



Research Office Newsletter

Interview with Professor Marian Beise-Zee

Welcome to a new academic year! The Research Office conducted an interview with the newly appointed Dean of International Cooperation and Research, Professor Marian Beise-Zee, for this issue of the newsletter. Enjoy!



Research Office: Professor Beise-Zee, congratulations on your appointment as the new Dean of International Cooperation and Research. I understand that you first started out as a researcher at the Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW) in Mannheim, Germany. Could you please share with us what prompted you to become a researcher in the first place?

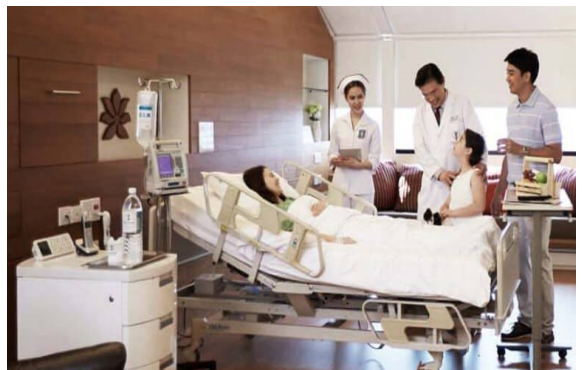
Professor Beise-Zee: During my final year at university, I worked as a student assistant at ZEW. I was a member of a research project that ventured to set up a system of indicators to measure the competitiveness of countries and compare them internationally. That project was so interesting that I basically neglected all of my other courses. I still managed to pass all courses and graduate but it was clear to me that I wanted to continue doing research. The process of exploring statistics for trends and hidden patterns probably fits my personality well. Any student sensing a passion for something during their university years should pursue it with courage. I was very fortunate as my passion for research came to me just at the right moment. This is how I started working as a researcher at a newly established research institution and happily stayed on for nine years.

Research Office: Thank you for sharing. What was your main research contribution at ZEW and how has it impacted your career trajectory as a researcher?

Professor Beise-Zee: At ZEW, I first studied how companies profit from public research activities. That is an important element in understanding how science leads to new technologies and products that everyone can benefit from. Since governments want to make sure that companies can quickly utilize all findings from public research, it is vital to identify conditions that facilitate this technology transfer. We collected a large database on innovation and scientific activities in each regional county in Germany and identified, for instance, whether regional closeness between companies and public research institutions is important. The research results were reported in a large newspaper and received a lot of attention. Another strand of my research explored the reasons behind how successful global innovations such as the fax machine and mobile phone were first adopted in one country and gained increasing global success from there. This research led to interest in supporting country markets that not only adopt new products and technology early on but can also leverage their initial success to bring these technologies to other countries. Yet, I realized over time that the impact governments have on innovation success is very limited. As for how my research trajectory was affected, I would say it bent towards concentrating on understanding the conditions of the success of companies in competitive markets.

Research Office: You also taught at the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand for a period of time. During that time, one aspect of your research focused on medical tourism. Could you please elaborate more on that?

Professor Beise-Zee: At that time, I wanted to do research on one of the most technologically advanced and innovative aspects of Thailand – tourism, specifically medical and wellness tourism. Many hospitals in Bangkok successfully cater to large numbers of foreign patients. These hospitals offer great healthcare and one of the most outstanding customer services in the world, which explains why medical tourism is a radical new form of health care. Having said that, it is difficult to imagine why people would fly to a totally different country, especially a developing country, while dealing with the stress of being sick amidst a completely new and foreign culture. This led to me and my local doctoral student attempting to understand the reasons why patients from western countries decide to go to Thailand for medical procedures. Our qualitative research involved going to one of the largest hospitals in Thailand to interview foreign patients. Seeing that this is a very delicate and ethically sensitive exercise, we were very lucky to gain the approval and support of the hospital in conducting this research. Based on our research, we came up with a conceptual model for medical tourism. The model suggests that the motivation for medical tourism changes over time. We realized that initially, many patients travel abroad for treatment because they are deeply unhappy with their health care situation at home, which is often either too expensive or poses other problems for them.



A picture taken at Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok (Thailand), where Professor Beise-Zee and his doctoral student interviewed foreign patients

However, after experiencing great service and respectful treatment at hospitals abroad, patients develop an emotional bond to the hospital over time and eagerly return the next time they require treatment. In my opinion, medical tourism can teach us a lot about service management.

