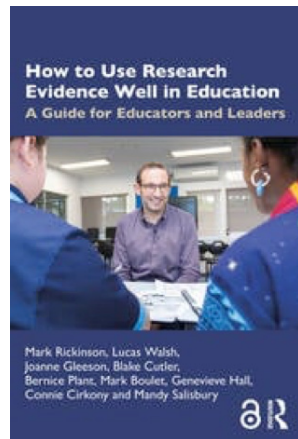


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Mark Rickinson, Lucas Walsh, Joanne Gleeson, Blake Cutler, Bernice Plant, Mark Boulet, Genevieve Hall, Connie Cirkony and Mandy Salisbury, *How to Use Research Evidence Well in Education: A Guide for Educators and Leaders* (1st ed.), Routledge, 2025; 214 pp.: ISBN 978-100-337-584-5

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Across education systems internationally, there is now widespread rhetorical commitment to research- and evidence-informed practice. Policymakers, system leaders and professional bodies routinely exhort educators to “use the evidence” to improve teaching, leadership and student outcomes (OECD, 2025). Yet, as a substantial body of scholarship has shown, this ambition has proved far easier to articulate than to realise in practice (Dimmock, 2019). Despite increased access to research summaries, toolkits and intermediary organisations, sustained and meaningful engagement with research remains uneven, fragile and highly dependent on local conditions. It is within this well-established but still unresolved context that *How to Use Research Evidence Well in Education* makes a timely and important contribution.



The book is a practical, accessible guide designed to help educators and school leaders, and researchers as well, use research effectively to improve teaching and learning. Based on a six year study with more than 2,300 educators, the book introduces the QURE Framework (Quality Use of Research Evidence), which defines effective research use as “thoughtful engagement with and implementation of appropriate research evidence”.

The book emphasises that using research well is sophisticated – it requires deep, reflective thinking; integrated – research should connect with

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everyday professional practice; developmental – skills grow over time, often hidden and rarely made explicit; and poorly supported – institutions often lack the structures required to do research well.

In order to address these challenges, the authors provide stepbystep guidelines and useful resources, including diagnostic tools, case studies, templates and improvement activities. Each chapter focuses on a key stage of the researchuse process:

1. Identifying a clear purpose
2. Selecting appropriate research
3. Engaging thoughtfully with evidence
4. Implementing researchinformed change
5. Modelling and supporting research use within organisations

Ultimately, the book positions research engagement not as an addon but as an integral aspect of **professional expertise**, similar to how clinicians continually integrate new medical knowledge into practice. It argues that when educators build the mindsets, skillsets and relational capacities to use research well, they create the conditions for:

- More informed decisionmaking,
- Increased professional confidence,
- Stronger collective practices, and
- Improved outcomes for students.

The book makes several contributions to evidence-informed practice in school and the field of research in general. One of its key strengths lies in its clear recognition that the central challenge facing education systems is no longer simply whether research is available, but whether it is *used well*. This emphasis aligns closely with empirical findings suggesting that research use is shaped less by supply than by educators' perceptions of its relevance, costs and professional meaning, as well as by the organisational conditions in which educators work (Brown et al., 2022). Rather than treating research use as a technical act of implementation, the authors frame it as a complex professional practice that involves judgement, interpretation, adaptation and collaboration. This shift in framing is both analytically important and practically generative.

The book is rooted in the state-of-the-art *Quality Use of Research Evidence* (QURE) framework, developed through the ground-breaking Monash Q Project, a conceptual backbone that gives coherence and depth to what might otherwise have become a purely “how-to” manual. Research use is defined not as the mechanical application of findings but as the thoughtful engagement

with and implementation of *appropriate* research evidence, supported by individual and organisational enabling conditions. In this respect, Mark Rickinson and colleagues directly address a longstanding gap in the literature on evidence-informed education, which has often focused either on individual teachers' dispositions *or* on system-level structures, without adequately theorising the interaction between the two. As prior research has shown, educators are more likely to engage with research when they perceive clear benefits, manageable costs and strong professional legitimacy for doing so, and when they are supported by colleagues and leaders who value such engagement (Brown et al., 2022). This book takes these insights seriously and translates them into an integrated, practice-facing framework.

