BUILDING CAPACITY FOR QUALITY TEACHING IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

CASE STUDIES
FINAL REPORT

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Project Overview

This project carried out case studies to investigate the implementation of Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) professional development outside the stipulations of an intervention study. Specifically, the aim of the project was to understand how QTR is implemented within individual school settings, what (if any) adaptations were made, and the general impact of participation for teachers, students, and the school community more broadly. These case studies were an essential component of the broader program of work, *Building Capacity for Quality Teaching in Australian Schools*, given that implementation in everyday practice can look very different from what takes place under research conditions.

Schools were identified and recruited through two primary mechanisms:

1. an email sent to all teachers who had participated in a QTR workshop since 2014 (n = 687), inviting them to complete a short online survey. From this pool, a subset of principals were asked to allow case studies in their schools. The subset aimed to ensure diverse school types and varying approaches to the implementation of QTR.

2. purposive sampling, with schools identified by staff in the Teachers and Teaching Research Centre and Quality Teaching Academy who had knowledge of which schools had sustained or embedded QTR after attending a workshop. Similarly, the aim was to ensure a diverse sample.

Overall, 15 schools were recruited, and the case studies proceeded via at least one extended visit to each school. The school visits typically included an interview with the principal, interviews with a range of teachers (in some cases, including both teachers who had and those who had not participated in QTR), and an implementation fidelity check involving observation of a Round where appropriate and feasible. During these visits, 108 teacher interviews, 11 principal interviews, and 13 fidelity checks were conducted by the research team.

This report presents an overview of the study, and key insights from the analysis on: (1) adaptations made and their effects; (2) the impact of QTR in these schools; and (3) challenges to implementation.

Sample

An overview of the 15 schools and the data collected at each site is provided in Table 1. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of each school (and participants). The sample comprised a diverse group of schools. Most are government schools, with two independent schools and one Catholic school included. The schools cater variously for primary, secondary, and K–12 student cohorts, as well as two environmental education centres and a distance education school. The schools are located in both metropolitan and regional areas and cover a broad ICSEA range from less than 680 to more than 1150. The range of communities served by these schools provides evidence of the applicability of QTR in multiple contexts.

Table 1. Overview of schools and sample

School	Sector	School Type	ICSEA*	Location	Interviews, n	Fidelity Checks, n
Bagaay Central School	Government	P–12	Low	Outer Regional	5	0
Cairnleigh Catholic High School	Catholic	7–12	Mid	Inner Regional	9	1
Edgeton Public School	Government	K–6	High	Major Cities	15	1
Everdale College	Independent	R–12	High	Major Cities	14	1
Green Ridge Public School	Government	K–6	Mid	Inner Regional	2	1
Henshaw Primary School	Government	K–6	High	Major Cities	7	2
Huxley School of Distance Education	Government	K–12	Mid	Major Cities	9	1
Koongkang Environmental Education Centre	Government	N/A	N/A	Major Cities	4	2
Lake Olley Central School	Government	K–12	Low	Major Cities	6	1
Mount Carey High School	Government	7–12 Girls	High	Major Cities	5	1
Olsen Valley High School	Government	7–12	Low	Outer Regional	10	2
Shefton Christian College	Independent	K–12	High	Major Cities	15	1
Treetops Public School	Government	K–6	Low	Inner Regional	12	1
Whiteley Public School	Government	K–6	High	Major Cities	2	0
Wulan Environmental Education Centre	Government	N/A	N/A	Inner Regional	5	1

*Note. Low ICSEA < 950, Mid ICSEA 950–1050, High ICSEA > 1050.

Key Learnings: Adaptations

In scaling QTR across a broad range of schools, a key consideration of this project was whether adaptations were made to the process of Rounds and, if so, their form and effects. Adaptations to the traditional QTR process sometimes occur when schools find it challenging to embed Rounds within their school due to financial or time constraints. This is particularly pertinent in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and current teacher shortages. Adaptations are also made to suit specific school contexts, as we explore below in a school of distance education and two environmental education centres.

Many schools adapted QTR in one or more ways (see Table 2). Our interest lies in whether adaptations improve the viability of QTR in a particular context, or whether outcomes are diminished.

