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Melanie Nind, Alicia Curtin and Kathy Hall (2016) *Research Methods for Pedagogy*, London: Bloomsbury (ISBN 978-1-4742-4281-3 [Pbk], 296pp)

This book forms part of the Bloomsbury ‘Research Methods for Education’ series which, according to the series editor, “[offers] overviews of the range of sometimes interconnected and diverse methodological principles for researching aspects of education”, providing information for researchers “wanting to think about research methods in the context of their research area, research problems or research aims.”

Pedagogy is complex, encompassing many aspects of social interaction, relationships and values in the context of providing learning opportunities that facilitate learner achievement; it is far more than, though it includes, curriculum content, organisation and delivery. Given its complexity, it is not surprising that many different approaches have been used in the study of pedagogy. For instance, at the start of the book there is a valuable “glossary of research methods and approaches” covering 59 terms; of these about half are further explored in more detail in the book. Although the glossary excludes methods which are not mentioned in the book, most of the main approaches are there. This includes interviews and

critical incident analysis, correlation and questionnaire analysis, focus groups and case studies and approaches such as ethnography, action research and systematic review. In short, there is something for everyone, whether one is investigating the efficacy of a specific teaching intervention or considering wider issues on teaching or learning behaviours and practices. Having said this, much of the book may not be particularly relevant to those who expect a quick ‘how to’ guide.

The book is divided into three sections: conceptions of pedagogy and implications for research; researching pedagogy in context; and researching the hidden and hard to know. Each section has its own short introduction and contain three chapters on different aspects of the topic. Throughout there is a range of case studies drawn from a global perspective and across primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as analysis of education policy. Whilst many of the case studies are not directly applicable to HE contexts, the application of the methods can be easily visualised.

Three themes pervade the text – pedagogy as specified (e.g. curriculum), enacted (in practice) and experienced (by teachers, learners, researchers and other stakeholders). It acknowledges the effect of the whole life experience on both teaching

and learning and the positions individuals adopt in relation to their role as learner, teacher or researcher, and its overall approach is sociocultural. There is an emphasis that pedagogy is values-based and that investigating the learning process is complex.

The first section adopts a critical approach to the way in which pedagogic research has developed, particularly since the drive for 'evidence-based practice'. It considers 'simplistic' the randomised control trials in which evaluation of a new pedagogic approach is likened to a clinical trial of a new medicine (although, personally, I have found some of these evaluations useful to give me a quick sense of something I am developing). Acknowledging that individuals may define pedagogy as art, craft or science it points out that an artist, a carpenter and a scientist may approach the same problem in very different ways and develop very different answers to it, all valid within their own context and, taken together, enriching our understanding. I found this discussion quite helpful in identifying the relationship between research question and methods adopted. The approach thus helps readers recognise and unpick the underlying assumptions which can limit approaches to data collection and interpretation. This certainly resonates with my own experiences in practice, where 'what worked' ten years ago can be a very ineffective delivery mechanism today. It also underpins approaches to increase inclusivity by utilising curriculum delivery mechanisms which provide learning opportunities for a diverse range of learning styles. Space is given in this section to review what others have written about pedagogy which, while interesting to those concerned with theory,

does not really help the individual interested in researching their own practice and their students' ways of learning their own subjects. However descriptions of research enacted gives useful hints of methods in practice and, in some cases, how methodology can develop by reflection in practice.

The three chapters in the second section considers research in different contexts: learning in early years; in school; and in out-of-school contexts. In so doing, it considers a variety of methods and approaches – ethnography, multimodal, child-centred, action research, process-product analysis, conversational and discourse analysis, and phenomenography – a summary of the main characteristics is extremely helpful. In fact, it ought to be possible using the second section, for individuals to start to pick out appropriate approaches to address the research questions.

The final section provides a different way of looking at research and identifies some of the factors which affect research but are hard to identify and quantitate. It considers how to analyse interactions between participants and physical aspects of teaching such as the role of the body and the use of space. These three chapters together have encouraged me to think, in a different way, about some cross Faculty focus groups I intend to run. Consideration of interactions also makes me reflect on the value of peer observations of teaching. Thus, this section encourages wider reflection on teaching in context, rather than just on researching practice *per se*.

The book has extensive and useful reference lists, both as further reading sections at the

end of each chapter and a comprehensive list of sources underpinning the text at the end of the book. This is followed by a useful index for quick reference purposes. This generally targets an audience who already have some knowledge of methods of sociocultural enquiry, and a few more references to 'how to' texts would be beneficial to those who do not.

Overall, the book meets its aims of exploring what pedagogy is, considering research methods and methodologies in use, providing examples showing the relationship between theory and practice in pedagogic research and encouraging researchers to reflect on their practice. Aspects covered in the context of pedagogic research can also be applied, with due reflection, to teaching practice. The conclusion to the book demonstrates this in more detail and is worth reading as an overview before reading the main text.

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Reference

Given, L.M. (2010) *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications