Educational Research Methods in Qualitative and Quantitative Perspectives

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Abstract

Qualitative and quantitative research is often presented as two fundamentally different paradigms in studying the social world. The mixed method approach has evolved into the third methodology of movement in educational research. The validity of mixed methods research as an important problem, however, has not been extensively examined. In addition, prior discussion on validity in mixed methods research focused on research design and procedures, not validity. This paper presents another perspective by using philosophical and methodological insights resulting from Habermas's critical theory. Theoretical assumptions and how they are consistent with the principles of mixed methods research are introduced.

Keywords: Educational Research Methods, Qualitative and Quantitative Perspectives.

Introduction

In the process of the emergence of mixed methods research and a community of mixed methods researchers, many important issues have been addressed and hotly debated, for example, the issue of paradigm (Biesta 2010; Creswell 2009; Feilzer 2010; Morgan 2007; Greene 2007; Johnson 2012; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004), methodology (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007; Lee and Greene 2007; McConney, Rudd, and Ayres 2002; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2006), and research design (Creswell 2013; Creswell et al. 2003). However, the discussion of the validity issue in mixed methods research is still in its infancy (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007; Onwuegbuzie and Johnson 2006). On the other hand, as an important yet contentious issue in educational research, validity has been examined extensively in quantitative (e.g. Borsboom, Mellenbergh, and van Heerden 2004; Embretson 2007; Kane 2006; Messick 1989, 1995, 1998) and qualitative approaches (e.g. Cho and Trent 2006; Creswell and Miller 2000; Denzin and Giardina 2008; Lather 1993; Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007). Yet the number of articles that are focused on validity issue in mixed methods research is still very few (Greene 2008; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2008).

Most research questions in educational fields as well as other fields of social sciences are answered by using quantitative and qualitative approaches. However, in the past two decades, mixed methods approach, which is generally defined as an approach that uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies or methods to collect data, analyse data, report findings, and draw inferences in a single study (Tashakkori and Creswell 2007), has evolved into the 'third methodological movement' (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003, 5) and the 'third research paradigm' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004, 15). This approach has also been embraced by educational researchers and the number of empirical studies in education that have employed mixed methods accounts for about a quarter of all mixed methods publications between 2000 and 2008 (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2010). An examination of research methodologies in 710 published articles in six prominent mathematics education journals between 1995 and 2005 revealed that about a third of the articles utilized mixed methods approach (Hart et al. 2009).

This study presents a perspective of discussing the validity issue in mixed methods research by using Jurgen Habermas' critical theory, more specifically, his Theory of Communicative Actions and validity claims. The perspective is only one among many perspectives and the purpose is not to replace previous ideas, but to encourage further conversations on the topic among mixed methods scholars.

Literature Review

One of the early works is Tashakkori and Teddlie's article in the first edition of SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research (2003). The authors examine validity in mixed methods research from the

research phase of drawing inference and focus on the quality of the inference. On the basis of cognitive psychology, psychology, and research methodology, they define inference as 'a researcher's construction of the relationships among people, events, and variables as well as his or her construction of respondents' perceptions, behaviours, and feelings and how these relate to each other in a coherent and systematic manner' (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003, 692). Because the term inference implies a process and an outcome, they then contend that quality of inference is assessed from two aspects of the research: design quality and interpretive rigor. The former is about the adequacy of the use and implementation of the process that conclusions are reached, whereas the latter is about the consistency of the conclusions with other aspects of the research, such as, research questions and the state of knowledge. Later, Tashakkoori and Teddlie (2008) streng then the idea of inference quality by developing an integrative framework in which criteria of assessing quality in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research are included. They state that the information mixed methods research provides is meta-inference, which is 'an overall conclusion, explanation, or understanding developed through an integration of the inferences obtained from the qualitative and quantitative strands of a mixed methods study' (101). Nine specific criteria are established for assessing design quality and interpretative rigour: design quality is evaluated by design suitability, design adequacy, within-design consistency, and analytic adequacy, and interpretative rigour is assessed by theoretical consistency, interpretive consistency, interpretive agreement, interpretive distinctiveness, and integrative efficacy (113-115).

