

Editorial for EJBRM Volume 16 Issue 3

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Editorial by the Editor: Ann Brown

The research process is complex, involving many conceptually different steps. For business and social science researchers there are a large range of research methodologies available and this toolkit is expanding every time a new type of problem generates a research question. The identification of a suitable problem for research along with the most appropriate research method can be a challenge involving a high level of creativity, whereas applying a chosen method must follow accepted and well defined rules. Adrian French (A review of Factors and Activities Contributing to proficient Academic Business Researchers) gives us an interesting review of the research carried on researchers themselves, to show some of the factors that motivate us as individual researchers to work on this most challenging of activities.

The remaining five papers present and assess their methodologies through application to a fascinating range of cases. Hence all papers include empirical analysis. The cases include - comparison of outsourcing strategies between engineering firms with Headquarters in UK and German (Mitchell); obtaining productivity gains in Knowledge Work through IT for sales representatives and software engineers (Pashkevich and Haftor); identifying career path patterns in Belgian households (Roman, Mortelmans and Heylan); Organisational change in 2 UK Higher Education Institutions (Farquharson, Sinha and Clarke) and the beliefs held by an indigenous group in relation to a major industrial development in their lands (Clutterbuck).

But perhaps the most outstanding feature of all these paper is the use of multiple research methodologies by:

- Combining more than one method in sequence and/or iterating between them using the results to inform the next step

or

- Applying more than one method in parallel to create alternative views of the data

Three of the papers combine several methods in sequence. This is the classic approach of Mixed Methods as the paper by Mitchell (A review of Mixed methods, Pragmatism and Abduction Techniques) explains. Farquharson et al (Researching Organisational Change in Higher Education: A Holistic Tripartite Approach) combine Lean management ideas, Appreciative Enquiry and Participatory Action Research to make sense of organisational change in the HE sector. Clutterbuck (Investigating the Social beliefs that Attach to indigenous Mining in New Caledonia) shows how the combination of Actor-Network theory, Historicity and Discourse Analysis can give an extraordinary insight into the perceptions of stakeholders living in and governing New Caledonia, who have been subjected to the traumatic changes that mining has wrought in this island.

Pashkevich and Haftor (Exploring Complementarities of productive IT use through Methodological Complementarism) and Roman et al (Establishing Typologies for Diverging Career Paths through the Life Course: A Comparison of two Methods) took a different path. In each paper two types of method have been applied in parallel. These alternative approaches can be seen to complement each other in producing differing but equally valid and useful insights.