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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Understanding Education and Educational Research

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We have in places drawn on, modified or expanded upon previously published material:

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Chapter 4: The nature of philosophy
Smeyers, P. 2006. What philosophy can and cannot do for education, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 25: 1–18

Chapter 5: The art of research
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