As depicted in Table 2, only four schools made no adaptations. In the remaining 11 schools, the main adaptations from the traditional approach to Rounds, as outlined in QTR workshops and associated resources, were: filming lessons rather than watching them live; half-day rather than full-day Rounds; reducing the number of teachers in a PLC from four to three; and engaging in a cross-school Professional Learning Community (PLC).

Three of the 15 case-study schools opted to *film lessons*, mainly because of the nature of teaching in these specialised settings – environmental education centres and distance education settings. These recordings are viewed by other members of the PLC prior to completing the remaining components of QTR. Only one other school filmed one entire Round with the intention of encouraging other teachers to participate after seeing what it looked like in their school.

Half-day Rounds were used in three schools, each in a slightly different way. In one school, a single half-day Round was held on each day. In another, two PLCs held Rounds on one day – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. In the third school, one PLC completed two Rounds on a single day.

Two schools varied the *number of teachers* in a PLC from four to three, while one school elected to have a PLC of six teachers with four present during any single Round. This small school combined with another in a *cross-school PLC* as a way of increasing flexibility in two small schools for the conduct of QTR.

In most cases, these adaptations ensured the viability of QTR in the school. However, some adaptations had negative consequences for teacher learning, as outlined in our recent paper (see Publications and Outputs). In one case, Olsen Valley High School, the number and type of adaptations – including removal of the reading discussion, fragmented conduct of QTR over multiple days, and changes to the formation of PLCs led to a 'lethal mutation' and, ultimately, abandonment of QTR.

The details and effects of these adaptations are elaborated below.

Table 2. Overview of adaptations

School	Adaptation
Bagaay Central School	Half-day Rounds (each PLC completed one Round in half a day)
Cairnleigh Catholic High School	None
Edgeton Public School	None
Everdale College	Professional reading discussion conducted at the end of a Round Three teachers per PLC
Green Ridge Public School	None
Henshaw Primary School	PLC size varies from 4-5
Huxley School of Distance Education	Filmed lessons
Koongkang Environmental Education Centre	Filmed lessons
Lake Olley Central School	Half-day Rounds (two PLCs complete one Round each in a day)
Mount Carey High School	Filmed the first Round to promote QTR within the school Intensive half-day Rounds (one PLC completes two Rounds in a day)
Olsen Valley High School	Professional reading discussion removed Each PLC only completed a single Round Each Round was completed over a number of days PLC discussion compressed into a regularly scheduled staff meeting and focused on a limited number of elements selected by the observed teacher
Shefton Christian College	Three teachers per PLC
Treetops Public School	Cross-school PLC Large dynamic PLC; not all PLCs members participate in each Round
Whiteley Public School	None
Wulan Environmental Education Centre	Filmed lessons

A lethal mutation

As an outer regional school, Olsen Valley High School has, for years, experienced major challenges to securing sufficient teachers. Their biggest barrier to implementing QTR is limited access to casual relief teachers to cover the duties of teachers while they participate in Rounds. The school also faces significant challenges caused by teacher attrition and retention. Almost half of the school's teaching staff leave in some years to work elsewhere. Wanting to involve their whole staff in QTR, significant modifications were made to the Rounds process to enable implementation in their context. As a result, each Round was conducted over a number of days (instead of during a single day), which separated the observation, individual coding, and group coding/discussion components. They also removed the initial reading discussion altogether.

To keep costs down and manage logistics, PLCs were formed based on practicality and convenience, with one teacher in each PLC being the 'host' (the observed teacher) of a given Round and the other teachers designated 'observers' when their professional development/release period was timetabled at the same time. This meant only one Round occurred per term and a PLC only functioned for this single Round, with participation in QTR neither sustained nor reciprocal. In turn, some teachers reported they were not able to build collegial relationships within their PLC.

The value of the group coding and discussion was also diminished, with this process compressed into a regularly scheduled staff meeting at the end of each term. In these discussions, PLCs members only discussed a limited number of elements, chosen by the teachers on the basis of perceived importance and/or benefit, rather than discussing all 18 elements as is the norm.

Our initial visit to Olsen Valley High School was in 2019. We followed up with the Head Teacher of Teaching and Learning three years later, in 2022. Despite great support from the school's executive team, the decision had been made to pause QTR. In this instance, too many adaptations had created a 'lethal mutation' of the approach. That is, the way QTR was running in this school was almost unrecognisable from its intended design which limited the deep professional learning that typically occurs within Rounds.

