

Chapter 22

Use of Multimethods in Assessing Records Management Practices in the Judiciary of Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Using more than one method of data collection or analysis in research is a well-established tradition in social sciences. The study adopted qualitative research and employed a multimethod approach for data collection. Findings revealed that the existing records management infrastructure in courts was highly inadequate. The study concluded that the current state of records management practices was likely to impede on the discharge of justice. The study recommends that, for the judiciary to improve the discharge of justice, records management should be driven by establishing a records management policy, building records management staff capacity and hiring qualified personnel, and following a top-down approach in records management with buy-in from all stakeholders involved in the processes of the justice system. Furthermore, a best practice framework for managing records in support of the discharge of justice is provided. This study contributes to the understanding between multimethod and mixed methods research.

INTRODUCTION

Mixed methods is defined as an approach which involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, hence, involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research (Plowright, 2017, p. 243). Nevertheless, Mik-meyer (2020, p. 2) considers multimethod as a strategy that uses multiple forms of qualitative data (e.g., interviews and observation) or multiple forms of quantitative data (e.g., survey data and experimental data). Matongo (2021) adopted a multimethod approach of qualitative data to assess records management practices in the judiciary of Namibia.

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Many disciplines are embracing multimethod techniques of data collection. For instance, library and information science has shown interest in adopting and using multimethod data collection techniques (Marutha, 2020). This chapter establishes the research methods used in the study conducted in 2021 on managing records in the discharge of justice in Namibia. The characteristics of a multimethod research and its application in qualitative study are illustrated as strategies for scientific research that library and information science researchers and as well as those from other disciplines may consider adopting for establishing trustworthy results.

This chapter shows how the application of various research techniques may offer trustworthy results through triangulating research strategies. Reis, Amorim and Melão (2017) observe that combining different research methods had been the matter of debates since the 1990s. For this reason, Mingers (2001) advocated multimethod research based on the grounds that both the target of the research and the research process were complex and multidimensional, thus, requiring a range of different approaches. The usefulness of multimethod approaches has been recognised by various researchers (Basit, 2010; Gabb & Fink, 2015; Jamieson, 2016; Gerring & Cojocar, 2016; Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2016). According to Ngulube (2020), the use of multimethods can be traced to the notion of psychological traits which trusts triangulating data-collection techniques. Nicholls (1999, p. 158) distinguished triangulation as strategies that mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, as complementary approaches.

Despite its positive contributions, the uptake of multimethod research in library and information science (LIS) has been low. This has been confirmed by Ngulube (2020) who decried limited application of multimethods by researchers in (LIS) due to the difficulties of distinguishing between multimethod and mixed methods research. Mingers (2003) reported that the use of the multimethod approach in information science was very scarce and that there have been numerous reviews of the information system literature, each with different purpose, but none have specifically considered combining methodologies neither adopting a multimethod approach. Ngulube (2020) asserts difficulties of distinguishing between a multimethod and mixed methods approach being the contributing fact towards the underutilisation of the approach in the field of library and information science.

Magangi and Migiro (2011) point out that often the importance of the multimethod and mixed methods approach is usually not made clear by researchers leading to confusion in the design phase of the study. It is in response to this, that Adakawa and Garba (2020) raised issues that the mixing of more than one approach for research has brought confusion and overwhelmed researchers having to deal with volumes of data gathered through various research methods and techniques. The point being that mixing often tends to collect more data than what researchers can comprehend; as such, some researchers opt to avoid utilising the multimethod approach. It was in light of the low prevalence of multimethods in LIS research, that this study saw the need to shed more light on the essence of multimethod research. Hence, this chapter sheds light on what constitutes multimethod research so that the information science professional may play a role in its utilisation to get a comprehensive understanding of their information science environment.

Magangi and Migiro (2011) and Ngulube (2015) observe that multimethod approaches have a positive impact in research in that it allows a researcher to use results of one method so as to strengthen or elaborate the other. This chapter provides research methods and techniques that were used in a study conducted in 2020 (Matongo, 2021). The study adopted a qualitative case study and employed multimethod techniques to collect data, and it was guided by the following objectives:

- Explore the evidential relationship between records management and the discharge of justice.

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