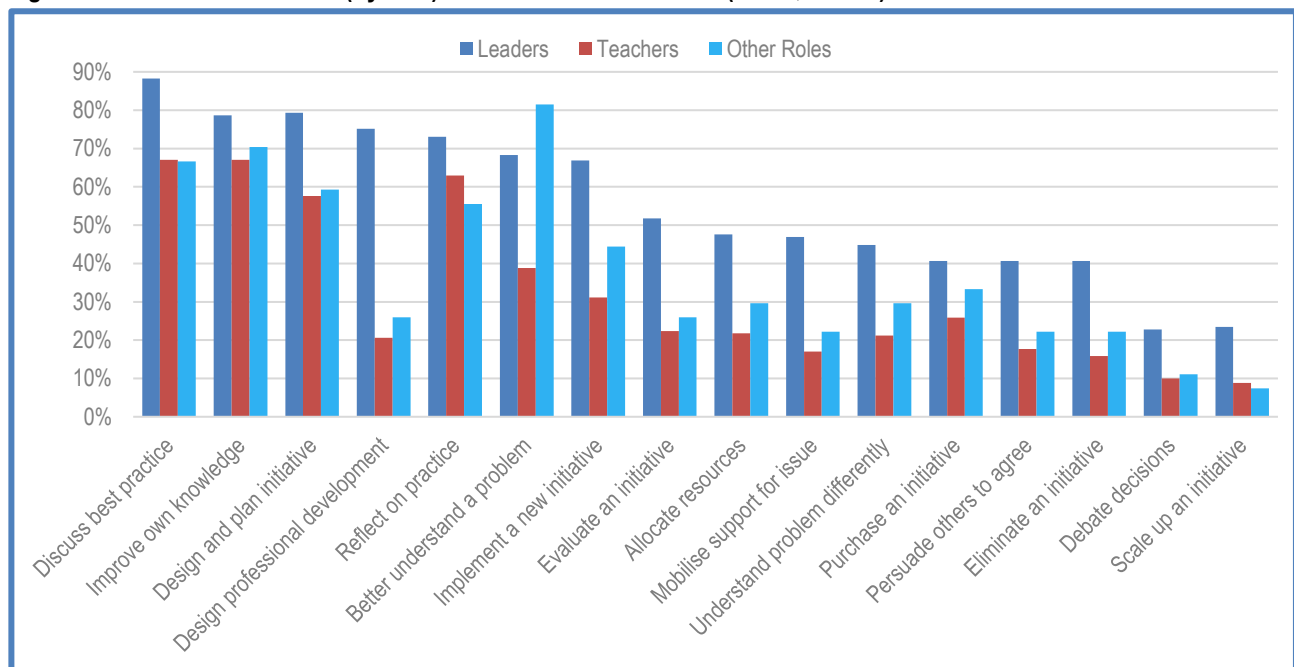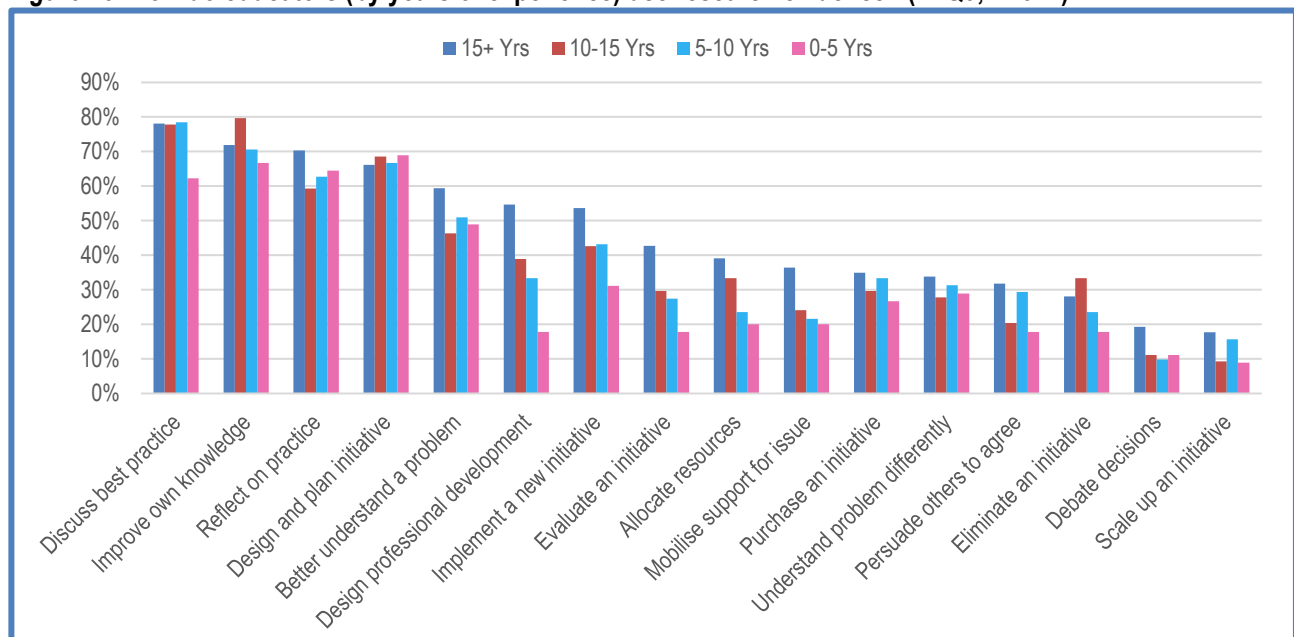*Figure 17:* **How do educators (by role) use research evidence? (P4Q3; *n*=342)**

Figure 18: **How do educators (by years of experience) use research evidence? (P4Q3; *n*=342)**

There were no consistent patterns of difference by **qualification level** (see *Figure 19*).

Figure 19: **How do educators (by qualification level) use research evidence? (P4Q3; *n*=342)**

Whilst some slight differences in response patterns by role, qualification level and years of experience were noted, state-specific trends largely followed those of the overall sample.

3.3.3   Reasons for Using Research

Overall, respondents reported **varied reasons for using research in practice**. **Contextual relevance** (e.g., 'directly applicable to a challenge or problem', 'compatibility with my teaching practices' and 'the research was directly applicable to the implementation') was a strong theme across the overall sample (see *Figure 20*), as it was for all state-specific samples, albeit slight patterning differences were noted (see *Table 12*).

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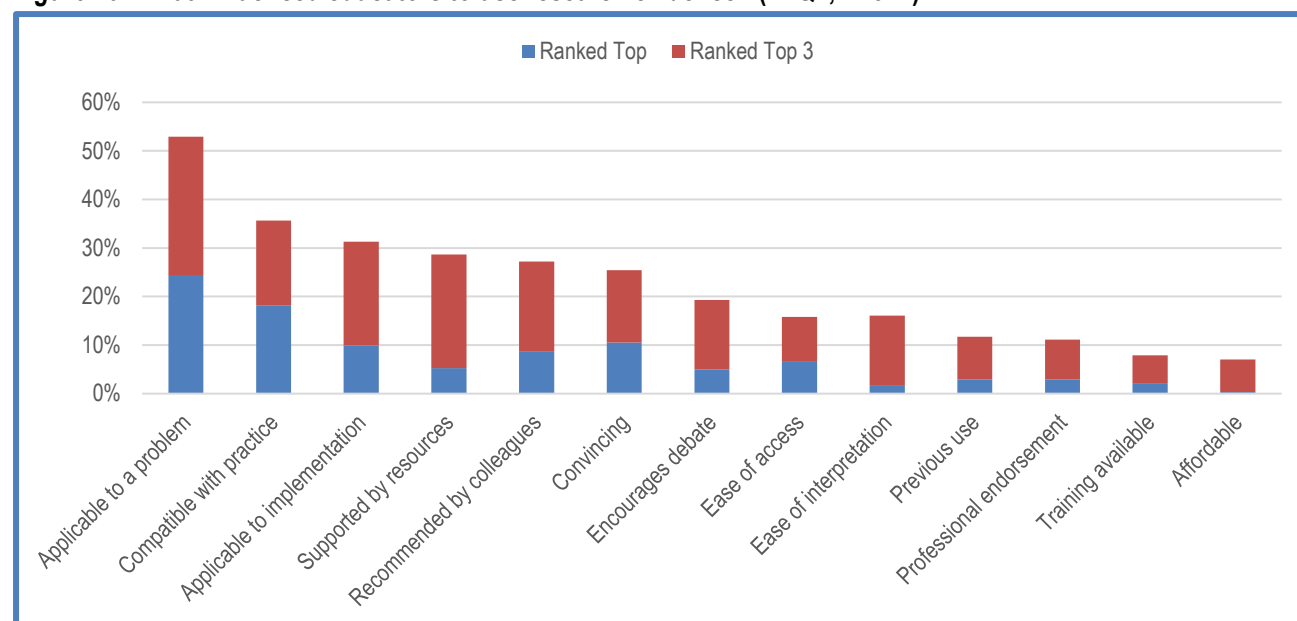*Figure 20:* **What influenced educators to use research evidence? (P4Q4; *n*=342)**

Table 12: **Ranking position of key influencing factors for using research in practice (by state) (P4Q4)**

