

Chapter 25

Mixing of Research Methods in Investigating Digital Archiving Practices at Selected Public Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Mixed methods research (MMR) is gaining prominence as a research design in the records and archives management discipline and information science field at large. Researchers, scholars, and practitioners are drifting away from the mono-method cocoon dominated by qualitative approaches and are slowly embracing MMR. This study investigated digital archiving in selected public universities in Kenya with a view to developing a framework for digital archiving in the institutions. Using MMR, data was collected from six institutions, namely University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Moi, Kenyatta, Maseno, and Egerton Universities. Preliminary findings suggest digital archiving in Kenya is still in its infancy and a lot needs to be done to streamline the practice in universities. Among other suggestions, the study recommended a systematic roll-out of awareness programmes for top officials in the institutions to bring them to a position of appreciating and supporting digital archiving initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Quantitative and qualitative research approaches continue to occupy large spaces in the research domain (Ngulube, 2020a), but mixed methods research (MMR) approaches are gradually emerging out of the need to efficiently evaluate and analyze highly complex social and behavioural phenomena (Green et al.

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2015; Hall, 2020). In a social science study, a researcher and participant's bias are undeniably present, intentionally and unintentionally, hence the use of multiple data sources enhances the trustworthiness of the study results and aids in data saturation (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). Combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in one study, also known as methodological triangulation, enables researchers to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). It also helps to enhance data accuracy, overcomes the underlying limitations in either of the methods and contributes to a more holistic and comprehensive outlook to knowledge (Baskarada & Koronios, 2018).

Notably, the application of mixed methods in Library and Information Science (LIS) research was until recently viewed wearily by scholars in the field (Ngulube, 2020a) as most researchers prevalently stuck to the common mono-method terrain. However, as observed by Zhang, Tam and Cox (2021), this narrative is slowly but gradually changing as the field continues to be increasingly intertwined with other subject areas such as Computer Science and Health Informatics. A slow but marked tendency towards diversifying the range of research methods in LIS to include MMR has been gradually witnessed (Zhang, Tam, & Cox, 2021), a trend that motivated the researchers to settle on MMR as the ideal methodological approach for the current study which covered multiple study sites. This chapter demonstrates the applicability of MMR in the LIS domain, by illustrating its usage in a multifaceted doctoral thesis study in records and archives management (RAM) which is still a work-in-progress. The chapter discusses preliminary findings of the study to provide a glimpse into the research output.

Defining Mixed Methods Research

The use of MMR design involves conducting research studies by combining quantitative and qualitative data. According to Creswell (2015), MMR design is not merely the collection of multiple forms of qualitative data (for example interviews and observations), nor the collection of multiple types of quantitative data (for example survey data and experimental data). It involves the collection, analysis and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data. In this way, the value of the different approaches to research (for example the trends as well as the stories and personal experiences) can contribute more to understanding a research problem that one form of data collection (quantitative or qualitative) could not on its own.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) in Clark and Ivankova (2016) define the term *mixed research* as the integration of at least one quantitative approach and at least one qualitative approach. Supporting this, Marutha (2020) notes that MMR constitutes equal mixing of quantitative and qualitative strands in a research. Nonetheless, more recent studies have proffered definitions that propagate the use of qualitative and quantitative strands at some stages of research or throughout a study. For example, Wiid and Diggines (2015) define MMR as a study wherein more than one research method is used during data collection, presentation, analysis and interpretation. Taking a more holistic perspective, Ngulube (2020a) avers that mixing of quantitative and qualitative research strands should be evident in all stages of a research study, a view that is similarly held by Creamer (2018). Given the above definitions, the present study defines MMR as research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study.

Nevertheless, researchers have often misunderstood and confused the concepts of MMR and multi-method research. Creswell (2015) explains the distinction between mixed methods and multi-method research in the following statement:

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