

Cognitive Development

The renewed focus on the school leader as a leader of learning makes the use of new knowledge and the engagement with new ideas and perspectives an important component of professional learning for leadership. Reading and research provides an alternative view and a different lens through which a leader can view his or her practice. It is therefore important that there are strong links forged between those engaged in leadership research that supports evidence informed practice and those providing professional learning for school leaders.

Carroll, Smith and Whewell (2008)¹ point out that if reflection on practice is not informed by new ideas and draws only on experiences, its capacity to inform learning is limited.

The Centre for the Use of Research Evidence in Education (CUREE) report (2012), “Understanding What Enables High Quality Professional Learning”² highlights the importance of support by specialist expertise as an important component of professional learning for both teachers and school leaders. The importance of “practice based current research on effective leadership” is a recurring theme found by CUREE when it examined a range of research on what constitutes good quality professional learning.

The Cosán Framework for Teachers’ Learning³ identifies research as a learning process and expands the definition of research to include:

- Participation in a researchmeet or other research event
- Research carried out as part of an academic programme
- Membership of a research engagement group
- Action research

Therefore, the use of relevant research that challenges existing practice as well as outlining a pathway towards improvement in teaching and learning outcomes for students, is a core component of a quality professional learning activity for school leaders.

¹Carroll M, Smith S and Whewell C. (2008) Creating Contexts for Practice-Based Learning cited in Reeves J. and Fox A, Practice Based Learning Developing Excellence in Teaching Dunedin Academic Press Ltd

² [www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/\[site-timestamp\]/CUREE-Report.pdf](http://www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/[site-timestamp]/CUREE-Report.pdf)

³ <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Cosan-Framework-for-Teachers-Learning.pdf>