

Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage

Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches (2nd Edition)

by Jerry Wellington

New York, New York: Bloomsbury, 2015, 384 pages

ISBN: 978-1-4725-3470-5 (paperback)

Reviewed by / Revu par

Diane P. Janes

University of Alberta

Many novice educational researchers need to understand the basics of educational research both from a theoretical perspective and from a practical perspective, the theoretical underpinnings of a research method and what it can give you as a researcher. In some cases, new researchers need a practical view of the process to help them attain some expertise before moving on to higher levels of engagement with the research process, a bit like an algorithmic approach that will over time become more heuristic in nature.

With this in mind I began to review Jerry Wellington's 2nd Edition of *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches* (2015). Originally published in 2001, it advertises itself as "extensively revised" and "[t]horoughly overhauled and updated" (Back cover description).

The first thing the reader sees upon exploring this text is how well the book is laid out. It comprises three parts (Issues and Approaches; Methods and their Limits; and Analysing and Presenting) with 13 chapters overall. The first section could be considered the preparation for the research. Covered here is an overview of educational research, the approaches that are possible, and a foray into the literature review, which sets the

stage for research. Part 2 focuses on the methods that might be used for research question data collection, while Part 3 moves research into conversations about the importance of disseminating findings. Wellington notes in his introduction “The main focus...is on qualitative work such as interview and case study, although survey research is discussed...” (p. xiiv) so the intention of the book is to move the reader toward smaller, manageable projects with a qualitative application.

Each chapter has an outline that makes the work very accessible. The reader can either read the chapter from the beginning or jump to the section needed to review before proceeding in your own work. The first 10 chapters all have a current case study written for this book by a contributing author/researcher. Each case study covers the contributor’s thinking when undertaking the project. This section brings the reader to the reality of conducting such research and allows them to see the research method or approach in action. The chapters are littered with small asides that really add to the process that a new researcher might not consider, and which I found quite valuable. Using examples, guidelines, theory summaries, and strategies all added to the conversation with the reader. Each chapter also ended with “points to ponder”—questions and considerations to be aware of if the reader is to use what was discussed in the chapter—again very useful for the novice (and the experienced).

Even the end matter is valuable. Unlike a lot of other research treatises, Wellington has a very different final set of appendices, which are well worth examination. Appendix 1 is a short précis of eight older works of educational research. Wellington indicates in the introduction to the section that these are items he has often recommended when discussing research over the past forty-plus years (p. 329). The final two appendices concentrate on grammar (words to watch) and punctuation (use of commas and semicolons for example) for the new researcher. The book also has a glossary of terms and ends with references and future reading suggestions.

If I had a criticism, it would be the small proportion of the book devoted to the internet and internet research. It is relegated to Chapter 10, “Other Methods for the Researcher” under a couple of sections – namely internet research, “netnography,” and online focus groups, which together make up about 3 pages of the 300+ pages of the text. He does discuss electronic delivery of survey questionnaires in Chapter 8 on survey research (p. 192–194). I do understand the author’s reluctance to venture into this area. He acknowledges he is unsure whether to call it “...an approach, a method, or simply a

fertile ground...” (p. 237). I envision this being a growth area rather than one that will diminish over time.

I do think this book is a fine combination of the classics discussed with some of the newer works in the area. The language is accessible and for a novice researcher in education, I would recommend this book as a starting point for a discussion of their project.