



Views on research through the voices of educators

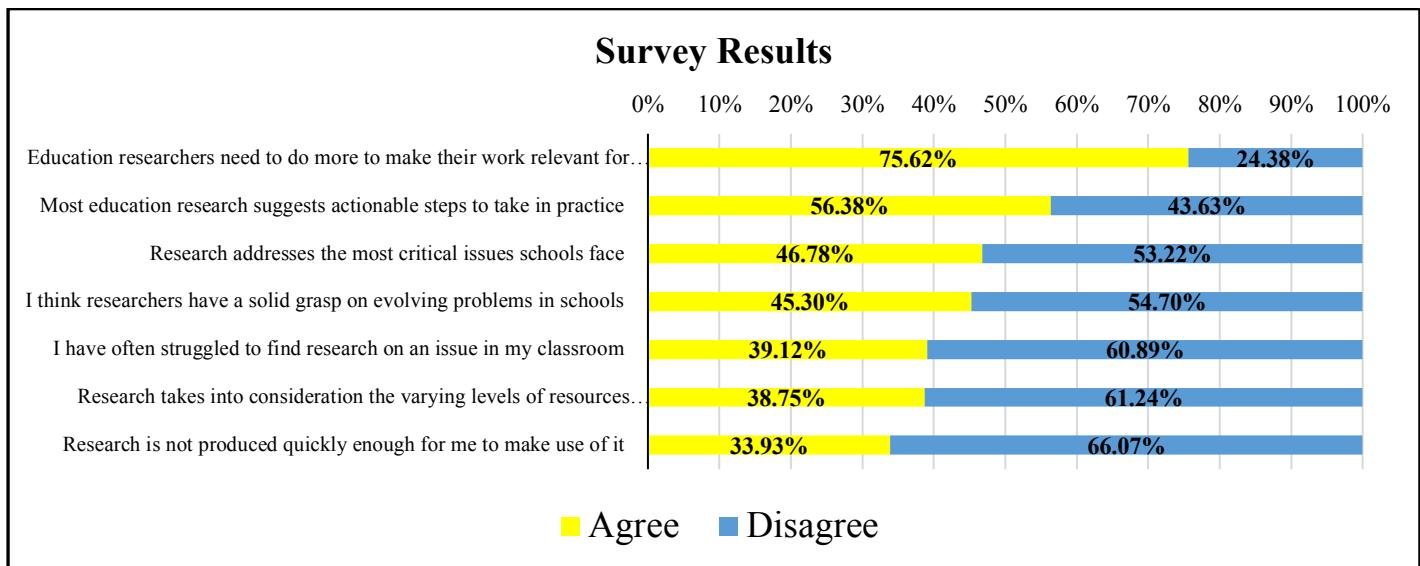
A Report from the Center for Research Use in Education

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The recent spike in pressure to increase collaboration between research and practice has led us to engage in dissecting the underlying behaviors of evidence-based educational decision-making. To understand the way practitioners incorporate research is preceded by understanding the nature of researcher efforts to produce relevant findings and disseminate those findings to practitioners. Therefore, it is also of crucial importance to understand how practitioners view the work of researchers.

Our work is situated in a larger research agenda intended to understand and leverage connections between research and practice to support education improvement efforts. A crucial social and structural dimension in evaluating these components is to assess current practitioners' attitudes and beliefs about educational research. By looking at research through the practitioners' point of view and conducting discourse with practitioners, research has the potential to create relevant changes in educational practice and create authentic expressions of the teachers' experience (Cladinin & Connelly, 1998). As such, we are concerned with practitioners' attitudes and beliefs about research relevance, usability, and accessibility. The data presented here comes from a pilot study of approximately 1000 school-based practitioners. We asked practitioners a multitude of questions to gauge their opinions about research.



As shown in Table 1, the majority of practitioners felt that researchers needed to make their work more applicable to their school and provide actionable steps to implement their findings. They were more evenly split when asked if researchers addressed critical issues they faced in their work and if they were attuned to evolving problems in schools. The results show us that practitioners feel education researchers need a better grasp on the current problems within contexts that would be most relevant to their school. Although most practitioners feel

that researchers have sufficiently identified the needs of classrooms and do produce research in a timely fashion, there is a great deal of room for improvement to conduct more applicable research and translate research into more meaningful and practical school and classroom practices.

Evidence-based educational decision-making relies on both the applicability and convenience of acquiring information that allows practitioners to best employ strategies in their own schools and classrooms. In addition to investing in research consistent with current challenges in schools and districts, researchers need to take into consideration whether practitioners have the resources and/or time to access research that addresses their issues (Boardman, Arguelles, Vaughn, Hedges, & Klingner, 2005).

Communicating research and disseminating it throughout practitioner communities includes providing the resources that enable practitioners to make the best use of research. The same practitioners who have increasingly demanding roles as the landscape of education policy has shifted have little room and limited access to scour sources for research literature relevant to their specific issues (Finnegan, Daly & Che, 2013; Lloyd, Weintraub & Safer, 1997). Therefore, the responsibility largely lies with researchers and the institutions to which they belong to ensure that their research reaches those who would use it. For example, Dr. Jenny Rankin recently discussed her work on dissemination with the American Educational Research Organization (AERA). In her [interview](#), she implores researchers to avail themselves of any and all technologies and opportunities to disseminate their findings beyond peer-reviewed journals.

To deepen relationships between research and practitioner communities, researchers need to shift their efforts to disseminate research to better align with the ways in which practitioners search for evidence, including making their work more publicly accessible via online tools (e.g., podcasts, YouTube, blogs) and accessing practitioner networks to facilitate greater dissemination of research. For more information, see our Data Point on search strategies.

References

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The Center for Research Use in Education (CRUE) is producing a holistic picture of what drives the use of research from production of knowledge by researchers to the application of research in schools. We also seek to identify strategies that can make research more meaningful to classroom practice. We believe that rigorous evidence, whether qualitative or quantitative, can foster better opportunities and outcomes for children by empowering educators, families, and communities with additional knowledge to inform better decision-making.

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