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## Toddling Towards Childhood: A Bibliometric Analysis of the First QROM Lustrum (2006 - 2010)

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## Toddling Towards Childhood: A Bibliometric Analysis of the First QROM Lustrum (2006 - 2010)

### Abstract

The first years in the life of a journal are the most difficult ones as editors need to advertise it effectively and attract worldwide researchers to safeguard its launch and maintenance. This study provides a bibliometric analysis of the first lustrum of the journal Qualitative Research in Organizational and Management (QROM) in an attempt to assess its production both in methodological and conceptual terms. The sample was made up of 66 articles by 109 (co - )authors from 66 institutions. A total of 53.2% of contributors were female and were responsible for 42.4% of the single - authored articles (compare to 34.8% of only - male articles). Eight “invisible schools , ”, 37.5% national ones, were obtained by relating authors to sharing co - authors (grade 1), institutions (grade 2) or cities (grade 3). The most productive authors were Cassell, Grandy, and McKenna, the first two being developers of invisible schools. The number of articles, theoretical perspectives, and diversity of applied techniques has increased in QRO M over the lustrum period with UK and Canada as most prolific countries followed by USA, Sweden, and Australia. Most articles dealt with organizational and managerial issues under discourses or narrative perspectives using interviews and sense - making theories. The evolution of these findings is also presented.

### Keywords

Bibliometric Analysis, Qualitative Research in Organizational and Management (QROM), Lustrum

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## **Toddlers Towards Childhood: A Bibliometric Analysis of the First QROM Lustrum (2006-2010)**

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*The first years in the life of a journal are the most difficult ones as editors need to advertise it effectively and attract worldwide researchers to safeguard its launch and maintenance. This study provides a bibliometric analysis of the first lustrum of the journal *Qualitative Research in Organizational and Management (QROM)* in an attempt to assess its production both in methodological and conceptual terms. The sample was made up of 66 articles by 109 (co-)authors from 66 institutions. A total of 53.2% of contributors were female and were responsible for 42.4% of the single-authored articles (compare to 34.8% of only-male articles). Eight “invisible schools,” 37.5% national ones, were obtained by relating authors to sharing co-authors (grade 1), institutions (grade 2) or cities (grade 3). The most productive authors were Cassell, Grandy, and McKenna, the first two being developers of invisible schools. The number of articles, theoretical perspectives, and diversity of applied techniques has increased in QROM over the lustrum period with UK and Canada as most prolific countries followed by USA, Sweden, and Australia. Most articles dealt with organizational and managerial issues under discourses or narrative perspectives using interviews and sense-making theories. The evolution of these findings is also presented. Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Qualitative Research in Organizational and Management (QROM), Lustrum*

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### **Introduction**

There comes a time when researchers participating in the development of a study field need to look back and consider what have been achieved and how. This exercise is even more necessary when the scientific production is devoted to a relatively new area of research and comes from a brand new journal. As once expressed by Kluckhohn (1949), it would hardly be the fish that discovered the existence of water in the same way that a researcher loses its own conscience while researching and publishing on his/her topics. To overcome this unawareness of identity which could endanger the coherent advance of a discipline, bibliometric analyses could provide editors and researchers with historical traces of what has been achieved so far and what still remains uncovered. Bibliometric analyses are related to a set of methods used to study and measure texts and information of a given source (Allen & Reser, 1990; Shubert & Glänzel, 1991). The term "bibliometrics" was first introduced in 1969 to describe the field of study concerned with the application of mathematical models and statistics to research, and quantify the process of written communication. It helps to take notice of what topics and what scientific terms and approaches are being used to address them. In some cases we might find ourselves devoting much of our time in the same study objects or narrowing our perspectives by just using a single limited approach. On the other hand, we may come across a huge diversity of issues, approaches, and techniques with little integration that could strengthen or enlarge our scientific field. In both cases, bibliometric analyses can provide us with suitable guidance to promote new insights in the realm of scientific production or to integrate existing ones thoughtfully (Davis & Cronin, 1993; Zubeidat, Desvarieux, Salamanca & Sierra, 2004).

In the present study, the use of basic bibliometric indicators stems from the sake of institutional assessment related to the selected journal -QROM- in absolute terms that is, without research production comparisons between similar journals. Using basic indicators, comparisons between journals becomes rather useless if not impossible because research production in each case will depend upon many external criteria connected to the institution such as research policies, institutional resources and allocation, distribution techniques, journal scope and nature, etc. However, bibliometrics often forms part of an institution's assessment strategy, looking at the impact of its research at inner levels in order to make for better-informed expert decisions with respect to budget allocations and to contribute to the definition of future research agendas and strategic goals (Adams, 2009).

QROM is an international journal encouraging researchers and practitioners to publish qualitative work in the field of management and organization. Each QROM issue, published quarterly, is made up of 4 or 5 articles. It covers a wide range of qualitative methods and techniques which are discussed under critical and reflexive scopes or which are being used in daily organizational or managerial contexts or experiences. In its short history, QROM has managed to attract attention worldwide thus clustering a wealth of research and studies from many countries and professionals from various different backgrounds and academic fields. In order to resume and organize this plethora of contributions, bibliometric analysis is applied to QROM contents in its first five-year period of existence. This longitudinal quantitative analysis will be necessarily complemented with an abstract content analysis as they have been proved to be somehow inter-related.

