MONASH Q PROJECT

WHAT, WHY, WHEN AND HOW: AUSTRALIAN EDUCATORS' USE OF RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS
SUMMARY

The Monash Q Project is a 5-year partnership between Monash University and the Paul Ramsay Foundation to improve the use of research in Australian schools. To improve the quality use of research in schools, we must first understand how research is currently being used. Drawing on the latest Q Survey report, *'What, why, when and how: Australian educators' use of research in schools',* this summary shares 1,725 educators' insights into their current practices and use of research evidence, as well as important considerations for improving the quality use of research in schools.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, research is **not used often** in practice and it **is less preferred** than other evidence types, such as student data. However, there are several key findings in relation to how educators currently use research in practice:

- **WHAT:** Educators prefer research sources that are **interactive and relational** (e.g., PD courses). There are also preferences for research types that are **short in format** and present the research in its **original form** (e.g., <4-page reports). These preferences are associated with using research more in practice.

- **WHY:** For research to be used, it must be **'usable'**. This means that it is **contextually relevant, practical, convenient and credible.** When educators have concerns about a lack of practicality or convenience, they use research less often in practice. Educators identified that **skills to assess the usability of research** are a critical development need.

- **WHEN:** There **are significant concerns about having sufficient time** to use research, which influence the extent to which research is used in practice. When research is accessed and used, it is mainly done **outside of work hours** and for **less than 30 minutes** at a time.

- **HOW:** Research is often accessed and used in a collaborative manner, with **colleagues, professional learning networks** and **school leaders** seen as **trustworthy sources** of research. It is common for educators to read research immediately or save it to read later. On average, **just over half** of what is saved is read at a later date.

CONNECTIONS TO THE QURE FRAMEWORK

The Monash Q Project's QURE Framework (*see, Figure 1*) contextualises these findings in four ways:

- Appropriate research evidence is at the core of the framework. This summary suggests that **appropriate evidence is contextually relevant, practical, convenient and credible**.

- Relationships are a key enabling factor in the framework. The findings highlight the value of **discussions, collaborations and professional learning opportunities with colleagues** when accessing, interpreting and using research.

- Skillsets are also a key enabling factor in the framework. Educators indicated that the development of **skills to assess the usability research** should be prioritised**.**
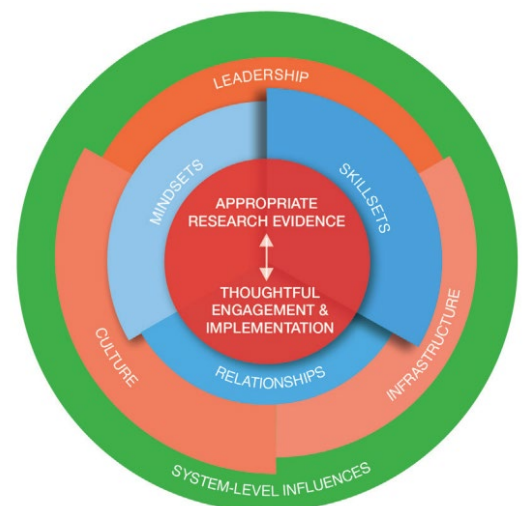

Figure 1: Quality Use of Research Evidence (QURE) Framework.

- Infrastructure is a system-level enabler in the framework. Educators' insights highlight a **significant lack of time** to engage with research and the need for dedicated time **during school hours**.

CONSIDERATIONS

The findings presented in this summary suggest that if we are to increase and improve the quality use of research in education, then the **research itself needs to be usable**. Furthermore, educators need to be **supported through the provision of sufficient time** and opportunities to **collaborate and develop their skills** to find, assess and implement usable research.

These insights provide school leaders and education system stakeholders with some important cues:

- **Educators lack sufficient time to engage properly with research, with many using their own time to undertake these tasks.** Providing educators with scheduled time to collaborate with colleagues and engage with research can support its greater use in practice. However, this is a challenge that cannot be addressed at the school-level alone. System leaders must also consider how educators' access to research and the provision of time can be improved.

- **Educators look to leaders, colleagues and professional learning communities as key avenues for finding and accessing research.** When research is discussed and shared between colleagues, it is more likely to be seen as high-quality and trustworthy. Leveraging these relationships can support educators' access to reliable, relevant, practical and convenient research.

- **Educators want research that is easy to take in and apply, practical and speaks directly to classroom practice.** This does not mean that they necessarily want research summaries. Educators indicated that is important that they are provided with the opportunity to make sense of the original research themselves. They also valued opportunities to engage with research through professional learning courses, conferences, and in-school presentations.

- **Educators believe that investments in their skills to assess the quality, usability and relevance of research are critical.** Prioritising the development of these skills will support educators to better select, adapt and implement research that can have a positive impact on teaching practice and students' learning. System-wide efforts are needed to provide access to quality professional learning and resources that help to develop educators' research use skills.

- **Teachers and school leaders differ, in some cases significantly, as to 'what, why, when and how' they engage with research.** Believing that teachers and school leaders have the same needs, expectations and capacities regarding their research use may hinder improvement endeavours. Understanding these nuances and tailoring professional learning, improvement interventions and support resources to the needs of different educator groups seem prudent ways forward.

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