



Running Case Study 1

Two student projects

In the running case study, we follow the struggles of two students, Mehmet Celik and Rebecca Nash, who are conducting their final research projects ('dissertations' as they are referred to in the UK, or final 'theses' as they are referred to in other European countries). In each chapter you will find out why this specific chapter is valuable for Mehmet and Rebecca and track their progress. You will also be asked to consider how the relevant methods and issues discussed affect their projects. As you will see, both conduct very different research projects, not only regarding the topic they investigate, but especially regarding the methods they employ. Therefore, some chapters will be more useful for Mehmet, others more useful for Rebecca, but most will be useful for both. This reflects the general attitude of this book towards research methods; namely, that there are no good or better methods. There is certainly good and better research, but not because of the methods used but because of how well they are applied.

Mehmet Celik, a future migrant entrepreneur?

Mehmet Celik is the third child out of four and his grandparents migrated from Turkey in the 1960s. His father Ahmed was the first in his family to complete a high school education, but never attended

a university. Rather he became self-employed with a taxi company specializing in shuttle buses to nearby airports. He quickly diversified his business, expanding it to a travel agency that did not only offer local transport to the airport, but also specialized in selling cheap flights to Turkey. Around the same time, Turkey developed into a popular tourist destination and Ahmed Celik started to offer holiday packages not only to his Turkish fellows, but increasingly also to natives. Today, Dolphin Travel is the largest travel agency in its region, employing 52 people in eight travel shops, of which only four are located in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of migrants. In short, Ahmed Celik and his family are a model case of successful integration.

Ahmed's son Mehmet is the second in his family with a university degree, next to his sister Cecik who has just completed her Masters in fashion design. The one thing that Mehmet needs to get his degree in business is to write his final research project. He does not know what to do thereafter. He could step into his father's business but does not like that idea because, like his father, he does not like to work for others. He is thinking about starting his own business maybe just because he wants to show his father that he can do it as well, but he has also attended career weeks at his university that provided him with job opportunities at various companies. Perhaps he will become a consultant and later on found his own consultancy firm to become the McKinsey of the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, currently his main interest is entrepreneurship and more specifically he wants to write about Turkish entrepreneurs. Yesterday he emailed Dr Flowermountain to ask whether he would be willing to supervise his final research project entitled 'Success determinants of Turkish entrepreneurs'. Dr Flowermountain replied stating that Mehmet needed to focus on the topic and to be more explicit on what he would like to research, as there are millions of success determinants on which he could focus. He asked him to write one or two pages and to think about more specific questions that interested him. Moreover, Mehmet had to develop some ideas about how he would research the topic and he needed to come up with a list of articles that he had already read about it. After Mehmet had done that, they would have a meeting. Mehmet had hoped for an immediate meeting, but he realized that only a general idea for the topic of his research project was not sufficient. He had to prepare more.

What should he do? He talked to his sister Cecik. She suggested that he wrote a case study on Dolphin Travel to find out why their father has been so successful, as many other Turkish entrepreneurs could learn from his experiences. Mehmet was reluctant to do this as he had the feeling it would be too much of a descriptive study and, moreover, he was sceptical about whether what made his father successful 20 years ago would still be valuable today. Then Cecik told him about her plans to start a fashion office and asked him whether they could combine their businesses. Mehmet could help her with the start-up and use that as a case for his research project. But Mehmet was again sceptical, as this sounded like writing a business plan rather than a research project.

Mehmet started thinking about what was interesting about Turkish entrepreneurs. The success of his father was more an exception than the rule; other self-employed relatives and friends operated small businesses mostly in migrant neighbourhoods, employing family members and serving mainly Turkish migrants. In Mehmet's eyes his father was much more successful, but wasn't his uncle Ender, who runs a small grocery shop, as happy as, or maybe even happier than, his father?

Mehmet had a lot of questions but no answers. Who was he to judge who has been successful and what are the criteria for success? Shouldn't he leave this judgement to the individual? But would people be honest if he asked them about their success? Mehmet had reached a point where he felt lost. On the one hand business success can mean different things to different people but, on the other hand, €20,000 profit remains €20,000 profit.

Rebecca Nash's sense of justice

Rebecca Nash is the only daughter of a clergyman and a primary school teacher. She has always been a good student, but never a swot, at least in her own perception. At school she loved maths and numbers; she also learned to play the violin and she even won an essay competition in a local newspaper. Before she enrolled at university, she went to Israel for six months and worked in a kibbutz, an experience she found much more inspiring and valuable than her last years at school.

Once at university Rebecca continued to get good marks in her courses, even in those considered hard by fellow students. And she liked to go to classes, to read the recommended books, articles and beyond. In short, she loved to be a student. There was only one thing she got angry about and that was free-riding and cheating. Just three months ago she saw it with her own eyes. During her exam on corporate finance, the student in front of her opened his ballpoint pen and took a small piece of paper out of it. She did not want to tell on him, but she was angry, especially since she knew him well. In another course, she was in the same group as that same student and they had to write a paper as a group assignment. In the end she and another friend wrote the paper as he never kept his promises.

Maybe Rebecca had this sense of justice because her father was a clergyman but she was really angry about all that cheating and she wanted to find out more about it in her final research project. Who was more likely to cheat? Did it depend more on opportunity or did it depend on the individual's personality? How would others react; did they have better strategies to deal with free-riders in a group? Later on she discussed a research plan with her friend Tom. He reckoned that the main reason for cheating was the laissez-faire attitude of lecturers. They simply did not care. If they enforced harder sanctions, nobody would cheat or free-ride. He suggested expelling students for one year at the first attempt, and permanently if it happened again. But Rebecca was rather unsure whether harder sanctions would really help.

The more Rebecca thought about her subject, the more facets of the problem arose. It seemed that so many intertwined factors had to be considered and that it would take years to investigate all these different factors. When she later met with her project supervisor, Monica Yardman, she was told to focus on just a small set of questions. For example, she could write about how different rules and sanctions affect unethical conduct by comparing different universities or she could have a look at how students react to other students' free-riding behaviour, but she could not investigate both or even think about a third alternative.

Monica Yardman told her that it was up to her to find the right question. What was most important was that she was really interested in the question and topic. Writing a research project is a process with ups and downs. At the beginning most students are enthusiastic, but there is always a point where the process gets stuck and you get disappointed. In such moments, you should at least like the topic otherwise it can get very difficult.

- 1 What type of study are Mehmet and Rebecca thinking about right now?
- 2 Looking at this chapter's running case study, try to relate the arguments and considerations made in the case study to different research philosophies. Thus, which of Mehmet's and Rebecca's thoughts sound more positivistic and which sound more constructivistic?
- 3 Identify and discuss the concepts Mehmet and Rebecca will address in their research.
- 4 Is it already possible to distinguish between the dependent and independent variables in Mehmet's and Rebecca's research plans?