### Procedure

To undertake the bibliometric study, a complete list of article abstracts published in QROM from 2006 to 2010 was compiled in a single Word file. A first careful reading helped to search for useful words to build up a categorical template considering the following aspects of each article: (a) author's sex, (b) total number of authors, (c) authorship position in the article, (d) study issue, (e) general approach, (f) specific qualitative technique applied, and (g) specific theory used. These selected indicators are basic ones in the field of bibliometrics (Archambault & Gagne, 2004; Lundberg, 2006). A first categorical template was made with the aid of the article title and using the common descriptive abstracts in each case if more information was needed. The initial categorical list was then checked and redefined following Cassell and Symon's book of 2004 (*Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*). Once the list was elaborated, each article was registered using the categorical template in a coded file. As many articles were unclear as to how their research topic was being treated, the codings were made twice by a single researcher obtaining a coincidence index of 77.3%. The final coded sample of articles was analysed using statistical tables and qualitative relationships in SPSS<sup>1</sup> version 18, and Excel, respectively.

### Results

#### *Overall production*

From its beginnings in 2006, the QROM comprises a total of 66 articles coming from 109 authors (46.8% males, 53.2% females) which means a production rate of 13.2 articles and 21.8 participant authors per year (see *Table I*). Although the most prolific years were the last two in a clear progressive line, if we consider the *production-author rate* then 2008 (1.15) and

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the low number of cases per cell no statistical contrast was able so far.

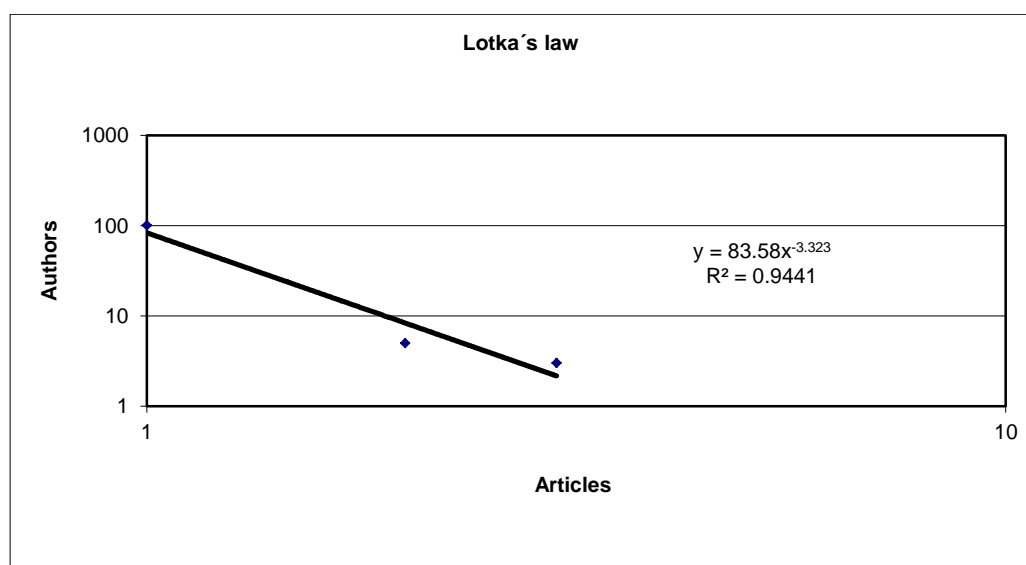
2006 (1.42) are the most productive years, with the highest number of single-author articles (11 and 7, respectively). This fact underscores the idea that with the advance of the journal more researchers have got in contact to co-author articles on the issues, which is something favourable for networking. While single-author articles accounted for 51.5% of the journal, 38% were signed by two, 15% by three, and 9% by four authors. During the second (2007) and last year (2010), QROM managed to cluster more than 25 authors doubling or nearly doubling the number of published articles (13 and 14, respectively). The average authorship rate within the lustrum in QROM was 1.64 (i.e., being the twosome plausible enough to produce a decent outcome not considering deep of analysis or complexity of the topic).

Table 1. QROM general production per year.

Year	Num. Art	Num authors	Rate	Single-author articles	2	3	4
2006	12	17	1.42	7	5	0	0
2007	13	26	2.00	4	6	2	1
2008	13	15	1.15	11	2	0	0
2009	14	24	1.71	7	5	1	1
2010	14	27	1.93	5	5	4	0
<b>Sums</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>8.21</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Means</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>

In any given field of research, a small number of high producers will be responsible for a significant percentage of all publications in the field. This type of distribution was first examined by Lotka whose power law is one of the major regularities studied in bibliometrics (Lotka, 1989). If we consider Lotka's bibliometric law (Lotka, 1989; Price, 1972) – which is based on Pareto's in economy (Pareto, 1935) – , it appears that a group of seven authors encompass most QROM production at a Lotkian formula of  $A_n = 83 / n^{3.3}$  as is shown in *Graphic 1*. Although prolific authors (7.3% of total sample) only account for 28.7% of total articles, the tendency is clearly towards the bibliometric rate of 20-80 (i.e. 20% of authors producing 80% of production).

Graphic 1. Lotka's bibliometric law applied to QROM production from 2006 to 2010.