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006: 57) stress the importance of the quality of inferences or meta-inferences that are made from different parts of a study, including the conclusions and applications. However, they propose another term-legitimation-to describe validity in mixed methods research because they believe that this term is acceptable to both quantitative and qualitative researchers. More specifically, legitimation refers to the threats to internal and external validity or credibility in quantitative and qualitative research. In addition, different from Tashakkori and Teddlie, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson view legitimation as a continuous process and contend that it should happen at each stage, rather than only at the outcome, of the research process. These two scholars continue to expand the legitimation criteria in their later works (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Johnson 2012; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins 2011). In Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Johnson's (2012) The authors state, 'By holistic, we mean that legitimation criteria should incorporate the major works in the area of legitimation /quality', and, by synergistic, we mean that our legitimation framework follows Hall and Howard's (2008) four core principles for synergistic approaches: (a) mixing legitimation/quality criteria culminates in a mixed

research study where in both the legitimation process and outcome are superior than would have been obtained if an individual components approach had been undertaken; (b) using a dialectic approach to legitimation, wherein multiple philosophical assumptions and stances are intertwined, when applicable; (c) considering of equal importance quantitative and qualitative legitimation approaches; and (d) balancing opposing quantitative-qualitative perspectives. (855-856). The two criteria added to the framework are: (a) philosophical clarity that emphasizes the importance of researchers' philosophical assumptions in the process of formulating research questions and selecting methods to answer these questions; (b) the connections between quality criteria agreed upon in mixed methods community and those in other communities regarding the use of mixed methods research.

In another attempt to address validity in mixed methods research, Dellinger and Leech (2007) employ Messick's concept of construct validity that has been widely accepted in quantitative research. They contend that there is an inherent tension in the research process of conducting mixed methods research because quantitative and qualitative approaches are different in several aspects. However, these two research approaches are the same in the understanding and negotiation of the meanings of the constructs. For this reason, the validity of mixed methods research centers on meaning making. Labelled the new framework as validation framework, the authors emphasize that construct validation process under this framework is not a closed or static process, but an open and dynamic process that aims to obtain meaning of the construct through all kinds of evidence. Dellinger and Leech later identify four elements of construct validation in the framework, including foundational element, inferential consistency, utilization element, and consequential element. The foundational element of the framework refers to researchers' previous knowledge of the phenomenon of interest and it addresses questions related to the literature review. Inferential consistency is about the consistency of the inferences made in a study and the appropriateness of research design and analysis. Utilization/historical element is the evidence of the use of construct measurement, whereas consequential element refers to whether the society accepts the consequences, findings, or inferences of a study. Recently, O'Cathain (2010) proposes a comprehensive framework to assess the quality of mixed methods research based on a literature review of published quality criteria in a variety of disciplines.

Research Validity

These discussions on validity provide profound insights for the understanding of the issue. However, it seems that all the discussions are built on Tashakkori and Teddlie's conception of inference quality and equate

validity with the quality of research. Although philosophical assumptions are highlighted in the works of Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Johnson (2012), Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins (2011) and O'Cathain (2010), these assumptions are still treated as one aspect of research and based on its inference quality. Under Dellinger and Leech's (2007), the purpose or consequence of conducting research is emphasized and the construction of meaning is put at the core. However, the four elements still address how to evaluate the quality of different aspects of a study.

Furthermore, these efforts of discussing validity focus only on research design, specific threats, research procedure, and inference quality through which validity is evaluated, but do not focus on validity, thus validity seems to be treated as a 'by product' (Dennis 2013, 7) of these aspects of the research. In other words, research design and procedures are just the techniques in conducting research, which can reflect the 'logic of justification' (Smith and Heshusius 1986, 4) of research, but are not the core of the logic. In this context, therefore, the concept of validity is over-simplified and forced into the background, or even masked (Dennis 2013). Greene also expresses the same concern about too much emphasis on methods and techniques in mixed methods research (Leech 2010: 261). In an interview with Leech, she points out that the field is moving towards convergence where a focus is more placed on technical level, or steps of how to conduct research. By doing this, 'the wonder that is possible in mixed methods will be reduced to procedures and techniques'. Taken together, a conception of validity that heavily relies on inference quality seems to undercut any effort to develop general criteria for design validity.

