

# RESEARCH REPORTER

Faculty of Business Research Newsletter | Issue 3 Winter 2015



## *Developing Braver Leaders*

**The role of the leadership coach**

*Making a difference to business*



## Maureen Brookes is the new President of ICHRIE

In July, **Maureen Brookes**, Reader at the Oxford School of Hospitality Management, was officially sworn in as President of the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (ICHRIE) in Orlando, USA.

ICHRIE is the oldest, global association of hospitality and tourism educators and professionals. In her role as President, Maureen will be responsible for the implementation of a new five-year strategic plan, which she developed while serving as Vice-President last year.

The plan focuses on increasing membership value through the development of new products and services for teaching, research and professional development and through enhancing networking between members from 58 countries served by six different federations.

Donald Sloan, Head of Oxford School of Hospitality Management, said: "I am thrilled for Maureen. This appointment speaks volumes about the high regard in which she is held in the academic community, internationally. It is also great news for the Faculty of Business and Oxford Brookes University as a whole - further enhancing our reputation and connections across continents."



## Hello and welcome...

...to the third edition of Research Reporter. This publication showcases the research activities taking place in the Faculty of Business at Oxford Brookes University.

In this edition, we feature examples of projects with potential impact on everyday life. This includes research around digital citizenship, undertaken by academics in the Department of Marketing, which has the potential to help government bodies engage with citizens more effectively, as well as household waste disposal research in the Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics, which looks at consumer behaviour.

We report on new research undertaken in the Department of Business and Management, which explores how poetry workshops can help employees to voice their anxieties over work-life balance, plus a new book by an academic and PhD student from the International Centre for Coaching and Mentoring Studies, which examines how coaching can help to develop braver leaders.

We also introduce you to one of our academics from the Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics and his unique research with focuses on the relationship between human rights and economic interests.

**Dr Louise Grisoni,**  
**Associate Dean, Research and Knowledge Exchange**



"Professor Singh is a combination of academic and practical excellence. He is meticulous in his research and teaching in the areas of emerging alternative economic ideas. Pritam is an excellent supervisor for those who not only want to develop their knowledge on alternative economic paradigm but also want to contribute to change the ideas that have become non-functional, counterproductive and obsolete in development economics and political economy. He is a real help when one is in critical need."

**Lok Nath Bhusal, PhD Student**

## Spotlight on:

### Professor Pritam Singh, Professor of Economics, Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics

Professor Pritam Singh came to Oxford Brookes University as a Senior Lecturer in 1988. Since then he has held a number of academic roles before becoming a Professor of Economics in 2013.

One of Pritam's main interests is the relationship between human rights and economics. This is prominent in his book entitled 'Economy, Culture and Human Rights: Turbulence in Punjab, India and Beyond', a unique scholarly text, where he presents economic theories that have been influenced by his heritage and first-hand experiences of human rights violations as an undergraduate student in India.

Pritam said: "I have tried to weave the lessons and insights I have gained from my personal encounter with human rights violations into my theoretical formulations and critical evaluations of

human rights practices."

The book, which Pritam uses in his teaching, focuses on the two-way relationship between human rights and economic interests of both government and business corporations. He discusses how some nations and businesses have ignored human rights violations in the pursuit of economic interests and how this can cause people to become a powerful economic force through campaigning if this deliberate ignorance becomes public knowledge.

'Economy, Culture and Human Rights...' has had global impact and organisations such as Amnesty International have sought Pritam's advice on developing a convincing case for business organisations to incorporate human rights in their business strategies.

The university has recently nominated Pritam for the 2015 Höffmann Academic Award, which aims to support the endeavours of an outstanding academic by awarding a prize to ground-breaking work carried out on topics of intercultural competence.

Pritam supervises PhD students in the following areas: Political economy of federalism and human rights; The dialectical link between economic interests and human rights; Theories and practices of economic development in Asia, Africa and Latin America. He can be contacted at [psingh@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:psingh@brookes.ac.uk)

His book, *Economy, Culture and Human Rights* (2010), can be found at: [www.threeessays.com](http://www.threeessays.com)



# Developing braver leaders

PhD student **Mike McLaughlin** and **Dr Elaine Cox**, Principal Lecturer and Programme Lead in the International Centre for Coaching and Mentoring Studies, have published a new book called *Leadership Coaching: Developing Braver Leaders*.

It begins by highlighting Martin Luther King's assertion that the measure of a man is where he stands in times of challenge, not where he stands in moments of comfort. Throughout the book Mike and Elaine suggest that leaders can develop the agency and direction they need in times of challenge by using a leadership coach:

"A coach can facilitate a range of sense-making strategies that promote development and understanding for leaders as they brave the problems presented in our complex global workplaces."

