

BOOK REVIEW

Doing Educational Research: A Practitioner's Guide to Getting Started

Carol Mutch, NZCER Press, 2005, 228 pages, NZ\$39.60

Reviewed by Anne Meade, Anne Meade Associates

One of the characteristics of education in Aotearoa New Zealand this decade is the encouragement of evidence-based teaching. Teachers are provided with evidence synthesised by others (e.g., the Ministry of Education's Best Evidence Synthesis series) and with literature reviews. Practitioner research is promoted by the government-funded Teaching and Learning Research Initiative and the early childhood education Centres of Innovation programme. Increasingly, teachers at all levels of the system are expected to engage with and in research. Those who do so are articulating a deeper understanding of learning, teaching, and education. More are stimulated to read education research and about educational research. The curious ones are keen to find "maps" to ease their "journeys" as practitioner-researchers.

In *Doing Educational Research*, Carol Mutch provides a very clear map for professionals new to educational research, be they practitioner-researchers or new researchers in tertiary institutions. Mutch's aim in writing the book was "to develop an awareness of what it means to be a competent and ethical researcher" (p. 11). She also wanted to provide busy practitioners with the skills, enthusiasm, and confidence to embark on their own research. Her job in teacher education involves helping new researchers, and her practical experience shows. I do similar work in a different context, with several teams of practitioner-researchers who have embarked on action research projects. After 2 years of data collection, they are facing the challenge

of creating concepts and models to make sense of their research experiences. They welcome maps to guide them and have seized on this practical book written by a New Zealand author.

Carol Mutch provides the best maps I've ever encountered for those who use qualitative approaches. She also provides a lot more, including advice on how to:

- write and implement research plans;
- undertake different forms of analysis of qualitative data; and
- interpret data and start to theorise.

Mutch writes extremely well, her headings provide a great directory for research "travellers", she sprinkles the books with engaging tales of researchers' experiences, and she finishes with a comprehensive glossary. I believe this book is set to replace the hugely popular text by Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project* (1999). That is high recommendation indeed.

References

- Bell, J. (1999). *Doing your research project*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Ministry of Education. (n.d.). Best evidence synthesis [webpage]. Wellington: Author. Retrieved 8 August 2005, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=8646&indexid=6088&indexparentid=1000>
- Mutch, C. (2005). *Doing educational research: A practitioner's guide to getting started*. Wellington: NZCER Press.