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Digital Technology and Qualitative Research: A Book Review of Maggi Savin-Baden and Gemma Tombs' Research Methods for Education in the Digital Age

Marice Kelly-Jackson
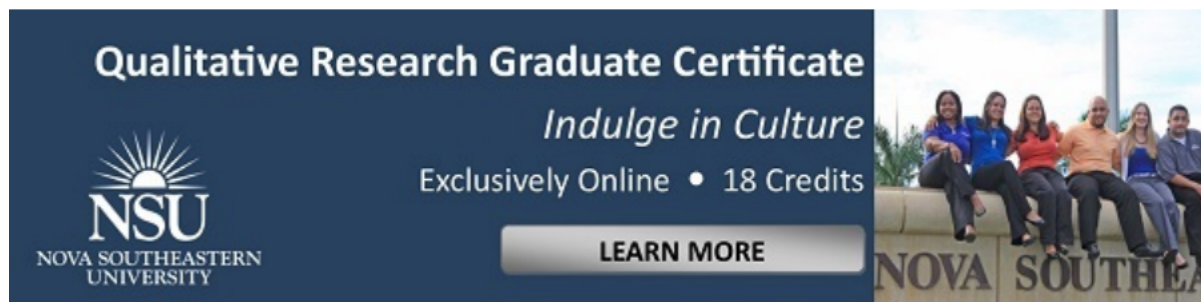*University of Georgia*, marice7@hotmail.com

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Abstract

Maggi Savin-Baden and Gemma Tombs' Research Methods for Education in the Digital Age is part of an educational series on methodology by The Bloomsbury Research Methods for Education. They wrote their book for qualitative researchers planning to use any form of digital technology such as digital recorders for face-to-face interviews, telecommunications application software (e.g., SKYPE) to conduct interviews, social media websites for data collection, digital imagery, and Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) for their study. Savin-Baden and Tombs also have a chapter that examines the use of digital technology in quantitative research. As a novice researcher, I found this book to be very helpful in my doctoral research journey to understand digital technology terms and the many available research options that digital technology can provide. In this book review, I will cover the salient topics from each of the ten chapters that will help other novice scholars make smart research decisions.

Keywords

Education, Digital Technology, Qualitative Research Methods, Quantitative Research Methods

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Digital Technology and Qualitative Research: A Book Review of Maggi Savin-Baden and Gemma Tombs' *Research Methods for Education in the Digital Age*

Marice Kelly-Jackson
University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA

Maggi Savin-Baden and Gemma Tombs' Research Methods for Education in the Digital Age is part of an educational series on methodology by The Bloomsbury Research Methods for Education. They wrote their book for qualitative researchers planning to use any form of digital technology such as digital recorders for face-to-face interviews, telecommunications application software (e.g., SKYPE) to conduct interviews, social media websites for data collection, digital imagery, and Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) for their study. Savin-Baden and Tombs also have a chapter that examines the use of digital technology in quantitative research. As a novice researcher, I found this book to be very helpful in my doctoral research journey to understand digital technology terms and the many available research options that digital technology can provide. In this book review, I will cover the salient topics from each of the ten chapters that will help other novice scholars make smart research decisions. Keywords: Education, Digital Technology, Qualitative Research Methods, Quantitative Research Methods

The practice of social science research has evolved more swiftly since the digital age of technology has been used in the field. Because of the various methods of digital technology, the delivery of education has changed, the way people communicate and receive information has changed, and the practice of research has transformed with broader selections of data analysis software for qualitative and quantitative researchers. The book under review examines the values and challenges of digital technology in research practices conducted in the education field. The book is written for qualitative researchers that plan to use digital technology to conduct research. The book has ten chapters that have a table in every chapter to assist in explaining how digital technology is useful to qualitative research. The book is part of an education series from Bloomsbury Research Methods that provide the latest methodologies for educational research.

