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KSENIJA VUKOVIĆ

Faculty of Organization and Informatics, Croatia

PREDRAG VUKOVIĆ

Faculty of Teacher Education, Croatia

METHODOLOGICAL PLURALITY IN THE STUDY OF ENTERPRISE GROWTH: COMPLEMENTARITY INSTEAD OF ALTERNATIVE

Abstract:

Unlike the natural sciences, which predominantly use a quantitative approach, researchers in the social sciences use both qualitative and quantitative approach. Due to the fact that quantitative research is focused on explanations of causes and consequences and prediction, and that qualitative research is based on the paradigm of understanding, one gets the impression that these are alternative approaches. However, we emphasize their complementarity. As an example, we present research in the area of company growth. The once very popular testing of Gibrat's law did not yield determinable conclusions, just as attempts to model the growth of companies do not provide a recipe for growth. The lack of growth among small and medium-sized enterprises leads to a wrong perception about the motivation for growth among entrepreneurs – owners of small and medium sized enterprises . A qualitative approach to researching growth phenomena reveals a different reality. Social sciences are more heterogeneous than natural sciences and also context dependent. We can conclude that in quantitative research outliers "spoil the picture", while in qualitative research they contribute to the richness of the results and the understanding of the phenomenon.

Keywords:

methodology, social science, quantitative approach, qualitative approach, complementarity

JEL Classification: C18, L26