This case study highlights the vulnerability of QTR when adaptations are too extreme or too great in number. In attempting to sustain QTR, Olsen Valley removed so many of the fundamental mechanisms built into its original design that it no longer produced the intended positive outcomes. With these outcomes now absent, teachers lost faith in the process of QTR, and commitment waned.

Making QTR work in specific contexts

At both the Environmental Education Centres (EECs) we visited, lessons are filmed to support participation in QTR. As these centres have a small number of teachers, and different school groups visit for a whole day, it is not possible to conduct QTR when students are on site. Hence, the PLC conducts Rounds on days when no students are visiting, with teachers watching the pre-recorded lesson together and the Round retaining fidelity in every other way. This adaptation provides the opportunity for the observed teacher to not only code the lesson but also view the recording alongside other members of their PLC.

Additionally, staff at these EECs work differently to most mainstream teachers in that they all teach the same 'set' lessons to different school groups. As Keely explains about her participation in QTR, "we chose lessons [for QTR] based on the fact that we wanted to observe other people teaching those lessons and improve those lessons" (Keely, teacher, Koongkang EEC). In this way, QTR enabled close analysis of each of these 'set' lessons so they could be improved for other school groups in the future. As Principal Chris elaborates, immediate changes can be made, improving lessons for the next group of students: "direct changes were quickly implemented and shared amongst the staff and then shared amongst the casual teachers. So, the change went across the board" (Chris, Principal, Koongkang EEC). QTR's emphasis on *teaching* quality, rather than the *teacher*, supports this improvement process.

Similarly, at Huxley School of Distance Education, filming lessons made QTR more convenient and practical for their context. Lessons at Huxley all take place online given that students are situated throughout Australia, and internationally in many instances. Teachers told us there is often little to gain from the PLC observing a live lesson as many students have their cameras and microphones switched off. Furthermore, teachers work to varying timetables as they don't teach students in conventional classes or groups. At Huxley, therefore, the filming of lessons enabled teachers to come together for a Round on a day that suited their schedule, avoiding the need for class cover.

In sum, filming lessons has been a positive adaptation in ensuring lesson observations are more accessible in non-mainstream school settings. At the EECs, Rounds have been embraced by teachers as a path to lesson improvement and teachers report high morale following participation. At Huxley, filming provides flexibility for PLCs to meet at a convenient time, with teachers valuing the opportunity to learn from each other and benefit from the "expertise within" (Jacinta, Head of English, Huxley School of Distance Education).

Addressing the impact of the teacher shortage/ limited staff availability

At Shefton Christian College, PLCs consist of only three teachers as this saves money on casual relief teachers and decreases time off class for the teachers involved.

At Treetops Public School, a regional primary school, the principal has trialled two QTR adaptations to tackle the current casual teacher shortage. In contrast to Shefton, in one adaptation, six teachers were part of a dynamic PLC in which only four participated in each Round. This provided a QTR experience for six teachers overall, without requiring all of them to be off class for every Round. In this small school, teachers already had good collegial relationships and appeared to be comfortable with this process.

When we visited Treetops, the school was also trialling a second adaptation in the form of a cross-school PLC with Green Ridge Public School, another small school in the area. The teachers had not previously met, but quickly built collegial connections as they discovered that, despite differences in their school demographics, their classroom experiences were similar. Importantly, it was the QT Model that gave them a common language to foreground this shared experience: "going into another school and having that common language and that common protocol to follow was so rewarding" (Morwenna, Stage 2 teacher, Green Ridge Public School).

In another adaptation to address staff shortages, some schools ran half-day Rounds. For example, at Lake Olley Central School, two separate PLCs complete one Round each in a day, which enabled two groups to engage in QTR for the 'cost' of one casual. Having originally implemented the recommended format of QTR, some teachers told us they felt 'rushed' in this new format, wanting to return to the original full-day format.

The adaptations made by Treetops Public School were both successful in managing the shortage of casual teachers. The pre-existing collegiality in this small school supported the larger, dynamic PLC. However, this approach may not work so well in a larger school where teachers are less familiar with each other, given that stability within a PLC is a core feature of its design. The cross-school PLC supported the building of positive relationships between the two schools, which could benefit staff and students in other ways in the future.

At Lake Olley, half-day Rounds ensured more teachers had an opportunity to experience Rounds. However, not all teachers reported gaining the maximum benefit from Rounds as they felt hurried to complete the professional development in a limited time period. Achieving balance between, on the one hand, providing the opportunity for more teachers to participate and, on the other hand, ensuring the quality of the experience needs to be managed at the school level.

Choosing to adapt

Other schools made an explicit decision to implement half-day Rounds to suit a particular set of circumstances rather than as a response to the current teacher shortage. At Bagaay Central School, for example, teachers reported that the half-day Round format is more appropriate for their complex K-12 timetable. In this instance, participating teachers reported that, with practice, the time required for coding has reduced and the shorter timeframe ensures they stay focused.

At Mount Carey High School, adoption of QTR had been spurred on by a recent standards-based school review. Hoping to create staff buy-in for those not wanting to take too much time away from class, the school's leadership team offered two versions of QTR: the recommended format and an alternate version they call 'QTR intensive'. In the intensive format, a PLC completed two Rounds in a single day, commencing at 7.30am and finishing at 5.30pm (a 10-hour day). While one teacher told us that "we didn't rush the discussions at all" (Byron, music teacher, Mount Carey High School), others commented that they have "to rush through a lot of things," thereby "squeezing" all the components of

QTR together (Reid, English teacher, Mount Carey High School). Although fidelity was maintained in the intensive format, teachers were left with little to no time between Rounds to consider their experience, process feedback or try out fresh insights and practices in their own classrooms.

As such, choosing to make adaptations can have mixed results. At Bagaay, teachers were happy with the half-day format. However, adding another Round for the same PLC, as occurred at Mount Carey, proved challenging for some teachers. This indicates that adaptations that work in one context, might not be appropriate in another.

Summary

These case studies demonstrate how adaptations can have varying effects, from successful refinement to lethal mutation. Moreover, while the fidelity of QTR can be retained in many, if not most, adaptations, the integrity of the intervention can sometimes be lost or weakened, with significant consequences for teachers' experiences of learning.

In our case study schools, the adaptations that proved disadvantageous were 'QTR intensive,' not maintaining stable membership within the PLC, and spreading the components of Rounds across multiple days within a term.

The adaptations that were successful were filming lessons, conducting Rounds with a three person PLC, cross-school Rounds, and certain versions of half-day Rounds (i.e., when a PLC only completed one Round in a day, but in a slightly condensed timeframe). However, we should note that as our case study schools employing half-day Rounds revealed, there are no blanket rules for whether an adaptation will be successful. As is so often the case in complex organisations such as schools, what works well in one context, might not suit another.

These insights enable us to provide more nuanced recommendations to schools where there is a perceived need to adapt QTR for their contexts.

Key Learnings: Impact of QTR

The large set of qualitative data from the case studies also enabled several key insights into the impact of QTR in naturalistic or non-research settings. While adaptations can affect implementation, five key themes emerged from the principal and teacher interviews in terms of the way QTR positively impacts teachers, their students, and wider school communities: deprivatisation of practice, improved collegial relationships, affirmation of knowledge and expertise, a common pedagogical language, and boosting morale.

Deprivatisation of practice

Teachers resoundingly reported that in a career where they are often isolated, gaining insight into other classrooms is one of the most powerful outcomes of QTR. As primary teacher Curtis shares, "Lots of people finish prac and get a teaching job and then that's the last time they see another teacher teach. You're on your own." (Stage 1 teacher, Shefton Christian College).

In a similar vein, Guiliana, an experienced high school English teacher, describes the desire that many teachers have to observe their peers – a void that was eventually filled through QTR:

> I feel that particularly for teachers, because we are so isolated, I suppose in our teaching, we are in silos. And the opportunity to watch other people, see how they teach, it's something that in fact I've always had on my list of – you know little wish list – is for me to go and see other teachers within my faculty to just see what they do. (Guiliana, Head of English, Cairnleigh Catholic High School)

Somewhat surprisingly, even as a Head Teacher, Guiliana has had few opportunities to observe other classes prior to QTR. Similarly, Jacinta reflects on what this opportunity can do by opening up classrooms across different subjects and stages:

> I feel as though [QTR's] given me insights into styles of teaching that don't normally apply to my subject area, which has enabled me to reach students with a diverse range of learning styles. (Jacinta, Head of English, Huxley School of Distance Education)

In a primary school context, the insight into other classrooms enabled by QTR can also lead to "getting people out of their own bubble" (Ayla, Assistant Principal, Edgeton Public School), helping to create broader and deeper insights into practice. As many teachers commented, observing others in their classrooms enables teachers to see how their own practice connects with what students have learnt, or will learn, at other stages. Colin, for example, expresses how observing a kindergarten and then a Stage 3 lesson during QTR meant that "from my point of view, I can see forward – okay this is where they need to get to [and] this is where they came from" (Stage 2 teacher, Edgeton Public School).