To some degree, these discussions resemble the discussions of validity issue in quantitative research, that is, more emphasis is placed on research design and practice, rather than validity. More specifically, quantitative researchers have not questioned 'the very nature' (Dennis 2013, 4) of conducting educational research, nor have they addressed epistemological and ontological questions that are fundamental to validity. Despite the emphasis of meaning interpretation and argument in the consensual conception of validity in quantitative research (AERA, APA, & NCME 2014), these aspects are rooted in measurement and testing, or 'lurk behind the definitional reification that has been achieved' (Dennis 2013, 4). In addition, the validity conceptual frameworks in quantitative research have seldom been brought into fruition in research practice, which is supported by the fact that quantitative researchers still wrote about different aspects of validity and the idea of validity is still contingent on a validated test or measurement.

Recently, in a review of the development of mixed methods research in the past five decades, Denzin (2010:420) clearly notes that mixed methods research community employs a post-positivist language to discuss

research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting, although he commends that mixed methods research is 'bold, innovative, energizing, and disruptive' and better than the 'simplistic, evidence-based movement'. This language entails that researchers can use any research method because the methods are just tools, not the practice of interpreting meaning.

With an increasing popularity of mixed methods research in education, an ongoing discussion of the validity issue will benefit the future development of the field. Further, based on the previous criticism, a perspective that focuses on validity itself is greatly needed. This study aims to examine validity in mixed methods research based on Habermas' critical theory, especially Theory of Communication Action and validity claims. It mainly uses Habermas' two volumes of The Theory of Communication Action (1984, 1987), and Car-specken's (1996) and Dennis' (2013) works that extend Habermas theory to discuss methodological issues in educational research.

Assumptions of Habermas' Theory

First, Habermas' theory puts epistemology at its core. Broader than the traditional sense of epistemology examining the nature, source, scope, and reliability of knowledge, critical epistemology (Car-specken 1996, 2003) also addresses the questions of meaning, understanding, truth, and power. Ontology and validity in critical theory are contingent on critical epistemology that draws heavily from the works of American pragmatists, such as John Dewey, William James, Charles Sanders Piece, and George Herbert Mead. In addition, the relationship between critical epistemology and ontology is pragmatic in the sense that 'doing/claiming implies being' (Dennis 2013, 30). In mixed methods research in education, pragmatism is the most popular paradigm and has been espoused by many mixed methods scholars (Biesta 2010; Johnson and Onwuegbuzi 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzi, and Turner 2007; Morgan 2007). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007, 125) state, 'We generally argue for what we call pragmatism of the middle as an especially useful philosophy for mixed methods. We have constructed a version of this kind of pragmatism around the ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey'.

Second, understanding and truth are not generated from visual perception or speech, but from communicative actions, which are processes of 'reaching understanding among members of a life-world' (Habermas 1984, 286). These communicative actions are not different from human interactions in our daily life (Carspecken 1996). Habermas (1984, 286) explains the situation of reaching understanding is when speakers involved 'are coming to an understanding with them, and who know when their attempts have failed'. He further argues,

Reaching understanding is considered to be a process of reaching agreement among speaking and acting subjects... A communicatively achieved agreement, or one that is mutually pre-supposed in communicative action... cannot be merely induced through outside influence; it has to be accepted or pre-supposed as valid by the participants. (Habermas 1984, 286-287).

Here Habermas suggests that intersubjectivity is involved in the process of reaching understanding, or more specifically, the agreement is reached only when a shared knowledge of the situation is obtained among all the participants. He continues to describe an ideal speech situation, in which a communicatively achieved agreement 'cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in the situation directly or strategically through influencing the decisions of opponents'. The real agreement, according to Habermas, 'rests on common convictions. The speech act of one person succeeds only if the other accepts the offer contained in it by taking (however explicitly) a "yes" or "no" position on a validity claim that is in principle ciriticizable' (Habermas 1984, 287). Carspecken (2003) adeptly summarizes Habermas' ideas of reaching understanding and inter-subjectivity as follows,

Inter-subjectivity can be found to have been always-already pre-supposed, but implicitly, each time we think or act meaningfully. It is not presupposed as some sort of simple "substance" or through some simple knowledge-imparting perception. It is rather a process that has always already occurred when we notice it.... The process of 'explicitation' (Brandom 1994, 114), moving implicit understandings toward explicit articulations, is the core process involved in theorizing about inter-subjectivity. (1017)

