

Q CONVERSATION

NOVEMBER 2020

FINDING AND USING RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE IN PRACTICE

As part of Monash Q Project's aim to improve the use of research evidence in schools, we want to develop a shared understanding of what it means to use research well. Facilitating rich and reflective conversations amongst practitioners is key to such understanding.

Q Conversation is a resource designed for school practitioners to promote discussion and reflection about research use attitudes and practices, using Q's emerging findings and considerations as prompts. We suggest that this resource can be used in professional learning or discussion contexts within a school, a community of practice, or a school network.

WHAT IS THIS Q CONVERSATION ABOUT?

This **Q Conversation** is focused on the theme of finding and using research and evidence in educational practice.

From a research perspective, both international and Australian studies suggest that finding, interpreting and using relevant research are not necessarily easy tasks. Teachers and school leaders appear challenged to find the time to access and review research, assess its credibility and relevance, and interpret and/or adapt it for context (e.g., [Penuel et al., 2017](#); [Prendergast & Rickinson, 2019](#)). From the Q Project's recent survey of nearly 500 Australian educators and interviews with just over 20, practitioners' early insights appear to reflect these challenges.

Our emerging findings suggest that whilst Australian practitioners have positive attitudes towards research, the intention is greater than the use in practice. Several challenges appear to exist:

- (i) confidence and capacity issues;
- (ii) time and access constraints;
- (iii) concerns regarding research credibility and relevance;
- (iv) diverse and variable sources; and
- (v) preferences for evidence beyond research.

This **Q Conversation** draws on a suite of Q publications:

- (i) *Q Data Insights* reporting key emerging findings regarding Australian educators' sources and uses of research, as well as their awareness and attitudes regarding finding and using research;
- (ii) *Q Narratives* showcasing how Macleay Island State School, Queensland and Assumption College, Victoria have recently sourced, assessed and used research in their specific contexts; and
- (iii) *Q Behavioural Insight* outlining key behaviours and thinking cues that underpin the tasks of finding, assessing and interpreting research for relevance.

Q Conversation is designed to be: (i) **informative** – by sharing Q insights from Australian educators; (ii) **thought-provoking** – by having leaders and teachers think about their own attitudes and practices in light of Q insights; and (iii) **action-oriented** – by asking leaders and teachers to convert their reflections into actions for improvement.

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Several **Q Conversation** structures are offered – some shorter and more targeted around specific findings or behaviours, whilst others may be more encompassing and challenging by drawing on broader findings and complementary research. Accompany presentation slides are available.

Q CONVERSATION SUGGESTIONS

Reflecting on one or both of the **Q Narratives**, the following questions may be used as prompts for individuals or in small group discussions, with insights shared with the broader group:

- (i) How is research and evidence being used in this narrative(s) and why? What benefits and opportunities emerged from the approaches or behaviours adopted?
- (ii) In what ways does this narrative(s) resonate (or not) with our own situation?
- (iii) How might insights gained inform our own research and evidence use practices? What would our narrative be?

Drawing on the **Q Data Insight** regarding educators' attitudes towards research use, the following questions may be used as prompts for individuals or in small group discussions, with insights shared with the broader group:

- (i) How would we describe our own confidence levels with regards to finding and using research? What is enabling or hindering our (a) individual and (b) collective confidence?
- (ii) How open-minded are we to exploring and using different research? Are our attitudes the same as those for others in our school community? Why do we think so?
- (iii) What actions can we take to: (a) improve our own confidence and open-mindedness; and (b) improve the confidence and open-mindedness of others?

Brown and Flood's (2018) recent study found that theories of action can help teachers identify, assess and adapt research for specific contexts or needs. Using the rubric in the article (Table 1, p. 149), consider the following as individuals or in small group discussions, with insights shared with the broader group:

- (i) With regards to a recent initiative or problem, how would we describe our approaches to finding, assessing, adapting and using research?
- (ii) To what extent did our approaches/actions: (a) reflect patterns described in **Q Data Insights** and **Q Behavioural Insight**; and (b) consider different theory of action domains as outlined in the Brown and Flood article?
- (iii) How might insights gained inform our own research and evidence use practices?

According to the Q Project's [Quality Use of Research Evidence \(QURE\) Framework](#), using research well involves the *'thoughtful engagement with and implementation of appropriate research evidence'*.

How educators identify and source research and evidence, assess it for credibility and relevance, and ensure that it is adapted and implemented to suit the issue, decision or practice context is therefore important.

Share your experiences and school's insights generated from **Q Conversations**. To connect with us, please visit:



<https://www.monash.edu/education/research/projects/qproject>



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