

Book review

Kervin, L., Vialle, W., Herrington, J. & Okely, T. (2006). *Research for Educators*. South Melbourne, Vic.: Thomson Social Sciences Press.

This book introduces new researchers to educational research at an undergraduate level. It provides a simple introduction to the 'secrets' of doing research and shows how teachers' reflective practice can be transferred easily into research projects. It demonstrates both the need for such work as well as the possibility of producing it. The de-mystification of research, and the well organised approach, is sure to be an asset to researchers just starting out, as well as serve as a reminder to those educators already well and truly involved in research projects.

The book has ten chapters which overarch a logical, step-by-step guide starting from 'Mapping the research process' through to 'Communicating research'. The book's style and language makes it is easy to read and understand. It uses a straightforward academic discourse with lots of examples of certain techniques and processes, as well as references to the authors' own research and how they dealt with the challenges they have encountered. These are quite helpful as everyday examples of problems that continually spring up during the course of actually doing research at this level. The book has an extensive definition of key terms in each chapter which is also a helpful guide to understanding the practice of research. The chapters start with focus questions which provide the objectives and finish with activities to reflect on what has been covered, to lead into new directions, to prepare the scene for the next chapter or to ask the students to translate the new knowledge into practical ideas on their own research.

The book starts with ethical considerations which students need to consider before deciding to do research, or choosing a particular topic for research. It covers both quantitative and qualitative research designs, data collection strategies, some simple forms of data analysis and possible software to use. It also provides advice on turning the data into a thesis or other kinds of publication. While doing this it delivers an 'honest' account of the difficulties that researchers encounter while communicating their findings:

Getting started on the writing-up phase of the research study is probably the most difficult part of the process. We can all think of more ways to procrastinate than to attend to the task. The four of us, for example, all found that spring cleaning and watching mindless television were suddenly attractive options when our PhD theses were waiting to be written. Writing about those findings and conclusions requires about 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration (p.160).

I think this is an adequate textbook to use in 'teachers' research projects' type of courses for upper year undergraduate students in education. One point that I really miss is the coverage of theory. This is a crucial necessity which education research needs to embrace, even at the beginner level, to overcome its pragmatic limitations. Without the theoretical underpinnings of research, there can be a tendency to revert to 'common sense'

understandings of phenomena. This can be problematic for students as there can be an inclination to reinforce already established beliefs and values, rather than achieve real social science analysis.

The book could be strengthened by a 'Further readings' section. Without this, there is the appearance of a lack of guidance into the broad field of research literature. Students need to be encouraged and emboldened to read around the areas they are covering in their research. There is a good deal of material available, and creating a bibliography with a few key references at the end of each chapter would be enormously helpful in pointing students in the right direction if they have questions and/or are looking for a deeper understanding when dealing with their research projects.

Zsuzsa Millei

School of Education, University of Newcastle

Email: Zsuzsanna.Millei@newcastle.edu.au