

Mixed methods start essay sample



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Mixed methods research (MMR), although it has been defined in several different ways (see Johnson et al.); most explanations are consistent in that it is essentially characterised by the employment of both qualitative and quantitative elements in a single study. (Johnson, et al., 2007, pp. 118-121; Niglas, 2000, pp. 9-10; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010, p. 2;

The concept of mixed methods developed from the idea of methodological triangulation. First, quantitative researchers, Campbell and Fiske suggested using multiple measures to validate their findings (1959) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010, p. 21). The idea was further developed (e. g. Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest (1966) and the term triangulation came about to refer to the operation of multiple methods in a single study with the intention of reaching the same conclusion (Johnson, et al., 2007, p. 114). (Jick, 1979).

The differentiation of within method triangulation, thus using different research methods within one paradigm, from between-methods triangulation, so mixing paradigms, is credited to Denzin (1978) (Bryman, 2004) who also defined four types of triangulation. Deriving/Growing therefore from a validation technique, triangulation later incorporated the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as data sources, analysts, and theories.

Reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative research were discussed by researchers (e. g. Sieber 1973, Rossman and Wilson 1985, Sechrest and Sidana cited in (Johnson, et al., 2007). Such reasons may involve the facilitation of the other method, triangulation, initiation, expansion

MMR is a growing field and as such it infers the development of several frameworks since its start. Classifications emerged based on the integration of approaches. One such framework is of Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) who differentiated between mixed method studies and mixed model studies, the former including separate quantitative and qualitative phase in a research, the latter including elements of the two approaches combined at various stages in the research (Niglas, 2009) (Niglas, 2000)(Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Creswell (1995) suggests three approaches to combining quantitative and qualitative a) two-phase design, where the two approaches are kept separate in a sequential design b) dominant- less dominant design, where one approach has more emphasis in the research and c) mixed methodology design, which can be regarded as the highest level of mixing, where integration happens at all stages. Or:

A number of philosophers still were not convinced about the feasibility of the integration. The incompatibility thesis argued that the epistemological and ontological positions of the two paradigms are so conflicting that it is inappropriate and impossible to merge them in one study. Supporters of this view also reasoned for the superiority of one method over the other. Against this view of “ purists” Howe, among other “ pragmatists” believe that the divide between the two paradigms are indistinct and actually there are many similarities. Moreover, a paradigm does not determine the methods and combining them would only add value to the research. (Howe, 1988)

Even though the paradigm wars are over, there are still a lot of issues associated with mixing methods. Bryman (2007)raised the question of the degree of integration, so how independent or interdependent the two

components should be in a mixed methods study. He interviewed social scientists who published mixed methods research (between 1994 and 2003). He found that despite authors asserting the exploitation of MM, many are inclined to report only one or place considerable emphasis of the findings of only one method, or giving a parallel presentation of the results. Bryman questions the existence of any integration in such cases. Another observation was regarding the paradigmatic differences on more of a practical level.

Bryman found that the ignorance of epistemological and ontological questions was linked to pragmatic views. Pragmatists, by the definition of the interviewed authors, therefore place an importance on the end product consequently raising such issues is regarded inconvenient. Bryman uncovered several reasons why these issues persist. These reflect practical considerations, and he grouped them into three types such as intrinsic aspects such as time issues, structure of the research project, ontological consideration; institutional context such as publication preferences, expectations of the audience; and finally skills and preferences of the researcher such as skills of the researcher, the nature of the data and methodological inclinations. Bazeley highlighted several methodological issues:

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