Following a Lotka distribution may indicate the existence of an identified group of researchers or practitioners with a growing concern on qualitative approaches who would be potentially considering QROM journal as a suitable channel of communication of their work throughout the professional community and also a place to cluster and forecast research efforts.

### *Contributing countries*

Table 2 (also pictured in *Graphic 2*) shows the contributing countries in the scientific QROM production within the lustrum considering the author's position (first to fourth position). Nearly one out of two articles came from the UK (45%), Canada being the second most productive country with 15.6% of total QROM production. Far behind are contributions from USA (8.26%), Australia (7.34%), and Sweden (6.42%). The remaining countries account for than 5 articles *per case* (less than 4%).

Table 2. Country production and authorship position in QROM lustrum.

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> author</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> author</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> author</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> author</b>	<b>Sums</b>	<b>%</b>
UK	29	14	5	1	49	44.95
Canada	10	4	2	1	17	15.60
USA	6	1	2		9	8.26
Australia	5	3			8	7.34
Sweden	7				7	6.42
The Netherland	2	2			4	3.67
New Zealand	1	3			4	3.67
Norway	2	1			3	2.75
Italy	1	1			2	1.83
Ireland	1	1			2	1.83
Switzerland	1				1	0.92
Czech Rep	1				1	0.92
Denmark	0	1			1	0.92
Egypt	0	1			1	0.92
	<b>66</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>

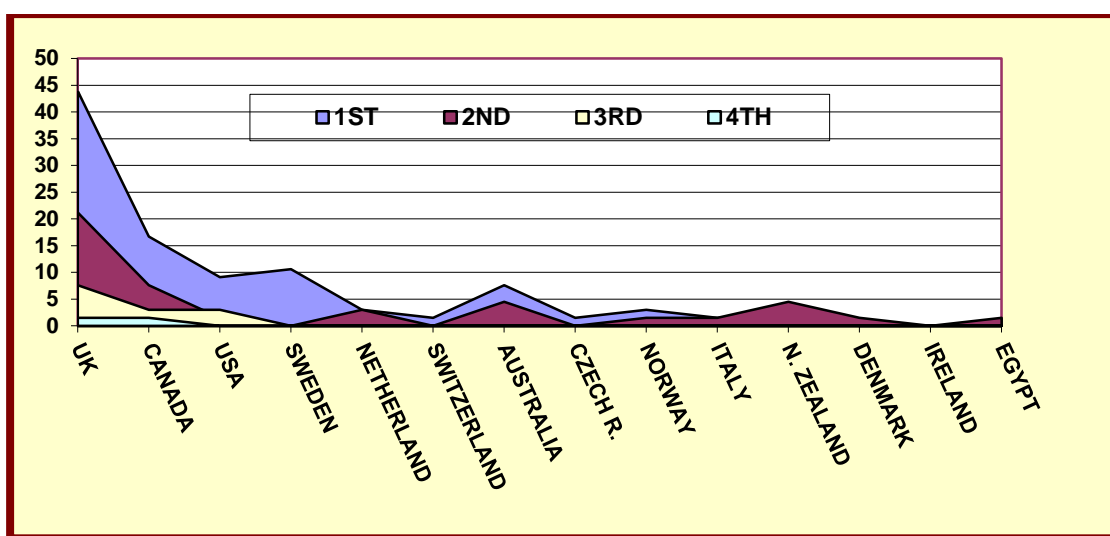
The most frequent single-authors are from the UK and Sweden while “secondary” authors appear to signed articles from New Zealand, Denmark, and Egypt. As fourteen countries have participated so far at QROM, the country-production rate is that of 4.71 articles per country. The data is indicating that QROM contributors are mainly from the editorial team and homeland researchers which should be the common thing that happens when starting a journal although there is more than a third of QROM entries (37.6%) coming from other continents. Apart from Sweden, whose contribution is sound, no other European country outstands in QROM and there are no signs of European networks in these issues. In this sense, frequencies and descriptive data were carefully requested to search for invisible schools among QROM participating countries and institutions in a wish to encourage possible networks among them.

### *Invisible schools*

Bibliometrics is also focused on the identification of research groups by coauthor analysis and its corroboration is often termed a "unit" – hereby labelled as invisible schools-

which can be taken to spot agreed worldwide research interests that may foster journal productions. As there was no repeated authorship pattern along QROM production, invisible schools were spotted from articles by virtually connecting authors from the same country and institutions that had a common grading feature. Therefore, an *invisible school* was used in this case as the potential network made of two or more independent QROM (co)authors' groups by means of a common author (grade 1), institution (grade 2), or city (grade 3). It is believed that the lower the grade, the greater the potential to create a network on QROM issues or interests. According to these relationship analyses, eight invisible schools were identified from the total sample of 109 authors isolated from the 66 articles and within 66 different institutions, being 3 mainly homeland schools and 5 international ones (two Canadian groups, and one each from Australia, New Zealand, and Norway).

Graphic 2. Country contributions to QROM production considering authorship position.

