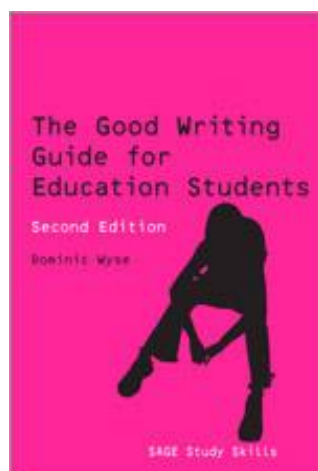## *Book Review*

The Good Writing Guide for Education Students
by Dominic Wyse
London: Sage Publications (2007).

Paperback £15.99 (ISBN: 9781412948593)

Review by **Mara Martini**

This writing guide by Dominic Wyse is presented to education students in a relaxed style. It reads as if a tutor is having an informal chat with a student. With this relaxed approach, perhaps the author hopes that students will feel more comfortable about the writing process.

Wyse divides his book into two parts: part 1 on "Reading and Thinking" and part 2 on "Writing". In the chapter "Searching for Reading Materials" in part 1, Wyse provides advice on locating such materials. He wisely encourages students to browse through the library stacks. By examining book titles and authors and journal content pages, students can begin to become familiar with the topic of their writing assignment. Wyse also makes the valuable suggestion that students read handbooks because they are often international in scope. As they browse, the author could have also urged students to view the reference list in books and journal articles and begin noticing the authors and titles most frequently cited. Students could then read these authors because they are the ones most recognised by their peers. However, students should not simply rely on these popular authors because new authors constantly enter the education field. Wyse understandably expresses disappointment in the destruction of library materials by careless acts (such as spilling water) but fewer examples of such destruction would have sufficed.

In the chapters titled "Reading Widely" and "Searching for Reading Materials", Wyse discusses using a computer to find reading materials. He gives a good overview of different types of websites, such as government and organisation websites. He helps education students see how online library catalogues work by choosing a specific education topic to search and explaining which search responses seem best for that particular topic. Wyse also introduces students to an important online source of journal articles for education students: the British Educational Index. However, since education terms sometimes change over time, students should know that other terms may appear in an online search. For example, the term "lifelong learning" was more often referred to as "lifelong education" decades ago. Wyse could have also informed students that their school libraries may allow them to access "electronic documents" (e-documents). These e-documents may include journal articles, conference papers, and government documents. Sometimes these documents can be printed or saved to a USB drive. If students save these documents instead of printing them, they can save money and time. The author offers different methods for tracking all of these reading materials in his chapter on "Referencing".

In the "Planning" chapter, Wyse informs students that they can approach writing in different ways. Students can plan their writing in their heads first or just begin writing without a plan

and have their ideas unfold as they write. The author could have also offered students other ways to prepare for the act of writing: talking to themselves aloud about their ideas or talking into a tape recorder and playing back their statements to hear if they make sense. Also, some writers work better typing out their thoughts for long stretches of time whereas others prefer short bursts. The author could have reassured students that it does not matter how many drafts they write. Rather, students should see progress in every draft. If a student writes more than the word count or feels unsure about some of their text, they could create a separate computer file for this extra text as opposed to deleting it. Before they submit their assignment, they may decide to add it back in or keep it for another assignment. If part of a student's writing does not sound right perhaps it just needs to be moved to another place in their assignment.

At the beginning of the "Grammar" chapter in part 2, Wyse cleverly tries to grab the student's attention by presenting two grammar puzzles. Unfortunately, the answers to the puzzles may confuse students because they will rarely arise in students' writing. In the chapter "Punctuation", the author provides helpful examples of students' mistakes and the appropriate corrections. However, he should have placed the student examples at the end of each type of punctuation, instead of at the end of the chapter. For example, students' misuse of full stops should immediately follow the description of a full stop. Wyse makes an excellent point of instructing students not to correct their grammatical errors when they first start writing but rather to just get their ideas on paper.

Wyse focuses on students' handwriting in his chapter on "Presentation and Proofreading". When writing by hand, such as during exams, Wyse urges students to improve their handwriting so that markers will not view their answers negatively. Based on the variety of handwriting styles, the description of handwriting "joins" on p 143 seems unnecessary.

The glossary defines some key terms but several, such as "sentence" and "paper", should already be known by undergraduate and certainly graduate students. Most terms are defined both in the body of the text and the glossary but a few critical terms, such as "research", only have definitions in the text. This basic term for education students should also appear in the glossary so that students can find it quickly. Finally, "Athens password" and its definition should appear in the glossary because it has an important role in the process of finding reading materials on the Internet. Wyse also covers "Spelling", "Structuring Your Writing", and "Assessment and Learning" in part 2.

Dominic Wyse has prepared a short guide on writing for education students. It is not a step-by-step textbook, but rather it provides an overview of the process of reading for and writing up education assignments. Wyse also provides an introduction on researching and writing in his chapter on "Small-Scale Research Projects". Keeping in mind the above suggestions, his guide can serve as an introductory book for beginning education students or those who consistently receive the same criticism from their markers about their writing. Perhaps Wyse's book can enlighten them into another way of approaching their writing.