

MONASH Q PROJECT

TOWARDS QUALITY USE OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE IN EDUCATION

DISCUSSION PAPER SUMMARY

This document summarises the Q Project's 'Towards Quality Use of Research Evidence in Education' Discussion Paper. The goal of the paper is to stimulate debate about the process of working towards high-quality use of research evidence in Australian education. It highlights a need for new conversations about how 'quality use of research evidence' can contribute to teacher professionalism, educational improvement and navigating complexity.

The Discussion Paper is written for anyone who is interested in improving the use of research evidence within and across all levels of schools and school systems. This could include teachers, school and system leaders, teacher educators, policy-makers, researchers and research brokers.

INTRODUCTION

- There is growing emphasis on evidence use within and beyond education, but discussions have tended to focus on the quality of the evidence rather than the *quality of the use*.
- The Monash Q Project is a 5-year initiative that is focused specifically on this issue of quality use of research evidence within Australian schools and school systems.
- This paper shows how the Q Project's Quality Use of Research Evidence (QURE) Framework draws on ideas from health, social care and policy, and highlights a need for new conversations in education.

A QUALITY USE OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION

- Quality use of research evidence in education is defined as 'the thoughtful engagement with and implementation of appropriate research evidence, supported by a blend of individual and organisational enabling components within a complex system'.
- At the centre of the framework are two core components that highlight the need for research evidence to be appropriate and for the engagement and implementation to be thoughtful.
- Quality use of research evidence, though, also depends on three individual-level enabling components (skillsets, mindsets and relationships), three organisational-level enabling components (leadership, culture and infrastructure), and broader system-level influences.

CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER SECTORS

- The literature in health, social care and policy indicate a lack of well-developed definitions or descriptions of quality of evidence use, highlighting the need for conceptual work on this topic.
- Studies across the sectors emphasised the centrality of practitioner expertise in using research in practice, which informed the development of the core components within our framework.
- Discussions across the sectors also highlighted the complex multilevel processes involved in evidence use in systems, which shaped our framework's enabling components and system-level influences.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- The Quality Use of Research Evidence Framework has implications for how evidence users such as educators, school leaders and policy-makers reflect on their current approaches to using evidence and how they might move forward to support these at individual-, organisational- and systems-levels.
- The development of the framework will continue through school-based investigation across four states in Australia, the integration of illustrations of practice, and the development of professional learning resources to build educators' capacity to use research evidence well.
- Readers are encouraged to connect with the Monash Q Project, and be part of new conversations about how 'quality use of research evidence' can contribute to Australian education (see next page).

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QUALITY USE OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE IN EDUCATION - BUILDING THE CONVERSATION



The Monash Q Project aims to improve the use of research evidence in Australian schools. Critical to this process is developing a shared understanding about what it means to use research evidence well in education. The ideas presented in this paper about ‘quality use of research evidence’ are intended as an initial contribution towards such an understanding. Their value, however, will depend on wide-ranging and ongoing conversation about how ‘quality use’ can be useful to educators, leaders and policy-makers. In particular, we see a need for discussion about:

QUALITY USE AND TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

Using research evidence well is highly professional, and requires educators with particular skillsets, mindsets and relationships. As Dylan Wiliam explains, “Evidence is important, but what is more important is [...] teacher expertise and professionalism [to] make better judgments about when, and how, to use research”. With this in mind:

- How can practising ‘thoughtful engagement with and implementation of appropriate research evidence’ become part of educational professionalism?
- How can quality use of research be understood and developed as integral to quality teaching and leadership, and within the professional standards?
- What does getting better at using research evidence in practice look like for educators at different career stages and in different roles and contexts?

QUALITY USE AND EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Using research evidence well is not an end in itself but a means to an end. As Carol Weiss argued, it is not about “how to increase the use of research in decision-making” but rather “how to make wiser decisions, and in what ways can research help” (p. 78). With this in mind:

- How can quality use of research be part of powerful and sustained improvement processes and cultures within and across schools?
- How can high-quality use of research be embedded within system improvement across multiple levels, stakeholder groups and time-scales?
- What are appropriate measures and indicators with which to understand and track the development and impact of quality research use in schools and school systems?

QUALITY USE AND NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY

Using research evidence well is part of building capacity to respond wisely to challenges and change. As our recent experiences of the COVID-19 crisis have shown, evidence does not speak for itself but depends on careful decisions about whether, when and how to use and act on it in specific contexts. With this in mind:

- How can quality use of research help us to understand not only the potential, but also the limitations, of research evidence in responding to educational challenges?
- How can quality use of research help us make better evidence-informed decisions to build more resilient and adaptive schools and systems?
- How can we improve the use of research evidence in ways that respond to the diverse purposes and practices of different organisations and systems?

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

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 monash.edu/education/research/projects/qproject

TO READ THE FULL DISCUSSION PAPER VISIT:
[MONASH.EDU/EDUCATION/RESEARCH/PROJECTS/QPROJECT/PUBLICATIONS/DISCUSSION-PAPER](https://monash.edu/education/research/projects/qproject/publications/discussion-paper)

² Wiliam, D., (2019, May 30). Teaching not a research-based profession. TES. <https://www.tes.com/news/dylan-wiliam-teaching-not-research-based-profession>

³ Weiss, C. H. (1978). Improving the linkage between social research and public policy. *Knowledge and policy: The uncertain connection*, 23–81.