They highlight a distinct gap between where we are in terms of leadership capability, and where we need to be, both in relation to public expectation, and employee expectation. In the following extract they explain their rationale and the role of coaching:

"Coaches have a particular role to play in the development of leaders. This view was driven by a strong sense that things are not as they could or should be. Since beginning writing this book, we could easily have gone back and rewritten our examples of leadership and corporate fiascos probably at least half a dozen times over: either things are getting worse, or things that were not getting much exposure before, are now, or both. In any event, the good news is that people are generally more aware of the shortcomings of some leaders, some corporations and some politicians.

"That awareness is important, but so is the pressing need to do things differently. We believe that there is much that is right and good in the

corporate world and that we should embrace the wonderful and positive elements of business and its leaders, and celebrate the genuine successes that are possible when things are done the 'right way'. There is much work to be done, however, to make it more acceptable for individuals to testify to or disclose the darker behaviours that they observe in their organisations. We must all become more comfortable at pointing out where things could be better or where a braver solution is possible.

"Coaches, we would argue, have a role to play here. Coaching leaders to be brave is not something we can do on every assignment. Coaching is all about the client agenda and if the client does not want to focus on taking brave

action, but is stuck on another issue or is focused in a more individualistic paradigm of profit and efficiency, it may be that the coach pays no heed to bravery at all, or, if the individualistic concerns are too heavily rooted in the ego, a coach may even decide to disengage.

"However, we would suggest that coaches may wish to do some good in a potentially toxic environment, and to help clients in those environments become the braver leaders they probably want to be but are currently unable to be. Coaches could make a conscious decision to engage with that important work, and do so mindfully, rather than being swept along on a wave of financial necessity. Our hope is that we have given those coaches

who want to engage with the braver agenda, a model of coaching to inspire them."

Although coaches do not generally provide advice and tend to always work with the client's agenda, Mike and Elaine suggest that will not always work:

"Rather than the coach working as a reflective glass, or as a demonstration to the leader's position in the organisation, they propose the time has come for the coach to be connected to the wider need for change - a change for the better. They suggest that "if coaches do not care about humanity or do not have moral fibre, and feel able to challenge their clients on these issues, perhaps they should not be in the role."

This book is fundamentally about coaches and leaders but Mike and Elaine say it is also about all of us:

"It does not serve us any more, if it ever did, to turn a blind eye, to walk away, to hope or presume that whatever we see that disturbs us will never impact us. We look to the leaders to change, but so must we. We should not encourage organisations or leaders who display no humanity, or compassion or moral fibre or environmental responsibility.

"If the environment that we coach or work in is toxic in any of these areas, it would probably be best for all of us to agree not to work in such environments at all. As coaches, or as employees, we could walk away: we could all uphold our own values and

decline any work that does not allow us to do so. So this book is a clarion call for leaders and coaches, but also for anyone else who wants to think about change in the way leaders and organisations function.

"I suppose it is for our children and their future, too. It is about every coach being brave enough to bring sustainability in all its complexity and guises into the coaching room as a challenge to the next, long-awaited, generation of brave leaders."

*Leadership Coaching: Developing Braver Leaders*  
Mike McLaughlin and Elaine Cox  
Published by Routledge,  
New York (2016)





# Poetry helps to voice anxiety over work-life balance

Poetry workshops can help stressed employees voice their anxieties over work-life balance, according to new research. Poetry brings emotions such as guilt to the surface, helping to resolve issues around prioritising between work and family or leisure activities.

Poetry workshops can help stressed employees voice their anxieties over work-life balance, according to new research. Poetry brings emotions such as guilt to the surface, helping to resolve issues around prioritising between work and family or leisure activities.

Work-life balance and how to achieve it is a topical issue, especially as more than one in 10 of the UK working population work 49 hours or more a week. As organisations recover from the economic down-turn, the pressures, choices and impacts on people working in organisations are likely to change, making work-life balance a greater priority.

Research led by **Dr Louise Grisoni**, Associate Dean Research and Knowledge Exchange in the Faculty of Business, has found that poetry is a creative way of engaging with this topic and was the focus of The Poetics of Work-Life Balance event within the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Festival of Social Science on the 13 November 2015.

Louise said: "What we have found is that poetry gives people a way to express their thoughts and feelings. They do this through the power of metaphor and similes which enables them to see their issues in a new light, to give permission to their concerns and get to the essence of people's values."