Structurally, the book is exceptionally well designed for its intended audience. Each chapter focuses on a specific aspect of using research well, from identifying a clear purpose, to selecting appropriate research, engaging with it thoughtfully, implementing it effectively, and modelling and supporting research use within organisations. The consistent chapter structure, with the use of case studies, reflective questions and improvement activities, makes the book highly accessible without sacrificing conceptual rigour. Importantly, the authors are explicit that the tools and activities provided are not recipes to be followed uncritically; rather, they are prompts to support professional judgement and contextualised decision-making. This stance thus avoids one of the common pitfalls of the evidence-informed movement: the risk of replacing professional autonomy with technocratic compliance (e.g., Biesta, 2007; Wrigley, 2018).

The book is also notable for what it does *not* do: sidestepping much critique of research-use initiatives but not privileging particular research methods, advocating for narrow definitions of “what works” or promoting research use as a top-down accountability mechanism. Instead, it positions educators as active sense-makers who bring their own expertise, contextual knowledge and ethical commitments to bear on research evidence. This orientation resonates strongly with research suggesting that educators are more likely to use research when it is aligned with their professional identities and moral purposes, rather than imposed as an external requirement (Brown et al., 2022). In this sense, *How to Use Research Evidence Well in Education* offers a corrective to more reductive accounts of evidence-based practice that have sometimes dominated policy discourse.

Another significant contribution of the book is its attention to organisational and leadership conditions. Research use is shown to be a collective and cultural practice, shaped by leadership behaviours, meeting structures, routines and norms. The chapters on modelling and supporting research use make it

clear that leaders play a crucial role not by acting as gatekeepers of evidence but by creating environments in which inquiry, experimentation and reflection are valued and sustained. This focus fills an important gap between individual-level accounts of research engagement and system-level reform efforts, offering a meso-level perspective that is often missing in both research and practice.

The expertise of the authorial team is evident throughout. Drawing on six years of empirical work with schools and systems, as well as collaboration with behavioural scientists, the book combines conceptual clarity with deep practical insight. The writing is clear, measured and refreshingly non-dogmatic. Claims are carefully grounded in evidence, and the authors are transparent about the limits and challenges of using research well. This intellectual humility enhances, rather than diminishes, the book's authority.

The book provides a series of implications for both research and practice. Most importantly, it shows that meaningful engagement with research is essential for strengthening both educational practice and the research that informs it. On the research side, it highlights the need for studies that are not only rigorous but also usable, contextsensitive and accessible to educators. By presenting real school cases and emphasising thoughtful adaptation, the book pushes researchers to describe contexts clearly, identify which intervention components are core or adaptable, and communicate findings in ways that directly support decisionmaking in schools. It also shows that effective research use requires collaboration between researchers and practitioners, encouraging longterm partnerships, codesign of studies and the use of behavioural insights to understand how educators actually engage with evidence.

For educational practice, the book positions research engagement as a core element of professional growth. It provides concrete tools and processes that help educators move from simply accessing research to using it purposefully and sustainably. By guiding readers through identifying a clear need, selecting trustworthy evidence, engaging with it critically, adapting it to context and implementing it thoughtfully, the book offers a practical roadmap for evidenceinformed improvement. It underscores that research use flourishes in collaborative cultures where time, structures, leadership modelling and shared reflection support ongoing learning. Ultimately, the book argues that when schools embed research into everyday routines – through inquiry cycles, collective sensemaking and structured implementation – teachers become more confident, decisions become more justified and student outcomes improve.

Overall, *How to Use Research Evidence Well in Education* is a much-needed contribution to the field of evidence-informed education. It moves the conversation beyond access and adoption, towards a more nuanced understanding

of quality, professionalism and practice. For teachers, school leaders, system leaders and those who work alongside schools, the book offers not only practical guidance but also a compelling reframing of what it means to engage responsibly and productively with research. At a time when calls for evidence-informed practice are louder than ever, this book provides precisely the kind of thoughtful, grounded and enabling support that the field has been lacking.

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