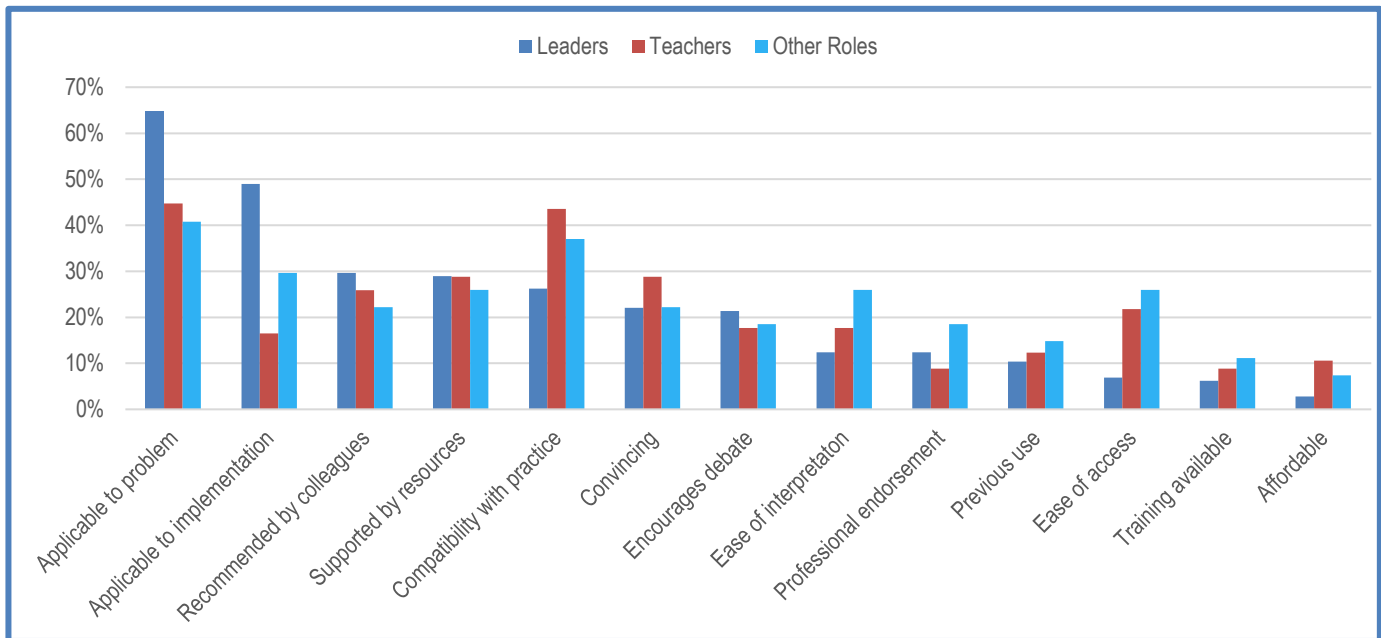|	Overall	VIC	QLD	NSW	SA
Sample sizes	(*n*=342)	(*n*=141)	(*n*=81)	(*n*=99)	(*n*=21)
Applicable to a challenge or problem	1	1	1	1	1
Compatible with teaching practice	2	3	3	2	4
Applicable to the implementation	3	2	5	4	=3
Supported by resources	4	5	2	3	7
Recommended by colleagues	5	6	4	5	2
Research was convincing	6	4	6	6	6
Previous use	10	=10	9	=9	=3
Professional endorsement	11	=10	10	=9	=3

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Reasons for using research differed notably by:

a) **Role** – with school leaders regarding contextual relevance (e.g., the research was 'directly applicable to the problem' and 'directly applicable to the implementation') as a stronger influence on research use when compared with teachers and other staff. Teachers and other staff appeared more influenced by familiarity and practical factors (e.g., 'compatibility with my own teaching practices' and 'ease of access') (see *Figure 21*). These trends were consistent across all state-specific samples.

Figure 21: **What influenced educators (by role) to use research evidence? (P4Q4; *n*=342)**

Response differences were noted by **qualification level** and **years of experience** (see *Figures 22* and *23*). Whilst the patterns appeared inconsistent, it was noted that educators with less than 5 years of experience were more influenced to use research if it was 'easy to interpret' and 'supported by resources' when compared with more experienced educators (see *Figure 23*).

Figure 22: **What influenced educators (by qualification level) to use research evidence? (P4Q4; *n*=342)**

Figure 23: **What influenced educators (by years of experience) to use research evidence? (P4Q4; *n*=342)**

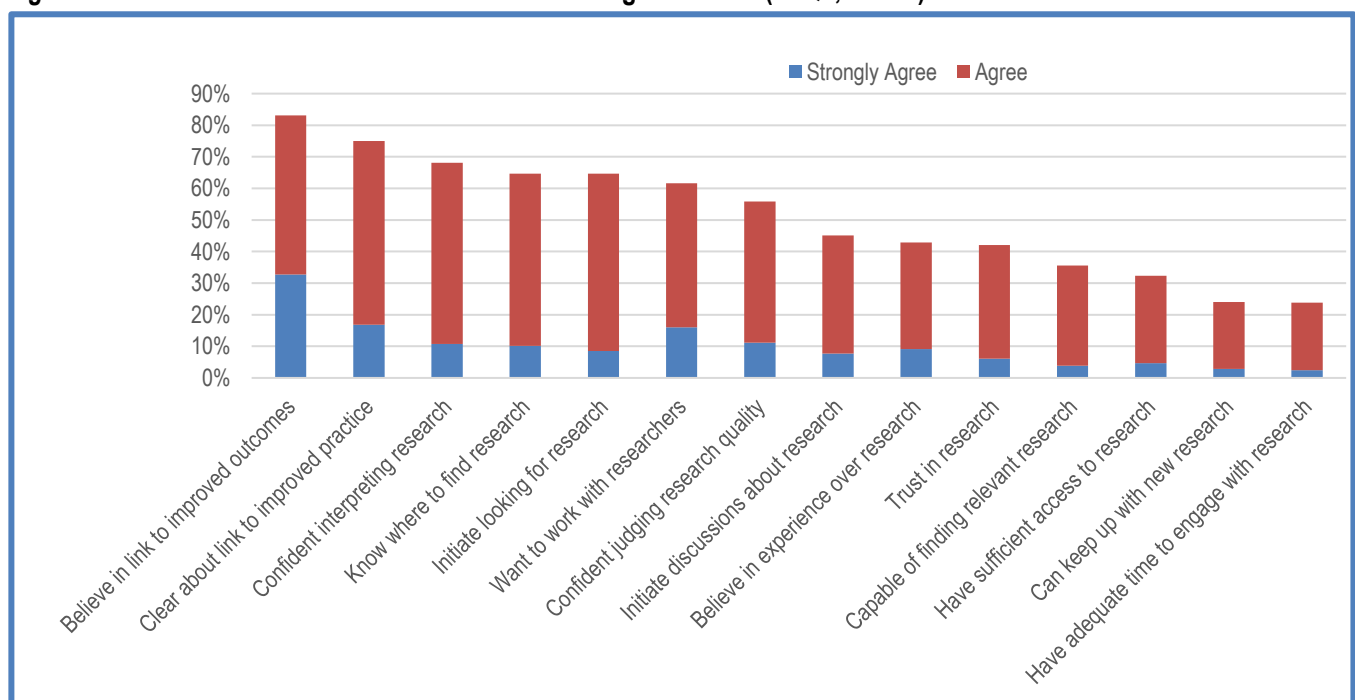## 3.4 Awareness of and Attitudes Towards Using Research

Highlights:

- Overall, educators have **positive attitudes towards using research**, as well as strong **beliefs** about the connection of research use **to improved practice.**
- Educators are likely to have **stronger positive attitudes** and **beliefs** about research use if they are a **school leader** and/or hold **post-graduate qualifications.**
- Educators are more likely to believe that '**teacher observations and experience should be prioritised over research'** if they are a **teacher**, hold **undergraduate qualifications** only, and/or have **less than 10 years of experience**.
- Overall, educators express **lower levels of confidence in their research use capacities** when compared with their largely positive attitudes and beliefs about using research.
- Educators are more likely to have greater confidence in their research use capacities if they are a **school leader, hold post-graduate qualifications,** and/or **have more than 5 years of experience**.

3.4.1 Attitudes Towards and Beliefs in Research Use

Overall, respondents appeared to have **positive attitudes towards using research**, as well as strong **beliefs about the connection of research use to improved practice** (see *Figure 24*). The majority believed that 'research will help to improve student outcomes' (83% of overall sample either 'strongly agree' or 'agree'), felt 'clear about how research can be used to change practice' (75%), wanted to 'look for relevant research when confronted with a new problem or decision' (65%), as well as have 'opportunities to work with researchers' (62%).

Figure 24: **What are educators' attitudes towards using research? (P4Q1; *n*=492)**

Research-related attitudes differed notably by:

a) **Role** – with leaders reporting more positive attitudes and beliefs than teachers and other staff (see *Figure 25*). These attitudes and beliefs were also found to be significantly more positive[17] when compared with teachers (all p=<.001). In contrast, teachers reported much stronger 'beliefs in teacher observations and experience being prioritised over research' when compared with school leaders (see *Figure 25*), which were also found to be significantly higher[17] (p<.001); and

b) **Qualification level** - with respondents holding post-graduate qualifications reporting stronger positive attitudes and beliefs about using research in practice than respondents who held undergraduate qualifications only (see *Figure 26*). All attitudes and beliefs were found to be significantly stronger[18] for post-graduate qualified respondents over undergraduate qualified respondents (e.g., felt 'clear about how research can be used to change practice', x^2=16.359, df=2, p<.001; 'look for relevant research when confronted with a new problem or decision', x^2=8.297, df=2, p=.016; and want 'opportunities to work with researchers', x^2=11.445, df=2, p=.003), except for beliefs in 'research will help to improve student outcomes', which was not statistically significant. Similar to response patterns of teachers, undergraduate qualified respondents were more likely to 'believe in teacher observations and experience being prioritised over research' when compared to postgraduate qualified educators, although this difference was not statistically significant.

These trends were observed across all state jurisdictions, except for one anomaly in NSW, where respondents with research-based post-graduate qualifications indicated stronger 'beliefs in teacher observations and experience being prioritised over research'.

Figure 25: **What are educators (by role) attitudes towards using research? (P4Q1; *n*=492)**

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[17] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).
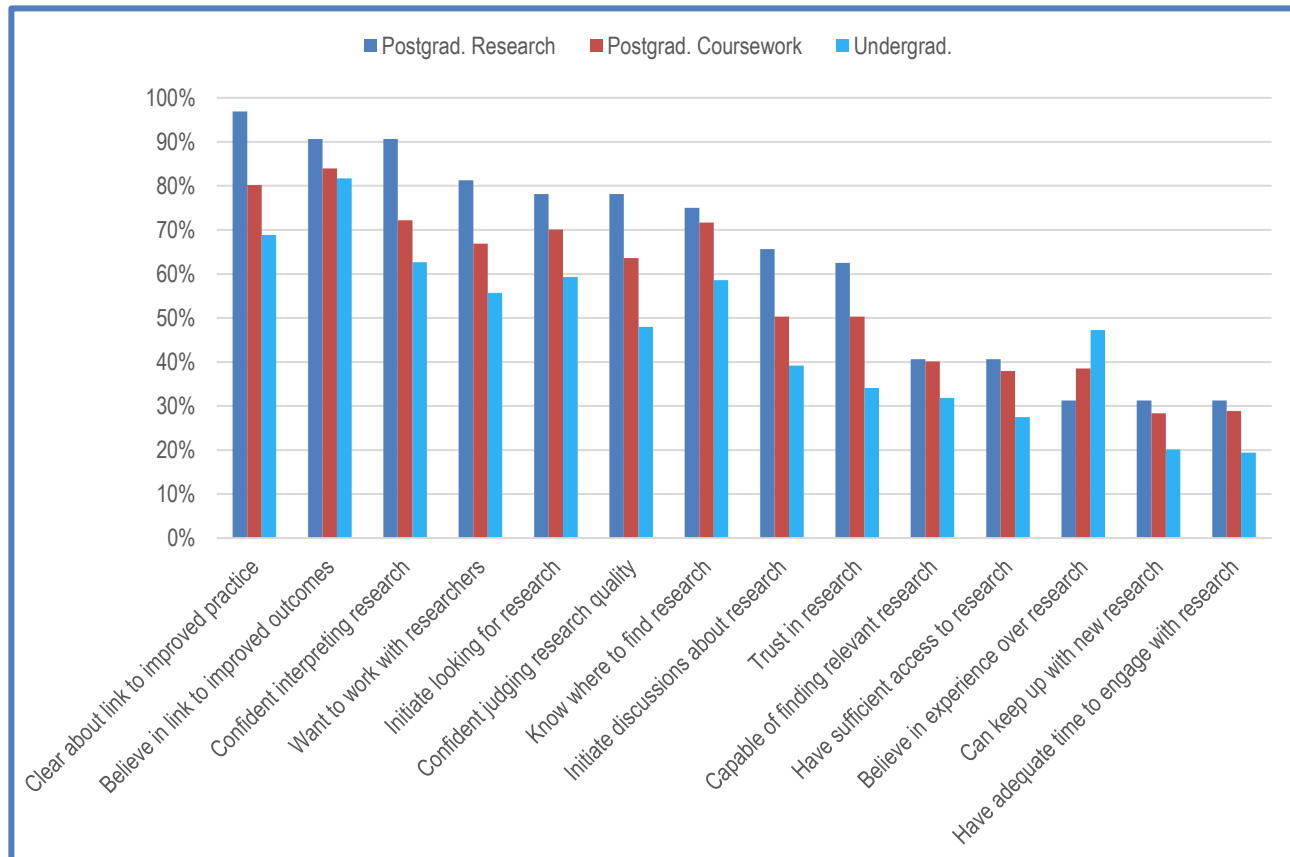[18] Using Chi-squared test (x^2); significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

