#### **A Study of One Students’ Use of the Internet for Self-Study in Science**

This is an example of a further case study noted in Chapter 8 of the book by Opie and Brown (2019).

This case study involved a mother and daughter where the mother carried out observational research as a participant observer with the aim of explaining how the Internet might be useful in teaching about various aspects of science (Lees-Rolfe, 2001). This was a particularly relevant piece of research given it was undertaken in the early days of the ubiquitous availability of the Internet.

One might baulk at this research, and you would be right to be concerned about all sorts of issues such as the reliability and validity of the findings, to say nothing about the ethical issues and possible social damage such research could do to a mother/daughter relationship. These, and other concerns were constructively addressed and presented in the thesis. Although the research resulted in initial difficulties, the outcome was a most illuminating and rewarding (for both mother and daughter) piece of research, as perhaps the following extract helps to show:

*She (daughter) asked why acids are soluble. When I didn’t give her an answer, she tried to go to a heading on one Internet site that wasn’t a link and got a bit irritated with it not being a link.*

*She went to another site.*

*D. ‘So anything that gives off a proton is an acid and everything that takes a proton is a base?’*

*She carried on reading and then*

*D. ‘Bases dissociate? What is dissociate?’*

*I told her to go to the glossary I gave her and she refused and went to a dictionary on Yahoo.*

*D. ‘Separate ‒ It would have been quicker for you to have told me.’*

*M. ‘This is supposed to see whether you can learn from the Internet without a teacher.’*

*D. ‘It is easy to use the internet for learning for what they have on it but something like that it is quicker for you to tell me’.*

Here we see the daughter making a clear distinction between the value of the internet vs. a teacher; this issue was raised on several other occasions.

You might also like to know mother-and-daughter relationships were not damaged by this research. They did start from a strong base and the agreement was made that if there were any signs to indicate that their relationship was deteriorating, the research would stop.

**References**

Lees-Rolfe, P. (2001) ‘Using the Internet as a teaching medium for a section of the school chemistry syllabus: A case study’. MEd thesis, University of Sheffield.

Opie, C. and Brown, D. (eds) (2019)*Getting Started in Your Educational Research: A Student’s Guide to Design, Data Production and Analysis*. London: Sage.