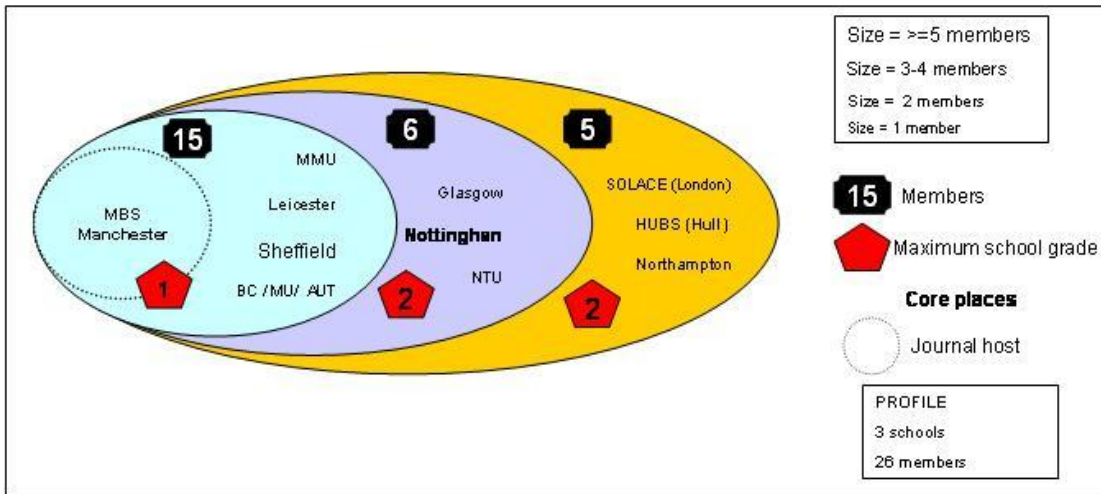


The largest potential network comes from the homeland invisible school that connects cities of Manchester, Sheffield, and Leicester by the Manchester Business School (MBS) throughout Cassell's contributions. It is made up of a total of 15 authors and 7 locations in 4 subgroups from the following institutions (see *Graphic 3*): The University of Leicester (Llewellyn, Bryman), Birkbeck College at University of London, London (Symon), the MBS (Cassell, Hyde), The Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester (Xian, Buehring), and from the University of Sheffield (Johnson, Lee, Cullen, Rose-Anderssen, Baldwin, Ridgway).

Two other Oceanian authors complete this school referring to the Auckland University of Technology, in Auckland, New Zealand (Northcott), and to Monash University, Clayton, in Australia (Collier). Another UK invisible school could be placed at Nottingham, mostly converging at the Nottingham University Business School (NUBS) at the University of Nottingham (Learmonth, Humphreys, Coupland) both linked with Nottingham Trent University (Bargiela-Chiappini) and with colleagues in Glasgow (Hibbert, McIntosh). Final UK main invisible school was located at Hull with two colleagues from Hull University Business School (Orr, Swailes), clustering people from Northampton Business School (Langley, Kakabadse) and one from SOLACE in London (Bennet).



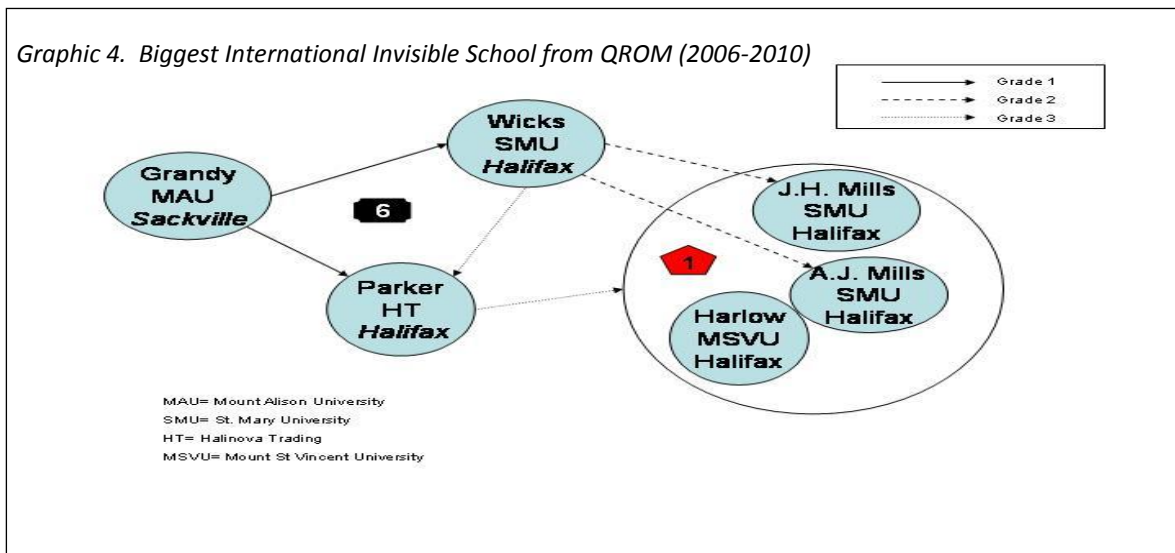
Graphic 3. Three homeland invisible schools retrieved from QROM journal (2006-2010).



MMU= Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.  
 BC= Birkbeck College, U. of London, London.  
 MU= Monash University, Australia.  
 AUT= Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand.  
 NTU= Nottingham Trent University  
 HUBS= Hull University Business School.