Figure 26: **What are educators (by qualification) attitudes towards using research? (P4Q1; *n*=492)**

Whilst there were no consistent attitudinal and belief response patterns by years of experience, it was noted that less experienced respondents, particularly those with less than 5 years, believed that 'teacher observations and experience should be prioritised over research' when compared with more experienced respondents (more than 10 years of experience). This difference in beliefs was found to be statistically significant[19] (x^2=11.297, df=3, p=.010). At the same time, however, less experienced educators, particularly those with 5-10 years of experience, were more 'open to work with researchers' (see *Figure 27*), with their positive attitudes towards this item being significantly greater[19] than more experienced respondents (x^2=9.453, df=3, p=.024).
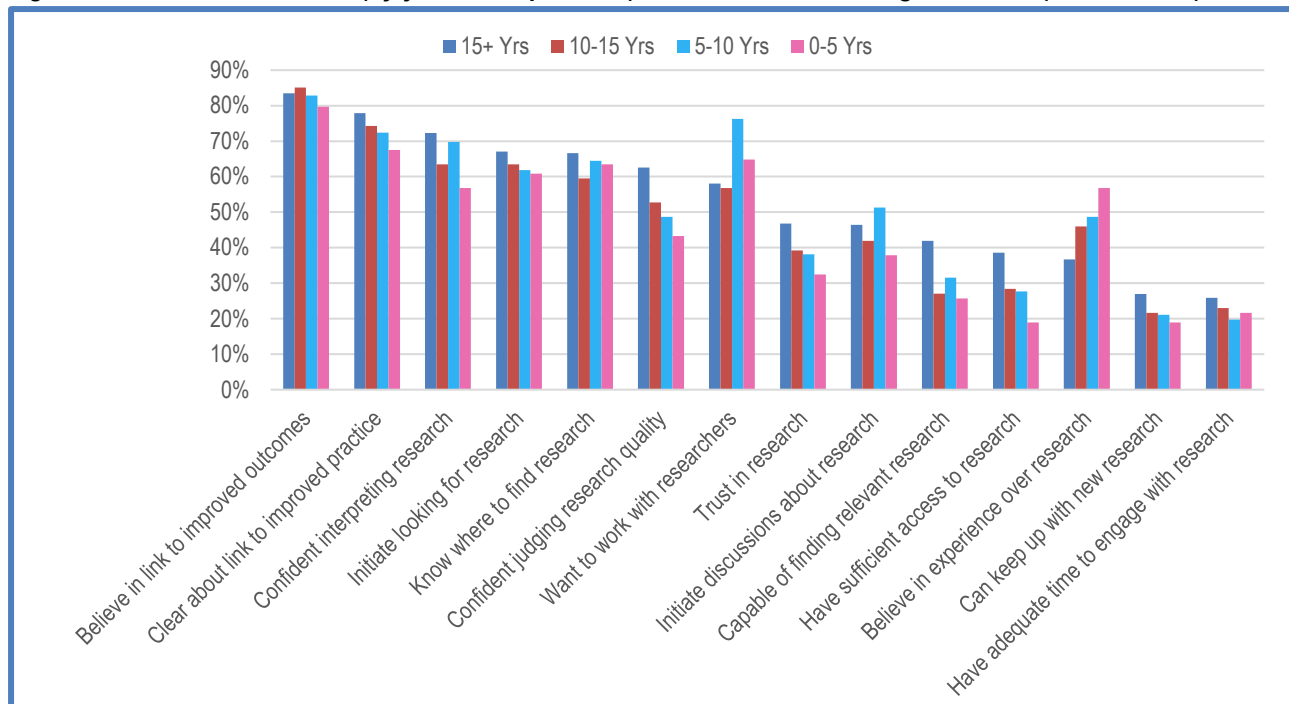
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[19] Using Chi-squared test (x^2); significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

Figure 27: **What are educators (by years of experience) attitudes towards using research? (P4Q1; *n*=492)**

3.4.2   Confidence in Research Use Capacities

Despite positive attitudes towards research use overall, respondents reported **somewhat less positive beliefs in their capacities** to use research in practice. Approximately two-thirds of respondents felt 'confident in analysing and interpreting research' (68% of overall sample) and believed that they 'knew where to find relevant research' (65%), whilst just over a half (56%) expressed 'confidence in how to judge the quality of research', and slightly less again (45%) felt that they 'regularly initiated discussions regarding research' (see *Figure 24* in previous *Section 3.4.1*).

Respondents expressed lowest confidence levels in and/or capacities to **find time to access and review research** (see *Figure 24* in previous *Section 3.4.1*). These attitudes and beliefs alongside respondents' weaker perceptions of school support for research use by **'making time available'** is cause for concern (see following *Section 3.5* for detail).

Confidence levels differed most notably by:

a)   **Role** – with school leaders expressing greater confidence than teachers and other staff (see *Figure 25* in previous *Section 3.4.1* and *Table 13* in this section);

b)   **Qualification level** – with those respondents holding post-graduate qualifications expressing greater confidence than those with undergraduate qualifications only (see *Figure 26* in previous *Section 3.4.1* and *Table 14* in this section); and

c)   **Years of experience** – with those newly-qualified respondents (less than 5 years) expressing less confidence than more experienced respondents (see *Figure 27* in previous *Section 3.4.1* and *Table 14* in this section).

Table 13 and *Table 14* show the differences in confidence levels that were found to be statistically significant.

Table 13: Significant differences in research use confidence levels by role[20]

	Research use task	p value
School leaders feel **more** confident and/or more able to a significantly greater degree with regards to the following tasks when compared with teachers:	Judging research quality	<.001
	Initiating research discussions	<.001
	Analysing & interpreting research	.002
	Finding relevant research	<.001

Table 14: Significant differences in research use confidence levels by qualification and years of experience[21]

	Research use task	Chi-square value		
		x^2	df	p
Respondents with undergraduate qualifications only feel **less** confident to a significantly greater degree with regards to the following tasks when compared with more qualified respondents:	Analysing & interpreting research	12.663	2	.002
	Judging research quality	17.889	2	<.001
	Initiating research discussions	11.306	2	.004
Less experienced respondents (<5 years) feel **less** confident to a significantly greater degree with regards to the following tasks when compared with more experienced respondents:	Judging research quality	11.510	3	.009
	Finding relevant research	10.774	3	.013

3.5 Perceived School Support for Research Use

Highlights:

- Overall, educators have **positive perceptions** about their school support for research use, although these perceptions are **less positive** in relation to both **informed risk-taking** and the **provision of time and access.** Alongside these weaker perceptions, educators have **concerns** about their own capacities to **find time to access and review research.**
- Educators are likely to have **more positive perceptions** about school support for research use if they are a **school leader** and/or hold **post-graduate qualifications.**
- Educators are more likely to have greater confidence in their capacities to **find time to access and review research** if they are a **school leader,** hold **post-graduate qualifications,** and/or have **15+ years of experience.**
- Educators who believe that their school **provides adequate time for research use,** are also more than likely to have **more positive perceptions** of their **capacities to find time to access and review research.** The majority of these educators **use research** in practice, and frequently consult **research-related evidence types.**

Overall, respondents indicated **positive perceptions** about their **school support for research engagement**. The majority of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their school: 'facilitated a professional learning community or supported collaborative learning' (87% of overall sample); 'makes research-informed decisions when choosing programs or initiatives' (82%); and 'sought

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[20] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).
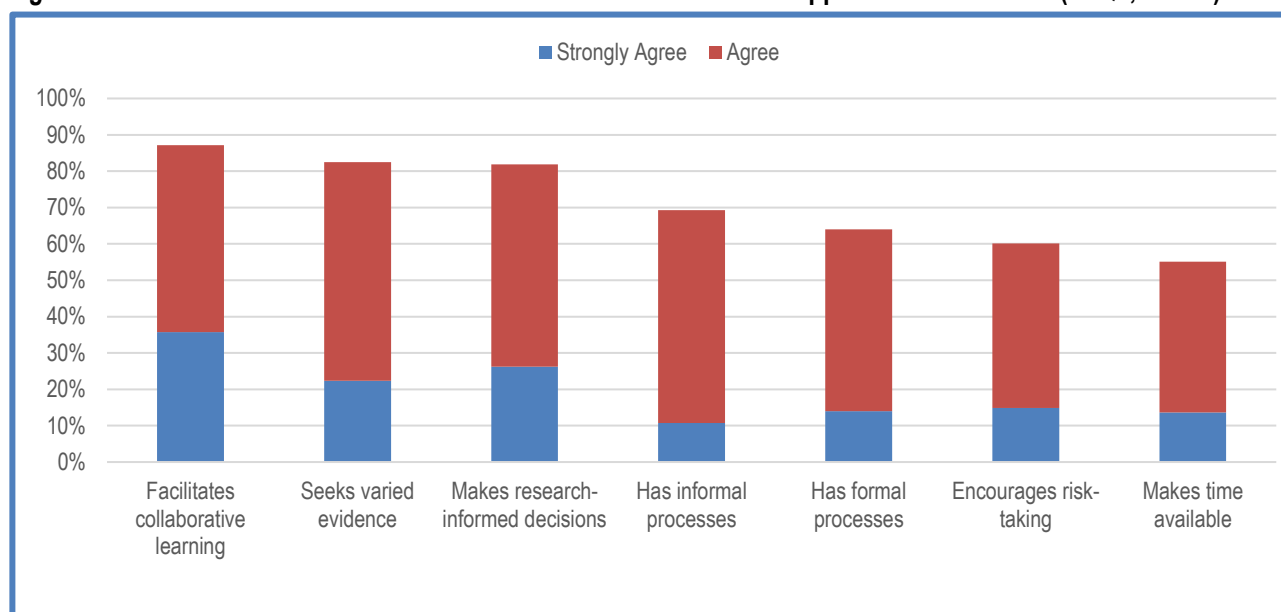[21] Using Chi-squared test (x^2); significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

information from a variety of sources' (83%). Whilst still largely positive, respondents had lower perceptions of school support with regard to having 'informal' (69%) and 'formal' (64%) processes in place to help staff engage with research (see *Figure 28*).

