

THIRD EDITION

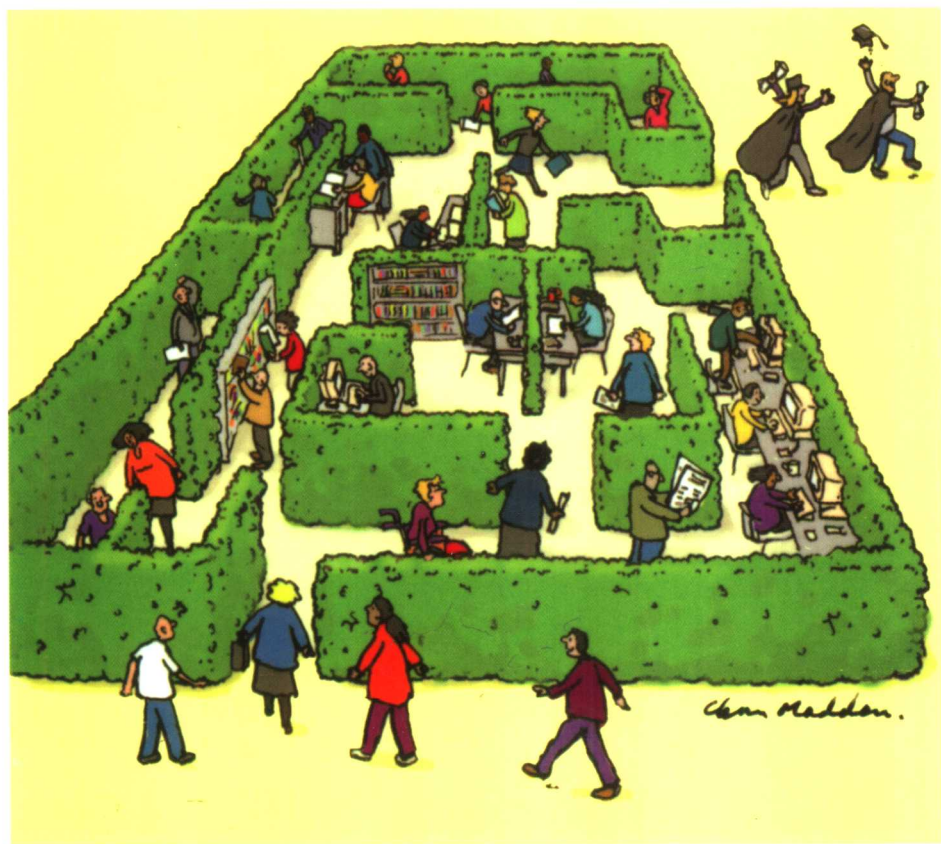
Doing Your Research Project

A guide for first-time researchers
in education and social science

教育与社科学研究入门指南

(第三版)

Judith Bell



外教社

上海外语教育出版社
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出版前言

《教育与社科学研究入门指南》(第三版)是一本全面介绍如何从事教育与社会科学研究的参考工具书。它共分三大部分,含十三章,涉及科研工作的诸多方面,是科研工作者的必备入门工具书。

《教育与社科学研究入门指南》(第三版)涵盖以下内容:

1. 教育和社会科学领域研究的几种主要方法:教师科研方法、个案研究法、人类学研究法、抽样调查法以及实验法;
2. 如何选择科研课题、合理安排时间、有效接受导师的指导;
3. 调查研究中应遵守的道德行为规范;
4. 如何有效地利用图书馆、计算机及网络技术查阅、收集、记录资料;
5. 如何运用文献材料为相关课题佐证;
6. 如何设计并开展问卷调查、访谈等各种类型的调查活动;
7. 如何应用统计学知识及相关软件科学地分析调查结果;
8. 科研报告的写作规范。

此外,特别值得一提的是,本书每章结尾部分都列表概括了科研工作各阶段的基本步骤,使读者一目了然,便于操作。

《教育与社科学研究入门指南》在1987年出了第一版。本书是作者在第一版的基础上对教育和社科研究的方法和步骤进行反复实践论证、不断改进的成果。相对于第一和第二版而言,它的优势是在实践的基础上增添了更多、更科学的研究方法,并且引进了当代信息技术来收集、分析资料,为提高我们的科研水平提供了可靠的指导。

我社引进这本书的目的是希望它能为我国高等院校的广大教师和学生以及广大科研机构研究人员开展科研工作带来帮助。我们希望读者通过使用本书,逐步熟悉如何在当今的因特网时代使科研工作更规范、更科学并为国内外同行所接受,进而走向世界,发挥其应有的影响。



PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The first edition of this book was written as a result of the accumulated experience of teaching research methods to postgraduate students in British and overseas universities and of writing distance learning materials for the Open University and the University of Sheffield. There are many good books on research methods on the market, but at that time, I had been unable to find one which quite covered the basic principles involved in planning research which was written in plain English and which made no assumptions about students' previous knowledge of research. *Doing Your Research Project* was intended to be a confidence builder and to provide new researchers with the skills and techniques to enable them to move on to more complex tasks and reading. I am told it is now a set book for many undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

All the techniques and procedures described in the first edition were well tried and tested, but there are always ways of doing things better. The experience of working through some of the procedures in research methods workshops in some cases suggested alternative approaches and the desirability of providing additional material. These were incorporated into the second edition in 1993, including a new chapter on interpretation and presentation of the evidence.