Five potential invisible schools can also be drawn from QROM most of them in grade 2 at the best. *Graphic 4* depicts a first Canadian school which is composed of 6 authors from 2 cities and 4 institutions, and is fostered by Gina Grandy at the Department of Commerce, Faculty of Social Sciences, of the Mount Allison University in Sackville who connects in grade 1, colleagues from various institutions of Halifax, Canada (Wicks, Parker, J. H. Mills, A. J. Mills, and Thurlow). The second Canadian school is clustered in grade 2 by members of Department of Management and Human Resources, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Montreal (Morin, Holford) and from the Department of Management, HEC Montréal at Montreal (St Onge, Bellehumeur, Dupuis). Another international school was spotted in Australia with 4 colleagues coming from the Swinburne University of Technology (SUT) at Hawthorn (Jones, Bryant, Lasky), and from the University of Wollongong at Wollongong (Noble). There is a fourth invisible school placed at Dunedin, New Zealand with three authors from the University of Otago (Everett, Ruwhiu, Cone) connected in grade 2 with the Institute of Management and Marketing, in the Škoda Auto University at Mladá Boleslav, Czech Republic (Strach). The final international school is based at Norway and it is composed of only 3 members from the Harstad University College, in Harstad (Solstad), and other two colleagues from Trondheim (Munkejord, Pettersen).

Graphic 4. Biggest International Invisible School from QROM (2006-2010)



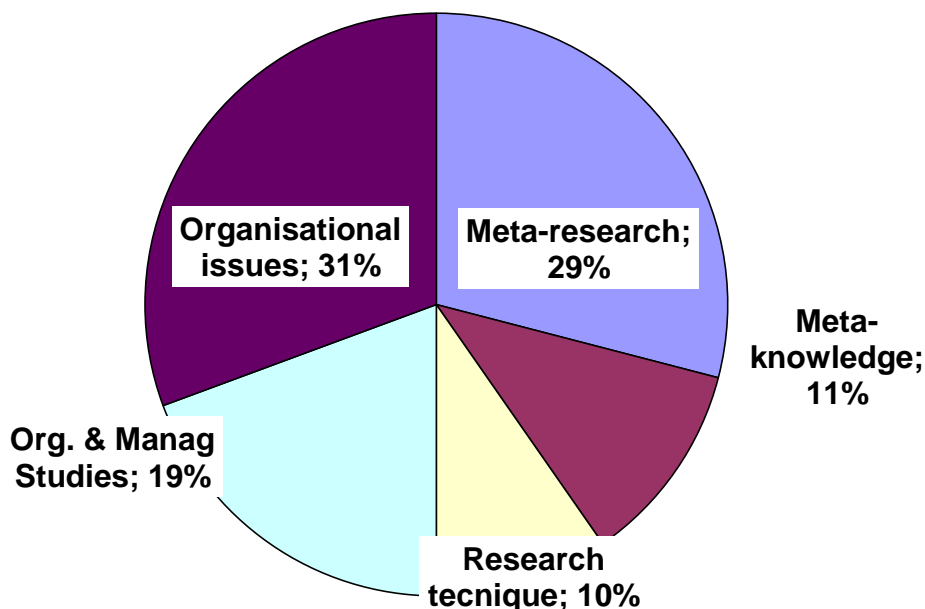
MAU= Mount Allison University  
 SMU= St. Mary University  
 HT= Halinova Trading  
 MSVU= Mount St Vincent University



## Study Issues: What is being study at QROM?

*Graphic 5* depicts the general topics being discussed at QROM along the first 5 years of its life. The most prolific area of publication deals with *applied organizational research* with 31% of the total sum of contributions where readers can find applied studies of diverse issues related to specific organizational factors. Among these issues we can mention discussions about leisure and culture, team meetings, complex relationships, organizational strategies, small firm competitiveness, organizational identities, power and influence, cultural change, decision makers, identity construction, participation, work performance, bullying, managerial identity, health care, hospital merger, or expatriate adjustment. Quite close to this set of contributions, we read articles providing knowledge or advice on how to deal with qualitative research or with the role and enquire of (qualitative) researchers accounted for 29% of the total in a production group that could be called *meta-research*. Examples of these meta-research articles are those who discussed about general introductions to or revisions of qualitative research, post-modern research, ethnography, researchers, role of teaching, grounded theory, methodology, qualitative production, research data, personal roles, researchers' dilemma and emotions, data translation, self-disclosure, or researchers' accountability. A third set of study issues are related to *organizational research or studies* (7.6%), *management research or studies* (6.1%), or *both of them* (4.5%), such as articles stating about total organizations, organizational research, lesbians, human resources management, interview, management field, qualitative management research, organization and management, use of CAQDAS, etc. All of these contributions were aimed at stressing the understanding of the life and functioning of organizational phenomena and managerial procedures.

*Graphic 5. Content analysis of study issues in QROM (2006-2010)*



Another block of articles which accounted for the 11% of the total articles can be distinguished by discussing on the emergence of the knowledge (*meta-knowledge studies*) which was stressed when dealing with interview, model of reflexivity, knowledge or meaning construction, career choices, workgroup risk management, and understanding organization events using sense-making approach. Finally, a similar amount of articles contributions were associated with explaining, expanding, or improving a *specific qualitative techniques* (10%) such as case studies, focus groups, stories, and use of narratives.