Figure 28: **How well do educators believe their school environment supports research use? (P3Q1; *n*=492)**

State-specific response patterns were largely aligned with those of the overall sample (see *Table 15*).

Table 15: **Percentage of respondents (by state) 'agreeing' and 'strongly agreeing' that their school environment supports research use (P3Q1)**

	Overall (*n*=492)	VIC (*n*=195)	QLD (*n*=116)	NSW (*n*=149)	SA (*n*=32)
Sample sizes					
Believes school:					
Facilitates research use learning	87%	87%	85%	87%	97%
Seeks varied evidence	83%	84%	81%	83%	81%
Makes research-informed decisions	82%	81%	84%	81%	84%
Has informal research use processes	69%	67%	72%	72%	63%
Has formal research use processes	64%	64%	63%	68%	53%

However, respondents indicated **weaker beliefs** in school support for both **informed risk-taking** and the **provision of time and access** (see *Figure 28* and *Table 16*).
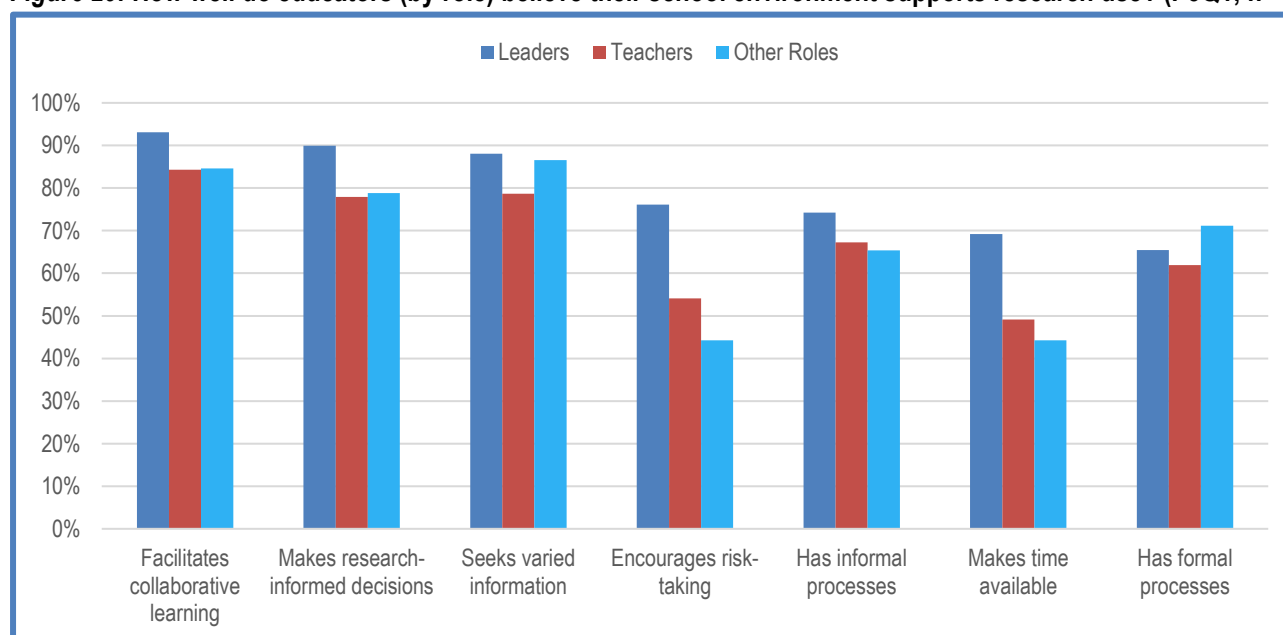
Table 16: **Percentage of respondents (by state) 'agreeing' and 'strongly agreeing' that their school environment supports research use: risk-taking and time/access items (P3Q1)**

	Overall (*n*=492)	VIC (*n*=195)	QLD (*n*=116)	NSW (*n*=149)	SA (*n*=32)
Sample sizes					
Believes school:					
Encourages informed risk-taking	60%	59%	62%	58%	69%
Makes time available	55%	55%	60%	51%	56%

Perceptions about school support for research use differed notably by:

a) **Role** – with school leaders having more positive perceptions of school support for research use when compared with teachers (see *Figure 29*). These differences were found to be statistically significant for all supports[22] (i.e., 'facilitates research use learning', *p*=.007; 'seeks varied evidence', *p*=.014; 'makes research-informed decisions', *p*=.002; 'encourages informed risk-taking', *p*<.001; and 'makes time available', *p*<.001), except for having both 'informal' and 'formal processes; and

b) **Years of experience** – with more experienced respondents (more than 15 years) reporting greater perceptions of all supports when compared with other less experienced respondents, except with regards to having both 'informal' and 'formal' processes to support research use (see *Figure 30*). Of these response patterns, respondents with more than 15 years of experience were found to have significantly more positive perceptions[23] of schools' support for 'making time available' (x^2=9.428, *df*=3, *p*=.024) and 'encouraging informed risk-taking' (x^2=15.982, *df*=3, *p*=.001).

Figure 29: **How well do educators (by role) believe their school environment supports research use? (P3Q1; *n*=492)**

Figure 30: How well do educators (by years of experience) believe their school environment supports research use? (P3Q1; *n*=492)

There were, however, no consistent patterns of difference by **qualification level** (see *Figure 31*).

Figure 31: How well do educators (by qualification) believe their school environment supports research use? (P3Q1; *n*=492)

Response patterns about whether schools 'make time available for research use' can also be considered alongside those of **educators' capacities to find time to access and review research** (see *Figure 24* in previous *Section 3.4.1*). Response patterns

indicate educators have **concerns** about 'having sufficient access to research evidence' (only 32% of overall sample 'agree' and 'strongly agree'), 'having adequate time to access and review research' (24%), as well as being able to 'keep up with new and emerging research' (24%).

Respondents' confidence in their own capacities to find time to access and review research differed most notably by:

a) **Role** – with school leaders expressing greater confidence in their capacities than teachers (see *Figure 25* in previous *Section 3.4.1*). These differences were found to be statistically significant for all capacities[24] (i.e., 'having sufficient access', $p<.001$; 'having adequate time', $p<.001$; and 'being able to keep up with new research', $p=.015$);

b) **Qualification level** – with those respondents holding post-graduate qualifications expressing greater confidence than those with undergraduate qualifications only (see *Figure 26* in previous *Section 3.4.1*). These differences were found to be statistically significant[25] for 'having adequate time' (x^2=6.537; df=2; $p=.038$) and 'having sufficient access' (x^2=6.669; df=2; $p=.024$); and

c) **Years of experience** – with more experienced respondents (>15 years) expressing greater confidence than less experienced respondents (see *Figure 27* in previous *Section 3.4.1*). The only difference that was found to be statistically significant[25] was 'having sufficient access' (x^2=12.130; df=3; $p=.007$).

Respondents who believed that their school **'provides adequate time for research use',** were also significantly more likely to have **more positive perceptions[26]** of their **capacities to find time to access and review research** than others ($p<.001$). The majority also reported **using research** in practice (70%), and frequently consulted **research-related evidence types** (e.g., 'university disseminated research', 52% use 'often' and 'always'; 'university-based guidance and advice'; 42%)**.**

4. ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Q Project survey was intended as one of two key research activities in 2020 – the other being 40 school visits (e.g., observations, interviews, focus groups) planned for June - September 2020. Due to COVID-19 impacts, the research activities that were conducted during 2020 included:

1. A survey, comprising 8 quantitative and 8 open-text questions, that was administered online to teachers and school leaders between March - September, 2020. In total 492 practitioners from 414 schools from the four participating Australian states completed the survey; and

2. Interviews with 29 survey respondents who were invited and volunteered to participate in a 45-minute follow-up discussion online.

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[24] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).
[25] Using Chi-squared test (x^2); significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).
[26] Using Fisher's exact test; 2-sided p values reported; significant p value <.05 expected (Field, 2015).

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4.1   Design Rationale

The design of the survey reflected the Q Project's 2020 research aim of **'listening to educators'** as well as starting to address the key school-based research phase questions:

a)   How are schools using research evidence?
b)   What is involved in using research evidence well?
c)   How can quality use of research evidence be developed?

The final survey aimed to build a picture of:

1.   what types of research and evidence were valued by educators, and how and why different kinds of evidence were sourced;
2.   educators' awareness of and attitudes towards research use in particular, their perceptions of school research-related supports, and whether and how research was used within their practices; and
3.   educators' initial conceptualisations of quality research use and what they considered as key associated behaviours.

Five key research considerations and concepts influenced the survey design.

Foremost, **a number of open-text questions focused on what respondents believed was involved in 'using research well',** as well as **'using research poorly'.** Very few international or Australian studies exist, if any, that report specifically on educators' insights into the meanings of quality research use in practice. Gaining practitioner insights is intended to inform both Q Project's ongoing research agenda and the relevance our QURE framework.

Second, whilst Q Project is engaged in understanding this issue of quality research use amongst Australian educators, the first survey presented **an opportunity to understand what** *actual* **evidence, information and research types were valued and used by practitioners, and how academic-based research factored in such use and value judgements**. Internationally, studies have been conducted over a number of years that help shed light on this topic (e.g., Brown, 2015; Finnigan & Daly, 2014; Gorard, 2020). Yet, whilst several Australian studies have recently been initiated (e.g., Mills et al., 2021; Parker et al., 2020; Prendergast & Rickinson, 2019; White et al., 2018), there remains little in-depth knowledge of the role and use of research in Australian schools.

