Independent Schools Queensland Research Framework

2019

Research at Independent Schools Queensland

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) engages in, and promotes, research-based activities that:

- contribute to improved teaching and learning practices and student outcomes in Queensland independent schools;
- position the sector as a forerunner of innovative changes to education; and
- contribute to the development of independent schooling.

This engagement is consistent with one of ISQ's key organisational principles: Reflective practices through continuous improvement culture based on research (ISQ, 2018).

ISQ's commitment to research-informed programs and practices aligns with reform directions suggested by the Gonski Review Panel in *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2018a) and promulgated through the *National School Reform Agreement* (2019-23) (DET, 2018b). This commitment includes the establishment of an independent national research and evidence base, and an increased focus on the use of evidence-based tools and resources to drive adoption of best practice across the schooling system.

An audit in 2018 of ISQ's then current and recent research-focused activities showed a broad scope of engagement with several universities, research and/or policy bodies and consultancies on many different themes.

These research activities underpin ISQ's efforts to:

- expand and enhance strategic advocacy;
- promote and support school improvement;
- foster better student outcomes;
- create and deliver highly valued professional development programs for school leaders, teachers and other staff;
- improve and maintain currency of key services to members; and
- foster positive public perceptions of independent schooling.

The ISQ Research Framework

The ISQ Research Framework articulates a set of adopted principles of research, the role of research within and across the spectrum of ISQ's activities and the relationship between identified priority research themes and ISQ's strategic directions (as indicated in the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan).

The Research Framework is comprised of 'Priorities: Principles: Partnerships'. It assists in answering critical questions about ISQ's research-focused activities – What? How? Who? – and is therefore of interest to ISQ's staff, membership and partners, and the wider community.

Priorities: What

The Research Framework supports alignment between research priorities and the following strategic directions as referenced in the *2018-2020 Strategic Plan*:

- **Leading advocacy:** influential representation and advocacy
- **Services and support:** exceptional services and support for independent schools to grow and improve
- **Research and policy:** promoting excellence in public policy and education
- **Engagement and growth:** leading and growing the independent schools sector
- **Organisational capability:** organisational efficiency, relevance and performance

While strategic directions provide the scope for identifying research priorities, they are steered and supported by reference to quality research – within a corporate culture of reflective practice and commitment to continuous improvement.

Generally, priorities will be categorised as relevant to the strategic domains of either sector advocacy or school improvement/student outcomes, and will vary over time to reflect emergent issues and changing membership needs, i.e. it is purpose-driven research.

Priorities are identified in response to several key questions, including amongst others:

- To what extent does this proposed research align closely with, and support, ISQ's strategic directions?
- To what extent are the findings of the proposed research likely to be of strong interest to ISQ's member schools, other educational agencies, or to governments and other strategic partners?

Principles: How

High levels of integrity in the conduct of research is expected by our members and the public. Principled research is essential to gain credibility and trust.

This is no less so at the broader institutional level where, for receipt of funding from the Australian Research Council, compliance with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* is required (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018). The eight principles embodied in the code are shown overleaf, and are reflected in the suite of principles articulated below.

The Research Framework endorses several key principles underpinning excellent research. These include:

- **Purpose – Relevance:** why the research should be conducted – its value
- **Objectivity – Transparency:** openness about interests and methods
- **Ethics – Fairness – Respect – Honesty:** a high level of relational integrity
- **Method – Rigour – Clarity:** committed to declared, robust methodology
- **Collaboration – Partnership:** connections that increase quality and scope
- **Leadership – Accountability – Responsible Conduct:** respected agency

Partnerships: Who

The Research Framework underpins the establishment of research partnerships and collaborations between ISQ, leading research bodies, other relevant research-focused agencies and member schools.

Research-focused partnerships will be most productive where the external parties demonstrate a strong alignment with the Research Framework i.e. a clear sharing of ISQ's research interests, priorities and principles. For example, where member schools are engaged with ISQ research activities, the Research Framework principle of 'Ethics – Fairness – Respect – Honesty' directs ISQ to respect the autonomy and privacy of these school collaborators.

The Research Framework is a living document that should be reviewed and updated on a biennial basis to reflect fresh corporate learnings about the conduct of research and new strategic research priorities.

REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

Department of Education and Training. (2018a). *Through Growth to Achievement: The Report of The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools.* Retrieved from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/662684_tgta_accessible_final_0.pdf

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National Health and Medical Research Council. (2018). Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research. Retrieved from https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-responsible-conduct-research-2018

The University of Western Australia. (2017). Basic Principles for Research Collaboration. Retrieved from http://www.research.uwa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/3068667/Basic-Principles-for-Research-Collaboration.pdf

AUSTRALIAN CODE FOR THE RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

The principles (P1–P8) that are the hallmarks of responsible research conduct are:

P1 HONESTY in the development, undertaking and reporting of research

- Present information truthfully and accurately in proposing, conducting and reporting research.

P2 RIGOUR in the development, undertaking and reporting of research

- Underpin research by attention to detail and robust methodology, avoiding or acknowledging biases.

P3 TRANSPARENCY in declaring interests and reporting research methodology, data and findings

- Share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly and accurately.
- Disclose and manage conflicts of interest.

P4 FAIRNESS in the treatment of others

- Treat fellow researchers and others involved in the research fairly and with respect.
- Appropriately reference and cite the work of others.
- Give credit, including authorship where appropriate, to those who have contributed to the research.

P5 RESPECT for research participants, the wider community, animals and the environment

- Treat human participants and communities that are affected by the research with care and respect, giving appropriate consideration to the needs of minority groups or vulnerable people.
- Ensure that respect underpins all decisions and actions related to the care and use of animals in research.
- Minimise adverse effects of the research on the environment.

P6 RECOGNITION of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them

- Recognise, value and respect the diversity, heritage, knowledge, cultural property and connection to land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to research being undertaken, so that they freely make decisions about their involvement.
- Report to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the outcomes of research in which they have engaged.

P7 ACCOUNTABILITY for the development, undertaking and reporting of research

- Comply with relevant legislation, policies and guidelines.
- Ensure good stewardship of public resources used to conduct research.
- Consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication.

P8 PROMOTION of responsible research practices

- Promote and foster a research culture and environment that supports the responsible conduct of research.

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Independent Schools
Queensland
choice & diversity