### General approaches: How is being study at QROM?

According to our analyses (see *Table 3*), the most common approach applied at QROM articles is related to *narrative or discourse analyses* with 14 articles (24.2%) clearly identified far followed by ethnographic approaches (13.8%), general view perspective (12.07%) – that is, introductory historically-revised articles- and grounded theory approach (12.07%). Another 3 set of 4 articles adopted a case-study approach, “experimental” or traditional approach – that is, literary-reviewed approach to the issue-, and a reflective/reflexive perspectives – that is, the exercise of mirroring or thoughtfully considering who one is (specially as a researcher) in relation to other social stimuli (each of them with 6.9%). Other specific approaches that can be traced along QROM production are dealing with communication interaction, content analysis, critical perspective, diary, historical analysis, phenomenology, psychoanalytical approach, rhetorical view, social constructionism, and visual images with only one article per case (1.72).

*Table 3. General approaches adopted in QROM articles for the studied period*

GENERAL APPROACH	n	%
NARRATIVE /DISCOURSIIVE PERSPECTIVE	14	24.14
ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH	8	13.79
GENERAL VIEW (RESEARCH, METHODS, SOFTWARE)	7	12.07
GROUNDDED THEORY	7	12.07
CASE STUDIES	4	6.90
EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH / LITERATURE REVISION	4	6.90
REFLECTIVE / REFLEXIVE PERSPECTIVES	4	6.90
COMMUNICATION INTERACTION	1	1.72
CONTENT ANALYSIS	1	1.72
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE	1	1.72
DIARY	1	1.72
HISTORICAL ANALYSIS	1	1.72
PHENOMENOLOGY	1	1.72
PSYCHOANALYTICAL APPROACH	1	1.72
RHETORICAL VIEW	1	1.72
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM	1	1.72
VISUAL IMAGES	1	1.72
	<b>58*</b>	<b>87.9</b>

\*Note: Only clear author-stated approaches or well-inferred from the article titles or abstracts were computed. Percentages calculated considering the subsample of this section.

### Specific techniques or middle-range theories: Which practical and theoretical instrument is used at QROM?

The most frequently applied technique in the development of qualitative research at QROM journal are interviews which appeared in the 30% of articles. Case studies, stories, and narrative/discourse analyses were equally used as specific techniques in 18 articles (13.9% each). Content analyses were found in three articles (6.9%) while the rest of identified techniques only accounted for one in each case (CAQDAS, entity-relationship diagramming (ERD), focus groups (FG), liminal analysis, neurolinguistic programming (NLP), role-playing (RP), triangulation, social network analysis (SNA), and visual images (*Table 4*).

Table 4. Qualitative techniques applied in QROM articles for the studied period

<b>QUALITATIVE TECHNIQUE: Which specific instrument is applied?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
INTERVIEWS	13	30.2
CASE STUDY	6	13.9
STORIES	6	13.9
NARRATIVE / DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	6	13.9
CONTENT ANALYSIS	3	6.97
CAQDAS	1	2.32
ENTITY-RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAMMING (ERD)	1	2.32
FOCUS GROUPS	1	2.32
LIMINAL ANALYSIS	1	2.32
NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP)	1	2.32
ROLE-PLAYING	1	2.32
TRIANGULATION	1	2.32
SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS (SNA)	1	2.32
VISUAL IMAGES	1	2.32
	<b>43</b>	<b>65</b>

\*Note: Only clear author-stated approaches or well-inferred from the article titles or abstracts were computed. Percentages calculated considering the subsample of this section.

Table 5. Specific middle-range theories used in QROM articles for the studied period

<b>Specific theory: What specific theory is tested in QROM?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
SENSE-MAKING	5	18.5
CRITICAL THEORY	3	11.1
METWORK THEORY	3	11.1
ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY	2	7.4
EXISTENCIALISM	2	7.4
GENDER THEORY	2	7.4
IDENTITY WORK	2	7.4
PRAGMATIC THEORY	2	7.4
COMPLEX THEORY	1	3.7
DERRIDA THEORY	1	3.7
FEMINIST THEORY	1	3.7
PATH DEPENDENCY	1	3.7
SINGULAR VIEW	1	3.7
STRONG STRUCTURATION THEORY	1	3.7
WITTGENSTEIN THEORY	1	3.7
	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Note: Only clear author-stated approaches or well-inferred from the article titles or abstracts were computed. Percentages calculated considering the subsample of this section.

On the other hand, some articles from QROM clearly stated the intention to use, test or apply a certain theory that would help to analyse the study object. A total of 15 specific theories were identified in 27 QROM articles most of them dealing with the sense-making theories –including Weick’s (1979) sense-making framework- that accounted for 18.5% of the total of coded entries of this section. Critical theory was also used in 3 cases (11.1%) in the same frequency that those dealing with network theories (including practical author theory and actor network theory). Following these sets of articles, other contributions were related to the use of gender, pragmatic, existentialist, anthropological, identity theories, and network theories –including actor network theory (ANT) - each of them with 2 articles (7.4%). Minor mentioned theories were those considering the feminist theory, Derrida theory, complex theory, singular view, Wittgenstein theory, strong structuration theory (SST), and path dependency with just one reference.