Third, studies suggest that there is **benefit in understanding educators' attitudes towards using research in practice as a precursor to understanding effective or quality use** (Judkins et al., 2014; Lysenko et al., 2014; Williams & Coles, 2007). Surfacing research-related attitudes and perceptions of confidence and skill levels allows for insights to be gained regarding what different individual and organizational factors need to be established and/or changed to: (i) guide practitioners' own research use improvements; (ii) assist Q Project's development of appropriate and useful resources to support practitioners' use of research; and (iii) help school and system leaders to target interventions themselves for collective improved use.

Fourth, to understand in detail the role that research plays in educators' practices, two **evidence use typologies or conceptual ideas were used to shape the design of survey questions and items**. Weiss (1979) describes seven different types of research and evidence use including: (i) knowledge-driven; (ii) problem-solving; (iii) interactive; (iv) political; (v) tactical; (vi) enlightenment; and (vii) research as part of the intellectual enterprise of society. This typology helped us to shape items that distinguished between 'instrumental' (e.g., problem-solving) and 'conceptual' (e.g., enlightenment) uses of research (Boaz & Nutley, 2019). It also helped to

highlight that research use may be mandated through education policies or guidelines (e.g., political use)[27]. Studies with educators in the UK (Cain, 2019; Cain et al., 2019) and the US (Penuel et al., 2016) also emphasise the importance of conceptual uses of research and evidence. For example, educators use research and evidence to *inform* their own knowledge which then influences their decision-making and reflective practices. They may also use research and evidence 'unknowingly' through the use of policies and official guidelines, research-informed professional development materials, or through the services of third-party consultants.

Last, a large-scale UK-based series of studies (Nelson et al., 2017; Poet, Mehta, & Nelson, 2015) adopted an approach in their surveys that focused on **teachers' 'research-engagement'**. In designing their surveys, Nelson and colleagues developed a number of constructs that, when combined, created a "picture of research engagement" (p. 5). These constructs included:

- Access and awareness – believing in the value of research evidence; knowing about research and evidence; knowing how to locate it; and physically accessing research evidence;

- Understanding and persuasion – understanding what the research evidence says; knowing how to critique it; believing in the findings (if reliable); and understanding the implications for classroom practice;

- Translation and action – knowing how to apply research evidence in practical situations; changing behavior or approach on the basis of research evidence; and using research evidence to make a difference in the school; and

- Knowledge – knowing what research evidence says on key topics related to effective teaching and learning and whole-school practice (pp. 5-6).

Noting that "research engagement is a term that means different things to different people" (Nelson et al., 2015, p. 5), as well as the benefit of understanding educators' attitudes and confidence levels as a condition of research use in practice, we have devised a simpler construction of 'research-engagement' that comprises educators': (i) beliefs in the value of research use; (ii) knowledge of what research evidence is; (iii) preferences for and consultation of research evidence; and (iv) confidence in their research-related skills and abilities. The survey therefore includes several questions and item statements that have been aggregated and scored as being representative of the extent to which an educator is 'research-engaged' (see *Table 22, Section 4.4* for the relevant items). Our intention was twofold: (i) to track whether there were any discernible response patterns by respondent group through the aggregation of these items; and then (ii) whether 'research-engagement', as an aggregation, provided any greater insight into research-related behaviours and attitudes of different respondent groups. Findings regarding educators' research-engagement are not included in either this full report or the survey summary report. Research-engaged findings will be reported in forthcoming papers due for release in June – July 2021.

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[27] Item related to imposed use was subsequently removed from relevant survey question regarding uses of research after testing with practitioners. 'Endorsement from professional associations/official bodies' was retained as an item for questions related to influences of different evidence use and influences of research use.

4.2 Design Challenges

When interpreting survey findings, it is important to be aware of the design challenges considered and faced, and then the approaches adopted to address these. Challenges included the following:

1. **Avoiding 'priming'** – Poet et al. (2015) suggest that by asking educators direct questions about their attitudes to research, unrealistically high levels of apparent research engagement tend to be generated.

> **Our approach:**
> Our first survey question (Part 2, Question 1) focused on a specific school improvement initiative, what evidence type was used and why. By asking respondents to nominate (open-text) what evidence type was used, our intention was to gain a more realistic appraisal of preferences for research. Responses to this question could then be compared to more direct attitudinal questions in Part 4.

2. **Establishing awareness of and preference for research use** – in addition to the risk of overstatement, attitudinal questions alone will not reflect the extent of educators' awareness of and preference for research use.

> **Our approach:**
> Our questions in Part 2 focused deliberately on what different evidence types were used in the last 12 months, what influenced their use, and what approaches were used to assess their quality. By asking these questions and appraising the relative status of research when compared with other evidence types, responses could then be compared to responses from direct attitudinal questions in Part 4 (Center for Research Use in Education [CRUE], 2020; Poet et al., 2015).

3. **Defining 'research evidence'** – the term 'research evidence' can be variably interpreted by different individuals. Different interpretations can influence responses.

> **Our approach:**
> The first half of the survey focused deliberately on questions regarding different evidence types, whilst the second half focused deliberately on questions regarding research use in particular. A specific definition of research evidence, influenced by Cain's (2019), Poet et al.'s (2015) and Penuel et al.'s (2016) studies, was given to respondents to consider before providing their responses: *research evidence means evidence generated through systematic studies undertaken by universities or research organisations and reported in books, reports, articles, research summaries, training courses or events.*

4. **Structuring survey questions and length** – to maximise response quality and rates, certain issues need to be considered including: (i) respondent fatigue; (ii) ease and consistency of question interpretation; (iii) question intent and language; and (iv) question complexity. With our primary intention being to listen to practitioners, qualitative questions needed to balance 'openness' such that respondents were free to express their views, but also 'direction' such that thematic coding and analyses were not overly complex and potentially invalidated due to breadth of response range.

> **Our approach:**
> Certain considerations were made: (i) only 'introductory' questions about school research-related supports and practitioner research-related attitudes were asked, as these areas of interest would be followed up in subsequent research activities; (ii) a 15-20 minute response time was targeted; (iii) a minimum number of questions were asked given the insights sought; and (iv) the survey development approach included testing with practitioners to ensure language and interpretation challenges were addressed.

4.3 Method of Development

The initial survey design was undertaken by the Q Project and informed by instruments designed and used in previous large-scale international studies of research and evidence use in education (e.g., CRUE, 2020; Nelson et al., 2017; Penuel et al., 2016; Poet et al., 2015).

The Q Project then engaged *WhereTo Research* (WTR), an Australian research consultancy, to assist with the design and testing of the first survey. *Figure 32* shows the sequence of activities undertaken during survey development.

Initial Survey

December 2019 – January 2020
- Survey written by Q Project team (Section 4.4 details initial survey design)
- Joint Q Project and WTR team review – Wave 1
- Initial survey built in Qualtrics (Monash-licensed)

Pilot

January – Early March 2020
- 3 waves of cognitive interview testing with practitioners (Waves 2-4); 4 practitioners per wave
- Key advisors to and stakeholders of Q Project invited to provide survey feedback between Waves 2 - 3

Final Survey

Early – Mid-March 2020
- Final testing of survey with Q Project team
- Finalised build in Qualtrics

***Figure 32:* 2020 survey development method**

Several points about the method of development are noteworthy:

1. 12 practitioners, recruited by WTR, participated in the survey development process. The demographics of this group reflected the demographic sample intentions of the broader project (e.g., four participating states; metro vs regionally-based schools; different school sectors; different roles; etc).

2. Each wave (Waves 2 – 4) involved four pilot practitioners. Each practitioner completed the Qualtrics-based survey online, administered by WTR and their identity not known to the Q Project. Each practitioner then participated in a 45-60-minute phone-based cognitive interview with WTR to "describe their thinking process step-by-step as they completed the survey, identifying any difficulty, lack of / overlapping codes, double-barreled answers, unclear statements or other issues". In particular, feedback was sought regarding: (i) the time taken to complete; (ii) how close the survey was to representing their situation; (iii) their understanding of the question scales used; (iv) any gaps - what should have been discussed more; (v) any constricting areas - where they felt their situation was misrepresented because of constricting questioning; (vi) fatigue – any areas where data collection quality may be compromised because the questioning is too tiring in terms of content or of structure (e.g., too many matrices); and (vii) any other observations. Each interview was recorded with WTR representatives also taking notes.

3. Between each wave, practitioner views, and when received, advisor and stakeholder feedback, were collated by WTR and discussed with us to determine what changes would be made. Anonymous survey responses were also shared to view quality of open-text responses in particular. Whilst changes were made to a number of survey features including language, question structure, and Qualtrics design aspects, the overall structure and intention of the initial survey did not change.

4.4 Structure and Composition

The final 2020 survey (shown at *Appendix 2*) comprised 5 parts as follows:

1. Respondent details; 7 demographic questions;
2. Focus on decision-making about school initiatives; 1 open-text question with 4 parts; 3 quantitative questions;
3. Focus on school environments; 1 quantitative question;
4. Focus on the role of research evidence in day-to-day practices; 4 quantitative questions; and
5. Focus on ideas about what it means to use research evidence well; 3 open-text questions, 1 with 2 parts.

The survey was initially designed with seven categories of findings in mind:

1. Sourcing different kinds of evidence;
2. Assessing different kinds of evidence;
3. Using research in practice;
4. Awareness of and attitudes towards research use;
5. Perceived school support for research use;
6. 'Research-engagement' patterns; and
7. Early insights into meanings of quality research use.

With respect to the quantitative questions/data only, *Tables 17* to *22* outline the initial construction of these categories.

