

Q CONVERSATION

OCTOBER 2021

MAKING TIME TO USE RESEARCH WELL IN PRACTICE

As part of Monash Q Project's aim to improve the use of research 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 **issue of time as a condition of using research well** in practice.

From a research perspective, sufficient time has been found as one of the most important enabling conditions for school practitioners' use of research in practice (e.g., [van Schaik et al., 2018](#)). Yet, most studies report that practitioners believe that they do not have sufficient available time, with many finding and using research in their own time and/or on top of their teaching and administrative workloads (e.g., [Levin, 2013](#)). There is also evidence indicating that other barriers to using research in practice can be linked to the issue of insufficient time (e.g., [Jon & Incu, 2014](#); [Williams & Coles, 2007](#)). These include a lack of accessibility to research, individuals' lack of research-use skills and confidence, insufficient availability to practical resources and support, and gaps in supportive school leadership.

From the Q Project's recent surveys and interviews with practitioners¹, early insights reflect the importance of practitioners' perceptions of time on their research use in practice. Our emerging findings suggest that Australian practitioners:

- (i) have more positive perceptions about time to engage with research when their schools have **formal or informal processes in place to support research use**;
- (ii) rely on **relational and convenience factors** to source and use research when they believe they have a lack of time; and
- (iii) value research that is **practical, easy to take in quickly, easy to apply and credible** given time constraints.

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

- (i) **Q Data Insight** reporting key findings regarding practitioners' perceptions of time and their use of research in practice;
- (ii) **Q Narrative** showcasing how leaders at Dulwich High School of Visual Arts value practitioners' discretionary time investments in research use and provide time-related supports to help improve such use; and
- (iii) **Q Behavioural Insight** suggesting how school leaders can address time challenges felt by teachers and staff around competing priorities and/or new ideas or changes being introduced to the school too frequently.

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

¹ In 2020-2021, research conducted included two surveys (n=1,311) and 29 interviews. For published survey and interview findings, see Q Project publications [here](#).

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

Q CONVERSATION SUGGESTIONS

Using the **Q Data Insight** as a guide, the following questions may be helpful as prompts for individual reflection or small group discussion, with insights shared with the broader group:

- (i) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'Strongly Disagree' to 5 being 'Strongly Agree') – to what extent do I/we agree that:
 - a. I/we do not have adequate time to access and review research?
 - b. I/we find it difficult to keep up with new and emerging research?
- (ii) In what ways are my/our perceptions of time impacting how often and how well we use research in practice?
- (iii) What other barriers to research use (e.g., individuals' research use skills, sufficient provision of supporting resources) may be linked to my/our perceptions of time?
- (iv) To what extent am I/are we prepared to address perceptions of time and research use? Why do I/we feel this way?

Both the **Q Narrative** and the **Q Behavioural Insight** highlight the importance of scheduled time through professional learning or communities of practice structures as important enablers of research use in practice. Reflecting on this narrative, the following questions may be used as prompts:

- (i) In what ways does this narrative resonate (or not) with our own school situation? How would we describe our provision of scheduled time for staff to find and use research?
- (ii) How might insights gained from this narrative inform how we support our staff going forward to find sufficient time to use research?

Similar to Gore and Gitlin ([2004](#)), the **Q Behavioural Insight** suggests that a rescheduling of workloads or school initiatives may have a real and beneficial impact on practitioners' perceptions of sufficient time to engage with research. Reflecting on this, consider the following for individual reflection or small group discussion:

- (i) To what extent do I/we believe that our school currently has competing priorities? In what ways are these competing priorities impacting me/our staff and my/our use of research in practice?
- (ii) To what extent do I/we believe that our school is introducing too many ideas too frequently? In what ways are these ideas impacting me/our staff and my/our use of research in practice?
- (iii) To what extent are we/the school prepared to address these perceived barriers? Why do we feel this way?
- (iv) In what ways can we change these situations? How easy or hard is it to make these changes?

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 leaders build and maintain appropriate school infrastructure, including the support and/or provision of time for staff to find and use research, is therefore important.

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



[Q Project Website](#)



[@MonashQProject](#)



MonashQProject@monash.edu