

BOOK REVIEW

USING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH TO INFORM PRACTICE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PRACTITIONER RESEARCH IN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES. LORRAINE FOREMAN-PECK AND CHRISTOPHER WINCH (2010) ISBN 978-0415450102. Publisher: Routledge. Pages: 160 pages

The author's set out to give the reader practical guidance on practitioner and research, explaining how using this can make teaching practice more informative. Any previous misconceptions and uncertainty that the reader may have regarding research are addressed to show how research can be an extremely useful tool in teaching and learning. They draw on their previous experiences of empirical research and studies into research in education giving numerous and informative case studies. The book is aimed at both experienced practitioners and those who are new or about to embark on research. The book is arranged into ten chapters with studies in each of how research can best be used to inform practice. The chapter's information flows naturally and sequentially from each other. Examples of research covered in the book are action research, quasi-experimented study and grounded theory. The book gives clearly articulates steps for successful practitioner research within both Further and Higher Education Institutions.

With a chapter by chapter guide on how to begin practitioner research it is a good starting point. There are numerous case studies highlighting examples of actual research, enabling the reader to move from theory to practice. At the end of each chapter a set of questions enables the reader to reinforce what they have just read and apply it to their own practice.

Chapter one: What's the use of practitioner research? Here the requirements in the standards for teaching and learning in Higher Education are explained. The chapter discusses the requirements that are expressed in all three standards for use in Higher Education Institutions, and goes on to set out the descriptors in the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Teaching in Higher Education(2004).

Chapter Two: Professional knowledge. This chapter defines practitioner's research distinguishing between the different types of professional knowledge and how research fits into the professional development of a lecturer.

Chapter Three: What is educational research any way? The authors explain the differences between education and educational research. The idea of fixed and flexible research is introduced to the reader. They go on to discuss how educational research improves practices, using common models of educational research with examples of evaluative, descriptive and action research case studies. The distinction between educational and education research along with practically oriented and non-practically oriented research is explored. The list of quality criteria is an excellent prompt for the reader to start considering practitioner research. At the end of the chapter the exercises encourage the reader to begin considering research in their particular environment.

Chapter Four: 'Good practice' and evidence based teaching: Defines how evidence should support practice. This chapter also examines lecturing as a profession and its' ethical characteristics and points out that lecturing staff have already obtained teaching qualifications which comprises a small element of research.

Chapter Five: Handle with care: reading and evaluating research: Explanations are given here of objectivity and subjectivity in research with further discussions on how to ensure that a research report is credible. This chapter explores educational research and gives good examples of research topics. Critical literature surveys are used to illustrate the pitfalls of how research can be misused by the practitioner.

Chapter Six: Practitioner research in Action: doing one's own research. This chapter discusses educational research and explores the idea of teaching with research in mind. It suggests adopting an evaluative stance regarding research activities incorporated into teaching starting with practitioner research. Some details of planning practitioner research giving examples of a collaborative research project. Practitioner research is examined in more detail encouraging its greater use in teaching. An introduction to using assessment as a source of research data is made with a step by step guide to undertaking such a research project.

Chapter Seven: Models of Practitioner research. Case studies are given with the three models of Action research explained. Different models of practitioner research and research design are explained. The various approaches to research and research design are identified with ideas on what may be best suited for particular areas of research.

Chapter Eight: Standards in Practitioner research. Two examples are given to illustrate ways in which different ideas about validity could be applied in fixed and flexible research design. The chapter examines verification and credibility of research findings and standards in practitioner research. There are tips on how to achieve credible research and the authors give the reader reassurance that findings or recommendations proposed by research are sound enough to be taken seriously.

Chapter Nine: Researching responsibly, ethics for practitioner. Considerations and advice are suggested on ethical issues at the various stages within practitioner research as well as in the overall research design. The benefits of research to students along with a caution about any negative impact research may have are clearly pointed out. Examples are given of research design showing how to avoid causing ethical issues and how to consider ethical issues when planning any research. The authors caution against any deception in research particularly not telling subjects what the research is actually for.

Chapter Ten: Examples of practitioner research case studies .Four case studies based on Higher Education are published here and are good examples for illustrating research design. The chapter demonstrates how Empirical research can be used to inform. The case studies are also used to illustrate the potential of research and recommends strategies for solving and investigating complex pedagogical problems. The critical commentary given on the case studies highlight the value, design and the management of the case studies

The book encourages the reader to undertake practitioner research and demonstrates that unknowingly you are likely to be engaging in research already. It is written in a clear and comprehensible style with loads of practical advice. The book is aimed at both further and higher education lecturers who want to start or continue using

research so as to be more informative in their own methods. For those interested in practitioner research this book is an invaluable resource. The glossary is also very clear making it a useful addition to anyone unfamiliar with any terminology used.

Overall the book is a good starting point for those who are either considering starting practitioner research within their organisation or those who are already engaged in research and want to improve their research methods. I found the book clear and concise in its layout enabling a reader to dip in and out of the book depending on what stage they are at with their research.

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