

Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences II – QMSS2

Reviewer: Professor, Ph.D., Daniel David

This review is based on my analysis of (1) the initial proposal; (2) the mid-term and the final reports, and (3) the two external reviews.

The main objective of the QMSS2 was to create an international Network of social scientists having advanced statistical and modelling skills, mainly by using training seminars and summer schools. The Network was thought to target interdisciplinary frontier research with advanced methodology. The main topics approached by the Network were (1) Social interactions and social networks; (2) Life-course analysis; (3) Cross-national comparisons; (4) Immigration and population dynamics; and (5) Survey design and survey quality. The outcomes should have an impact on the social-economical environment, inform Governments, and provide transferable declarative and procedural knowledge to students and young scientists.

The aims of the QMSS2 are both relevant and of potential high impact. Indeed, social problems are key issues in our current civilisation and their approach should be based on strong quantitative methods. Although qualitative methods are legitimate research strategies, they are more related to the exploratory and/or nuancing phases of the research, rather than with the core phase of facing and solving complex societal problems. Moreover, quantitative research methods allow social sciences to develop multi- and interdisciplinary research (e.g., better relating and coordinating the effort with the natural/exact sciences), absolutely necessary when we face complex problems in current human civilisation.

The activities of QMSS2 were of high quality and strong impact, helping the team to reach its aims. We mention some of them as follows:

- About 20 seminars prepared the summer schools. For each topic cutting-edge quantitative methods were chosen; about 523 participants attended these seminars;
- About 10 workshops/summer school were organized. By this activity the dissemination of declarative and procedural knowledge to your scientists was stimulated (e.g., about 300 students participate in these activities);

- In order to work on research papers and projects' activities about 12 visits among researchers were implemented.

The management and financial aspects were well-organized. The unspent funds are related to a natural "research risk" involved in any such large scale project.

The scientific outcome is both relevant and of high impact. Thus, it can be summarized as follows: about 37 scientific articles in peer-reviewed publications, three proceedings/special issues, 8 books and/or book chapters (all published and/or in press). In order to inform broadly the scientific community and the general public about the outcomes of the project, press communicates, publicity posters, website messages, and newsletters were used. The European dimension of the outcomes can be expressed in two main aspects:

- There is an European infrastructure for promoting advanced quantitative methods in social sciences;
- There is an European infrastructure for stimulating interdisciplinary research in the social sciences field.

In the end I can say that the general and the specific aims to the QMSS2 were attained. Now, at the European level we have a Network of about 500 scientists, including senior and young researchers. The Network provided us with rigorous scientific output, relevant for science and society in general. Moreover, the Network is ready to conduct interdisciplinary frontier research in social sciences, with advanced quantitative methodology, flexible enough to approach various relevant problems facing our society.