



Education and Theory (Conducting Educational Research)

Gary Thomas

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'... a masterpiece ... long overdue'

Professor Judy Sebba, University of Sussex and member of 2008 RAE panel for Education

"This is an exceptional book - and one that should be essential reading for anyone seriously thinking about educational practice - for two reasons. First, it is one of the few books on thinking about education which is written with the wit and humour which makes compulsive reading. Second, the approach to theory (or thinking systematically, philosophically and evidentially) is through the author's own attempt to understand what appears to many as a mystery. In this personal journey, the author provides a comprehensive and critical review of different theoretical positions."

Professor Richard Pring, University of Oxford


- What is the role of theory in education?
- Does the pursuit of theory in education always lead to improvements in practice?
- What is the alternative to theory?

Theory holds a central place in educational inquiry: tutors urge students to embed their work in it; funding bodies demand that research proposals be located in. But in an important new analysis, Gary Thomas suggests that the pursuit of theory in education is the pursuit of a chimera.

This compelling book examines what theory means for both student and researcher and questions whether the confidence in educational theory is justified. It begins by looking at what theory is, and what use it has in education and examines some theoretically significant influences on educational thought and practice in the twentieth century. Challenging the idea that the practice of education should be based on theory, the author offers alternative, simpler frameworks for conducting inquiry, without the constraints of existing theory, contending that it is time for a discussion about how values, evidence and ideas can more straightforwardly guide educational practice.

Education and Theory is stimulating reading for academics, researchers, teachers and students of education.

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