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Editorial by the Editor: Ann Brown

Invitation to our readers to send in their opinions and views by letter to the editor

One of the papers in this issue raises an issue central to academic writing and reviewing – plagiarism - and proposes a controversial change to current accepted practice (Re-imagining Academic Writing to De-incentivise Plagiarism by Anthony Stacey). The paper proposes a paradigm shift in how the academic community might manage referencing. We feel that many of you will have strong views on this proposal and we want to hear from you; indeed, we are always interested in well-argued points of view. All your letters will be read by the Associate Editors and selected ones will be published in a later issue.

This issue also includes a book review of a remarkable book on Mixed Methods (Pat Bazeley's 'A Practical Introduction to Mixed Methods'). We would like to publish more book reviews. If you are aware of a recently published book on research methods, which you would recommend to our readership, please send us the reference with your reasons for proposing it.

The research papers include papers on:

- Data handling
- Case application of mixed methods
- Theory development

Data handling - Two of these four papers focus on ways to enhance the collection and analysis of data, using case material to illustrate their ideas. These are:

- A new framework for identifying the key themes of qualitative data emerging from the initial analysis (Alistair J Campbell)
- Ways to increase response rates of surveys in the specific projects involving micro-firms in England (Marc E Betton, J Robert Branston and Philip R Tomlinson)

Case application - an example of how to apply Mixed Methods which also offers a critical assessment of the approach (Oluka Pross Nagitta and Marcia Mkansi).

Theory development- The fourth paper proposes a method of formative scale development – a theoretical paper for the handling of quantitative data (Dawn Hall and Joshua D Shackman)

Alistair Campbell addresses the problem of making sense of the ramifying set of nodes and themes that usually emerge from the first attempt at analyzing qualitative data. His proposed framework aims to determine a hierarchy of themes by using the attributes that are found in the database itself and hence use the expert knowledge collected in the database. The framework is applied to two mini cases.

Response rates for surveys are a key measure for establishing the credibility of findings. The paper by Marc E Betton and colleagues gives us an in depth review of the survey process adopted for their research project on Micro-firm owner managers' views of regulation in England. The aim is to establish which, if any, of their actions to get more responses from the micro-firms' managers offered the best results.

Oluka Pross Nagitta and Marcia Mkansi describe their application of mixed methods in their research project to identify the key factors in the successful management of the supply chain of medicines for hospitals in Uganda. They make the case for the value of mixed methods for problems of this nature – complex embedded supply chains. This paper is an excellent example of how to use mixed methods as it not only describes the application of a mixed methods approach in detail but assesses the strengths and weaknesses of using it.

The paper by Dawn Hall and Joshua Shackman contributes to theory creation for quantitative data. Two approaches to scale creation – reflective and formative - are compared and 'an empirical example of the hybrid approach of measuring a scale formatively for the first level and reflectively at the second order level' is then proposed.