



Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2015). *Practical research. Planning and design* (11th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson

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It is an excellent sign when a textbook enters its 11th edition as it signals a high adoption rate by academics and thus high quality, and Leedy and Ormrod's primer *Practical Research* is no exception to that observation. Paul Leedy had been Professor Emeritus of Education at American University – he passed away in 2002. Jeanne Ormrod is Professor Emerita of Psychological Sciences at the University of Northern Colorado. Pearson had previously been the world's largest publisher before the company recently decided to focus solely on education. Its textbooks are typically user-friendly introductions and reference tools with a mass market appeal. The book reviewed here is the 11th global edition. In its global publications, Pearson, according to the back cover of the tome, collaborates with additional educators across the world and consequently "features alterations, customization, and adaptation from the North American version". Apart from the global version, alternate versions of the book are available such as the North American version and also an e-book. The first two chapters are also available as a free download (<https://www.pearsonhighered.com/assets/samplechapter/0/1/3/3/013374132X.pdf>).

Practical Research is extremely well-organised and is a suitable primary reference tool for a course in basic research methodology from a broad, cross-disciplinary spectrum. Thus, it is not only relevant for students of Education but also those from many different disciplines, including Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Business Administration, Landscape Architecture, etc. In the argument of the authors, "[m]any basic concepts and strategies in research transcend the boundaries of specific academic areas" (4), and consequently, a wide variety of examples from the above-mentioned disciplines is provided.

In case anybody needed convincing, the Introduction persuasively argues that a course on research methodology offers "an unparalleled opportunity to learn how you might better tackle any problem for which you do not have a ready solution" (5). The book comes with very detailed contents (over 14 pages), a glossary, an index and appendices (that refer to some of the most common software employed in quantitative research, i.e., Excel and SPSS) as well as a detailed reference list. The book is divided into six main

sections which are: (1) the fundamentals (describing the 'nature' of research); (2) focusing your research efforts; (3) quantitative research; (4) qualitative research; (5) mixed-methods research; and (6) research reports.

Unsurprisingly, the textbook covers familiar ground and essentially guides a novice researcher from the stating of the research problem to the final report. The authors argue that quality research demands careful planning and design, and as a result, a highly systematic, step-by-step approach is adopted, with practical suggestions throughout. Most academics would have their favourite textbook on research methods. (For me, it is Blumberg et al. for undergraduate business courses, Saunders et al. for postgraduate students, and Flick on qualitative research.) So why bother with yet another textbook on research methods?

There are many things about the book that I much appreciate. Succinct overviews are provided throughout. Each chapter contains checklists (which one could fill in at the various stages of research) and which I imagine could be helpful in ensuring clarity, critical reflection and comprehensiveness during the research process. These checklists may be of tremendous use for dissertation students at all levels and their supervisors. Also, as my teaching focus is on business and management subjects, it is refreshing for me to read examples from many other disciplines (including 'exotic' ones such as Musicology).

The emphasis on practical matters (which is already in the book's title) is laudable. For instance, outlines for both qualitative and quantitative research proposals are provided (136-137) and then elaborated on in a thoughtful and detailed way. A research proposal for a doctoral dissertation (assessing pre-service teachers' attitudes toward teaching African-American students) is then provided and critically discussed (150-152). Many of the chapters end with such extended examples of "Dissertation Analysis", with text excerpts on the left and extensive, evaluative comments on the right.

Another positive is the unbiased and fair approach towards both quantitative and qualitative research as well as a chapter

(12) on mixed-methods designs. The text also contains many figures and tables; for instance, I found the illustrations of the various sampling methods in chapter 6 useful, and the same can be said about table 9.1 that systematically compares distinguishing characteristics of different qualitative designs (276). Other selected helpful advice is the publication of one's dissertation in the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses: Full Text (proquest.com) database as well as sections on presenting one's research at conferences and writing journal articles (367-370).

It would be remiss of me not to ponder the weaknesses of the text. These are mainly in the eye of the beholder, as are the above-discussed strengths. Despite the 'global edition' moniker, most examples are from the US, which is understandable to some extent, as both authors are American. A genuinely global edition with exemplars from around the world (including the global South) could have been thrilling. The fact that examples from many different disciplines are provided can be perceived as both a strength and a weakness. Zeroing in on a parent discipline (like, for instance, Business) could have provided more focus. Some sections could have been more detailed. For instance, the philosophical assumptions of research are discussed on only one page (25-26), and there could have been a more historical approach to the discussion of research methods – however, one could counter-argue that a more philosophical and historical approach would have made the

book less practical. Finally, to some extent, it can be argued that, as the book tries to be many things to many readers by discussing many different things, it perhaps does nothing outstandingly well.

While introductory and focused on the novice researcher, the book – over 407 densely-populated pages – has sufficient depth to also serve as a useful reference tool for more experienced researchers. I can certainly recommend the 11th global edition of this classic (first published in 1993) to research-active educators, and more specifically, dissertation supervisors and those who teach research method courses.

Additional References

Blumberg, B., Cooper, D. R., & Schindler, P. S. (2014). *Business research methods* (4th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London, England: Sage.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students* (5th ed.). Essex, England: Pearson education.