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**Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods
Approaches (4th ed.), Creswell, J. W. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, (2014).
650 pp.**

Esra Öztürk Çalık^{a 1} 

^a Ministry of National Education, Ankara, Türkiye

Book Review

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Abstract

Conducting a well-established research requires deep knowledge about the research designs. Doing research can be likened to jumping into the sea which may transform into a huge ocean if the researcher is not experienced. As a PhD candidate and a novice researcher, I believe that the book “Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches” by J.W. Creswell is a true reference guide for novice researchers since it is the most comprehensive and informative source with its reader-friendly structure.

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Keywords: Qualitative; quantitative; mixed methods approaches

Conducting a well-established research requires deep knowledge about the research designs. Doing research can be likened to jumping into the sea which may transform into a huge ocean if the researcher is not experienced. As a PhD candidate and a novice researcher, I believe that the book “Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches” by J.W. Creswell is a true reference guide for novice researchers since it is the most comprehensive and informative source with its reader-friendly structure.

¹ Corresponding author.

E-mail address: ozturk06es@gmail.com

The book encompasses three parts and seventeen chapters. At the end of each chapter, a section titled as ‘key ideas of the chapter’ is provided which presents a summary of the contents. Besides, useful information for consumers and producers of research exists at the end of every chapter and offers concrete guidance in interpreting and evaluating research. Another nice point of the book is that it is quite informative with the appendices part. Appendices range from the answer key of the questions asked in the chapters to most commonly used statistics.

The book initializes with the definition of research and its importance. Next, the six steps of conducting research which start with identifying the problem and end with reporting the research are explained. The most critical part of this chapter comprises the similarities and differences between the qualitative and quantitative methods in terms of the six research steps. Creswell does not finish the first part without warning the readers of paying special attention to the ethical issues which mostly occur in data collection and reporting stages.

In the second part (Chapters 2-9) Creswell provides detailed explanations about the six steps in conducting the research. While doing so, he follows a step-by-step route from the very beginning of defining the research problem to interpreting and reporting the findings. Part II embraces the answer of any question that a novice researcher has in mind such as determining the population and sample, forming the hypothesis, writing the problem statement and ensuring the ethical procedures. One of the strengths of the book is that there is balance in terms of explaining the qualitative and quantitative methods. Creswell provides a clear and balanced description of research steps for both of the spectrums and does not prioritize one over the other.

The author gently leads the novice researchers into the research steps and makes an analogy of it as lowering the bucket into the well slowly, not dropping it suddenly into the water. He starts with explaining the multiple strategies for writing the statement of the problem section in chapter 2. With reference to this, he makes use of the visuals, diagrams and flow charts to help the readers understand better. Besides, in the ‘Think-Aloud’ sections at the end of each chapter, Creswell exemplifies the writing techniques.

Subsequent to clarifying the parameters of a scientifically acceptable problem statement, Creswell goes on with the steps of literature review in Chapter 3. Initially, he explains the rationale for conducting a review and then informs the reader about the

differences in the extent and use of literature review in qualitative and quantitative studies. The most helpful part of this chapter is that it guides the researchers about where to start and how to locate the necessary information when reviewing the literature. On page 84, Creswell presents a triangle about differentiating between high and low standards to ensure quality by providing examples from primary and secondary sources of information. His rationale for doing so is to enable the researchers to criticize a scientific work about its originality. After all, secondary sources mostly reflect the researcher's opinion, which may impact the reader's own way of interpreting the information.

With regard to the research questions and hypothesis, the author likens them to signposts without which the readers may get lost. Therefore, he suggests the researchers to constitute the hypotheses and research questions clearly so that the readers have an idea about the focus of the research. The design of the purpose statements, hypotheses and research questions requires discrete criteria according to the research paradigm to which they belong; therefore, novice researchers are expected to benefit to a great extent from the explanations given in chapter 4 which clearly lists the differentiating points between qualitative and quantitative research.

Information in connection with the data collection and analysis are given in separate chapters for quantitative and qualitative studies since each bears their own criteria about sampling, data collection instrument, data collection procedures etc. Creswell adopts a meticulous look in explaining each step and supports the explanations with sample weak statements that most researchers use mistakenly. One of the strengths of the chapters in accordance with data analysis is that several website links are shared. For quantitative data analysis, links for the most frequently used statistical analysis computer programs such as *SPSS* and *SAS* are provided. Similarly, links for the major qualitative data analysis software programs such as *Atlas.ti* and *HyperRESEARCH* are given along with brief information about their specific features. A considerable amount of place is provided for coding qualitative data which is defined as an inductive process of narrowing data into a few themes. Creswell highlights that there is no definite procedure for coding but he recommends six steps that can be employed for narrowing codes into themes. Another important issue related to qualitative data analysis is ensuring the accuracy and credibility of findings. Since qualitative research cannot be divorced from the researcher's interpretations, validating the findings have always been an issue for researchers. In fact, distinct opinions take place for naming the terms accuracy and credibility so much so that authenticity and trustworthiness are preferred by

Lincoln and Guba (1985). Although a number of strategies exist for validating the qualitative findings, Creswell puts the emphasis on the three of them: triangulation, member checking and auditing. In a research paper, writing in a sensitive, ethical and scholarly manner is as substantial as ensuring validity and reliability. At the end of Part II, strategies for avoiding bias when describing people are shared. The strategies are specified along with the poor and preferred examples related to them, which is quite helpful on the part of the reader since giving the explanations alone may not always adequate. In terms of writing in a scholarly manner, the issues related to appropriate point of view, consistency, content and subject matter balance, title and abstract are explained. Contrary to the other parts of the book, the part on deciding to a concise title is lack of examples. On the other hand, the checklists for evaluating the process of qualitative and quantitative papers are quite comprehensive. After giving the 'map' (the six steps of research), Creswell informs the readers about eight different research designs in Part III (Chapters 10- 17). As in the rest of the book, he adopts a balanced and consistent attitude between qualitative, quantitative and mixed research paradigms. Part III is inclusive of the key aspects, historical developments and parameters of the research designs. Besides, a sample article for each of the research design and further reading sources are provided.

Judging by the explanations, examples, and overall structure of the book, Creswell's intention is to inform the novice researchers about how to select the most appropriate research design and things to consider whilst conducting the research. In his book, he explains every single detail without confusing the readers. He adopts an objective point of view in the presentation of the research designs and highlights the importance of academic norms. In agreement with Creswell, I advocate that no research paradigm is superior to others. What determines the appropriate research design is the aim of the research. To exemplify, if the researcher aims to discover the impact of foreign language exposure at an early age on the learner's motivation, conducting an experimental study might not be a good option since it may not be possible to take all the other variables under control other than foreign language exposure at a young age. Similarly, adopting a survey design requires a large number of participants and the researcher may not reach that number of people. However, conducting a longitudinal study and observing only one or a small number of participants, discovering their attitude towards foreign language through interviews, diaries etc. and utilizing motivation scales within the framework of mixed method research design might be the most appropriate path to take. All in all, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods*

Approaches by J. W. Creswell is an informative, comprehensive and one of the most available sources for novice researchers and I highly recommend it to everybody who is taking the first steps in the academia.

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