Research Office: Medical tourism is indeed gaining prominence in our society today. I am sure that your research in this area will be relevant for many. Besides medical tourism, have you conducted research on any other aspects of the service industry? If so, please elaborate.

Professor Beise-Zee: Yes, I have. Another research track in tourism focuses on understanding business travelers, who are very different from tourists because they have to work while traveling. We found that many business travelers experience emotions ranging from boredom to anxiety. Therefore, service personnel need to be aware of these emotions and respond to them accordingly. Business travelers often expect hotel staff to support them and perceive them more as quasi co-workers. This is an example of customer-company cooperation which is also called service co-creation, a core concept in service management. It therefore can be said that tourism studies and service management are very much intertwined.



A picture taken at Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok (Thailand), where Professor Beise-Zee and his doctoral student interviewed foreign patients

*Source: Bumrungrad International Hospital Website (<https://www.bumrungrad.com/en>)

Research Office: Moving on to some of your more recent research endeavors, you have been conducting research on Discrete Choice Analysis (also known as Conjoint Analysis) since you started working at APU. Could you explain to us what this term means and how it connects to our everyday life as consumers?

Professor Beise-Zee: For those of you who are not familiar with the term “Discrete Choice Analysis”, discrete choice models are used to explain or predict a choice from a set of two or more discrete (i.e. distinct and separable; mutually exclusive) alternatives. My interest in this was sparked by my dissatisfaction with the way we collect data in research. Everybody is doing a lot of surveys but, in reality, we don’t learn much from asking all kinds of questions about someone’s attitudes that most people cannot quite accurately and unbiasedly answer. Most surveys, for instance, ask to measure our attitude towards something on a scale of 1 to 7, but in reality, this is quite difficult to do accurately as we have no metric measures in our head. By converting what we like to find out into choice decisions, we can use everybody’s ability to choose among offered alternatives. This not only applies to products we buy daily but also imaginary alternatives. For instance, I can ask people whether they would prefer a specific life situation over another. Since we make all kinds of decisions in our life almost every day, it is a more natural way to understand human preferences. The beauty of this approach is that it can be used in virtually all human areas, such as health, environmental protection and politics. The strength of such a method is that while several attributes of a product or situation may appear as equally important, trade-off relations between these attributes exist, therefore requiring us to make hard choices and sacrifice one attribute for another.

Research Office: While the name sounds complicated, it is without a doubt that each and every one of us conduct Discrete Choice Analysis to some extent on a daily basis. Do you have a concrete example that you could share with us?

Professor Beise-Zee: Some years ago, I participated in a research project carried out by the Development and Cooperative Economics Research Group at Marburg University, which identified optimal economic development policies based on population preferences of development outcomes. The research group conducted a decision-based survey among inhabitants of the Okavango basin in southern Africa. In this study, about 800 households in villages in the basin border area across Angola, Botswana and Namibia were asked to choose several times between future scenarios on picture cards depicting a certain life situation. The life scenarios included various factors in different combinations such as water accessibility, livestock grazing opportunities, a certain level of infrastructure, forest and wildlife. The head of household was then asked to rank these pictures by how appealing the situation was. The decision analysis reveals what is the most preferred life scenario and what each feature is worth compared to any other feature. For instance, that access to water and grazing opportunities were much more important features than forest and wildlife. This allows policy makers as well as NGOs to concentrate their resources on more preferred developmental goals.



An example card depicting one life situation that was used in the decision-based survey distributed to the inhabitants of the Okavango basin in southern Africa

Research Office: Wow, that sounds really intriguing. Now, for the final question of this interview, what are some aspirations you have for yourself as a researcher in the upcoming academic year?

Professor Beise-Zee: I want to conduct representative surveys using discrete choice analysis. Good surveys based on random samples of a population are expensive. You cannot just go out with the clipboard and ask people on the street. That would not be representative. So, the main challenge remains getting funding for data collection conducted in a scientifically accurate way by professional survey institutions. Thus, the Research Office, which helps to process grant reimbursements, has a really important role in our research process.

Research Office: Thank you so much for your time, Professor Beise-Zee. The Research Office will strive to live up to your expectations!



