



GARDNER, F. and COOMBS, S.J. -eds.- (2010) *Researching, Reflecting and Writing about Work: guidance on training course assignments and research for psychotherapists and counsellors*. London, Routledge. 150 pages.

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Whilst the medical profession has long acknowledged the importance of evidence-based practice this is not the case in other areas. Like education, the counselling and psychotherapy professions are beginning to acknowledge the value of research skills and critical thinking within the field of continuing professional development. This represents an important step forward as these professions yet it raises many important questions. Whilst the principles of research may be embedded in the therapeutic process, at what point does training become research? Is professional based learning an intrusion or an enhancement of professional skills? What are the moral and ethical implications of researching counselling and therapeutic practices? How do we go about the process of becoming a reflective practitioner? And, perhaps most importantly, how do we find the time to do this?

This book provides a user friendly guide to negotiating the complex process of planning and carrying out work-based research. This enterprise is seen as being fundamentally creative and there is a wealth of advice and experience that is shared with the reader. Essentially in two parts, chapters 2 -5 provide a comprehensive overview of 'how to' engage in work-based research whilst in chapters 6 – 9 a range of contributors present their thoughts and ideas based on their own experience as researchers. These include researching in organizational settings, the voluntary sector, the public sector and within the community from a feminist perspective. The book concludes with advice on publishing research and the way forward for work-based action research and the development of critical professions.

There are two main strengths to this book that make it stand out from similar research guides. Firstly the advice given is grounded in the contributors own experiences as researchers. There are numerous valuable insights into how research can be undertaken and how problems are identified and dealt with. Of particular importance is Jane Whiteheads description of data analysis – an area that I feel could have been given greater prominence in this book. Secondly each chapter concludes with practical activities that encourage the novice researcher to critically engage with key ideas and concepts.

This book would be of specific interest to those on counselling courses or who are training as psychotherapists although it would appeal to a wider audience of those who are involved in professional learning in education or the helping professions, as mentors or coaches for example. My experience of supervising student research is that there is a need for two kinds of books; a detailed 'bible' dealing with technicalities of research methodology and a user-friendly guide to support the student through the research process. This book is a worthy addition to the latter category that it will inspire and motivate practitioners to engage and, and publish, work-based research.