One important ontological stance in conducting mixed methods research is the existence of many kinds of reality, including subjective, objective, and intersubjective (Johnson 2012; Onwuegbuzie and Johnson 2006). Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006, 48) mention, 'The arbiters of research quality will be the research stakeholders, which means that the quality or validity issue can have subjective, inter-subjective, and objective components of influences'. Furthermore, Morgan (2007) criticizes the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity in social inquiry and argues that researchers 'need to achieve a sufficient degree of mutual understanding with not only the people who participate in our research but also the colleagues who read and review the products of our research' (73). Therefore, the process of conducting research emphasizes mutual communication and constructed meaning. Morgan further notes that understanding intersubjectivity helps resolve the issue of incommensurability in combining quantitative and qualitative research. This point has been concurred by Biesta (2010) who suggested inter-subjectivity as an alternative to the dichotomous classification of subjectivism and objectivism. The notion has also been expressed in the discussion of the term paradigm, which

was originally coined by Thomas Kuhn (1962) and was further developed by mixed methods scholars as research paradigm. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzi (2004, 24), research paradigm is 'a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research', or simply put, 'a research paradigm refers to a research culture'. In other words, mixed methods research, similar to quantitative and qualitative research, is built on shared beliefs and knowledge.

Third, Habermas emphasizes that reaching understanding is not a monologue; it is rather a dialogue between speakers and hearers. He notes that 'in communicative action a speaker selects a comprehensible linguistic expression only in order to come to an understanding with a hearer about something and thereby to make himself understandable' (Habermas 1984, 307). Greene (2008, 20) proposes a 'mixed methods way of thinking' based on dialectic stance, which refers to a way of thinking in social inquiry that 'actively invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple stand-points on what is important and to be valued and cherished'. Recently, Johnson creates the terms of dialectical pragmatism (2009) and dialectical pluralism (2012) as a philosophy and a 'metapraradigm' (2012, 752) to understand mixed methods research. As with Greene (2007), Johnson's use of the word 'dialectical' highlights the importance of engaging people with different paradigms and perspectives into conversation and integrating different theories and values into workable solutions for research questions.

Fourth, based on the idea of intersubjectivity in communicative actions, the process of understanding and even the truth claimed, is uncertain. In other words, in people interpretation of this world, there are a range of possible meanings, rather than one single meaning. Therefore, validity and validity claims are also uncertain and can be 'challenged and queried' (Dennis 2013, 5). The process of reaching understanding is also negotiable and consensual because this is the essence of being critical. For this reason, 'validity can be conceptualized as the process through which people come to understand one another given the bounded range and flexible field of possible interpretation' (Dennis 2013, 20).

Fifth, Habermas assumes that truth and power are interrelated. When power or force becomes a part of the truth, truth claims are distorted. Therefore, like other criticalists, advocates of Habermas' theory are also concerned with social injustice and inequality and aim for the challenge of status quo and positive social changes. Mertens (2007) suggests that transformative paradigm is used as an overarching framework for mixed methods research in order to discuss the role of the researchers and the reasons for conducting research. The issue of power is a central issue in transformative paradigm; therefore, researchers share social responsibilities and

their major purpose of conducting research is to address social injustice. Mertens (2007, 214) further contends, 'By carefully devising mixed methods to obtain input into the conditions that warrant the conduct of research, opportunities are opened for those whose voices have been traditionally excluded'. Greene (2008, 20) also believes that mixed methods research is advantageous over other research approaches in that 'it unsettles the settled, challenges the taken-for-granted, offers a discordant voice in an otherwise harmonious choir'.

Based on the assumptions of Habermas' theories, truth claims are made through communicative actions and they are immediately translated into validity claims, which are 'equivalent to the assertion(s) that the conditions for the validity of an utterance are fulfilled' (Habermas 1984, 38). According to Habermas (1984, 307),

In the context of communicative action, speech acts can always be rejected under each of the three aspects: the aspect of the rightness that the speaker claims for his action in relation to a normative context (or, indirectly, for these norms themselves); the truthfulness that the speaker claims for the expression of subjective experiences to which he has privileged access; finally, the truth that the speaker, with his utterance, claims for a statement (or for the existential presuppositions of a nominalized proposition).

