BOOK REVIEW

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The Thesis Journey: Tales of personal triumph

Professor Tricia Vilkins (Editor)

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The Thesis Journey is a light and enjoyable journey through the experiences of students and supervisors involved in the doctoral process. The strength of the book is undoubtedly the student contributions in which they tell their stories in a wide range of forms that reflect their experiences, interests and world views. Those of us who have undertaken the journey will identify with the triumphs and challenges they share. Like the contributors to this book, most of us would have found the doctoral process a life-changing experience.

The strength of this book is its clarity and the variety of contributors who are at varying stages of the thesis journey. Some are full-time students, while others are slogging away as part-timers. Their ages and past occupations also vary, along with their previous life experiences. It was good to see a paramedic as a contributor. Most of the students are studying in the social sciences or management disciplines. It would have been useful if students in the physical or medical sciences had been represented in the book as they may have different stories to tell.

The reflections demonstrate that obtaining a PhD is possible for anyone with a passion for their topic and the ability to persist through self-doubt and the day-to-day pressures of life. At a more practical level, the contributions provide useful hints about time management, support processes, motivation and project management that other research students would find useful. Although these strategies are not new and are included in many books and courses on how to obtain a PhD, these personal stories will help other students understand how these techniques can be useful in their own journey.

The student stories and reflections also bring the book alive for potential students and supervisors. The sections on selecting and managing supervisors are good reality checks for those of us who are supervisors. They remind us of the importance of understanding student expectations in the

supervisor-student relationship, when sometimes it is all too easy to forget about the problems and challenges that research students face.

I would recommend the book to those who are considering the PhD journey and those who, having started, are experiencing unexpected challenges and barriers. Somewhere in the book most students will find a person who has experienced and overcome similar challenges.

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