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Table 17: **Findings categories 1 & 2 - Preferred evidence types, sources and assessment approaches**

Data Sought	Question Number	Question Focus	Influences
Influences of use	Part 2; Q3	Rating (in descending order) of influences of evidence type/source used	CRUE, 2020. Penuel et al., 2016. Poet et al., 2015. Note: Item related to imposed use was subsequently removed from relevant survey question regarding uses of research after testing with practitioners. 'Endorsement from professional associations/ official bodies' was retained as an item though for questions related to influence of different evidence use (Part 2; Q3) and influence of research use in particular (Part 4; Q4).
	Part 2; Q4	Rating (in descending order) of quality assessment of evidence type/source used	
	Part 3; Q1	Likert-type rating of perceptions of school-level supports for research use. The extent to which practitioners believe their school environments are supportive of research use may be influencing practitioners' preferences to use research (or not)	
	Part 4; Q1	Likert-type rating of attitudes towards research use. Issues with beliefs (e.g., Items 2 & 8), confidence levels or skills and capacities (e.g., Items 1, 6, 7, & 11), trust (e.g., Item 14), or infrastructure barriers/enablers (e.g., Items 4, 5, & 12) may be influencing practitioners' preferences to use research (or not)	
	Part 4; Q3	Multiple-selection of different uses of research	
	Part 4; Q4	Rating (in descending order) of influences of research use	

Table 18: **Findings categories 1 & 2 - Preferred evidence types, sources and assessment approaches (cont.)**

Data Sought	Question Number	Question Focus	Influences
Preferred types	Part 2; Q1	Open-text nominations of evidence types/sources used in relation to a specific school or personal initiative	Poet et al., 2015.
	Part 2; Q2	Likert-type rating of frequency of evidence type/source used	
	Part 4; Q2	Dichotomous (yes/no) response to research use in the last 12 months	

Table 19: **Findings category 3 - Uses of research**

Data Sought	Question Number	Question Focus	Influences
Different uses	Part 2; Q1	Open-text nominations of specific school or personal initiatives to which evidence was applied	Poet et al., 2015. Penuel et al., 2016. Note: Item related to imposed use was subsequently removed from relevant survey question regarding uses of research after testing with practitioners. 'Endorsement from professional associations/ official bodies' was retained as an item though for questions related to influence of different evidence use (Part 2; Q3) and influence of research use in particular (Part 4; Q4).
	Part 4; Q3	Multiple-selection of different uses of research	
	Part 4; Q4	Rating (in descending order) of influences of research use	

Table 20: Findings category 4 - Awareness of and attitudes towards research use

Data Sought	Question Number	Question Focus	Influences
Attitudes	Part 2; Q1	Open-text nominations of evidence types/sources used in relation to a specific school or personal initiative; nomination of academic-backed research	CRUE, 2020. Penuel et al., 2016. Poet et al., 2015. Stoll et al., 2018.

Note: the influence of 'academic backing' over both the selection and quality assessment of different evidence types (Part 2; Q3 & Q4) does not necessarily indicate a respondent as having a more positive attitude towards research and its use. It may be that a respondent selects this because 'academic backing' is perceived as an 'appropriate' criterion, rather than as something that is truly believed or understood (Cain & Graves, 2019). |
	Part 2; Q2	Likert-type rating of frequency of evidence type/source used; strong preference for research	
	Part 3; Q1	Likert-type rating of perceptions of school-level supports for research use. The extent to which practitioners believe their school environments are supportive of research use may be influencing practitioners' attitudes towards research use (or not)	
	Part 4; Q1	Likert-type rating of attitudes towards research use	
	Part 4; Q2	Dichotomous (yes/no) response to research use in the last 12 months	
	Part 4; Q4	Rating (in descending order) of influences of research use. Similar to Part 3; Q1 - the extent to which practitioners believe infrastructure barriers exist (e.g., affordability, ease of access) may be influencing practitioners' attitudes towards research use (or not)	
	Part 5	Open-text nominations of behaviours and attitudes associated with 'using research well' and 'using research poorly'	

Table 21: Findings category 5 - Perceived school support for research use

Data Sought	Question Number	Question Focus	Influences
	Part 3; Q1	Likert-type rating of perceptions of school-level supports for research use. The extent to which practitioners believe their school environments are supportive of research use may be influencing practitioners' attitudes towards research use (or not)	Penuel et al., 2016. Poet et al., 2015.
	Part 4; Q4	Rating (in descending order) of influences of research use. Similar to Part 3; Q1 - the extent to which practitioners believe infrastructure barriers exist (e.g., affordability, ease of access) may be influencing practitioners' attitudes towards research use (or not)	

Table 22: Findings category 6[28]: 'Research-engagement' (aggregated)

Data Sought	Question Number	Question Focus		Influences
'Research engaged'	Part 2; Q2	Likert-type rating of frequency of evidence type/source used; strong preference for 'research disseminated from universities' and 'advice or guidance from universities'		Poet et al., 2015. As noted in *Table 17*: the influence of 'academic backing' over both the selection and quality assessment of different evidence types (Part 2; Q3 & Q4) does not necessarily indicate a respondent as having a more positive attitude towards research and its use.
	Part 4; Q1	Likert-type rating of attitudes towards research use	Agreement with/positive confidence levels in research-related capacities (Items 1, 6, 9, & 11)	
			Agreement with/positive beliefs in value of research use (Items 2 & 8)	
			Disagreement with/negative belief in prioritisation of teachers' experience & knowledge (Item 3)	
	Part 4; Q2	Dichotomous (yes/no) response to research use in the last 12 months		

4.5 Administration and Analytical approach

Due to the impacts of COVID-19, several changes were made in 2020 to the intended participant recruitment and research activities (see *Section 5* for details). This resulted in two different samples participating in the survey.

Sample 1: Each participating Q school (78) nominated two leaders/teachers/staff to complete the survey and provided email contact details for these people. In cases where the schools were very small in size, only one individual was nominated. Each nominated individual was emailed a personalised, identifiable link to a Monash-licensed Qualtrics online survey (182 in total). Each survey was expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The survey was administered to Q partner schools between March – August 2020. A 68.7% per cent response rate was achieved, with 125 completed surveys (see *Section 5* for sample details).

Sample 2: The Q Project engaged *The Online Research Unit* (ORU) to administer the survey to a panel of their own respondents (see *Section 5* for panel recruitment and sample details). ORU replicated Q's first survey using their own software. Additional questions were included to ensure that the school type (e.g., primary, secondary, etc) and school name were nominated by respondents. This enabled school demographic information (e.g., ICSEA value, location, etc) to be sourced from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2019) school profile data for each ORU respondent. ORU administered the survey between August – September 2020, with an achieved sample of 367 respondents. ORU coded quantitative responses from their recruited sample according to Q's coding frames, and provided both quantitative and qualitative data to the Q Project in MS Excel spreadsheets for analysis.

In total, completed survey responses from 492 respondents (see *Tables 25 and 26* in *Appendix 1* for sample details) were analysed between October 2020 – February 2021.

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[28] Findings regarding educators' research-engagement are not included in either this full report or the survey summary report. Research-engaged findings will be reported in forthcoming papers due for release in June – July 2021.

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Using MS Excel and SPSS statistical software (Released 2020. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 27.0. IBM Corp.), quantitative responses from both survey samples were analysed as follows:

1. **Descriptive statistics:**

    a) Likert-style quantitative questions were assigned numeric ratings of 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*), with negative-worded items (e.g., P4Q1 Item 1 – 'I am <u>not</u> confident in how to judge the quality of research evidence') reverse-coded. All Likert-style questions were analysed using the full sample (*n*=492).

    b) Ranking-style quantitative questions (e.g., P2Q3) were analysed using assigned numeric ratings based on (i) whether respondents selected an item and if selected, then (ii) the ranking position of that item (in descending order) (e.g., P2Q3; if 'ease of access' was selected and ranked in 1st position by the respondent, a numeric rating of 1 was applied). If an item was not selected, then a numeric rating of 0 was applied to that item. Percentage values reported are based on the summed number of respondents who ranked an item either 1st (numeric rating of 1), 2nd (2) or 3rd (3), divided by the number of respondents who selected that item (numeric rating>0). All ranking-style questions were analysed using the full sample (*n*=492), except for P4Q4 which used a reduced sample (*n*=342) that included only those respondents who had selected 'yes' to 'having used research in the last 12 months' (P4Q2) as the denominator.

    c) P4Q3, as a multiple selection-style quantitative question, was analysed using assigned numeric values of 1 (*if an item was selected*) and 0 (*if any item was not selected*). Percentage values reported are based on the summed number of respondents who selected that item, divided by the total number of respondents. This question was analysed using a reduced sample (*n*=342) that included only those respondents who had selected 'yes' to 'having used research in the last 12 months' (P4Q2).

2. **Defining demographic variables for inferential statistics:**
    a) **Role**: Teachers = 1; Leaders = 2. Respondents with other roles were not included in the statistical analyses.
    b) **Qualification**: Undergraduate = 1; Post-graduate, coursework-based = 2; Post-graduate, research-based = 3.
    c) **Years of experience**: 0 up to, but not including 5 years = 1; 5 up to, but not including 10 years = 2; 10 up to, but not including 15 years = 3; 15 and more years = 4.

3. **Inferential statistics:**

    a) The numeric ratings applied to Likert-style quantitative questions (e.g., P2Q3, P3Q1 and P4Q1 – detailed above) were recoded as:
    -   **P2Q3**: Numeric rating of 4 or 5 = Regularly uses the source type (Recoded as 1); Numeric rating of 1, 2 or 3 = Does not regularly use the source (Recoded as 0);
    -   **P3Q1**: Numeric rating of 4 or 5 = Positive perceptions of school supports (1); Numeric rating of 1, 2 or 3 = Negative perceptions of school support (0); and
    -   **P4Q1**: Numeric rating of 4 or 5 = Positive beliefs about research use (1); Numeric rating of 1, 2 or 3 = Negative beliefs about research use (0).

    b) The numeric ratings applied to ranking-style quantitative questions (e.g., P2Q3 and P2Q4) were recoded as:
    -   Numeric rating of 1, 2 or 3 = Highly ranked influence (recoded as 1); and
    -   All other numeric ratings = Low ranked influence (recoded as 0).

c) Tests for statistical significance, with significant p values <.05 expected for all tests, included:

- Fisher's exact tests (Field, 2015) were used to test the relationship between responses to the recoded survey items and demographic variables with two levels (e.g., role);
- Chi-square tests (Field, 2015) were used to test the relationship between responses to the recoded survey items and demographic variables with more than two levels (e.g., qualification, experience); and
- Fisher's exact tests were also used to test the relationship between responses of two recoded survey items (e.g., whether respondents who ranked 'evidence of impact' in their top 3 influences in P2Q3, and also did so in P2Q4).

5. ABOUT THE SAMPLE

The original sampling strategy for Q's research phase was to identify 160 - 200 schools across the four participating states in order to achieve a minimum sample of 25 participating schools per state (100 schools in total). These 100 schools would: (i) participate in two surveys in 2020 and 2021; and (ii) form the sample from which 40 school visits in 2020 and then again in 2021 would be selected. The total sampling frame included all school types (e.g., primary, secondary, combined, and special) from government and Catholic school sectors in the four participating states (see ACARA, 2019 for school numbers).

Overall, the sampling scheme for the school-based research phase was planned as a combined random and non-random scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

For 2020 school participation, the initial scheme was a mix of simple criterion sampling approaches (Bryman, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Via a range of Q Project promotion and communication strategies, as well as state-specific school recruitment strategies, all schools in the sampling frame were able to opt-in and complete an online Expression of Interest (EOI) should they wished to volunteer to participate in the project. Each school had an equal chance to complete an EOI. It was initially hypothesised that EOI numbers greater than 25 per state would be received, so purposive sampling (Bryman, 2016) was intended to select the minimum number of 100 participating schools. Using a mix of variation and criterion sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007), a sample of schools would be selected that represented: (i) the greatest spread of demographic characteristics (e.g., ICSEA value, geographic location, school sector and type, etc) possible; and (ii) a mix of self-reported perspectives about school research awareness nominated in EOI responses.