Here Habermas suggests that there are three validity claims, namely, objective, subjective, and normative claims, which correspond to three realities. In order to illustrate these types of validity claims, an example in an ordinary life context is provided (i.e. while you are sitting in a Luwak coffee shop, you see a friend pass by and you wave to him twice) because as mentioned earlier communicative actions that are the foundation of understanding validity claims resemble the actions in everyday life.

An objective claim is the claim about the features of the physical world (Carspecken 1996). More specifically, it represents things that exist in the external world as well as the relationships. The claim indicates 'what is' and 'what works' (Dennis 2013). It is associated with the third-person perspective, or 'the world-a single world which is "the same" for all people' (Carspecken 1996, 65). Traditionally, observations and measurements are the two most frequently used modes for making a valid objective claim. The principle to validate an objective claim is multiple access, which means that people involved in the communication all have the access to an objective claim in the same way. Disagreements during the communication can be resolved through repeated observations and measurements, or through discussions of the procedures (Carspecken 1996). Some objective claims in the above example of waving to a friend include: there is a Luwak coffee shop, you are sitting (in a chair), your friend is passing by, and you wave twice. These claims are based on the observations of you or your friend, or any other people that are involved in the scenario. If all the people in your group hope to validate a simple claim that you wave twice, for instance, they need to count the frequency of the wave based on the same counting system.

A subjective claim is the claim about an individual's subjective states and represents things that exist in an internal world, which mainly consists of how I feel, desire, and think. This type of claim, indicates what experiences that are internal to me and is associated with first person perspective, or 'my' world. It is validated by privileged access, which means that I am the only person who has the direct access to my own subjective states, and any other people could not have access to my feelings or emotions even though they could show their understanding. To question the validity of a subjective claim is the same as questioning a speaker's sincerity and authenticity (Carspecken 1996; Dennis 2013). In the example of waving to a friend, some possible subjective claims are: you are sitting at the shop just hoping to meet that friend, you wave to him twice because you like him very much, and you are happy to see him. Any person who hopes to validate these claims should ask you for confirmation. For instance, a girl who is sitting beside you says, 'You must be happy to see your friend because I saw you smile at that moment'. You could deny that claim by saying, 'No, I was not happy to see him. I was smiling because I thought of something funny about another friend at the moment'. The girl could choose to believe in you or not, but she cannot say that you are lying because she has no access to your emotions.

Normative/normative-evaluative claim is the third type of validity claim and refers to the claims about a social world with consensual norms and values, which are generally about what is right, wrong, and appropriate (Carspecken 1996; Dennis 2013). People use 'should' or 'ought to' to describe this kind of claim. Normative claim is associated with second-person perspective and 'concerns the nature of our world rather than "the" world or "my" world' (Carspecken 1996, 83). The way of validating normative claims is the shared access and its validation depends on specific contexts that an individual is in. This social world, or 'our' world, could be called into question but people from different backgrounds can reach agreement by communication. One normative validity claim in the example of waving to a friend is that people should wave to a friend when they see him or her; otherwise, they should be considered impolite. It is possible that this norm is not applied to another culture, but people from two cultures with different norms can communicate about these norms and reach their agreement.

These three validity claims are interrelated and only one validity claim cannot lead to any understanding. Habermas argues, 'reaching understanding … does not rest only on the inter-subjective recognition of a single, thematically stressed validity claim'. In other words, any speech act between a speaker and a hearer achieves an agreement at three levels, as stated by Habermas (1984, 307-308). It belongs to the communicative intent of the

speaker (a) that he perform a speech act that is right in respect to the given normative context, so that between him and the hearer an inter-subjective relation will come about which is recognized as legitimate; (b) that he make a true statement (or correct existential pre-suppositions), so that the hearer will accept and share the knowledge of the speaker; and (c) that he expresses truthfully his beliefs, intentions, feelings, desires, and the like, so that the hearer will give credence to what is said.

What Habermas suggests here is that any claim includes objective, subjective, and normative validity claims. For an objective claim that you wave to your friend twice, a possible subjective claim is that waving to your friend twice shows you are happy to see your friend, and a normative claim is that you should wave to your friend when you see each other. For a subjective claim that 'I am happy to see my friend', a possible objective claim is that you have a friend, and a normative claim is that seeing a friend ought to be a happy experience. A normative claim that 'I should wave to a friend when I see him' implies an objective claim that you wave to a friend when seeing him and a subjective claim that you are happy to do so. These interpretations derived from the claims are entangled together and any claims cannot be understood separately.

