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### An endnote: Advice and recommendations from the University of Waikato education professionals, for teachers as researchers

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## **AN ENDNOTE: ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS, FOR TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS**

**KERRY EARL RINEHART  
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New Zealand*

*We conclude this issue with some advice for teachers as researchers from members of the Division of Education staff at the University of Waikato along with some recommendations for helpful reference books. The emphasis of this article, in the words of four of the staff, is one of the support available to assist education researchers. Educational research is not conducted in solitary but by researchers within a variety of relational contexts. Therefore, University teachers and class peers, supervisors, members of collaborative research teams and journal editors can all provide support in a teacher-researcher's research journey.*

### **Advice**

[Associate Professor Chris Eames](#)

Director of Postgraduate Research and Programmes

Teachers often enter research as there is an issue they need to solve in practice. It might be policy, pedagogy or curriculum, but they want to inquire about it. We help them massage their idea into a manageable study that gives them the tools for their inquiry. It is fantastic to see the passion and curiosity, and eventual deep satisfaction that teachers experience as they learn through research.

[Dr Dianne Forbes](#)

Senior Lecturer in Research Methods

A good way for teachers to undertake quality research is to work in partnership with academics who are experienced researchers. There are several ways of doing this, and it can be as simple as approaching an academic to ask whether they would be interested in a joint research project. This is a win-win arrangement often leading to joint publications, as well as to research that informs practice. It is possible to get funding for such an arrangement via the Teacher-Led Innovation Fund (TLIF), as part of the Ministry of Education's scholarships, awards and funding for people working in schools (See [education.govt.nz](http://education.govt.nz)). Of course, another way to learn how to conduct effective research as a practitioner is to undertake postgraduate study, including a compulsory research methods paper as part of a Master's degree. Study and research can be managed alongside teaching and can enrich practice along the way, as a form of professional learning and development. The flexibility of summer courses and online papers, and the availability of study awards enabling sabbatical leave, add to the opportunities for practitioners to become researchers.

[Professor Bronwen Cowie](#)

Associate Dean Research

Teaching as an inquiry process underpins responsive teaching and continuous professional learning. Teachers have as their primary concern children's learning and growth. Researchers have as their primary concern a contribution of new knowledge to the discipline or field. In my view, teachers and researchers collaborating together move beyond an inquiry process. This kind of collaborative study provides opportunities for mutual learning, in-depth explanations of what works and why, as well as the wider dissemination/sharing of findings. In my experience, such *research* collaborations are both a pleasure and a privilege!

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[Dr Kerry Earl Rinehart](#)

General Editor of Teachers and Curriculum

Writing up research for publication contains a number of challenges. As a particular kind of text in form and content, journal articles also involve the personal of the author and the professional of the content (Thomson & Kamler, 2013). Writing for any journal requires adherence to their guidelines for authors, which includes specific referencing formats (At Teachers and Curriculum we use APA ) and submissions using the journal's website template. Journals also have blind-review processes and authors need to negotiate (consider and respond to) reviewer feedback in order to progress the manuscript to a published article. The time, focus and emotional investment to meet these various challenges take organisation, determination and resilience. I suggest teachers as researchers consider working with co-authors to share the experience and look for journals that support new authors.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recommend to you four reference books for teachers undertaking smaller research projects. We have selected texts here by New Zealand and overseas authors that we consider worthy of teacher's review for purchasing when commencing research in education settings. (Click on the images and links below for more information).

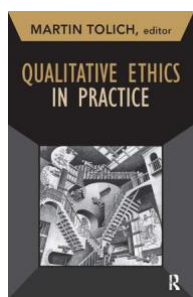
**Selected texts**

**Doing educational research. A practitioner's guide to getting started**  
(2nd edition) by Carol Mutch published by NZCER Press.

[Carol Mutch](#) is Associate Professor in Critical Studies in Education at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. She is also the Education Commissioner for UNESCO New Zealand. Dr Mutch was a primary teacher for many years. Her teaching and research interests are in research methods, education policy, curriculum development and social education.

To quote Diane Forbes (2015);

[T]he honest and straightforward approach of this book is well suited to the Kiwi audience for whom it is primarily intended. 'Doing educational research' is for teacher-researchers or research students embarking on small research projects in New Zealand. ... It is a practical beginner's guide and an orientation to research in Aotearoa New Zealand. ... The examples are popular with Kiwi teachers, due to the familiarity of research contexts, topics, tools and data sources. This is a text that invites teachers to value their experiences as they consider their practice and builds upon pedagogical knowledge and teaching as inquiry to explore research possibilities related to the work of teaching. (pp. 307-308)

**Qualitative ethics in practice**

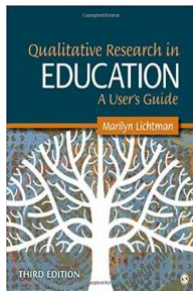
Edited by Martin Tolich (2016) published by Routledge.

[Martin Tolich](#) is a sociologist and ethicist and currently an Associate Professor of sociology at the University of Otago. He specialises in the Sociology of Research Ethics in general and qualitative research ethics in particular. He is the founder of the not-for-profit *New Zealand Ethics Committee*, an ethics committee for those unaffiliated (to universities).

In *Qualitative ethics in practice*, researchers from various disciplinary fields (including education) and different countries present a variety of cases to discuss how researchers address ethical dilemmas in a research setting. However, it is probably the text written by Dr Tolich himself as the editor that is most interesting for teachers as researchers. He identifies three issues and the first of these is that

although research undertaken within higher education programmes requires ethical approval from an institution's ethics committee, the types of ethical dilemmas that occur when researchers gather evidence in the field are varied and unpredictable. However, the aim here is that reading such accounts will help tune researchers into the *routine* likelihood of such 'crises' happening during the course of their research.

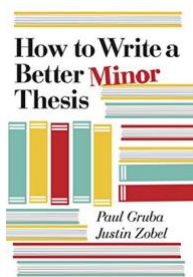
See also [Getting Started: An Introduction to Research Methods](#) (2011) by Carl Davidson and Martin Tolich.



### Qualitative research in education. A user's guide

(Third edition) by Marilyn Lichtman published by Sage

Marilyn Lichtman is a retired Professor of Educational Research and Evaluation from Virginia Tech, Virginia USA. She taught both qualitative and quantitative research courses while at The Catholic University of America and Virginia Tech. She is currently on the editorial boards of *The Qualitative Report* and *Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)*, both online journals devoted to qualitative issues. In *Qualitative research in education A user's guide* (2012), Dr Lichtman writes for graduate courses in educational research. As the Sage publishing blurb says "The use of real-world examples and illustrations will help users grasp abstract ideas and apply them to their research." (<https://au.sagepub.com/en-gb/oc/qualitative-research-in-education/book235144>). In this book there is a chapter on the use of social media for qualitative research, and researchers can also find information on thematic and narrative approaches to data analysis.



### How to write a better minor thesis

by Paul Gruba and Justin Zobel (2014) published by Melbourne University Publishing, Australia.

[Paul Gruba](#) is Associate Professor in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at the University of Melbourne. [Justin Zobel](#) is Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor, [School of Computing and Information Systems](#), also at the [University of Melbourne](#) and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Graduate and International Research, also at the University of Melbourne. These two authors have decades of experience advising novice researchers through the process of completing a minor thesis.

In *How to write a better minor thesis*, Dr Paul Gruba and Professor Justin Zobel present clear and practical advice on how to approach a smaller thesis and get organised. There is also plenty of help in this book of just over 120 pages, on how to structure your thesis and prepare the document for submission. This book is a companion to their senior text, *How to write a better thesis*.

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