Traditional approaches to achieving a better work-life balance have focused on asking people to identify how much time they allocate to different tasks or activities. Louise has adopted a more holistic approach with her research which is based around poetry workshops.

Participants have included local authority managers as well as master's students mainly working in the public sector. They are encouraged to write their own verse or to create collective poems within the group. In group work participants

write one line then keywords, and these words go around the group - people 'discover' their own poem from the collective ones.

Another approach is using haiku, a form of three-line poetry, to enable those taking part to access buried emotions. The following is an example of a verse from a group poem created in one of these workshops:

***Work-life balance: An ideal to aspire to  
The ideal slips away as the turmoil rages  
The turmoil of the 25-hour day  
Never a fulfilled day: never enough  
Never, never a question I ask myself whenever  
I don't achieve it  
Wherever, whenever, life to the full***

The on-going study has highlighted that people are initially anxious about writing poetry because they regard it as 'highbrow'. Working with poetry also requires different skills to those that many managers have developed and perfected in daily practice. However, it does enable them to depart from traditional ways of thinking, to be creative rather than reinforcing what they already know, and to 'say the unsayable'.

In addition, the study has identified that people come away from the workshops feeling more in control of their lives and how they allocate their time between work, family and hobbies. "It's about seeing things differently and thinking differently, not about creating beautifully crafted poetry," says Louise. "I'd hesitate to call it therapy - it's about exercising other parts of our brain, for example, the creative right part rather than the rational left part which is focused on problem-solving."

For further information contact  
Dr Louise Grisoni, lgrisoni@brookes.ac.uk,  
01865 760288

*The ESRC is the UK's largest funder of research on the social and economic questions facing us today. It supports the development and training of the UK's future social scientists and also funds major studies that provide the infrastructure for research. ESRC-funded research informs policymakers and practitioners and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective*





# The challenges of engaging with digital citizens

A research project led by Department of Marketing academics **Dr Sarah Quinton**, Senior Lecturer, **Dr Ana Canhoto**, Postgraduate Programme Lead with **Dr Thom Oliver**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow and **Dr Tribi Budihathoki**, Research Assistant.

The transformational impact of digital technologies across society is viewed as a strategic research priority by the UK Research Council and the UK government has a general strategy to 'channel shift' the provision of services to digital.

Likewise, local government bodies are appraising the digital technologies through which to engage their communities as an approach to delivering resource efficient services. Yet, little is understood about how citizens are using digital technologies to interact with their local councils, which segments councils should be engaging with and how and what the priorities for engagement should be.

The pilot study currently being completed has worked with two local government authorities Oxford City and West Oxfordshire District Council to elicit data and form longer term research relationships. Both councils are in the process of re-evaluating their digital provision to citizens and this project aligns with the wider government strategy to 'channel shift' services.

The initial stage of the project involved interviews with key council managers responsible for the implementation of the channel shift 'default to digital' initiative. The interview questions were derived from both academic and public sector specific literature, and the interview data were coded into NVivo analytical software.

The second stage comprised the design and dissemination of a 20 question questionnaire, to the citizens of Oxfordshire, the results of which are currently being analysed. Early stage findings include: a mismatch between a top-down approach to digital communication and service provision by the councils and the actual engagement and usage levels by citizens, in addition to citizens prioritising 'problem solving' as a key online preference.

Dr Sarah Quinton said: "We are keen to determine if citizens and councils in other UK regions are facing similar digital challenges and hope to extend this pilot study nationally once further funding is secured."

This project has the potential to create impact as the findings:

- will benefit the local and regional community within Oxfordshire, as highlighted as a strategic priority in the university's 2020 strategy document
- will create value through collaborative public engagement and outreach activity in engaging local authorities and citizens with research
- have the potential to influence public policy in the implementation of 'channel shift' at a local level
- have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the public sector, through more effective deployment of digitalised resources
- have the potential to improve the social welfare of citizens through gaining a better understanding of citizen engagement with digital technologies.



## Yoko's rubbish projects

**Dr Yoko Nagase**, Senior Lecturer in Economics, is beginning work on a project looking at cross-country comparison of household waste management between Japan and the UK, studying how the waste disposal and collection fee structure affects the behaviour of households and businesses in waste generation and disposal.

Yoko said: "This research came about because I got in touch with researchers who were presenting a paper on 'immoral waste disposal' in Japan. They found that some Japanese households take their rubbish to public places like parks and supermarkets so they do not have to pay for the collection.

