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Editorial by the Editor: Ann Brown

The long standing debate between research rigour and practical relevance for business research has spawned a number of research methods that seek to span this divide. Each of the three papers in this issue address this challenge. All are concerned with business problems for which practical actions are required. Understanding the problem is a key requirement for identifying appropriate action. Such business problems are seen as imbedded in a social system which affects and is affected by the researcher's work. All papers adopt an interpretivist approach with two papers explicitly stating this. Each paper's proposal of a research method is illustrated by case application.

The methods proposed include:

- Activity Theory
- Participatory Action Research (PAR) combined with mixed methods and systems thinking
- Design Science combined with reflective practice

Activity Theory is described in detail together with it's strengths and weaknesses in the paper by R.Kamanga, P.Alexander an F. Kanobe. The theory is presented as of particular relevance when aiming to identify reasons for failure in existing situations. So it is no surprise that the cases used to illustrate it's application are both on the use of new Information systems (IS) – a subject notorious for it's disappointing performance!

The paper by S Hughes and F Scholtz will be of particular interest to business school teachers. Their paper reports the research methods used for a long running research project on an interesting teaching innovation in modules at two universities in South Africa. The modules center on a computer based business simulation and the research method employs a combination of participatory research methods, mixed methods and systems thinking. The research aims include a wide range of questions focused on 'measurably increasing the impact of simulation based modules'.

JTJ van Rensburg and R Goede have written a largely theoretical paper on combining reflective practice with Design Science methods. The core of the paper is their detailed description of the modification of the design science research framework by the inclusion of reflective practice at each of the five stages of the standard model. An excellent case is made for the potential value of such a modification in generating a wider range of knowledge and insight than the standard model. The case example on a concern that IT graduates lack certain skills expected by industry gives a good introduction to the application of the framework and the benefits of the approach.