

Special Issue with Papers From The European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies

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Guest Reviewers:

Bob Hughes

Jocene Vallack

Frank Bezzina and martin Rich

Marie Ashwin

with Mark saunders

Editorial to the conference issue

The subject of research methods in business continues to exhibit an extra-ordinary level of activity and innovation, and this conference (the 13th European Conference on Research Methods in Business and Management) reflected this. Several issues have emerged over the last few years of such importance as to command a separate minitrack within the conference including; Researching Project management, Researching personal experience and teaching research methods

The final selection of papers was made by the editor of the Journal, who is grateful for the help provided by the guest reviewers. The papers selected were chosen for their quality of writing, their relevance to the Journal's objective of publishing papers that offer new insights or practical help in the application of research methods in business research.

The chosen Papers

The first three papers offer some intriguing ideas for managing a key step in using qualitative research methods – the interview. Hilary Drew describes the special barriers posed by interviewing business elites and proposes a technique for offering the lead role in the interview to the respondent while retaining control of the issues to be discussed. The case used to illustrate the approach, is illuminating and the method itself of potential value to interviews of all types of interviewees. The second paper (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins and Peng) is concerned with the meaning that interviewer and interviewee place on the questions and answers that interviews elicit. This paper presents an instrument, decision making maps, that offers a way for interviewer and interviewee to collaborate in establishing a deeper understanding of the topics under discussion. The last paper on interviews (Ali Rostron) offers an insight into the important role that our self identity plays when we make our responses to questions in a typical semi structured interview.

The minitrack on teaching research methods has been of increasing importance at the last few conferences both in terms of quality and numbers of papers contributed. We include three papers from this minitrack. Frank Bezzina and Mark Saunders offer us an eye-opening revelation as to the depth and range of misunderstandings of statistics displayed by a representative sample of expert teachers of research methods. The second paper (Zelma Bone) explains how effective the application of a learning contract to the teaching of research methods can be within one subject module (leadership issues) - with a wealth of positive comments from students who had experienced this approach. Finally Martin Rich introduces an important and developing idea in education – that of personalised learning. He concludes that personalised learning does in principle offer some attractive possibilities for research training.

Researching software project management is an extra-ordinarily complex subject. Software projects always present complex new problems and have a history of missing cost and time targets, hence researching the subject is bound to involve a number of disparate factors. The paper by Zana Ahmedshareef, Robert Hughes and Miltos Petridis explains that 'A challenge confronting software project management research and practice alike is producing practical solutions based on empirical data'. Their solution is appropriately complex and demanding! They propose the use of Actor Network theory (ANT) to create an overview of a whole project and its interconnections. They combine this with software metrics to establish where the problems lie and Grounded Theory for analysing the interview material that may be able to show why the problems occurred. They include a fascinating case example which has been researched using these methods.

The final paper by Sally Eaves seeks to harness the realm of personal experience in qualitative research. The paper is a dense exploration of the philosophy of arts-based methods to benefit research, practice and pedagogy. The case examples show how effective these methods can be in bringing the researcher and researched together in a shared exploration of meaning.