Further changes have become necessary for this third edition.

When the first edition was published, relatively few students were skilled in information technology (IT) and only the most advanced libraries provided general access to computer search facilities. Now, times have changed so it has become necessary to provide new material on access to libraries, search techniques, locating published materials, computer databases and the Internet. Much good research is done without access to complex equipment, but if the facilities are there to make our lives easier, it is only sensible to make use of them.

Other changes in this edition include enlarged chapters on approaches to educational research and on the analysis of documentary evidence; additions to several other chapters; updating of the suggestions for additional reading and adjustments and additions to checklists. However, the basic structure remains the same as in the first and second editions. Feedback from students and from teachers has indicated that it has worked well over the years, and I hope you will continue to find the format and content useful.

Judith Bell



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been helped throughout the preparation of all three editions of this book by the interest of colleagues and friends who were once first-time researchers themselves but are now expert practitioners. I have particularly welcomed guidance from research students who kindly (and sometimes gleefully) pointed out that they had found better ways of doing things than I suggested in the first two editions. I have been happy to incorporate all their suggestions.

My thanks to Brendan Duffy and Stephen Waters, two outstanding former Open University research students who carried out investigations into aspects of educational management in their own institutions and developed a considerable degree of expertise in research methods in the process. Both generously allowed me to use some of their ideas and experiences. Brendan, who already held a PhD in history before he embarked on research into education management, wrote 'The analysis of documentary evidence' in the first two editions and has extended and updated the original versions for this edition.

I am grateful to Alan Woodley, Senior Research Fellow at the Open University for permission to continue to draw on his literature review in Chapter 6 and to Clara Nai, Singaporean-based former postgraduate student of the University of Sheffield, for permitting me to quote parts of her MEd literature review, also

in Chapter 6. My particular thanks to Jan Gray and to Sally Baker for providing new material for this third edition. Jan, holder of a prestigious university prize for research, recently completed her doctoral study at the Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. She contributed the section on narrative inquiry in Chapter 1 and her enthusiasm for this approach not only encouraged me to read further but also to begin to understand what is involved in narrative research.

Sally Baker, Education and Social Sciences librarian at the Open University library was persuaded to write Chapter 5, and managed to guide us expertly through the highways and byways of computer databases, literature searching and managing information, without blinding us all with technology. I have learnt a great deal by working with both Jan and Sally.

Finally, to all of you who once again painstakingly read drafts, sometimes at short notice, provided comments, offered advice or drew attention to errors and omissions, as always, my grateful thanks.



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INTRODUCTION

This book is intended for those of you who are about to undertake some sort of educational research in connection with your job, or as a requirement for an undergraduate, diploma or postgraduate course.

If you are a beginner researcher, the problems facing you are much the same whether you are producing a small project, an MEd dissertation or a PhD thesis. You will need to select a topic, identify the objectives of your study, plan and design a suitable methodology, devise research instruments, negotiate access to institutions, materials and people, collect, analyse and present information and finally, produce a well-written report or dissertation. Whatever the size of the undertaking, techniques have to be mastered and a plan of action devised which does not attempt more than the limitations of expertise, time and access permit. Large-scale research projects will require sophisticated techniques and, often, statistical and computational expertise, but it is quite possible to produce a worthwhile study without using computers and with a minimum of statistical knowledge.

We all learn how to do research by actually doing it, but a great deal of time can be wasted and goodwill dissipated by inadequate preparation. This book aims to provide you with the tools to do the job, to help you to avoid some of the pitfalls and time-wasting false trails that can eat into your time allowance, to establish good

research habits and to take you from the stage of selecting a topic through to the production of a well-planned, methodologically sound and well-written final report or dissertation – ON TIME. There is, after all, little point in doing all the work if you never manage to submit.

Throughout this book, I use the terms 'research', 'investigation', 'inquiry' and 'study' interchangeably, though I realize this is not acceptable to everyone.

Some argue that 'research' is a more rigorous and technically more complicated form of investigation. Howard and Sharp discuss this issue in *The Management of a Student Research Project*:

Most people associate the word 'research' with activities which are substantially removed from day-to-day life and which are pursued by outstandingly gifted persons with an unusual level of commitment. There is of course a good deal of truth in this viewpoint, but we would argue that the pursuit is not restricted to this type of person and indeed can prove to be a stimulating and satisfying experience for many people with a trained and enquiring mind.

(Howard and Sharp 1983: 6)

They define research (p. 6) as 'seeking through methodical processes to add to one's own body of knowledge and, hopefully, to that of others, by the discovery of non-trivial facts and insights'.

Drew (1980) agrees that 'research is conducted to solve problems and to expand knowledge' (p. 4) and stresses that 'research is a systematic way of asking questions, a systematic method of enquiry' (p. 8). It is the *systematic* approach that is important in the conduct of your projects, not the title of 'research', 'investigation', 'inquiry' or 'study'. Where collection of data is involved (notes of interviews, questionnaire responses, articles, official reports, minutes of meetings, etc.), orderly record-keeping and thorough planning are essential.

No book can take the place of a good supervisor, but good supervisors are in great demand, and if you can familiarize yourself with basic approaches and techniques, you will be able to make full use of your tutorial time for priority issues.

The examples given in the following chapters relate particularly

to projects which have to be completed in two to three months (what I have called the '100-hour' projects), but I have been pleased to learn that numbers of MEd, MPhil and PhD students have found them equally useful. I hope you do too.