

MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

Mixed methods is a powerful strategy that is increasingly used in early childhood research and combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods. It produces a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the research topic than just the one approach. So, for example, combining a questionnaire with a detailed in-depth **case study** enhances the research since it combines the strengths of both approaches. Within mixed methods research, there is often movement back and forth between the different approaches and methods. For example, qualitative interviews may be carried out with early childhood teachers that inform the writing of a questionnaire. Without the initial interviews, it might be impossible to know what to include in the questionnaire. Mixed methods also helps us to understand the increasingly complex lives of families, children and early childhood settings by allowing for a range of different viewpoints and understandings.

TRIANGULATION AND RESEARCH VALIDITY

A particular strength of mixed methods research is the triangulation of different types of qualitative and quantitative data. For example, if both qualitative and quantitative data sets agree, then there is a good agreement between two different but complementary sources of data. This gives the researcher confidence in the accuracy of their findings and increases the validity of the research findings. This agreement between the different research methods can be said to have triangulated the research.

Triangulation is the research practice of comparing and combining various sources of evidence in order to reach a better understanding of the research topic. Triangulation gives research validity and makes the findings more convincing. It involves the researcher collecting a range of evidence by using a variety of research methods and gives researchers the opportunity to check out their evidence from a range of sources. It is important to try to gain different perspectives. For example, if you were interested in a teacher's practice it would be insufficient to simply ask them about their practice in an interview. You would also need to observe what they did and possibly ask for the children's perspectives on their teacher too. In this manner you would be relying on three sources of evidence:

- what the teacher told you in the interview
- your observations of what the teacher actually does
- the children's perspectives on their teacher's practice.

Gail's study on work and children, the teachers and followed this up with the parents about their v

Lucy's study on domestic with a range of professional from a number of profes

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(see Figure 5.2).

sample as well as interviews
provided various perspectives
ngulation (see Figure 5.3).