

Book Review

Flick, Uwe. 2020. *Introducing Research Methodology: Thinking Your Way through Your Research Project*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing

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Through this book, Flick presents beginners in research with a concise view of research practice in academic, political, and other contexts. However, it focuses primarily on research in social science scenarios rather than natural science, history, or technology. Flick defended his Ph.D. in 1988 and is an experienced professor in qualitative and other research methodologies with a good number of books on methods to his credit. The book is quite elaborate, with 384 pages, structured into five different parts, namely, “orientation,” “planning and design,” “method selection,” “working with data,” and “reflection and writing.” The first edition of this work came out in 2011, and the second in 2014. Compared to the second edition

(Flick 2015), the present edition has a structural re-ordering. A particular focus is given to methods by grouping the two chapters on methods into a new part. The chapter on e-research is avoided, and the concept of digital research is incorporated into various chapters by recognizing it as a means for doing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research rather than as a method of its own. In the part on “working with data,” a new chapter is added on the use of existing data. This restructuring and addition and deletion of chapters have given the book a more meaningful and logical structure.

The author attempts to accompany young researchers through this book as each chapter gives a picto-

rial description of where the research has reached that moment and discusses the various challenges and practical issues to be faced there. This escorting is also seen when the author gives practical advice from his expertise in the field. For example, he states: "In most researches, you will learn a lot not only about the participants, but also about yourself" (p. 17). That gives beginners an experience of interacting with an experienced professor. Moreover, Flick has attempted to help the readers by providing a bullet-pointed view of what is discussed in each chapter at the beginning and end of the chapter. A few questions are also provided at the end of each chapter to check whether the reader has grasped the issues discussed. What makes this book even more beneficial are the examples from actual research done in the past. Around forty such examples are given in boxes, and these examples are discussed throughout the book to explain various concepts. As many of such examples are from student research as part of their academic curricula, it can be insightful for beginners.

The "orientation" part of the book distinguishes social research from other kinds of research and knowledge of everyday life. It also points out prominent epistemological ideologies, such as critical rationalism, interpretative paradigm, and constructionism, that underlie various methodologies commonly used in research. A rather important discussion in this part is about various ethical issues to be looked into while undertaking research. This discussion makes it clear that ethical boundaries make it impossible to do research on every possible interest of a researcher. At the same time, it also makes it clear that getting consent may not be possible in every instance (e.g., while observing the behavior of people walking through a street). In the second part of the book, the chapter that narrates steps

in the research process is quite helpful in gaining clarity about the practical differences between doing quantitative research and qualitative research. In the third part of the book on "method selection," the descriptions of triangulation and mixed method approach could be the most helpful while entering real-life research.

The addition of a chapter, in the fourth part, on the use of existing data is a timely update for this book because the use of existing data is on the rise, as the possibility of digitally storing collected data, the digital availability of documents, and their public accessibility are increasing in the contemporary world. While the methods of collecting data are discussed in detail, the description of various analytical approaches is brief in certain aspects. For example, topics like "central tendency" and "testing associations and differences" could have been more elaborate. In the twelfth chapter, the author makes an original contribution to the field by suggesting a way for true integration in the analysis stages of research done via the mixed method and triangulation. The last part of the book makes it clear that it is impossible to evaluate quantitative and qualitative research using the same criteria. While quantitative research is checked for its reliability, validity, and objectivity, qualitative research can be rightly assessed only with a reformulated understanding of these evaluative ideals. The worthiness of the topic, rigor with which research is conducted, ethics, coherence, the significance of contribution, et cetera, are also presented as meaningful criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research. The author's discussion of the various limits of different methods helps a beginner choose the suitable method for one's research. Finally, the author's expertise again becomes visible as he points out the need to consider aspects other than scientific interests (e.g., economic

and social interests) to have political and practical impacts of one's research findings.

Even though the book may not be attractive to experts, it neatly serves its declared aim of being helpful to beginners in research. However, it seems contradictory as the author calls the book concise since it spreads to 384 pages with some repeated narrations. One of the clear examples of such repetition is chapter eight, in which the description of decisions to be taken in the research process is an iteration of the steps presented in chapter six (even though pre-

sented in a different style). Another example is the discussion about digital research. Avoiding such 'repeated' narrations could have made the book more concise. For a modern reader in the post-covid-19 era, one thing that could be disagreeable in the book is the view that conducting an online video interview is an arduous task. It could be because video calls became very popular and easily accessible only with the Covid-19 spread in 2020. Even with these comments, one can undoubtedly affirm that this is a commendable book from Flick and recommendable for those entering their social research career.

References

Flick, Uwe. 2015. *Introducing Research Methodology: A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

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