**BACKGROUND**

**Business Masters degrees** (together with research degrees) accounted for 19% of UK postgraduate HE enrolments in 2014/15 (HESA, 2015) but in Transnational Education (where the study was conducted) Business is a much more significant element of the total picture, estimated to account for 54% of all taught postgraduate enrolments in 2012/13 and generating 56% of all transnational education revenues (Dire, 2013). Only 28% of these full-time students are actually asked, for example, about exam practice data on how saved when interest rates Conversely do not summarise the key findings of Kangis & Carman; 91% used questionnaires and, for more than two-thirds of those, it formed the only significant source of research data (other than literature) as the following chart illustrates:

**DOES STUDENTS TEND TO USE QUESTIONNAIRES OVER OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION?**

The answers to this question were very similar to the findings of Kangis & Carman; 91% used questionnaires and, for more than two-thirds of those, it formed the only significant source of research data (other than literature) as the following chart illustrates:

### Student's analysis

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<td>Research methods used</td>
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<td>Student's responses</td>
<td>Yes, 51.9%</td>
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The survey question, asked to a broad sample of staff, addresses awareness rather than whether such measures actually exist and the first part of the analysis suggests this but student then goes on to conclude that therefore there is no fault feedback, which wasn’t actually the case. The research question would have been better addressed by conducting a separate analysis on the topic under study. 

**DOES THE PREFERENCE FOR QUESTIONNAIRES AFFECT THE QUALITY OF THE FINDINGS?**

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The consequences of outsourcing (where a company moves an activity from in-house to a third party, typically involving non-core activities) is that it is quite often investigated by students of Supply Chain Management and tends to require a fairly common set of objectives. We drew up a list of issues we would expect to see addressed and then looked at a sample of five such dissertation reports to evaluate both the planned scope and the extent to which it was actually covered by results obtained.

**CONCLUSIONS, OBSERVATIONS & FURTHER WORK**

Whilst this is still an exploratory study based on small datasets, it does indicate that there is a significant knowledge gap concerning how Business Masters students carry out their research, and that the way many of them collect data is sub-optimal and can result in outcomes which are erroneous or biased by evidence gathered. At the same time the chosen methods may limit the scope of the research and more appropriate methodologies may be ignored or not be used sufficiently. In addition to reducing the quality of this significant component of their Masters programmes, these issues may lead to a failure to equip them appropriately with the skills to carry out research in the modern workplace.

One key cause of these issues appears to be a lack of teaching of the use of data-driven and archival research methods and an over-emphasis on the value of primary research. Most methodological guidance is written from the viewpoint of a researcher external to the phenomenon of data collection and organisation being studied and this may account to some extent for the perceived difficulty of using organisation data in such material. However, with many students researching their own organisations, a new perspective may be required which could also help with developing research skills for use in students’ future careers.

The findings to date strongly support the view that a full-scale research project on the subject is justified.

**FURTHER WORK:**

The review of dissertations has already been extended to other programmes and geographies and a full scale project is being developed covering further aspects and subjects includes views of academic staff, teaching methods, development of teaching materials, research as a management skill and overcoming barriers to using organisation data.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**METHODOLOGY**

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study specifically sought to answer the following questions:

- Do students tend to use questionnaires rather than other methods of data collection? If so:
  - How many?
  - Does that affect the quality of their findings?
  - Does it affect research scope?
  - What might cause this preference?

- Are the students using questionnaires as the primary source of research data?

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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I hope this poster will stimulate debate.

If you’re not around when you read it, please tweet your comments / observations.