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Understanding Education and Educational Research

Educational research is widely assumed to be essentially empirical, consisting mainly of collecting and analysing data, with randomised controlled trials as the ‘gold standard’. This book argues that good educational research is often philosophical in nature. Offering a critical overview of the current state of educational research, the authors argue that there are two factors in particular that distort it. One is that throughout the world it is expected to serve the interests of the state in securing educational improvements, as measured by standardised examination results, and to demonstrate ‘scientific’ credentials sufficient to guarantee absence of ideological bias and carry conviction. The other is that learning to do educational research is generally seen as a matter of being trained in empirical ‘research methods’. The authors demonstrate, by contrast, that good educational research needs the rigorous thinking characteristic of philosophy, and that philosophical treatments themselves sometimes constitute such research.

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Smeyers, P. and Burbules, N. 2006. Education as initiation into practices, *Educational Theory* 56: 439–449

Chapter 2: The nature of social science

Smeyers, P. 2006. ‘What it makes sense to say’: education, philosophy and Peter Winch on social science, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 40: 463–485

Chapter 3: The idea of method

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