

*Research in Early Childhood* by A. Nolan, K., Macfarlane and J. Cartmel. London: Sage (2013). Pp 190 (pbk) ISBN 9780857022547.

This book aims to introduce students and early career researchers in the field of early childhood to research methodology, methods and design using an alternative approach as the authors present key issues about research “*like a mentor or a friend*”. The book has ten chapters and, although there are already a number of books on research methodologies, methods and design, this book is indeed offering a creative and critical approach through the topics addressed in the chapters. What makes the book stand out from others in the field is the use of case studies and research examples drawn from the wealth of experience of the authors. As they state in the beginning of the book their aim is to become a companion friend to all embarking on research in the field of early childhood, and this aim is successfully achieved throughout the book.

The introduction of two research students as case studies (Amy and Lara) and the exploration of their research journeys are an innovative way of discussing research in early childhood. It helps students or new researchers in the field of early childhood to identify themselves with these two research students and share their journey with them. The research “journey” can bring anxiety to students and early career researchers in terms of the theoretical and practical perspectives of research, but at the same time at an individual level as it can be an emotional journey as they have to come to terms with their own personal insecurities, beliefs and values. The two case studies in the book illustrate all these issues to a large extent and assure new researchers that this is an inevitable outcome when commencing research.

Embarking on research is recognised as always being a difficult and daunting task. Setting off on the journey there is new terminology, or as the authors call it “*another language*”, as well as theoretical aspects/perspectives that should be understood and mastered as well as practical aspects such as choosing methods, handling data, analysing data and writing up the project. This book manages to tackle all these issues in a personalised way and effectively presents guidance to gaining a very good understanding of research at a theoretical level whilst at the same time giving several examples at a practical level. The authors have approached the critical, and on occasion difficult, aspects of research in ways that are clearly and simply explained, but manage to avoid being simplistic and this is to be applauded.

The opening chapters (1 & 2) of the book aim to explain “*the other language*” of research and set the approach the authors are taking throughout the book. They offer a rationale on research with young children addressing and linking it with the landscape of early childhood policy, pedagogy and curriculum.

Chapter 3 focuses on explaining theoretical approaches and perspectives /paradigms in research which are covered in a systematic, accessible and personalised way through the use of the case studies. I consider this chapter should become a core recommended chapter in all early childhood studies degrees that include research methods.

Chapter 4 explains how to start research and establish aims, questions and purposes of the research. The section on how to design the research proposal is

enriched with a number of case studies and examples are well structured and presented in a way that will provide students a starting point for their own research projects. Chapter 5 illustrates in a logical way the purpose of the literature review and offers a number of valuable examples of how this task should be approached.

The remaining chapters elaborate on the ethics of research (Chapter 6), the two main methodological traditions: qualitative (Chapter 7) and quantitative (Chapter 8) and emphasise the importance of drawing the research journey to closure by determining the key findings and how these can be disseminated (Chapter 9). The closing chapter (10) reflects the whole research process and proposes that researchers should reflect back on their journey in order to identify ways this project has contributed not only to the knowledge of the field of early childhood, but also to the intellectual growth of the individual.

Overall, I believe strongly that this book will enable early childhood students to start their own research project and move from a nervous and uncertain place to become confident and secure in their research journey. It also helps early career researchers to reconceptualise and extend their understanding of the research process. Through the use of worthwhile examples, cases studies, the accessible writing style and the coverage of key issues related to research this book does achieve what the authors set as their key aim: to be a companion and a mentor to beginners in research, but also relevant to intermediate researchers.

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