Observing lessons from across the school provides what kindergarten teacher Helen describes as "continuity" and a deeper understanding of how "the little steps that we're taking now with the kids will make a big difference when they're in Year 5 or 6" (kindergarten teacher, Henshaw Primary School). Megan, the principal at Helen's school, identified another benefit of this experience as having insight into students' whole schooling experience:

If I'm a Year 4 teacher and I'm talking away with a parent about a child's need and I've got some understanding of what their experience was in Year 3 or Year 2 because I've seen it, I know how we teach in that part of the school. (Megan, Principal, Henshaw Primary School)

Megan describes the whole-school impact QTR can provide with leaders, teachers, parents, and students all standing to benefit.

These comments indicate the broad benefits of deprivatising practice. QTR enabled teachers to combat feelings of isolation, building positive professional relationships and lift their morale. Insight into other classrooms led to practical skills teachers could use with their own students. In the primary school context, QTR also enabled better understanding of students' progress through schooling, with positive outcomes for students, teachers and parents.

Improved collegial relationships

Teachers also frequently reported improved relationships as a result of participation in QTR. Ella, an early career teacher, shared the benefits of being in a PLC with the teacher in the classroom next door to her:

Now every morning, instead of just kind of walking past and saying "Hey," I'll go and ask him questions and things like that, whereas I probably wouldn't have done that before. One, because I didn't have the relationship. And two, because I felt "Oh they're in Year 5, they wouldn't really have anything to contribute to a Year 1 literacy session." So, I think that working with people [who] you don't normally work with is super important. (Ella, Stage 1 teacher, Edgeton Public School)

Ella now has a colleague she feels comfortable to approach with questions; the teacher next door is now an ally, rather than just someone she works alongside.

Another teacher, Jacinta, describes a similar shift in collegial relationships at her school as a result of QTR, with significant ramifications for the broader school community:

It's made stronger relationships with staff I don't always hang out with at school or work closely with, which builds a stronger school, which builds a stronger community. If I'm on an Aboriginal Education Committee and my buddy that I made friends with at my last QT Round is there, we might look at each other and put our hands up to do a project together. So, it changes the collegial relationships. (Jacinta, Head of English, Huxley School of Distance Education)

Other teachers also recognised that relationships with their PLC colleagues extend beyond QTR, ultimately benefitting their students. Tasha, a primary school teacher, shared how her improved relationships with colleagues had an impact on her class:

It's been a really positive relationship builder for me as well, with my team, with our lessons and work, and a respectful feedback process, and learning for the kids, and for us as educators to build our own knowledge and understanding of a holistic approach to [young people]. (Tasha, Stage 2 teacher, Henshaw Primary School)

The skills Tasha learnt during QTR enabled her to give more productive feedback to her students, and to understand their learning in a more holistic way.

For early career teachers like Ella, and for experienced teachers such as Jacinta, improved relationships with colleagues through QTR has had multiple positive outcomes. Just as with the deprivatisation of practice, improving collegiality has potential impact across the whole school community, with students the ultimate beneficiaries.

Affirmation of knowledge and expertise

Many teachers also spoke about the way QTR draws attention to the wealth of knowledge and expertise that already exists in schools, affirming teachers' capacities. PDHPE teacher Lonnie now recognises that "everyone is essentially an expert" (PDHPE teacher, Shefton Christian College). In particular, the Rounds process was seen as providing the time and opportunity for teachers to learn about the strengths of their colleagues. For example, before participating in QTR, Charlie, a deputy principal, was unaware of the knowledge a particular teacher, Alice, brought to the school:

> She's really, really passionate and really, really clever about what she does. And she researches a lot herself and she has some really great ideas but we didn't really know that before [QTR]. So, you know, there's been quite a bit that's come out about her passion and what she looks at and what she holds important in helping kids learn that really wasn't there before. So, it's given her a bit of an opening and a bit of a voice I think to share her opinions and ideas. (Charlie, Deputy Principal, Henshaw Primary School)

QTR has brought Alice recognition in her school. Importantly, her strengths can now be utilised for the benefit of the whole school community.