Picture of Professor Beise-Zee during his time in Bangkok with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus (third from the right)

Events

Inclusive Leadership: Key For Future Japan

The Center for Inclusive Leadership (CIL) Forum was held on February 7, 2020 at the Ritsumeikan Tokyo campus. A total of 101 participants from various enterprises and educational institutions attended the forum. The director of CIL, Professor Lailani Laynesa Alcantara, introduced the center's goals and plans for implementation at the forum. The keynote speech, delivered by Professor Chizuko Ueno from the University of Tokyo, touched on problems Japan faces as a rapidly aging society. The keynote speech was followed by a panel discussion ("Inclusive Leadership: Key For Future Japan") moderated by APU's President Haruaki Deguchi.



You can watch the full event on Youtube (in Japanese only) via the this QR code:



CLE AY2019 Division Initiative Program Retreat Workshop



The APU Center for Language Education (CLE) AY2019 Division Initiative Program Retreat Workshop was held on 13th February 2020. The workshop largely focused on three themes – Developmental Disability, Language Learning and Universal Design for Learning. Several CLE faculty members presented their research related to the aforementioned themes and discussed matters related to supporting students with learning disabilities, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), etc. In addition to the program leaders for 2018 and 2019 (i.e. Associate Professor Tamaki Sumida and Tenured Senior Lecturer Jung Jonghee respectively), members of this program include Professor Akiko Honda, Associate Professor Hiromichi Terajima, Associate Professor Maiko Berger, Tenured Senior Lecturer Fumie Ishimura, Tenured Senior Lecturer Tomoko Eto, Tenured Senior Lecturer Zhang Wenqing, Lecturer Anthony Diaz and Lecturer Alejandro Morales Rama. These faculty members will continue to conduct related research.

News

Professor Peter Mantello awarded research grant from the Japan Science & Technology Agency (JST)



Professor Peter Mantello and several researchers have been awarded an international project co-funded by the Economic Social and Research Council (ESRC) and Japan Science & Technology Agency (JST). The project is titled 'Emotional AI in Cities: Cross Cultural Lessons from UK and Japan on Designing for An Ethical Life'. The Japanese team will be working alongside the UK team on the project. The former, led by Professor Mantello, comprises of Professor Nader Ghotbi of APU, Associate Professor Hiromi Tanaka of Meiji University and Professor Hiroshi Miyashita of Chuo University.



For more information on the project, please scan the above QR code.

The Research/Educational Support Homepage

The Research/Educational Support Homepage for Faculty Members has been launched! This homepage provides information regarding research support and academic affairs. Be sure to bookmark this website now!



The Research/Educational Support Homepage

AY2020 APU Academic Research Subsidies

The application guidelines of the following Academic Research Subsidies are available on the Research/Educational Support Homepage for Faculty Members. Please read the application guidelines carefully if you wish to apply.

Subsidy	Application Period
Academic Research Subsidy (Special Research Support)	Only Grants-in-Aid recipients are eligible to receive this subsidy. The subsidy will be automatically transferred. Said recipients need not apply.
Academic Research Subsidy (Grants-in-Aid Reapplication Type)	The Research Office will inform eligible applicants of the deadline at a later date.
Research Findings Dissemination Subsidy (Academic Conference Presentation Support)	April 1, 2020 (Wed) - January 8, 2021 (Fri)
Research Findings Dissemination Subsidy (Support for Submitting Papers to Journals)	April 1, 2020 (Wed) - February 26, 2021 (Fri)
Research Findings Dissemination Subsidy (Publication Support)	April 1, 2020 (Wed) - February 26, 2021 (Fri)
Research Findings Dissemination Subsidy (Support for Encouraging Authors of published papers)	April 1, 2020 (Wed) - May 29, 2020 (Fri)

Research Office Facebook Page

The Research Office Facebook page publicizes research-related information pertaining to APU faculty members and students on a regular basis. The contents of our posts range from faculty members' publications to student presentations at academic conferences. When relevant, our posts incorporate links to allow easy access to published journal articles and commentaries written by our faculty members and students.

Should you be interested to find out more about research at one of the most international universities in Japan, be sure to Like and Follow our page. If you would like to see certain aspects of research at APU being featured in future issues of the Research Office Newsletter, or if you are an APU faculty member that wishes to feature your research on our Facebook page, get in touch with us at ropa@apu.ac.jp. We look forward to hearing from you soon.



Research Office Facebook Page

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For inquiries, please email ropa@apu.ac.jp