

Book Review

Oades, L.G., Siokou, C.L. & Slemp, G.R. (2019). *Coaching and Mentoring Research: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

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It is not difficult to find instructive texts on the basics of behavioural and social science research. Such books typically provide comprehensive, highly detailed descriptions of the numerous ways a researcher might choose to think about their research, and then organise themselves to undertake it. Whilst such detail is undoubtedly helpful, it can also make 'standard' texts rather dense and not so user-friendly.

Coaching and Mentoring Research: A Practical Guide is a different sort of research text. Some of those differences become apparent at first point of contact. The front cover is somewhat understated, utilising a simple image and basic colour palette. More significantly, whilst it is quite compact (less than 250 words), a quick glance at the table of contents suggests that it is not insubstantial. As such, my initial impressions of this book were that I was about to embark on a brief, manageable but highly stimulating read. As it happened, this turned out to be the case.

The book is organised into four parts. In Part 1, the reader is encouraged to consider what it is to be a coaching and mentoring researcher; what might be beneficial about it, how one can ensure high impact, who might be useful to work with (in a research team), what pitfalls are good to avoid, and what theories of knowledge (epistemologies) might guide the process.

With those foundations attended to, Part 2 focuses on the various phases of the research process. In effect, this section is a beginning-to-end description of what happens when conducting research. It presents nine chapters that briefly describe how researchers approach key tasks such as choosing a research methodology, framing research questions, reviewing literature, collecting and analysing data, and disseminating research findings.

To my mind, these chapters are noteworthy for two reasons. First, they are brief. Whilst it would be possible to dedicate many more pages to each of the nine topics, the authors have resisted any urge they might have had to do so. Instead, the aim of this section appears to be to inform and raise the awareness of readers about critical issues. Second, the structure of the chapters reflects the basic philosophy of coaching. The self-directed learning of readers is supported throughout via the use of the GROW model, with technical information accompanied by questions designed to stimulate thinking, identify options, promote action, and build knowledge along the way.

Having overviewed the major elements of the research process, Part 3 and Part 4 give attention to the use of quantitative methods (Part 3), and qualitative methods (Part 4). As many readers will know, these are significant topics in any text focused on research. Indeed, entire books are often dedicated to describing quantitative and qualitative methods, with an intricacy that can be challenging to even experienced researchers.

However, in *Coaching and Mentoring Research: A Practical Guide*, consideration of these topics is made manageable, with a succession of short (8-10 page) chapters to stimulate the reader's thinking and build awareness of relevant issues. For example, in Chapter 15, the reader is encouraged to think about what type of research study they wish to undertake, and what methods are best suited to the research questions being posed (rather than methods that readers might feel naturally inclined towards). Much like earlier chapters, the information is presented in a way that is designed to assist decision making (again using GROW), with further reading and resources offered at the end of each chapter.

Tellingly, one of the shortest chapters in the book (Chapter 19) is on statistical methods. The authors begin by acknowledging that, "many people are not confident with mathematics in general, and this is true also for applied statistical methods at higher education level" (p. 161). Then, rather than attempting any sort of exploration of statistical methods, the authors encourage readers to self-assess their confidence levels with statistics (using a series of self-set scaling questions), before encouraging them to identify options that can help develop their statistical knowledge and skills. All-in-all, only six pages are used for this most vexed of research topics, which I found to be written in a way that was both empathic and empowering.

The appeal of this book will depend greatly on each reader's level of research experience. For highly experienced, widely published researchers,

there may be minimal value. However, for novice and less experienced researchers (e.g. students) or infrequent researchers (who need a refresher), this book has much to offer. It may also be of interest to practicing coaches and mentors who would like to be more informed consumers of published scientific research.

As should be apparent by now, this book does not set out to catalogue all that needs to be known about the production of high-quality coaching and mentoring research. Those with more granular information needs should look elsewhere. What it does do is provide the reader with a good, manageable introduction to research theories and practice. The authors seem acutely aware that “research” is a confronting idea for many people and possibly even alienating. As such, they write in a way that should feel empowering to readers, and most likely make important contributions to their future research efforts.