

BOOK REVIEWS

INTRODUCING RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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With this illuminating book, Bolshaw and Josephidou offer a helpful path, not only for practitioners in early years settings and practitioner candidates but also for early stage researchers, by introducing research in the field of early childhood education. As the authors state, 'whatever your starting point in terms of understanding research, this book will provide you with a firm foundation...', and this is achieved by promoting critical thinking and providing real life examples along the way. Without a doubt, the book is a valuable resource for beginner researchers and for those who do not conduct research but benefit from research literature in their practices. However, while this book is a helpful beginner guide, more experienced researchers might find the content underwhelming.

The book consists of 12 chapters and at the beginning, the authors explain its purpose and offer their description of research. They then outline the different ways to conduct research including, policy research, large-scale programme evaluations, longitudinal studies and comparative/cross-national research, and emphasise the importance of research in the early childhood setting. With the basic information provided in the first chapter, a pathway for the reader is established, making the book easy to follow. The authors present in-depth explanations for two of the research types introduced in the first chapter – longitudinal and cross-national research – in separate chapters. Additionally, the book includes two different approaches for early childhood education – research about children and research with children – in the 5th and 6th chapters. Although there are more research approaches that could be included, the authors still manage to create a basic understanding in this book, which is very important and highly acceptable, considering that it is

intended as an introduction to the field.

This book not only introduces the reader to different approaches to research but also provides the core elements of conducting research and applying the existing research results to practice, such as thinking critically and distinguishing truth and knowledge. Today, published research is in high demand, which, according to Binswanger (2013), results in inflation of the research literature. It is crucial to engage critical thinking while reading research literature in order to filter the relevant, reliable and valid information from the rest. Bolshaw and Josephidou explain how to develop the required skills for critical thinking through examples from daily life, turning an information-packed chapter into easy reading. Their piece regarding evaluation of research is not limited to critical thinking in this book; rather, it is extended towards distinguishing and understanding what is the truth and what is knowledge. The authors encourage the reader to question the truth, for it may change over time, depending on its successor. To illustrate this, a series of real-life examples are given, along with a number of definitions of 'truth' and 'knowledge' from different sources, which make it easier for the reader to relate to the point being made. The authors follow the same structure to explain what knowledge is, using the same examples. In this way, a bridge is built between these two entwined concepts. The significance of these two chapters about critical thinking and truth vs knowledge is not only reserved for the research field, but also offers guidance for appropriate implications of research findings to practice.

Through these chapters, the basic building blocks of conducting research are explained, such as research ethics and research design. The last four chapters cater for conducting research

in an early years setting. Considering that the intended audience for this book is beginner researchers and early childhood practitioners, these chapters are highly appreciated and valuable for those who are preparing to conduct research of their own. At the end of this section, the authors walk the reader through the foundation of research and how to conduct and implement it on a basic level.

Even though this book sets early childhood education as the focus and the examples, and the critical thinking exercises target this specific field, most of the information provided here can be applied to other fields of education. This book is not only versatile in the education field, but also approachable for non-native speakers, due to its simple language. Reading this made me realise how much I would have appreciated such a book when I was studying to become an early childhood educator and how much better informed I might have been at the start of my research career. As mentioned previously, there is an increasing amount of research published, yet, there is still a gap between what research suggests and what is implemented in practice. I firmly believe that this book will help narrow the gap between the rhetoric and practice by bringing practitioners not yet involved in research, closer to research. This book opens a new window for teacher educators as well as teacher candidates, by helping them to incorporate research literature in their lectures. As a teacher educator myself, although I did not have the chance to benefit from this book during my own studies, I am excited to introduce it to the students at my university. ■