At a personal level, many teachers report their practice is affirmed by the feedback they receive during Rounds. As Fleur explains below, QTR can be a reminder of what teachers are getting right:

> Having other people come and observe my lesson and then code my lesson was a really affirming experience. So, there were some things that I didn't recognise that I was doing in my lesson and then my colleagues picked up on them, and I was like, "Oh, I am doing that; oh, that's great." (Fleur, English teacher, Shefton Christian College)

Primary School principal Megan recognises how important this kind of affirmation is for early career teachers. She believes QTR "reduces the imposter syndrome [as teachers realise] 'I am actually really doing what I should be doing'" (Megan, Principal, Henshaw Primary School). Special education teacher Matilda shares how important affirmation of practice is in her context: "it just confirms that what I'm doing is on the right track. I guess I feel a bit more comfortable in myself as a teacher in that sense. (Matilda, Stage 1-3 teacher, Treetops Public School).

QTR's collaborative approach and the positive feedback it provides supports teachers to identify their existing strengths. In turn, this process builds confidence and morale and is productive for teachers regardless of their context and level of experience.

A common pedagogical language

With QTR being grounded in the Quality Teaching Model, many teachers shared the way QTR provides them with the tools to discuss pedagogy with clarity and precision:

> It gives us the language to talk about our pedagogy in a way that is meaningful. QTR unlocks the vocabulary that we need to discuss our lessons in a way that shapes differentiation and individualised learning… You're giving people who aren't comfortable or don't often talk about practice the language to do so… they feel more empowered to have discussions around the practice, not just the content. (Jacinta, Head of English, Huxley School of Distance Education)

As well as enabling teachers to express their ideas about pedagogy, the QT Model and Rounds process creates what Curtis calls "an even playing field" for teachers (Stage 1 teacher, Shefton Christian College). Berta, an English teacher at Curtis' school explains:

It's given us all a common language because we do have a range of ages and experience and where people have studied and so on, and some others are from interstate as well. And so, this gives us a common language and a common framework that bridges the years of experience and so on as well. (Berta, Head of English, Shefton Christian College)

Deb, who teaches across all stages at an environmental education centre, echoes this view that QTR allows everyone to be "on the same page, with the same criteria, discussing the same thing" (Deb, teacher, Wulan Environmental Education Centre).

Having the language to speak about practice means teachers can be more objective about the impact of their lessons, particularly in relation to their students:

So having that language as well was just so incredibly validating for what we're doing for those kids. And saying, you know 'this isn't about me, this is about what the kids are getting out of it'. (Francesca, English teacher, Shefton Christian College)

In this vein, Francesca describes how the 'language' of Quality Teaching enabled her to see her practice from her students' perspective, reminding her of what she was already doing to support them. Indeed, supporting their students and student learning was the first priority of all the teachers we spoke to, as Colin explains:

I'm looking forward to the feedback I get from when I teach so I know what I can do better to improve my students' [learning] and how I become a better teacher for them. (Colin, Stage 2 teacher, Edgeton Public School)

Teachers at the case study schools valued the inclusive effects of the language of QT. Having this common language meant teachers were equipped to analyse and share feedback about practice in a way that was accessible to all.

Boosting morale

The experience of QTR also served as a reminder to teachers of why they chose the teaching profession. This is hugely important in the context of the current teacher shortages and high rates of teacher attrition. One teacher observed that after QTR, colleagues are "almost on a high in some ways" (Matilda, special education teacher, Treetops Public School). Similarly, for Zoe, QTR "boosted us up together" (Zoe, Stage 2 teacher, Edgeton Public School), suggesting a collective element to morale as a result of QTR. For Fran, QTR was similarly uplifting, with colleagues validating her practice, leading her to feel appreciated in the school community:

I just think this has got a totally different tone [to other forms of PD]. The purpose, and creating relationships and ones with support, even though you might be in totally different faculties, there's an appreciation of what you're doing and a value in your teaching and that's what it should be all about. (Fran, religious studies teacher, Cairnleigh Catholic High School)

Fran's use of the words 'relationships', 'support' and 'appreciation' indicate the way strong collegiality supported her wellbeing, extending beyond the timeframe of her participation in QTR.