Due to impacts of COVID-19, several changes were made to the 2020 sampling scheme and research activity plan:

a) School recruitment activities conducted by Q team members, all state-based education departments, CEM or others were stalled and eventually halted in March 2020 (in the case of South Australia, school recruitment had not yet started). Jurisdiction partners were updated about the status of school recruitment activities at meetings held in February 2020 and specifically regarding COVID-19 response plans in May 2020. It was agreed that original sampling aims and numbers would be different in 2020.

b) It was agreed that all schools who had volunteered and consented to participate before March 2020 would be invited to complete a survey (see *Section 4.5* for survey administration details). Targeted valid survey respondent numbers would be uncapped and the survey could be administered on a rolling basis if any additional schools approached Q Project and provided consent between March – August 2020.

c)   The Q Project Steering Committee was advised in June 2020 of the Q Project's decision to engage a panel company to administer our first survey to an additional population of Australian educators. The aims of this engagement were both to increase and diversify the overall survey respondent sample. The Q Project engaged *The Online Research Unit* (ORU) to administer the survey to 367 respondents.

Q's first survey was completed by 492 respondents in total from 414 schools across Australia, as shown in *Tables 23* and *24*, and in detail in *Tables 25* and *26* in *Appendix 1*. Despite relatively low respondent numbers in South Australia, the overall sample is: (i) largely representative of the overall school sampling frame (ACARA, 2019); (ii) includes a range of different schools (e.g., ICSEA value, location, etc), despite there being no discernible response pattern differences by school-characteristic; and (iii) a ratio of school leaders to teachers and other staff that is largely representative of the ratio in the overall sampling frame.

Table 23: **Sample - Respondent details (*n*=492)**

Respondents' State	New South Wales 149 respondents, 30%	Queensland 116 respondents, 24%	South Australia 32 respondents, 6%	Victoria 195 respondents, 40%
Respondents' Years of Experience	0-5 years 74 respondents, 15%	5-10 years 76 respondents, 15%	10-15 years 74 respondents, 15%	15+ years 267 respondents, 55%
Respondents' Role	Senior Leader 99 respondents, 20%	Middle Leader 60 respondents, 12%	Teacher 281 respondents, 57%	Other Staff Role 52 respondents, 11%
Respondents' Qualification Level	Undergraduate 273 respondents, 55%	Non-research-based Post-graduate 187 respondents, 38%	Research-based Post-graduate 32 respondents, 7%	

Table 24: **Sample - School details**

Type of School (*n*=414)	Primary (Prep/Kindergarten – Year 6) 205 schools, 42%	Combined (Prep/Kindergarten – Year 12) 117 schools, 24%	Secondary (Year 7 – Year 12) 156 schools, 32%	Special 14 schools, 3%
Respondents' School Features (*n*=492)	Metropolitan Location 359 respondents, 73%	Regional Location 133 respondents, 27%	Low ICSEA Value 179 respondents, 36%	High ICSEA Value 313 respondents, 64%

6. CONCLUSION

Having analysed responses from 492 respondents across eight quantitative questions in the Q Project's 2020 survey, several key insights have emerged:

a) Foremost, **educators are sourcing and using research in practice far less when compared with other evidence types or educators' own knowledge and experience**.

b) **Despite lower relative utilisation of research evidence though, there is cause for optimism.** Educators reveal positive attitudes towards using research, as well as strong beliefs about the connection of research use to improved practice. Overall, they also have positive perceptions of their schools' support for research use.

c) **There are differences that need to be acknowledged.** Individual characteristics (e.g., role, years of experience, and qualification levels) rather than school characteristics (e.g., ICSEA value or location) influence educators' attitudes towards, beliefs in and use of research in practice. Teachers and school leaders differ in particular, in the types of research and evidence that they value, how and why they source different kinds of evidence, and whether and how they use research within their practice.

d) **There are issues that challenge the uptake of research use.** These include time and access constraints, non-supportive school cultures, and low research-related confidence levels in educators' own skills and abilities.

e) **There are complexities that warrant further investigation.** Analysis of response patterns revealed significant inconsistencies between educators' low consultation of research-related evidence types relative to their high levels of reported research use during the last 12 months. Whilst not detailed in this report, other inconsistencies emerged from analysis of educators' open-text responses, with other evidence and data sources often described as 'research'. These inconsistencies could indicate weak understandings amongst educators about what is and what is not 'research evidence'. Actual research use in practice may therefore be overstated.

These findings suggest that there is scope for greater and improved use of research by educators in practice. Key considerations then for school and system leaders may include:

a) **Acknowledging and understanding the differences between teachers' and school leaders' research-related needs, expectations and capabilities** and tailoring professional learning, improvement interventions and support resources accordingly.

b) **Acknowledging and addressing educators' research-related time and access concerns** as barriers to increased and improved use of research in practice.

c) **Paying attention to the importance of contextual relevance** to educators' use of research and evidence and therefore, the ways in which appropriate research and evidence are made available, as well as the ways in which educators' skills and confidence levels are developed.

d) **Facilitating different relationships**, both within and beyond school communities, **and encouraging collaborative and social processes** to support educators' increased and improved use of research.

Staying Connected with Q

Q Project survey findings and subsequent considerations can potentially make an important contribution to ongoing system-wide discussions about the importance of quality research use in educational practice. The Q Project is keen to stay connected with teachers, school leaders, policy-makers, researchers, research brokers and other key stakeholders across Australia as our research findings are understood and communicated.

We encourage you to join us in discussions regarding quality research use. To connect with us, please visit:

🌐 https://www.monash.edu/education/research/projects/qproject

🐦 @MonashQProject

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APPENIDIX 1

Table 25: 2020 survey respondent sample – by school type

	Responses		Respondents by School Type				Respondents by Location		Respondents by ICSEA Value	
	From Persons	From schools	Primary	Combined	Secondary	Special	Metro	Regional	ICSEA <=1000	ICSEA >1000
NSW GOV	20	11	17	0	3	0	14	6	15	5
NSW CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NSW IND	4	2	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	4
Q TOTAL	24	13	17	4	3	0	18	6	15	9
NSW GOV	78	74	40	4	33	1	56	22	41	37
NSW CATH	19	19	9	2	8	0	13	6	1	18
NSW IND	28	26	4	22	2	0	23	5	4	24
ORU TOTAL	125	119	53	28	43	1	92	33	46	79
ALL NSW TOTAL	**149**	**132**	**70**	**32**	**46**	**1**	**110**	**39**	**61**	**88**
QLD GOV	28	17	18	3	6	1	14	14	18	10
QLD CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
QLD IND	4	2	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	4
Q TOTAL	32	19	18	7	6	1	18	14	18	14
QLD GOV	65	60	33	13	16	3	42	23	31	34
QLD CATH	15	14	5	5	5	0	9	6	0	15
QLD IND	4	4	0	4	0	0	2	2	1	3
ORU TOTAL	84	78	38	22	21	3	53	31	32	52
ALL QLD TOTAL	**116**	**97**	**56**	**29**	**27**	**4**	**71**	**45**	**50**	**66**
SA GOV	11	7	8	1	2	0	3	8	4	7
SA CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SA IND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Q TOTAL	11	7	8	1	2	0	3	8	4	7
SA GOV	11	10	6	3	2	0	6	5	4	7
SA CATH	5	4	3	2	0	0	5	0	3	2
SA IND	5	5	0	5	0	0	2	3	2	3
ORU TOTAL	21	19	9	10	2	0	13	8	9	12
ALL SA TOTAL	**32**	**26**	**17**	**11**	**4**	**0**	**16**	**16**	**13**	**19**
VIC GOV	32	21	15	0	17	0	30	2	10	22
VIC CEM	20	13	3	0	17	0	18	2	3	17
VIC CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VIC IND	6	4	0	6	0	0	5	1	1	5
Q TOTAL	58	38	18	6	34	0	53	5	14	44
VIC GOV	80	76	33	11	28	8	62	18	37	43
VIC CEM	27	23	11	3	13	0	25	2	2	25
VIC CATH	4	4	0	0	4	0	1	3	1	3
VIC IND	26	18	0	25	0	1	21	5	1	25
ORU TOTAL	137	121	44	39	45	9	109	28	41	96
ALL VIC TOTAL	**195**	**159**	**62**	**45**	**79**	**9**	**162**	**33**	**55**	**140**
ALL SURVEYS / JURISDICTION TOTALS	**492**	**414**	**205**	**117**	**156**	**14**	**359**	**133**	**179**	**313**

Table 26: 2020 survey respondent sample – by respondent type

	Response from Person	Respondents by Role				Respondents by Qualification			Respondents by Years of Experience			
		Senior Leader	Middle Leader	Other Role	Teacher	Under-grad	Post-Graduate Non-Research	Post-Graduate Research-Based	0-5	5-10	10-15	15+
NSW GOV	20	16	3	0	1	17	3	0	0	2	2	16
NSW CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NSW IND	4	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	4
Q TOTAL	24	18	5	0	1	17	5	2	0	2	2	20
NSW GOV	78	2	5	12	59	55	21	2	18	12	17	31
NSW CATH	19	1	2	4	12	9	9	1	1	7	1	10
NSW IND	28	2	4	3	19	15	13	0	2	5	3	18
ORU TOTAL	125	5	11	19	90	79	43	3	21	24	21	59
ALL NSW TOTAL	**149**	**23**	**16**	**19**	**91**	**96**	**48**	**5**	**21**	**26**	**23**	**79**
QLD GOV	28	16	5	0	7	15	8	5	1	3	1	22
QLD CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
QLD IND	4	2	2	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Q TOTAL	32	18	7	0	7	15	11	6	1	3	1	26
QLD GOV	65	9	5	6	45	48	15	2	11	8	13	33
QLD CATH	15	1	1	4	9	10	4	1	4	4	2	5
QLD IND	4	1	0	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	2
ORU TOTAL	84	11	6	11	56	59	21	4	16	13	15	40
ALL QLD TOTAL	**116**	**29**	**13**	**11**	**63**	**74**	**32**	**10**	**17**	**16**	**16**	**66**
SA GOV	11	8	2	0	1	6	4	1	0	2	1	8
SA CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SA IND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Q TOTAL	11	8	2	0	1	6	4	1	0	2	1	8
SA GOV	11	0	0	3	8	7	4	0	5	1	2	3
SA CATH	5	0	0	1	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
SA IND	5	1	0	1	3	2	3	0	0	1	1	3
ORU TOTAL	21	1	0	5	15	12	9	0	5	2	3	11
ALL SA TOTAL	**32**	**9**	**2**	**5**	**16**	**18**	**13**	**1**	**5**	**4**	**4**	**19**
VIC GOV	32	18	12	0	2	14	14	4	2	6	7	17
VIC CEM	20	12	7	0	1	3	15	2	0	3	5	12
VIC CATH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VIC IND	6	3	2	0	1	2	3	1	0	1	0	5
Q TOTAL	58	33	21	0	4	19	32	7	2	10	12	34
VIC GOV	80	1	3	10	66	44	33	3	19	15	11	35
VIC CEM	27	3	2	1	21	9	16	2	5	1	3	18
VIC CATH	4	0	0	0	4	2	1	1	1	2	0	1
VIC IND	26	1	3	6	16	11	12	3	4	2	5	15
ORU TOTAL	137	5	8	17	107	66	62	9	29	20	19	69
ALL VIC TOTAL	**195**	**38**	**29**	**17**	**111**	**85**	**94**	**16**	**31**	**30**	**31**	**103**
ALL SURVEYS / JURISDICTION TOTALS	**492**	**99**	**60**	**52**	**281**	**273**	**187**	**32**	**74**	**76**	**74**	**267**

APPENDIX 2

Q Survey

Purpose of Survey
This survey aims to build up a picture of the kinds of information sources and resources that are used and valued by educators.