### Evolution of QROM

Considering time factor in QROM production, other quantifications and tables were obtained to longitudinally describe the journal (see *Table 6 and Graphic 6*). As logically expected QROM initial year of 2006 was devoted to expose general approaches in organizational and managerial research (4 articles) while 2007 (purposely) comprised the most of its contents using a case study approach (4 articles). On the other hand, 2008 and 2010 used a narrative and discursive approach in most of its contributions (7 and 4 articles, respectively), and finally, year 2009 had 4 articles using ethnographic approaches. Our data also proved an increase in the diversity of different general approaches to the study objects being last year of 2010 the best with 10 different perspectives out of 18 possible ones (55.5%).

*Table 6. Prototypical contents and overall diversity in each QROM year.*

	GENERAL APPROACH	SPECIFIC THEORY	SPECIFIC TECHNIQUE	STUDY OBJECTS
2006	General (38.8%)	Identity work (27.7%)	Interviews (35.7%)	Meta-research (research process) (87.5%)
2007 <sup>2</sup>	Case study (44.4%)	(none remarkable) (22.2%)	Case study (57.1%)	Research techniques & Organizational issues (87.5%)
2008	Narrative / Discursive (33.3%)	Sense-making (27.7%)	Interviews (28.5%)	Organizational issues (62.5%)
2009	Ethnographic (38.8%)	Anthropological (22.2%)	Interviews (42.8%)	Meta-research (researchers) (75%)
2010	Narrative Discursive (55.5%)	Critical theory (33.3%)	Interviews (42.8%)	Meta-knowledge (62.5%)

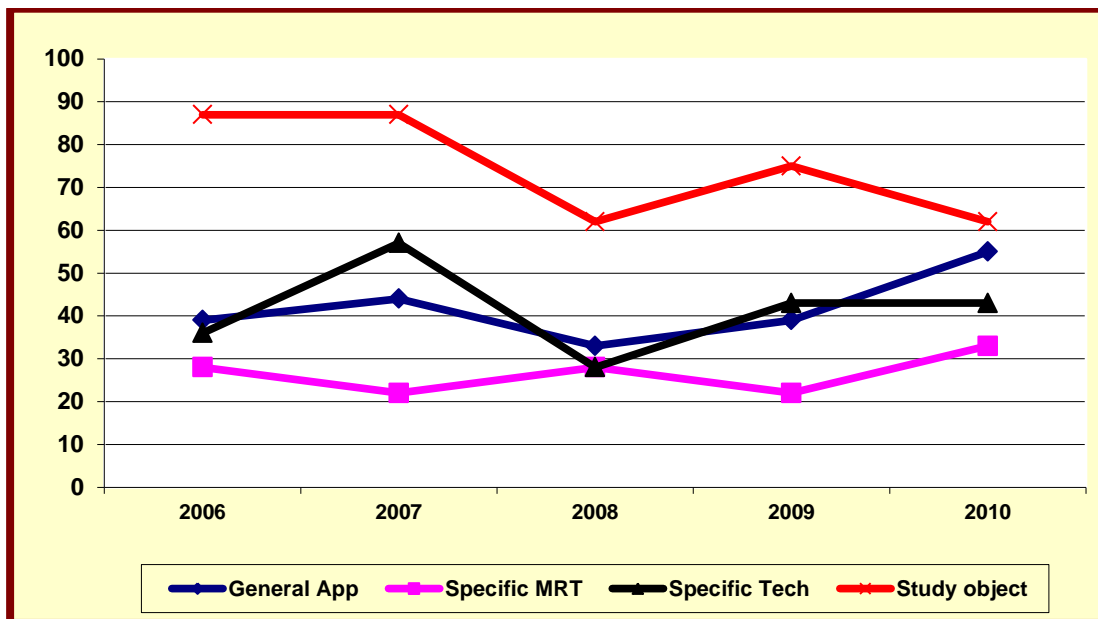
Note: Diversity percentage in brackets (i.e., number of coded categories divided by the total number of categories in each case).

The pass of years in QROM has also increased the number of medium-range theories (33.3% in 2010 compare to 27.7% in 2006) mainly referring to identity work theories in 2006, sense-making in 2008, anthropological theories in 2009, and critical theory in the last year (no remarkable theory appeared in 2007). The most used technique in QROM published articles were interviews except for year 2007 purposely devoted to case studies. However, the journal

<sup>2</sup> This year includes one special issue on case study.

has also enjoyed an increased in the technique variability (from 35.7% to 42.8%). What really seems to have decreased along the years is the number of study issues (with a 25% topic reduction since the start in 2006) converging most articles to meta-knowledge contents while in other years discussions were around organizational and managerial issues. It seems as if the journal would be moving towards more intangible realities of the process of researching – dealing both with researcher’s worries and procedural enquires of research – within subjective and critical views. The estrangement from more “down-to-earth” issues would certainly provide the QROM journal with higher complexity.

Graphic 6. Content diversity evolution of QROM production (2006-2010).



Note: MRT = Middle-range theory.

