

Creating a Special Issue on Cross-Cultural Research

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Robert and Maris will talk about the work involved in creating a special issue of a journal - in this case IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management - on cross-cultural research issues. We will look at the conception and development of the idea, contacts and negotiations with the journal editor, the framing of the call for papers, and the management of the [cross-cultural] manuscript review process. We will also explore cross-cultural research more generally, and explain its attraction for us, as well as some of the difficulties involved in publishing work of this nature.

The following sentences, extracted directly from the call for papers for the special issue, characterise some of the issues that are relevant to cross-cultural research:

Managers all over the world are seeking to improve business performance through IT application. Unfortunately, many organisations have invested in IT without achieving any tangible benefits. A common problem is that their efforts are inconsistent with the prevailing (societal and organisational) culture and/or they fail to build a culture to support change. Despite an emerging consensus that *context does matter*, IT specialists still tend to seek universal formulae for successful practice, while ignoring or downplaying the messiness of human factors in different environments.

However, as IT provides growing levels of interactivity and networking, we are becoming more conscious of not only the world as a whole, but also the cultural differences that exist across societies. There is a growing realization that it is difficult to transfer and assimilate an IT application into a different societal culture. The limited research to date on the impact of cultural issues on IT management has tended to compare and contrast phenomena in two or three organisations or countries and then attribute the differences to "culture". Seldom have researchers searched beneath the surface in an attempt to understand the reasons for the differences that have been observed. As a result, our current understanding of how and why specific cultural attributes affect the planning and implementation of IT-enabled business process change efforts remains very limited. Technology and engineering managers have been left to cope with cultural issues without being able to draw on empirically-tested prescriptions or the experiences (successful or otherwise) of others.