Savin-Baden and Tombs begin the book with defining qualitative research designs, methods, and data analysis terminology. The introductory chapter has a chart that describes digital technology that is used in the educational field to deliver online learning. The chart explains the key terms that help support the reason for writing the book. As stated by the authors, the use of digital technology opens up a new domain to conduct research, especially for qualitative research since individual meaning making is investigated through this approach.

Chapter 1 starts with discussing current issues in educational research that use digital technology. Savin-Baden and Tombs discuss how online learning environments can be used to conduct qualitative research. They examine using the discourse from online learning classrooms, social media websites, and any data that exist on the internet as part of the data collection process. The authors purpose new data collection information may originate from blogs, digital photos, public domain websites, private websites, and observations in a virtual world. They also purpose research about digital immortality that when a person dies, his or her

presence can still exist because of the internet. The authors also mention that digital technology opens up more options in conducting interviews.

Chapter 2 examines traditional qualitative research methodologies and introduces new methodologies. The most distinct methodology in this chapter was called "liquid." Liquid methodologies are decoupled from the traditional philosophical worldviews when using digital technology and can be compatible with other philosophies. The authors give the example of using narrative inquiry and deliberative inquiry together. I surmised that the authors are suggesting researchers be open in interlinking methodologies together because of digital technology. The customary qualitative research methodologies were discussed, and the word digital was added to the title to show how the methodology uses digital technology (e.g., digital narrative inquiry). Chapter 3 begins with explaining the history of ethnography and then describes different forms of digital ethnographies. For instance, netnography is "gathering and managing social media data" (p. 63). There is a chart that explains how the different positions of ethnographies through different philosophical worldviews can be used.

Chapter 4 highlights different educational research approaches and theories that would be suitable to research in the digital age. The authors list design-based research, design patterns, actor-network theory, and activity theory would be the best proposals. Chapter 5 addresses quantitative data methods that are appropriate in the digital age. Three broad categories were listed as appropriate research areas in the digital age: individual data, engagement data, and learning data. Chapter 6 focus is on digital ethics by researchers. The authors explain that researchers need to be cognizant of their behaviors when using digital spaces (social media, twitter, Facebook, Gaming, etc.) to collect data. The same ethical standards that the Institutional Review Boards have should be followed when using participants from digital spaces. Chapter 7 examine researchers' roles in data creation and collection from digital spaces. The authors indicate that a researcher's philosophical stance will influence the type of data creation and collection for a research study. A chart shows the different philosophies, description of the philosophies, and the researcher's role. Chapter 7 also details different approaches to observations and interviews through digital spaces.

Chapter 8 discusses methods researchers may use to manage and analyze data from digital spaces using qualitative general analysis approaches. The authors provide a chart on different types of sources to collect data and how to transfer the data into Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). Chapter 9 reviews different ways to explain and portray the findings after analyzing the data. The authors suggest that findings can now have digital images, audio, and video recordings that align with the written final report. The authors suggest for researchers to take advantage of digital technology to represent and portray their study's findings. Lastly, chapter 10 explores the impact of digital technology in the educational field. The authors address different ways researchers can measure their impact on society by using various digital tools. They list digital tools such as h-index that measures how many publications or citations use from a researcher, altmetrics that evaluates how long a person spent reading an article on a blog, website, twitter, or any social media website, and impactstory which is an open-sourced database that calculates how many times an article was tweet, retweet, downloaded, viewed, and number of comments to show the impact of an article. I found *Research Methods for Education in the Digital Age* beneficial for graduate students that are using any form of digital technology to conduct qualitative research studies.

Reference

Savin-Baden, M., & Tombs, G. (2017). *Research methods for education in the digital age*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Author Note

Marice Kelly-Jackson is Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Georgia in the Lifelong, Education, Administration, and Policy Department. She is currently an Adjunct Business Instructor with Georgia Piedmont Technical College. She has also completed a communication and leadership series with Toastmasters International through the Legacy Qwls at Kennesaw State University. Her research interests are adult learning, online learning, workplace learning, and qualitative research. Please direct correspondence to marice7@hotmail.com.

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