Consent
Taking part in this survey is voluntary and is considered to be low risk. As detailed in the project's Explanatory Statement, by completing this survey, you provide your consent to participate in this research.

Confidentiality, collection of data and data storage
This survey is not confidential – survey responses will be identifiable by email address. However, responses will only be reported at an aggregate level and so individual survey responses will not be made public. Data from this survey will be stored in secure Monash University servers, located within Australia, until the completion of the Q Project (end 2023).

Structure of Survey
This survey asks educators to provide demographic information, details of information sources and resources they have used within their school.

Estimated time to complete the survey
15-20 minutes, depending on how much feedback you would like to give.

Survey deadline date
Please complete the survey by April 10, 2020.

Instructions
To move through the survey, please use the blue arrows at the bottom of the page. The survey will save your responses as you progress.

If you would like to complete the survey in more than one sitting, you can return later and the survey will continue from where you left off.

Contact details
For information or help with this survey, you can email monashqproject@monash.edu If you would like more information about the Q Project, you can visit our website here.
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Research & Evidence Use in Australian Schools

April 2021

Q Project: Survey, analysis & key findings

Part 1: Personal Information

1. What is your job role? (Please select one response that best describes your role).
   - ☐ Teacher
   - ☐ Middle leader
   - ☐ School/Senior leader
   - ☐ Other role. Please state:

2.

   a. Do you have a particular teaching/role specialisation? (Please complete the text box with as much information as necessary.
   - ☐ No / N/A

   b. What grades or year levels do you currently teach and/or significantly interact with?

   - ☐ Prep/Kindergarten/Reception
   - ☐ Grade/Year 1
   - ☐ Grade/Year 2
   - ☐ Grade/Year 3
   - ☐ Grade/Year 4
   - ☐ Grade/Year 5 Grade/Year 6
   - ☐ Year 7
   - ☐ Year 8
   - ☐ Year 9
   - ☐ Year 10
   - ☐ Year 11
   - ☐ Year 12
   - ☐ N/A

3. How long have you been in the teaching profession? (Inclusive of career breaks)
   - ☐ Years
   - ☐ Months

4. How long have you been teaching at your current school? (Inclusive of career breaks).
   - ☐ Years
   - ☐ Months

5. What is your gender?
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Prefer to self-describe. Please state:
   - ☐ Prefer not to say

6. What is your highest educational qualification?
   - ☐ Diploma
   - ☐ Bachelor's degree
   - ☐ Bachelor's Honours degree
   - ☐ Postgraduate coursework degree (Initial teacher education, e.g.,. MTeach)

☐ Masters coursework degree (e.g., MA, Med)
☐ Masters by research
☐ Doctorate
☐ Other. Please state:

Part 2: School Initiatives Related to Improving Student Outcomes

1. Please identify one specific initiative related to <u>improving student outcomes</u> that you or your colleagues have started to use in your school or classroom in the last 12 months. (Please complete the text boxes with as much information as possible).

   If you are a school/senior leader, please name a whole-school initiative. Otherwise, please name an initiative relating to your classroom.

a. What was the initiative? What was changed or introduced?

b. Why was it necessary? (i.e. what challenge was it addressing?)

c. What information sources, if any, did you use when deciding on the initiative?

d. Why did you use these information sources?

   ☐ Did not use any information sources

2. Thinking generally about school initiatives that you have implemented in the last 12 months, how often did you consult the following information sources to help inform your decisions?

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
a.	TED Talks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	The Conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Policy and curriculum documents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Articles, reports, books or summaries based on the work of universities or research organisations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	News articles (mass media)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Blog posts or other social media (e.g., Twitter, YouTube)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Action research conducted by yourself or colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	Ideas from other schools or communities of practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	Promotional materials of an external supplier, consultant or website	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Articles, reports, books or summaries based on teachers' experience and/or practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Advice or guidance based on research from university or research organisations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l.	Information gathered through professional development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

or from conferences

m.	Guidance from official bodies (e.g., Department of Education, AITSL)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n.	Student data	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o.	Professional publications (e.g., professional association journals)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p.	Podcasts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q.	Online evidence platforms or databases (e.g., Evidence for Learning)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r.	Other. Please state:	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Thinking generally about the information sources you have used often or always in the last 12 months, what <u>influenced</u> you to use them? (Please rank as many as apply, from most to least important)

☐ Word of mouth or recommendation from others

☐ Ease of access

☐ Previous use of or experience with the information source

☐ Ease of interpretation and application

☐ Perceived credibility of the source

☐ Appeals to me

☐ Alignment with my teaching experiences and practices

☐ Being backed by academic research

☐ Inexpensive to access

☐ Evidence of impact is made available

☐ Alignment with my own professional experience

☐ Endorsement from professional associations or official bodies

☐ Alignment with our school's plans

☐ Appeal to school leaders and/or colleagues

☐ Appeal to parents

☐ Appeal to students

☐ Information from this source assists with implementation of programs or initiatives

☐ The source or information was new/ novel

☐ Other. Please state/ rank:

4. How do you assess the quality of information when deciding on approaches to improve student outcomes? (Please rank as many as apply, from most important to least important)

☐ Word of mouth or recommendation from others

☐ Previous use of or experience with the information source

☐ Perceived credibility of the source

☐ Perceived credibility or reputation of the author or person who produced the information

☐ Critique of the information with school colleagues

☐ Information source being backed by academic research

☐ Available evidence of the impact of the information

☐ Social media recommendation

☐ Endorsement from professional associations or official bodies

☐ Other. Please state/ rank

Part 3: Your School Environment

1. To what extent do you think the following statements describe the current environment within your school? In my current school, we:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Seek information from a variety of sources when making a decision	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Do not make time available for staff to use a variety of sources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Have formal processes to help staff engage critically with different information sources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Have informal processes to help staff engage critically with different information sources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Refer to evidence of what works when deciding which programs or initiatives to implement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Do not encourage informed risk-taking in teaching practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Facilitate a professional learning community or support collaborative learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 4: Using Research Evidence in Your Own Practice

Part 4 focuses on your own day-to-day practices, and the role of research evidence. For the below questions, research evidence means evidence generated through systematic studies undertaken by universities or research organisations and reported in books, reports, articles, research summaries, training courses or events.

Please consider _this definition of research evidence only_ when answering the questions in Part 4.

1. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your own awareness / use of research evidence.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I am not confident in how to judge the quality of research evidence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. I am not clear about how research evidence can be used to help change practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. I believe teacher observations and experience should be prioritised over external research	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. I don't have adequate time to access and review	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

research

e. I don't have sufficient access to research evidence (e.g., subscriptions, logins) ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

f. I regularly initiate discussions regarding research and its connection with school practice ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

g. I know where to find relevant research that may help to inform my teaching practices ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

h. I don't believe research will help improve student outcomes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

i. When confronted with a new problem or decision, I look for research that might be relevant ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

j. I would like opportunities to work with researchers to help with my own learning ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

k. I feel confident in analysing and interpreting research for my own teaching context ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

l. I find it difficult to keep up with new and emerging research ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

m. It is difficult to find research that addresses my specific practice, context, or needs ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

n. I find it difficult to trust research because of bias and judgements expressed by the researcher ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. In the last 12 months, have you used research evidence to inform your practice?

☐ Yes
☐ No

3. How have you used research evidence to inform your practice? (Please tick all that apply). I have used research evidence:

☐ To design or plan a new program or initiative

☐ When considering eliminating an existing program or initiative

☐ When considering directing new or additional resources (e.g., funds, people) to a particular program or initiative

☐ To mobilise support for an important issue or decision

☐ To get others to agree with my point of view

☐ To discuss best practice with colleagues

☐ To design or provide professional development for colleagues in our school

☐ When considering purchasing a particular program or initiative

☐ When considering scaling up an existing pilot program or initiative

☐ To debate a school or departmental policy or decision

☐ To reflect on my own practice

☐ To improve my own knowledge of a topic or subject

☐ To guide the implementation of a new program or initiative

☐ To inform the evaluation of a program or initiative

☐ To better understand an issue or problem

☐ To understand an existing problem in new ways

☐ Other. Please state

4. What <u>influenced</u> you to use research evidence? (Please rank as many as apply, from most important to least important)

☐ Compatibility with my own teaching practices, experience and ethos

☐ The research was convincing

☐ Capacity or potential to encourage debate and discussion amongst colleagues

☐ Ease of access

☐ Affordability

☐ The research was directly applicable to the challenge or problem I was trying to solve

☐ The research was supported by resources (e.g., materials, practice guides for application in the classroom)

☐ The research was recommended by colleagues and/or school leaders

☐ The research had been used previously by colleagues

☐ Ease of interpretation and application

☐ Coaching and training available based on the research

☐ Endorsement from professional associations and/or official bodies

☐ The research was directly applicable to implementation of a program or initiative

☐ Other. Please state/ rank:

Part 5: Using Research Evidence Well

Part 5 focuses on your ideas about what it means to use research evidence *well.* This is a topic that is not well understood in education and so we are interested in any ideas that you have.

1. What does 'using research evidence well' mean to you?

2. Thinking about a school where teachers and/or school leaders are using research evidence, what in your view would be happening if:

   a. research evidence was being used well?

   b. research evidence was being used poorly?

3. What questions would you ask teachers and/or school leaders in order to understand if they were using research evidence well?

That is the end of the survey. Thank you for taking the time to share your views with us. If you would like more information about the Q Project, you can visit our website [here](#).

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