

METHODS Project: Social Research Data Gathering and Analysis Quality Guidelines

Scope

Scientific activities such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, technical monitoring, face-to-face or online; data gathering, data analysis, theory-building, scientific publication; triangulation, corroboration, pilots.

The reviewed output:

Final report of Analysis and Identification of different entities

Issues and Explanations

	Yes/No; Date	Comments, Details
Data Gathering		
Were the questionnaires, surveys, interviews piloted?	Yes	This needs to be scheduled by the development lead
<i>This ensures that questions are not phrased badly, that the questions were understood as intended, that answering them did not take too long, that the analysis gave useful findings</i>		
How was the development of the questionnaire documented and modified?	It was done via stages and each draft was sent to all project partners	By development group and by version control
<i>This means that external reviewers can inspect the development process.</i>		
Was the questionnaire peer reviewed?	yes	Yes
<i>This enhances the quality by ensuring different relevant perspectives.</i>		

Were standard, recognised and documented procedures and instruments used?	yes	As this is a new departure in differing contexts a bespoke approach was used which utilised questions from a range of previous surveys.
<i>Using standard procedures and instruments makes findings more credible because it shows other researchers have used them before and have published and evaluated the procedures and instruments being proposed.</i>		It would be advisable to validate the survey within the existing project.
Data Analysis		
Was the analysis of the data planned in advance? What was the proposed method of analysis?	Yes; the analysis team agreed to analyze the collected data using Excel software with a relevant frequency analysis tools	Data analysis plans required.
<i>Planning the analysis at the same time as planning the data gathering means that there are no unexpected problems with the proposed data analysis techniques.</i>		
Is the proposed method of data analysis recognised, validated and appropriate?	Yes; the analysis group used frequency, word clouds etc,	See above
Are causality, correlations or associations important? Will the analysis reveal connections between various data items? What techniques will be used? Has this been planned and tested?	Yes; some survey answers depend on previous answers of other questions, the correlation analysis (Pearson or Spearman) can be very useful but was not implemented in this stage	Plans required
Does the data gathering and analysis recognise the difference between objective data (how many computers do you have?) and subjective data (do you think computers are good for education?)? Are the instruments and	Yes, some questions in the survey were open ended and that required manual analysis to get a conclusion of the answer in an objective manner.	Plan required

methods appropriate to the data and the subjects?		
<i>We should use appropriate techniques: we should use surveys for short concrete questions over a large population but interviews for exploring motive and motivation and web-sites, reports or other documents for specific pieces of factual information.</i>		
Theory building		
Does the gathering and analysis of the data engage with any conceptual or theoretical framework, in order to explore with it is relevant, accurate, transferable and appropriate?	Yes; the development group explored the findings with relevant literature related to ICT users and non-users	
Trusting our Findings		
Was there any form of corroboration or triangulation? How trustworthy are the data?	Yes; the development group looked at the respondents answers from all participating universities to corroborate the findings	
What is the confidence and validity of the questionnaire? Is it trying to be representative and confident at certain prescribed levels, is it using statistical techniques?	Not analyzed at this stage	Aiming to be representative
Do our surveys look at a representative sample of a specific population? How do we guarantee this? Are our surveys skewed by access to computers or the way we contact respondents? Will averages, for example, have any meaning? How important are exact results (for example does it matter if 78% of students have mobiles or 81%, or their average age is 22yrs or 23yrs?)	The survey looks representative since it was delivered by online methods (emails mainly) that all faculty members and students use to access information. It is not necessarily skewed since the level of ICT familiarity is not that difficult to get access to the survey. The numbers are analyzed in such a way that small difference in frequencies are ignored and only the major trend is noted.	Sample issues not configured
With rapidly changing technologies and social practices, how long will our findings stay accurate?	To assure that the findings of our survey stay accurate, the	Baseline survey will repeat yearly

	development group will repeat the Baseline Survey yearly	
<i>These questions address concerns that our surveys might be dependent entirely on what respondents tell us and our findings might be inherently untrustworthy. We need to find ways to cross-reference within the survey or use an additional technique as cross-reference.</i>		
Impact and Effectiveness		
What is the intended impact of the questionnaire? How will it make a difference to the project activities? How does it relate to project priorities?	The questionnaire is important in getting some census into the direction that the project will follow along with the focus group results. It will show direction in moving the project forward. It is of high priority in the project since it is the starting point of the project.	
Does the survey inform project decisions and choices? Is it the best use of project time, effort, people and resources, is it the best use of respondents' time and good-will?	YES	