REVIEW ESSAY


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This book is not a typical “how-to” introductory action research book. It has nine chapters which include topics on understanding epistemology and ontology in AR, understanding one’s basic research methodological assumptions, selecting an approach which matches those assumptions, using student data, collecting information from others (i.e. parents), completing the project, ethical concerns, and distributing findings. While the authors do discuss differences such as qualitative and quantitative research methods, they do not go into detail and provide information about where the reader can go to learn more if needed. Like most authors in the field of AR, they claim that the book meets the needs of novices and advanced researchers alike. Unlike most typical AR books, this book seems to be for those who are at least familiar with basic research concepts and would like to understand more about why they are making the choices that they are. I feel that this book fills an important gap as an intermediate textbook.

Action research in education is peppered with research tips for each stage of the research process. For example, the authors suggest that readers of research look at articles like speed-dating—make sure there is a decent fit before you invest too much time (p. 46). Other examples include: when selecting research methods, start with your biggest research critic in mind (p. 50); where to place a video recorder when interviewing students (p. 79); and how to involve students in the research process (p. 70). The authors have included information on collecting visual data (p. 56), using participatory methods (p. 60), and mixed methods (p. 63). In the section about sharing findings with the wider research community, the authors list many different ways to report what was learned including: posters, “share and tell” lunches, additions to staff handbooks, the school intranet, peer observation, and conferences (p. 157). Perhaps atypically, the book does not include a “how to write a journal article” chapter.
Baumfield, Hall, and Wall are researchers working in the British context. Examples include exams such as CGSE. While this is unproblematic for the readers, North Americans who are unfamiliar with this teaching context might have to research these concepts. Interestingly, the authors also state that “Evidence of learning is the main 'business' of educational institutions” (p. 83). Other researchers, especially those from a more socio-cultural philosophy, may have a different understanding about the role of educational institutions, cognition, and the place of research in general.

In summary, action research in education is a good book for doctoral students interested in AR or for those who work in schools and already have some familiarity with the topic. Plentiful examples are given to researchers that will help them conduct projects with ease. I would recommend this book to others.