

Reviews

***Educational Research: Taking the plunge.* Phil Wood & Joan Smith
(2016) Bancyfelin: Independent Thinking Press. ISBN: 1781352402**

Phil Wood and Joan Smith took their vast experiences of teaching in secondary schools, at the postgraduate level in Education at the University of Leicester and their research backgrounds in educational learning innovation and research methods, respectively, to compose *Educational Research: Taking the Plunge*. The book is an excellent introduction to educational research aimed at those with little to no educational research experience and will be valuable to seasoned researchers from other fields that are interested in taking up educational research. The book functions well as a guide for designing and writing up small-scale research in all levels of education and schooling.

Educational Research guides the reader through various frameworks and approaches to educational research including quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The book first covers research ethics and then moves onto discussing the links between critical reading and writing and the development of thinking and development of literature reviews. The discussions continue to cover theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, data gathering, analysis and the presentation of measured insights. *Educational Research* concludes with further advice on how to develop small-scale research projects and appendices with further reading suggestions. While the book is a light and enjoyable read it is an invaluable resource for the budding or early stage researcher.

Educational Research begins with a definition of what good research is and develops ways in which the reader can become just that, a good researcher. Good research is defined as:

The systematic investigation into, and study of, materials, sources, situations and people in order to explore and understand identified issues with the aim of reaching new insights. (p. 3)

In developing ways for becoming a good researcher in education, *Educational Research* brings up three key foundations of good educational research that are much welcomed and are unique to this publication; research literacy; an emphasis on research ethics; and an emphasis on transparency in the reporting of research. These three key foundations are addressed throughout the various chapters.

Being research literate involves being able to read previous studies at a deep critical level to understand the 'positioning of the research, the assumptions underpinning it and how this has influenced the resultant change', all skills that equally contribute to good research

writing (p. 8). The three elements of research literacy are a working knowledge of research methods; an understanding of threshold concepts of key conceptual frameworks in education; and by developing and carrying out one's own research project helps build up a more critical understanding of the research of others. Wood and Smith argue that research literacy is important due to the interdisciplinary nature of educational research where many disciplines converge on educational interests such as statistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, economics, that impact research methodologies and threshold concepts (p. 9).

The second key foundation is the role of ethics in educational research, not only to satisfy research ethics boards, but also to ensure ethics are 'woven throughout all stages of the research process' and foster good research as 'responsibly, rigorously and ethically executed' (p. 13). Good research ethics treat participants with care and respect their rights to ensure their welfare during data gathering and in the reporting of research. Chapter two provides a guide for producing ethically based research based through participant consent; honesty in reporting methods and findings; care for all those involved starts in the design stage and continues through in the reporting; and due diligence in the management of research biases.

Honesty, the third key foundation, ensures that responsible reporting of research is transparent in explaining research processes and results. The reporting of research must present all aspect of a research project in a clear and detailed manner. Transparency is a foundational principle because it contributes to the validity of research and allows readers to more accurately evaluate the research.

Educational Research: Taking the Plunge can be used in a research module and would also be handy for seasoned researchers seeking new ideas about ethically and critically based approaches to educational research. Though the book is aimed at those new to educational research several concepts, such as action research and randomly controlled trials, are used in the early chapters but are not explained until much later. Such terms and concepts are unique to the field and it would have been good to have them explained when they are first brought up. It also would have been beneficial if there were a glossary of key concepts to make learning of these easier.

I have used this book as both inspiration for and as a guide for jumping into educational research into my uses of music in my teaching of cultural studies to undergraduates. It is hoped that this book review will, similarly, encourage readers to 'take the plunge' into this book and into researching practices of media education and educating with media."

Reviewer – Stephen Andriano-Moore, University of Nottingham Ningbo China