## Discussion

Over the first lustrum of its life, QROM has managed to collect 66 articles from 66 institutions and 109 authors from many countries and disciplines. Obtaining an average of 13 articles and 21 authors per year, most of the production was single-authored although an increase in co-authorship was noted (average rate of 1.6 authors per article). One of two articles had been written in the UK and evidence of Lotka’s law of distribution was found in seven authors: Bryman, Cassell, Grandy, Johnson, McKenna, Mills, and Symon. The production of this outstanding group should be then carefully analysed and monitored for the sake of the QROM journal.

Eight invisible schools (units) were potentially located considering the mutually share of authors (grade 1), institutions (grade 2) or cities (grade 3) in each case. In the UK, three invisible schools were potentially placed in the North-West, Central-North, and East-South having their cores in Manchester, Nottingham, and Hull, respectively. At an international level, QROM invisible schools can be detected in Canada in Sackville-Halifax and Montreal and, to a lesser extent, in Australia, New Zealand, and Norway. Considering these schools, we can conclude that QROM is not well represented in the European context while there are good options for both geographical proximity – regardless of technological advances – and philosophical or epistemological tradition to fulfil its contents. Therefore, networking with

European researchers could be worthwhile in order to forecast the journal inside a potential huge market.

Content analyses of QROM's first lustrum have indicated that there is a balance between applied organizational research (31% of total articles) and meta-research (29%), that is, the journal covers both the content and process of qualitative research in organizational or management issues. Other study issues are related to general research concepts, meta-knowledge studies, and specific qualitative techniques. General approaches of these studies mainly referred to narrative or discourse perspectives (24%), ethnographic approach (14%), and grounded theory (12%). The increase in the reflective / reflexive perspective (7%) is to be mentioned because it reflects the on-going research interest of reporting both the subject's production of the study issue and also the researcher's own accounts within the process. These revealing attitudes may target qualitative research towards the "anthropological triangle," thus defined by Mahadevan, in which the researcher, the actors in the field, and the audience are considered along the research practice (Mahadevan, 2011). It is a suitable way to complete all the subjective process of the research duty always value in qualitative perspectives.

Most techniques used and middle-range theories in QROM production also stressed these research attitudes. Interviews (30%), case studies, stories, and discourse/narrative analyses (14% in each case) were the most used in the 66 articles of the period. On the other hand, middle-range theories were devoted to sense-making (18%), critical theory (11%), and network theory (11%). These points of view project an image of organizations as complex, intangible realities made of meanings and share awareness to be socially constructed or deconstructed (Dick & Amy, 2002; Kilduff, 1993; Weick, 1979). This definition is far away from traditional images of organizations as rational entities and calls for more attention to dialogues and narratives from all participants inside the anthropological triangle mentioned. The rise of sense-making in organization and management issues may reinforce the internal talk of researchers of their own work to the detriment of the study issue which is placed at the background. Considering the evolution of QROM production, there seems to be a fusion between various disciplines in qualitative research that appears to strengthen its scientific nature by providing an adequate equilibrium between the flexibility of subjective matters (sense-making, discourse analysis, stories, etc.) and the formality of researchers' accountability (the anthropological triangle view). Finally, we can state that the prototypical QROM product is an *"UK two-authored article researching on an organizational issue inside narrative/discursive perspectives, and using interviews and sense-making properties."*

In summary, QROM has shown itself to have covered a wide range of research issues by means of diverse disciplinary and methodological approaches. Despite its youth, the journal reflects modern talk on qualitative research using refreshing ways of looking at organizational and management practices. QROM can be very useful forum in which to gain new insights in the literature on organizations and management that could better depict the complexity and subjectivity always involved in socially constructed entities. However, the search for invisible schools retrieved from QROM has indicated the need to create and maintain European networks among qualitative researchers that may enrich its contents. The overall bibliometric analysis has proved that QROM journal is certainly prepared to enter "childhood."

The present study contains some shortcomings that need to be considered. First, the bibliometrics analysis applied has only considered the production of research articles while not considering other significant QROM productions (book reviews, research reports, annual research prizes, etc.) which could be exceptional material of the field. Bibliometric studies are also supported by many modern on-line services with powerful search tools and engines of scientific articles, many of them are taken into account for prestigious scientific ranking

such as ISI Thompson impact index among others (Archambault, Campbell, Gingras & Larivière, 2009; Bradford, Costello & Lenholt, 2005; García-Pérez, 2010; Smith, 2001). These indices have not been taken into account in the present study as QROM is not yet included in any research database. Nevertheless, bibliometrics seems to be useful for journals and ascribed institutions to be graded more on the visibility of their products and then on their long-term reputation or resources. In this sense, institutional evaluation, perceived as a continuous process, should be in place for the systematic monitoring of research performance and other fundamental scholarly activities. Finally, bibliometric and content analysis has been only applied to a single journal and, in doing so, no comparisons of bibliometric indicators were possibly made between journals. The application of a bibliometric study on a single, newly-born journal was however useful to start off in order to identify production progress, outstanding research units (invisible schools), and a range of research issues, approaches, techniques, and middle-range theories within the journal. It has certainly provided us with some order in the classification of qualitative research content which still appears to be pretty new and confusing in the research realm.

Nevertheless, comparison studies between QROM and other similar journals –such as *The Qualitative Report* or *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology*– is definitely recommended in further research of bibliometric indicators as our next step. In this sense, indicators and content templates used in the present study might be useful for these comparison purposes.

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