

ACCESSING APPROPRIATE RESEARCH

At the core of the Quality Use of Research Evidence (QURE) Framework is the need for **appropriate research evidence**. However, sourcing quality research is not always an easy task. Educators can face barriers related to time, access, and knowing where to find quality research.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT ACCESSING QUALITY RESEARCH?

Teachers can access research from a wide variety of sources (Lysenko et al., 2014) and recent technological advancements have greatly increased the “rapidity and ease” at which educators can access different forms of evidence (Cain & Graves, 2019, p. 81). However, with these drastic increases to the quantity of research available, comes varying degrees of quality. To avoid making educational decisions “using data that are available, rather than data that are appropriate” (Earl & Timperley, 2009, p. 8), the literature highlights that educators should access appropriate research by **targeting quality sources, accessing multiple evidence types, and leveraging professional networks**.

An overarching best practice for sourcing appropriate research is to target **high quality sources**. These can include academic journals and publications from educational research organisations (Coldwell et al., 2017). While blogs and social media are highly accessible sources of research and can be useful “signposting tools”, they are not generally of high quality (Cain & Graves, 2019, p. 88). For this reason, the search for quality research often involves engaging with multiple sources (Spencer et al., 2012).

When engaging with **multiple sources**, the literature highlights two key practices. First, educators should cross-reference multiple pieces of research to see if there is consistent evidence that an intervention has a positive impact (Parker et al., 2020). Second, educators should use locally generated research and evidence (e.g., student data) to supplement their professional decision-making (Coldwell et al., 2017). By ‘triangulating’ these multiple sources, educators are more empowered to make well-informed decisions and select appropriate research evidence (Nelson & Campbell, 2017).

Finally, given the challenges associated with accessing high quality research, educators can leverage their **professional networks** to help with this task. Research can be accessed via journals from professional associations or educational research-to-practice networks (e.g., [ResearchED](#) and [edureading](#)) (Cain & Graves, 2019). Connections with colleagues and other schools can also be useful avenues to access and share quality research (Parker et al., 2020).

WHAT DO AUSTRALIAN EDUCATORS SAY ABOUT ACCESSING QUALITY RESEARCH?

In interviews, Australian teachers and school leaders were clear about the importance of thoughtfully and carefully considering how to access quality research (referenced in 93% of interviews). This involved “looking widely and thinking widely” and “seeking out research from multiple sources” to select the most appropriate research for the specific practice issue. As one teacher described:



“[I make] the time to look at a variety of sources on a specific topic, analyse them all, discuss, apply [them] in the classroom and reflect on their effect.”

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In contrast, failing to access quality research was often associated with “using a single source”, “not comparing multiple sources”, as well as settling on “the first research found” and “not pushing” to find the most appropriate research. This emphasis on consulting a variety of sources was also supported by our latest survey with 414 Australian educators, where over half indicated that they had high levels of trust in several sources of research (see Figure 1).

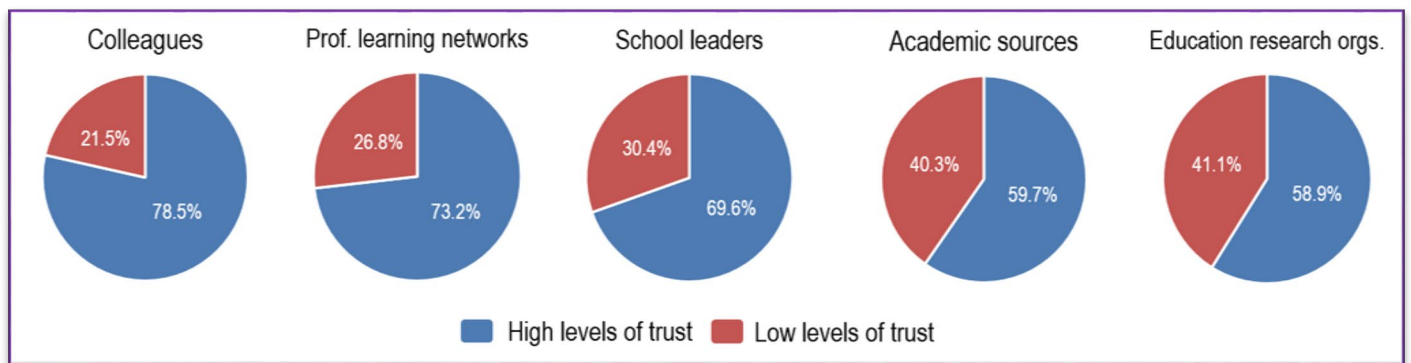


Figure 1: Educators trust in sources of research

At the same time, Australian educators did not consider research to be appropriate or of high quality if it was selected to “back up what was already being done” or “support a pre-existing view”. For this reason, they valued engaging with research alongside multiple forms of professional evidence to ensure that research addressed an important practice need or specific improvement priority. This was evident in our earlier survey of 819 educators, where research was among one of the top quality evidence types for informing decisions about practice (see Figure 2).

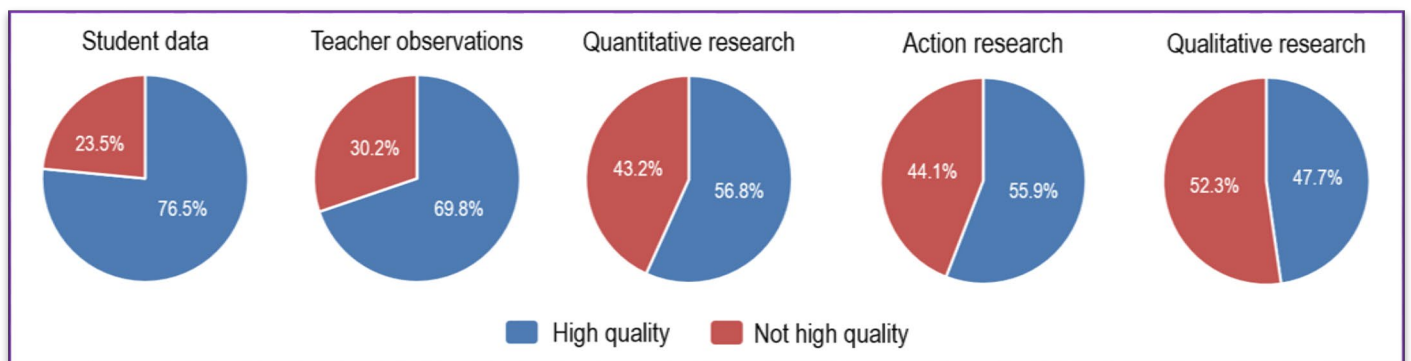


Figure 2: Educators' top quality evidence types

Despite these strong views, Australian educators reported facing a number of challenges when accessing quality research, as noted by one senior leader:

“I can get overwhelmed with where to go to source research. I ask myself, ‘Am I missing something?’ There is so much research out there, being able to discern between what is really good and what’s not, well, that can be overwhelming too”.



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For this reason, they also valued accessing research-based publications from professional associations (e.g., [The Social Educator](#), [Australian Educational Leader](#)), research-focused organisations (e.g., [Teacher Magazine](#), [Evidence for Learning's Guidance Reports](#)) and educational peak organisations (e.g., [Spotlights from AITSL](#), [AERO's Practice Hub](#)).

This research summary was generated by the Monash Q Project. For further information, please refer to the Monash Q Project's website.



[Q Project Website](#)

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