"I think what may be happening in the UK is the complete opposite because

only businesses have to pay for their waste disposal and it is likely that in some cases they may take their rubbish to households. We thought this could be an interesting contrast."

Two final-year economics students have been selected to be the Research Assistants for this project, helping Yoko collect the relevant data.

Another project will explore the households' (or consumers') decision-making criteria in choosing durable goods, such as a washer, and the sorts of characteristics critical for consumers in deciding what to buy. By investigating what consumers look for in the goods, Yoko and colleagues hope to elicit useful policy recommendation for promoting sustainable and less waste-generating product choice.

Yoko said: "At a conference I went to in London there was a presentation about a really successful Korean electronics company who advertise the fact that they will repair any products that consumers purchase at repair services in their stores, but the customer may have to pay higher prices for the product. This research is interested in finding out how much people care about different aspects of a product and whether they would pay more for this service."

For more information about this research, please contact Yoko Nagase: [ynagase@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ynagase@brookes.ac.uk), 01865 485 997





# Faculty of Business doctoral event

In June, the Faculty of Business Doctoral Event brought together research students and supervisors from the Business School and the Oxford School of Hospitality Management.

Seven PhD presentations, three external speakers, 65 attendees, a bright summer's day and an evening meal in Brookes Restaurant brought the faculty's doctoral activities in 2014-2015 to a fitting finale.

The PhD presentations came courtesy of volunteer students who outlined their contribution to knowledge: Barbara Brown, Priscila Pereira, James Pritchard, Nadia Singh, Rachel Wang, Siobhan Ward and Heba Younis.

Delivered with great confidence in a very demanding eight minutes, each

student benefitted from the challenging but positive experience that comes from articulating a succinct research statement to a questioning audience.

The external speakers were led by Professor Gillian Symon, Professor of Organisational Studies at Royal Holloway, London. She focused on qualitative methodology and the challenges faced using qualitative visual research and qualitative research online.

Sir Andrew Dilnot, Warden of Nuffield College Oxford and the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, added a quantitative balance with a thought-provoking commentary on the use and misuse of statistics by the Government and others; you, me and everyone. Andrew produced much laughter

among the attendees whilst making a number of serious points.

Finally, Christine Toomey, in conversation with **Dr David Bowen**, Reader and Head of Doctoral Programmes, and PhD student Rosa Codina, drew out similarities between journalistic research and doctoral research. Christine has been a foreign correspondent and feature writer for The Sunday Times for more than 20 years and has twice won the Amnesty International award for Magazine Story of the Year. Her sometimes chilling encounters with the darker side of life produced highly relevant and stimulating thoughts among other topics.

# Research in the Faculty of Business

Within the Faculty of Business at Oxford Brookes University we have been building a research culture and expanding our research community with wide-ranging interests in many specialist areas. We have three research centres, which bring distinctiveness to the work of the faculty, and four departments with identified research clusters that bring focus to the subject areas.

## RESEARCH CENTRES

### ASKe Pedagogy Research Centre

Director: **Prof Margaret Price**

The impact of this centre is widespread and influences learning and teaching practices around the world.

### The Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice

Director: **Prof Simonetta Manfredi**

This centre takes a multidisciplinary approach linking legal and human resource management perspectives.

### The International Centre for Coaching and Mentoring Studies

Director: **Dr Tatiana Bachirova** and **Dr Elaine Cox**

This centre specialises in coaching and mentoring, education and supervision for coaches and mentors at master's and doctoral levels.

## DEPARTMENTS

### Accounting, Finance and Economics

Research Lead: **Dr Samantha Miles**

Clusters: **Accounting, Accountability and Responsibility; Applied Microeconomics; Applied Macro, Public and Financial Economics; Development and Environmental Economics.**

### Business and Management

Research Lead: **Dr Juliette Koning**

Clusters: **International Strategy; Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Operations; Critical Management Studies.**

### Marketing

Research Lead: **Prof Janine Dermody**

Clusters: **Brand Strategy; Consumers and Consumption; Digital Marketing.**

### Oxford School of Hospitality Management

Research Lead: **Prof Levent Altinay**

Clusters: **International Business Development; Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility.**

If you are thinking about **joining us as a doctoral student**, commissioning a market research survey or considering executive education, you will experience a quality research culture in a lively and supportive research environment.





For more information about research opportunities  
and doctoral study in the Faculty of Business

**tel:** +44 (0)1865 48 58 58

**email:** [business@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:business@brookes.ac.uk)

**[www.business.brookes.ac.uk/research](http://www.business.brookes.ac.uk/research)**