Nova, a teacher with 17 years' experience, shares how her experience of QTR sustained her passion for teaching:

It definitely keeps the passion going. And you constantly think of 'What can I do better?' Because that's what it's all about. It's 'What can I do better for these children?'… This model helps you continue on that journey of wanting more and achieving more. And being more. (Nova, Assistant Principal, Edgeton Public School)

Nova's desire to 'be more' as a teacher is motivated by her desire to 'do better' for her students. QTR has enabled her to develop and improve her practice.

QTR can also provide a 'boost' when teachers are struggling with tough class dynamics. Eliza, who had a class with 'challenging behaviours', explains it almost 'broke' her until the discussions she had in her PLC represented a significant turning point:

> [They were] really valuable across the board, not just for improving [my] teaching but improving my wellbeing, improving my outlook with my kids, improving behaviour management in my class and all of that really boosted everything that year. (Eliza, special education teacher, Edgeton Public School)

QTR enabled Eliza to access the support of her colleagues who reminded her of what she was doing well, helping to improve her wellbeing during a challenging time. This sense of validation is echoed by Francesca who explains her eagerness to participate in QTR for a second time:

> I'm excited to be a part of another PLC because I just know that it can be so validating. And I think being part of fostering that really positive culture in the school, that's exciting to me to know that we've got each other's backs... People come out of [QTR] feeling really good about themselves. (Francesca, English teacher, Shefton Christian College)

The boost to teachers' morale provided by QTR has supported the wellbeing of many teachers we spoke to. This positive outcome is timely considering increasing attrition rates in the profession.

Challenges to Implementation

As explored above, some schools experienced logistical challenges with implementing QTR. These challenges have been exacerbated during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, as teacher sickness and casual shortages have become more prevalent. Our case study project identified one school, Olsen Valley, where challenges were not overcome. This school's outer regional location has contributed to persistent issues with high teacher turnover and casual shortages.

Another common challenge reported by teachers was apprehension at the thought of being observed by their colleagues. This was the case even for teachers with many years of experience. Head Teacher Rose, for example, experienced anxiety rooted in the feeling that she had to 'get it right':

> I felt confronted by having, you know, that I suppose people looking [at] what you are doing, and I suppose the anxiety of trying to get it all right. (Rose, Head of Performing and Creative Arts, Cairnleigh Catholic High School)

As an experienced teacher, Rose felt her colleagues would have high expectations about her practice. Other teachers were most worried about students misbehaving in front of their PLC colleagues:

> I guess it's always having someone watch you teach. I think that no matter how many years of teaching you have under your belt you still have that "Oh." And I think the worry that you have is that you expect the children to behave in a certain way and if they don't do that on the day you kind of feel like it's a reflection perhaps on me. But I think that's just been the only real challenge, is getting over that hurdle of having someone watch you. (Nova, Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction, Edgeton Public School)

While Nova labels her anxiety a 'hurdle', many teachers comment that once the process of Rounds begins, this 'hurdle' is easily surmountable. Daisy explains:

> It's a little overwhelming in the beginning. And then kind of once you settle into it, you really look at the codes and everything, it sort of gets a bit easier. (Daisy, English teacher, Huxley School of Distance Education)

Daisy's comment demonstrates how focusing on the codes – as elaborated in the QT Classroom Practice Guide – can remove attention from the individual teacher, thereby reducing anxiety.

Carys, an early career primary school teacher who participated in cross-school Rounds, also experienced initial nerves, but explains the professional growth she has gained has made any challenges worth overcoming:

> I remember the English lesson I did earlier in the year, I was so nervous, and I couldn't spell on the board. So, I was very nervous, and I ended up just saying like, "I *can* spell, I promise. I just can't think when I'm under pressure!" But I think I know that I'm only growing from this experience, you know; I can only grow, and it's only going to make my practice better. So, I would never opt out of doing it because I know the purpose of it. (Carys, Stage 3 teacher, Green Ridge Public School)

Other teachers echo this sentiment, maintaining that the benefits of QTR outweigh any initial doubts. Helen conceptualises this process in terms of the appreciation she feels for the learning opportunity provided by observing her colleagues:

> I'm a little bit nervous about it, but having said that, it's been wonderful actually seeing other teachers. So, I'm sure that it can only make me a better teacher in the long run. (Helen, kindergarten teacher, Henshaw Primary School)

Helen's comment reflects the reciprocity inherent to Rounds, where each teacher in the PLC takes their turn at being vulnerable by exposing their classroom practice but recognises that both the observed teacher and the observers stand to gain.

