

MONASH Q PROJECT

USING RESEARCH WELL IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS SUMMARY

In 2020, the Q Project surveyed and interviewed nearly 500 Australian educators to understand what is involved in using research evidence well in schools. This is a topic that has been investigated surprisingly little, both in Australia and internationally. This summary shares key insights from our full [Discussion Paper](#), offering a unique practitioner perspective on quality research use. It presents educators' views on using research well in terms of key characteristics and connections to the [Quality Use of Research Evidence Framework](#). This summary also outlines considerations for teachers, school leaders, system leaders, researchers and research brokers in relation to increasing and improving the quality use of research in schools.

EDUCATORS' VIEWS ON USING RESEARCH WELL

For educators, using research in practice needs to be **intentional and purposeful**, being done primarily to bring about change in student learning and outcomes, and educators' knowledge, practice and professionalism. 'Quality research use' is associated with effecting positive change, whilst 'poor research use' is connected with no or ineffective change.

Using research well matters to educators, with quality research use needing to be:

- **EMBEDDED** – when research use is an intrinsic part of the school's processes, practices, language and culture;
- **COLLECTIVE** – when all staff are consulted and engaged in research-related decisions, implementation, and reflection;
- **PURPOSEFUL** – when there are clear intentions and strategic purposes for engaging with and using research;
- **TIME AND EFFORT-DEPENDENT** – when time is taken to engage deeply with the research and implement it carefully;
- **CURIOSITY-DRIVEN** – when research use draws and builds on staff curiosity, inquisition, and questioning; and
- **CONNECTED TO TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM** – when research use is fulfilling an expectation of ourselves as professionals.

EDUCATORS' VIEWS IN RELATION TO THE QURE FRAMEWORK

When comparing educators' views to the QURE Framework, it was clear that there were strong connections between the ways in which educators talked about using research well and the components of the QURE Framework (*Figure 1*).

- **Appropriate research evidence** encompasses: traditional methodological rigor; educators' perceptions or assessments of 'expert' content, reputability, and credibility; evidence of impact; contextual relevance; 'teacher voice'; and practical usability.
- **Thoughtful engagement and implementation** are about: a way of approaching research and its use, incorporating specific research-related attitudes, dispositions and capabilities; a way of working with research, including how research is found, understood and implemented; and a way of benefitting from research and its use.
- Educators emphasised the **connection of skillsets, mindsets and relationships to quality research use**, including the needs for educators to: possess research skills; have a research-related mindset; be prepared to question and reflect on research; leverage different relationships; and build and maintain trust within relationships to improve research use.

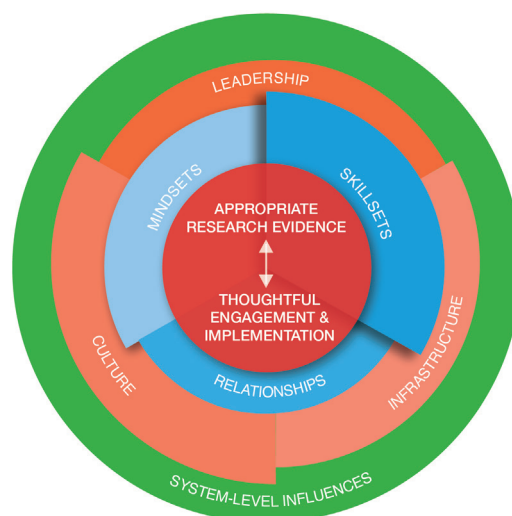


FIGURE 1: Quality Use of Research Evidence (QURE) Framework

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SUMMARY

- Educators emphasised the **connection of leadership, culture and infrastructure to quality research use**. Leaders were central to the organisational enablement of quality research use through: their own values and behaviours; the ways in which they lead implementation of research in practice; their fostering of research-supportive cultures; and their support of research use through the school's infrastructure.
- **System-level influences** were most frequently thought of as the school itself, or governing jurisdiction bodies. More often than not, system influences were viewed as barriers to quality research use.

CONSIDERATIONS

Building on educators' insights, all teachers, school leaders and education system stakeholders are encouraged to consider the roles that they can play to help improve the use of research in schools.

- **Educators themselves need to be supported as critical consumers of research and information.** Educators require the right skillsets and mindsets to find, interpret and use research well. Standards, interventions and resources are critical at all levels of the education system to support and scaffold educators' development. School planning and reporting requirements should reflect the importance of these for improvement over time.
- **Research itself needs to be contextually relevant, credible and practical** for educators to want and be able to use it in practice. Researchers, policy-makers and research organisations need to ensure that research availability, accessibility and usability are increased or improved for educators. These types of support must also go hand-in-hand with increasing educators' awareness of credible and trustworthy research sources, as well as their research-related skills and confidence.
- **The challenge of available time needs to be addressed.** Helping educators to find the time to engage with research well is an issue for all education sector stakeholders to understand and resolve. Benefits would be gained from understanding, documenting and sharing the different ways schools make dedicated time available to find and interpret research collectively, that are then linked to school performance planning and reporting processes.
- **Collaborations, both within and beyond schools, are important.** Educators need to be both encouraged and supported to leverage and/or expand their networks for improved research use. As a key message for school leaders, educators are also clear in their desires and expectations to be included in research-related decisions, discussions and implementation within schools. Teacher educators, research organisations, jurisdictions and governing bodies have roles to play in ensuring that school leaders have the skills and networks themselves to promote and embed collaborative school research cultures.
- **School leaders have other key roles to play in encouraging and supporting research use** in their schools. These include role-modelling positive research-related attitudes and behaviours themselves; embedding research use in school infrastructure and professional learning opportunities; and providing clear direction regarding the use of research in the school.
- **Cross-system co-ordinated efforts are important** so that educators hear consistent messages about the criticality of quality research use, are clear about how their improved research use is valued by different education system stakeholders, and have knowledge about what supports and resources are available to them.

The Q Project's findings continue to build and shape deeper understandings of what it means to use research well in educational practice. We encourage different educators and system stakeholders to join us in discussions about quality research use and connect with the project to contribute to improving the use of research in Australian educational practice.