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Understanding school engagement *in and with* research

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USER - why and how we did it

(USER = Understanding School Engagement in/with Research)

USER Project

- ▶ To better understand and meet the needs of schools in regard to their:
 - ▶ Engagement IN academic research projects
 - ▶ Engagement WITH research and evidence
- ▶ Jurisdictions receive hundreds of research applications per year
- ▶ Little was known about if/why/how schools respond to research opportunities, and if/how schools use research and evidence
- ▶ Through a survey, focus groups and principal interviews, gained feedback from 67 schools

Follow-up Literature Review

- ▶ To analyse wider evidence on school research engagement (in relation to USER)
- ▶ Search parameters:
 - ✓ Engagement in and with research
 - ✓ Empirical studies and reviews, 2013-2017
 - ✓ Aus, NZ, US, Canada, UK
- ▶ 134 included - 110 relevant
- ▶ Analysed in terms of:
 - Sims/diffs to USER findings
 - Sims/diffs to USER methods

5 key themes: USER study + literature

1. Schools are selective about their research involvement

- Schools get a lot of requests to participate in research, but say 'no' most often (79%, USER 2016)
- More favourable when: aligned with school needs/priorities, tangible return
- Less favourable when: demand too great, competing priorities, not 'relevant'

2. Schools are discerning about *what* the research is on and *how* it is conducted

- Want research that improves teacher capability and student learning (at least line of sight)
- Partnership approach (*with*, not *to*), professional learning/capacity building

3. Schools value research more than they use it

- 80% 'highly value' research, but 34% 'often' use research evidence in practice (USER, 2016)
- Similar findings in UK - strong interest, but low use (Williams & Coles 2007, Proctor 2015)

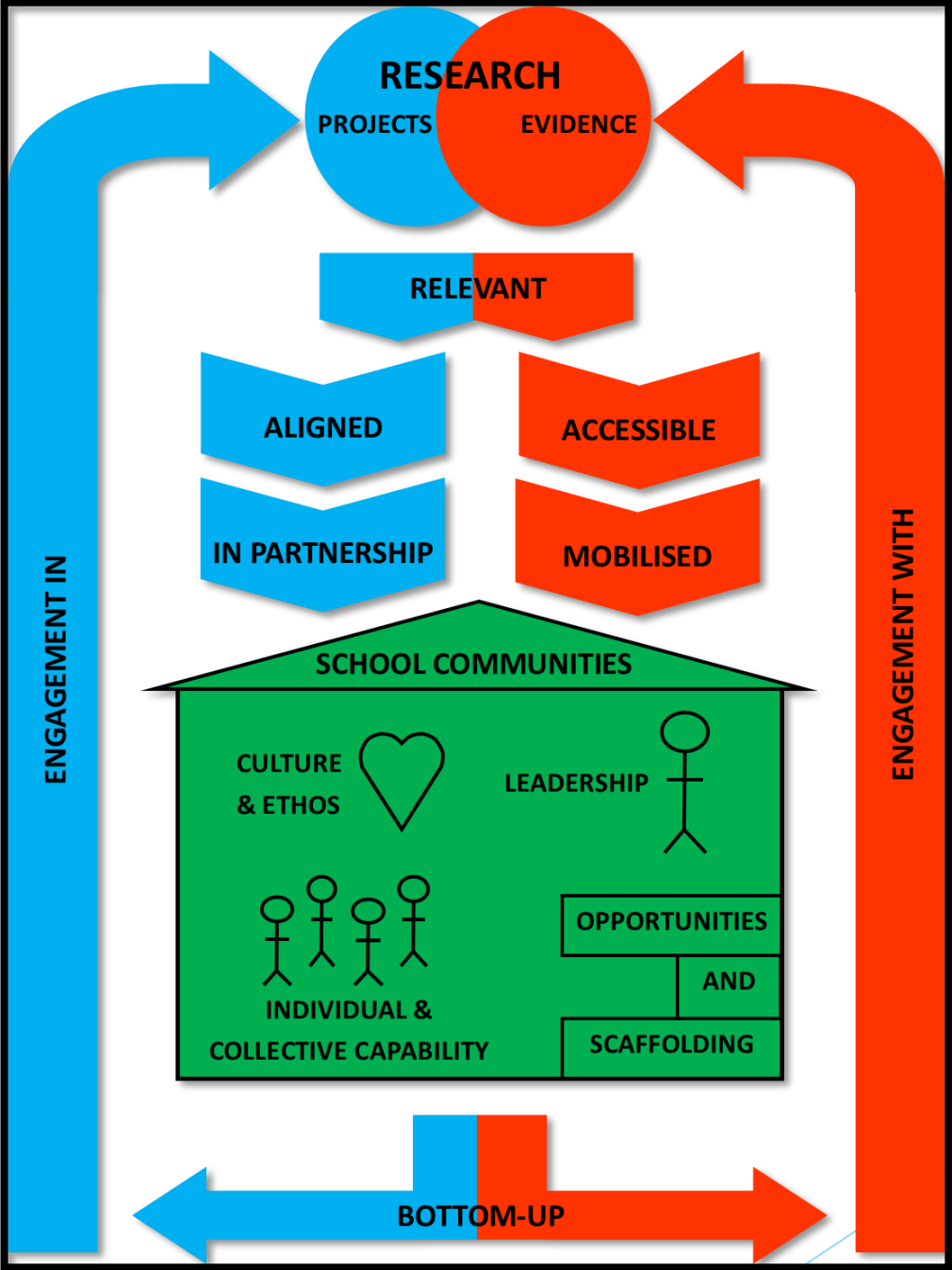
4. Schools access research in indirect and informal ways

- Where? Indirect - within school/colleagues, professional learning/conferences
- How? Informal - collaborative approach, with colleagues and peers, through professional learning

5. Schools need much more than research access

- Research factors - 'relevant', accessible, user-friendly, practical
- Practitioner factors - confidence & capability to apply
- School factors - leadership, culture, time/opportunity
- Wider context - system/jurisdiction support, communication between researchers & users

Conceptual framework for understanding and improving school research engagement



Thanks! 😊

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- ▶ USER <http://www.cem.edu.au/our-schools/research-in-schools/user-project>
- ▶ Relevant publication '[What can evidence-use in practice learn from evidence-use in policy?](#)' (Rickinson et al, 2017)