At Edgeton Public School, teachers who have already completed Rounds reassured others of the benefits of QTR:

> I've got someone in my group who's… a bit petrified of the idea [of Rounds]. But I think having had so many people tell them the benefits of it and the value in it, I think that's overridden the fears and the nerves a little bit. (Andy, Stage 2 teacher, Edgeton Public School)

Once teachers gain familiarity with Rounds, they often became strong advocates for participation. The teachers in Lonnie's PLC experienced a complete turnaround, not only enjoying Rounds, but spruiking its benefits to others:

> The people with me, they were super-nervous the first time. I'm like, "Guys, this is great. It's a great day. Relax." Once they got it, they're like, "This is awesome." And now, whenever they see anyone, they're saying, "Oh, it's great. Don't worry about it. There's nothing to be nervous about at all." (Lonnie, PDHPE teacher, Shefton Christian College)

At Shefton, the positive way many teachers speak about their QTR experience has encouraged more teachers to participate and there is now a waiting list to join a PLC.

These comments elucidate the way that participation in Rounds can shift negative views of observation. In every case study school, at least some teachers reported feeling nervous at the thought of participation in QTR. However, our data reflects the shift that occurs once Rounds commenced, with teachers describing QTR as a valuable opportunity for professional growth and learning.

Conclusion

The key learnings explored above highlight the multiple ways that QTR can benefit teachers, students, and broader school communities. While challenges do sometimes exist at a school level, the adaptations examined in this report demonstrate ways to tweak the original QTR format to support implementation. At an individual level, many of the teachers we interviewed reported feeling nervous at the prospect of Rounds. However, teachers invariably reported their nerves quickly dissipated once QTR commenced.

Jacinta's comment below summarises some of the key insights that emerged from our data. She identifies the value of the adaptability of QTR to individual settings and the unique collaborative experience of each PLC. She also acknowledges the benefits of QTR for the skills and knowledge of each teacher:

> That's why it's so successful… it's not somebody from the outside telling us how to do our jobs, it's us learning from each other. And then every experience is different, it's unique to the moment, it's unique to the cohort and it's differentiated by the people who are in it. So, it empowers people by giving them back the autonomy to shape their PL in a meaningful way. (Jacinta, Head of English, Huxley School of Distance Education)

The case study schools we have visited each provided insights into the everyday implementation of QTR and the adaptations that occur. The broad range of geographic locations and community demographics covered in these case studies demonstrate the variety of contexts in which QTR can succeed. This project has provided a nuanced understanding of the positive effects of participation in QTR and the valuable professional growth teachers have experienced.

Publications and Outputs

To date, this case study project has produced the following publications and outputs:

– A Q1-ranked journal article that applies the lens of implementation science to a case study of Olsen Valley High School, titled *Shifting the focus of research on effective professional development: Insights from a case study of implementation* (Patfield, Gore & Harris, 2023).

– A Q1-ranked journal article that investigates the ostensive and performative aspects of implementation in case studies of Mount Carey High School and Lake Olley Central School, titled *Scaling up effective professional development: Toward successful adaptation through attention to underlying mechanisms* (Patfield, Gore & Harris, 2022).

– An online blog for the British Educational Research Association, titled *Tensions in scaling up effective professional development: Balancing programme integrity and school adaptation* (Patfield, Gore & Harris, 2022).

– Conference presentations at the 2022 Australian Association for Research in Education annual conference and the 2022 Quality Teaching in Practice conference.

In addition, a journal article in preparation is focusing on the ways participation in QTR leads to improved teacher morale. We will argue that in the context of the current teacher shortages and increased workloads for teachers, QTR can support teachers to build collegial relationships and improve teaching practice. In turn, these factors build confidence and a sense of efficacy, thereby improving retention.