

GILE Journal of Skills Development

Paul Delnooz (2025) Research Done Right: A Practical Guide to Social Science Research

Brigitta Czók

Trek & Teach Glocademy, Hungary

 ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4161-9998>

In recent years, the growing emphasis on skill development would be incomplete without recognising the crucial role of well-designed research. It is not self-evident that if we put our mind to research, we can design it well. Often, as emerging researchers, we dive into the process with great enthusiasm, only to realise - after bitter mistakes, rejections, and misguided research plans - that “good” research requires much more than just commitment. The Research Done Right: A Practical Guide to Social Science Research by Paul Delnooz provides a valuable contribution to this journey, offering a comprehensive and creative guide to research design and methodology.

As an educational anthropologist, I have always found that research was always a creative and exciting experience thanks to my supervisors and scholarship opportunities. Designing research does not focus only on data collection and analysis but understanding the circumstances of the examined phenomenon and the whole process management. When I came across Delnooz’ research methods guide Musil’s words came to my mind. “Every man is born with the strength to experience the most immortal sensations. He is not bound by laws. But then life forces him to choose between two possibilities, and he always feels that one is missing, always one, the undiscovered third possibility.” (Musil, 1965, p. 141).

The greatest contribution of Research Done Right lies in its ability to cultivate the skill of discovering this “third possibility.” It offers a fresh perspective on traditional approaches to research and provides insights that are highly relevant to scholars and practitioners across various disciplines.

1. Structure and content

Research Done Right is structured into two volumes with a total of 10 chapters, each focusing on a different aspect of research design. The first volume, comprising the first four chapters, begins with a discussion of research paradigms and challenges commonly accepted assumptions about the research process. As Delnooz states, “There is no set recipe for research. How it is carried out in reality depends on the perspective, knowledge, and, above all, creativity of the researcher” (Delnooz, 2025, p. 8).

Some of the author's assertions may seem provocative, particularly when addressing the practical relevance of researchers' work, but they are invaluable for early-career researchers as they help reveal the "hidden secrets of science." (Delnooz, 2025, p. 5).

The first two chapters lay a strong theoretical foundation, challenging biases and encouraging critical thinking with examples, such as the "stork theory" and the "handbook of torture." These examples help to illustrate the importance of action research and how it connects with broader societal issues, such as women's emancipation. The third chapter offers practical guidance on how to conduct investigations, distinguishing between explanatory and descriptive research. The first volume concludes with a reflection on problem formulation, the selection of definitions, and the "4 W's" technique for gaining a comprehensive understanding of research problems: "In this technique, the issue to be solved is temporarily put on hold. Answers to these four questions are first sought to get the fullest possible picture of the historical and situational context in which the problem or issue arises" (Delnooz, 2025, p. 52).

The second volume of the book is about the techniques for data collection and analysis. In the remaining 6 chapters (Chapter V. to Chapter X.) the operationalisation issue, the cause and effect in research, the types of data collection, interviewing techniques, the sampling theory and basic statistical context are outlined in detail. While these topics are often challenging to explain in an engaging way, Delnooz succeeds by using simple, and sometimes humorous examples. For instance, he describes a 25-year-old woman discussing her fear of men to explain in-depth interviewing (pp. 37-38) and demystifies the Z-table of reliability related to sample size.

One of the book's major strengths is its accessibility. Delnooz simplifies complex concepts and provides creative problem-solving strategies that are easily understandable by both novice researchers and experienced academics. Each chapter begins by raising a research problem, followed by an analysis and real-life examples, and concludes with findings presented in a table format, which makes the research methods practical and applicable. These examples are particularly valuable for readers looking to design research that evaluates skill development initiatives.

2. Key themes and relevance to skill development

Although the book primarily focuses on research methods, its relevance to skill development research is significant. The processes of skill acquisition, retention, and transfer all benefit from well-designed research that captures change over time. Additionally, the sections on mixed-methods research provide valuable insights for those looking to combine quantitative and qualitative data to gain a more holistic view of skill development. Skill learning is influenced by measurable factors (such as time spent practicing) and subjective factors (such as motivation and self-efficacy), and Delnooz offers detailed guidance on integrating these diverse data sources.

3. Areas for improvement

When I conducted research among the international teachers living in Hungary, I had to answer who I am as a researcher and how I position myself—not only for my own understanding but also for my participants and readers (Czók, 2021). While *Research Done Right* offers a thorough exploration of research design, it could benefit from more targeted discussions on researcher reflexivity and self-positioning. Although reflection is mentioned in the book, it is not emphasised, and novice researchers might overlook its importance in the research process.

Another area that could be further developed is the discussion of ethical considerations. While the book mentions research ethics, this section is relatively brief. Given the complexities of conducting research, especially in contexts involving human subjects, greater attention could be paid to issues such as informed consent, data privacy, and the ethical implications of research outcomes.

4. Conclusion

Paul Delnooz has succeeded in creating a book that bridges the gap between theoretical rigour and practical application. For those engaged in social science research, *Research Done Right* provides valuable insights into designing methodologically sound studies that are relevant to real-world learning and development scenarios. As Delnooz himself states, “All told, it is time for a new kind of book. A book which explains both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ ways of doing research in a balanced and tolerant way. A book which promotes critical thinking, reflection, creativity, and problem solving” (Delnooz, 2025, p. 8). This innovative approach may well be the “undiscovered third possibility” that Musil alludes to.

References

- Musil, R. (1965). *The man without qualities* Vol.2, Into the millennium. (The criminals). Secker & Warburg.
- Delnooz, P. V. A. (2025). *Research Done Right: A Practical Guide to Social Science Research: Part 1: Methodology and Perspective*. P4Y Knowledge Repository.
<https://doi.org/10.56611/p4y.book.1>
- Delnooz, P. V. A. (2025). *Research Done Right: A Practical Guide to Social Science Research: Part 2: Techniques For Data Collection and Analysis*. P4Y Knowledge Repository
<https://doi.org/10.56611/p4y.book.2>
- Czók, B. (2021). *A kapcsolatok embereivé nevelni. Gondolatok a 21. századi tanítás kihívásairól és annak kutatásáról [Nurture people of relationships. Reflections on the challenges of teaching and its research in the 21st century]* In: Kihívások és megoldások a XXI. század pedagógiájában. Eger, Eszterházy Károly Katolikus Egyetem Líceum Kiadó.
<https://doi.org/10.46403/Kihivasokesmegoldasok.2021.211>

Declaration Statements

Conflict of Interest

The author reports no conflict of interest.

Funding

The author received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

Data Availability

No dataset is associated with this article.

Open Access Agreement

This article is published under a CC BY 4.0 license. This license allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator. The license allows for commercial use. For more information, please visit

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Corresponding Author

The corresponding author for this manuscript is Czók Brigitta who can be contacted by email via brigiczok@gmail.com.