Validity of Research

Validity claims can be applied to discuss the validity in mixed methods research because all three kinds of claims are derived from the procedures and techniques of conducting quantitative and qualitative research, or, the quantitative and qualitative components of mixed methods research. It is true that quantitative research focuses on statistically significant differences or relationships and it produces more objective claims. However, this does not mean it contains no subjective or normative claims. Instead, it shows that objective claims are just 'foregrounded' (Dennis 2013, 25).

Furthermore, the procedure of measuring a construct, a fundamental practice in conducting quantitative research, also involves objective, subjective, and normative claims. Measurement usually begins with operational definitions, which are rooted in a shared language, culture, object-term, value, or norms. Even for a construct as simple as gender, its definition is related to the norms of a society during some period of time. Defining whether an individual is a female or male, in our modern era, is much more complex than five decades ago (Carspecken 1996). Other situations that seem very objective, such as, counting the frequency of waving, measuring the length of a table, depends on a shared system of counting and measurement. In other words, the construct that each researcher hopes to measure is determined by a set of theoretical assumptions and methodological procedures that have been adopted in the culture that he resides in and have existed there for a long time. On the other hand, most of the constructs

measured in educational research are individuals' views, attitudes, or subjective states, such as, self-esteem and self-efficacy, although they are represented by an objective score on a scale (Carspecken 1996).

In the same token, the three types of validity claims also exist in qualitative research. There is no question that qualitative research focuses on individuals' subjective states and subjective claims are more foregrounded, whereas it might be difficult for people to make a connection between objective claims and qualitative research. However, any qualitative study begins with primary records, which include the descriptions of the settings, participants, and happenings. These records are essentially objective claims and they form the basis on which subjective and normative claims are made explicit (Carspecken 1996). As one of the most widely used qualitative methods, observation is often considered subjective and interpretive. But the observational elements in qualitative studies, as in any other studies, have both objective and subjective components as well as normative parts. The objective component in the observation is related to the procedures and functions, the subjective component is related to the interpretation generated from the observation, and the normative aspect is related to what are acceptable for participants and researchers in the observation under a context or setting (Dennis 2013).

Implications

The examination of validity issue in mixed methods research is of critical importance to advance educational research and disseminate research findings. The validity issue is also the central issue of the quality of educational research, which determines the quality of education in a nation. This examination is also highly pertinent to the continuous conversation on what research methodology could provide credible evidence in educational research (Berliner 2002; Donaldson, Christie, and Mark 2009; Eisenhart and Towne 2003; Slavin 2002). Paradigm wars or the quantitative-qualitative debate started from the 1970s but little consensus has been arrived until now (Donaldson, Christie, and Mark 2009). Although quantitative scholars expressed their dissatisfaction with the research paradigm in their area and called for complementing quantitative research with qualitative modes of inquiry (Howe 2004), they still discussed research methodology from post-positivism perspective and contended that randomized experimental designs are the gold standard for providing scientific evidence, particularly for establishing causality. Other researchers argued that the sole reliance on experimental methods does more harm to the field and the utilization of multiple research methods should be encouraged (Donaldson 2009; Erickson and Gutierrez 2002; St Pierre 2002).

On the other hand, when researchers understand that quantitative and qualitative approaches have its own

shortcomings and mixed methods research that combines the strengths of these two approaches could be the best alternative, mixed methods research has been criticized for its pre-dominant use of postpositivism languages (Denzin 2010), the incapability of providing valid evidence, and marginalizing qualitative research methods (Howe 2004). Addressing validity issue in mixed methods research from a perspective of qualitative theory might provide a better idea to understand the issue. Additionally, given the great influence of Habermas' theory on education and qualitative research (Ewert 1991), the selection of the theory as a framework to discuss validity issue is legitimate. Furthermore, because three types of validity claims are all used to provide validity evidence in research, it is possible to create an overarching framework to map the validity issues in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches in educational research, thus possibly ending quantitative vs. qualitative, and quantitative, qualitative vs. mixed methods debates.

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