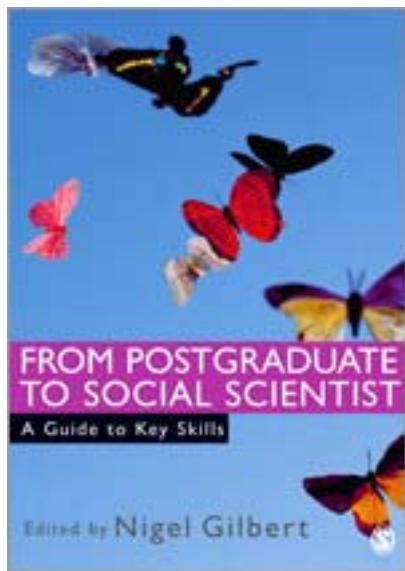


Book Review



From Postgraduate to Social Scientist: A Guide to Key Skills

by Nigel Gilbert (editor)
London: Sage Publications (2006).

Hardcover £67.00 (ISBN: 9780761944591)
Paperback £21.99 (ISBN: 9780761944607)

Review by **Despina Chronaki**

Nigel Gilbert's edited volume offers a new insight into the procedure in which a postgraduate student is trying to become a professional social scientist. Each chapter of the book includes general overviews of the topic discussed, useful advice relevant to the topic, short "retrospective sections" where graduate students reflect on their experiences and a selection of further readings.

The book refers to the professional skills that a postgraduate student should develop during and after their doctoral studies; there are some very useful parts such as the use of graduate students' and researchers' experiences to illuminate the topics discussed in each chapter. They help the reader form an image of what could happen during their studies or in the early years of their career and they also provide ideas for handling difficulties. In addition, the "further reading" section is useful to the reader enabling them to follow-up any aspects of particular interest.

After the first chapter that highlights the importance of the skills that a postgraduate researcher should develop, chapter two focuses on the importance of reviewing existing research and literature in any piece of academic writing. The author discusses and closes the chapter in that way, showing how a review is assessed and transformed into a coherent piece of academic work and ends with some conclusions on the purpose of a review and the dissemination of its findings.

Chapter three discusses the use of the internet in social science, both in terms of using it to locate sources, and in terms of using it as a research tool. However, the author does not move further to an evaluation of the validity of the internet as a research tool and does not provide information on how combined online research methods or a combination of online and traditional research methods would work.

Chapter four focuses on the ethics that apply in every research study, not only within the context of social science but also within the context of science in general. The chapter includes a lot of information which would be clearer to the reader if it were categorised into sections. Also, the lack of a conclusion that summarises the information provided in the chapter, makes it difficult for the reader to have an overall image of what was discussed.

In chapter five, the writers discuss how a research proposal should be written. The chapter is divided into four parts in which the logical foundations of the research proposal, the proposal itself, and advice on how to develop and write it are discussed. However, it does not provide a sample of the different parts of the proposal or any specific examples, which I would have found useful.

In chapter six, advice on how to organise and conduct a project is provided. A strong point is its summary of the points that a researcher should take into consideration when organising and conducting a research project. However, the section on how to manage a project is not discussed in as much detail as perhaps would be expected from the target readers who are postgraduate students at the start of their academic careers, and needs more detailed guidelines. What is perhaps required is a more detailed discussion of every step of this procedure and references to any problems that may emerge

Chapter seven starts with a quite clear definition of the meaning of intellectual property and includes the procedures for the registration of intellectual property that is considered as essential in order to protect the rights of being the creator and manager of that kind of property. Although in the chapter the advantages of registration for the protection of a researcher's work are discussed, there is no focus on how useful these rights may be in case a researcher's work is, for example, copied.

Chapter eight aims to outline the writing of a thesis, a report or a dissertation both in terms of structure and content. The author highlights the importance of the methodology in the whole procedure and gives an analytic account of the structure and the content of a thesis or a dissertation.

Moving on to chapter nine, advice is provided on how to manage research in order to produce papers, books or presentations and "translate their work for different audiences". Nonetheless, I think the reader needs more than this kind of advice in order to be well informed, such as more details on what kind of language to use in their written work, how should the work be structured and how they should generally organise their work so that it is as effective as possible.

Chapter ten discusses the teaching opportunities that postgraduate students have during their studies as well as at the early stages of their career. The writer offers advice and useful information on the reasons why a postgraduate student should take the opportunity of teaching during their studies, the nature of the tutorials for which they may be responsible, the methods of teaching, and the ways in which someone should handle any problems that could arise.

Finally, chapter eleven offers information and advice on the future career steps of a postgraduate student. Overall, this chapter is divided into sections which discuss the possible careers of a postgraduate student and the use of their scientific skills within the market and not the academic sector. It also offers sources when looking for a career and "job-hunting strategies".

To sum up, the book is a useful guide for postgraduate students and researchers, as it offers valuable advice and information about the professional skills that they should develop. It also offers information that researchers could use in their search for a job or for funding their academic work, along with examples describing other researchers' experiences, so that the readers have knowledge of the problems and opportunities that they may encounter.