

# How to prioritise your challenges



Gary Jones and Deborah Netolicky

## What's the idea?

You will not be short of challenges that you want to turn your attention to so, once you have developed your challenges into well-formulated questions, you then need to identify the most important question to focus on.

## What does it mean?

There are a couple of models you can use to prioritise where to focus your research.

The **FINER** mnemonic was developed by Hulley et al. (2013) for use in medicine. We have adapted it here for application in schools:

**Feasibility.** Are there sufficient resources in the school – both in terms of capacity and capability – to answer the question?

**Interesting.** Is the question interesting to those who will be researching it?

**Novel.** Is this a recurring problem/

question, or something that is new to the school and may become an ongoing issue?

**Ethical.** Have any ethical issues been identified and considered?

**Relevant.** Is it relevant to the school's development plan? Will it influence school policy and practice?

The **SCEPTIC** mnemonic – again, originally developed for use in medicine – may also help you get to grips with the most important question to answer. It follows:

**Significant.** Does the answer to your question make a difference? Will it help you address an important problem in your own practice or school?

**Clear.** Is each term in the question clearly defined or definable?

**Ethical.** Are there any ethical issues that you need to take into account? Is any form of approval required before you try to answer the question?

**Parsimonious.** Is your question tightly focused on a specific issue?

**Timely.** Do you have sufficient resources and time to answer the question?

**Imaginative.** How creative does your answer need to be?

**Contextualised.** Is available research evidence relevant to your school and context? (adapted from Hulley et al., 2013)

## What are the implications for teachers?

This will help you to know that you are solving the right problem and have considered other ways to address it than the one you now want to research. This is the moment where you need to consider how you will go about gathering research evidence from practitioners, scientific literature, the school and stakeholders.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

» Hulley SB, Cummings SR, Browner WS, Grady DG and Newman TB (2013) *Designing Clinical Research*. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

» Straus S, Glasziou P, Richardson S and Haynes B (2011) *Evidence-Based Medicine: How to Practice and Teach It* (4th edition). Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, Elsevier.