

Checklist – Research Project Management: Principles

When managing research projects, the following principles should be observed in both the research proposal and in the final report:

Purpose, demonstrated via:

- significance to current societal issues;
- contributions to current knowledge base or policy;
- production of a set of outcomes (e.g. report, recommendations, dialogues);
- research questions.

Relevance, demonstrated via:

- literature review;
- significance of the problem itself;
- need for development in migration management in the host country;
- government/donor request;
- necessity for IOM programme development.

Feasibility, demonstrated via:

- availability of resources, including time, financial and human;
- list of activities to carry out research method(s);
- acknowledgements of any limitations.

Accuracy, demonstrated via:

- congruence with theoretical predictions, available statistical data and scores of similar studies achieved in different countries (localizations);
- identifying accurate indicators;
- reference to experts;
- triangulation;
- verification of all data.

Accountability, demonstrated via:

- detailed account of actions taken and decisions made;
- justifications for any digression from original research design;
- acknowledgements of limitations of the activities carried out.

Checklist – Research Project Management: Tools

Good project management ensures the success of a project. The following actions should be undertaken according to the relevant project management tool.

◆ Resources

- Financial: Budget and monitoring costs of conducting research;
- Time: Create a timetable to plan dates and order of research activities;
- Data: Establish and maintain relationship with the key persons (or “gatekeepers”).

◆ Project Document

- Understand the project development flowchart;
- Understand the purpose and objective for each component of the Project Document.

◆ Terms of Reference

- Describe objectives, expected roles and responsibilities of the researcher;
- Identify formal and informal qualifications;
- Distinguish between required and desirable qualifications;
- Prioritize qualifications;
- Consider effect of researcher’s demographic characteristics in relation to target group.

◆ Contract

- Outline rights and obligations of the researcher;
- Include contractual clauses to avoid problematic ambiguities (e.g. need for additional services after date of expiry).

◆ Training

Introduce researcher to the:

- research context;
- research objective;
- population of interest;
- methods of survey distribution, completion, processing;
- interview and note-taking skills.

Checklist – Research Methodology

Deciding on the methods and approach to be applied in a study, one may ask the following questions:

- ◆ Is the research problem of the project :
 - precisely defined and operationalized with measurable indicators?
 - referring to the characteristic of the whole population in focus?
 - testing hypothesis on the casual relationship between factors (variables)?

If answer to these questions is yes, then choose the survey method.

- ◆ Will I able to:
 - get information about the parameters of the whole population in focus?
 - obtain relevant, complete, precise and up-to-date sampling frame?
 - define an appropriate sample size and draw it in a random way?
 - contact selected respondents within disposable resources and maintain acceptable level of non-responses?
 - effectively administer the survey and control performance of data collectors?
 - competently process and analyse data to assure statistical significance of findings?

If answer to these questions is still positive, your survey results have a chance to be representative and strong in claims. Otherwise, consider whether unrepresentative findings and (as a consequence) limited scope for generalizing are still worth all efforts and financial expenditure raised by sincere implementation of a survey method.

If at least one or more answers for the previous questions were negative, consider:

- ◆ Is the research problem of the project:
 - dealing with unexplored or new phenomena?
 - focused on disclosing and understanding the mechanisms and motives underpinning human behaviour (also within networks and organizations)?
 - requiring rich and detailed information?
 - referring to issues which respondents may find sensitive, embarrassing or evoking psychological trauma?
- ◆ Would the findings be still valuable and interesting, despite of the lack of representativeness?

If answer to these questions is yes, then think about less-structured approaches and qualitative methods.

Checklist – Ethics

Globally:

- ◆ Respect the laws and cultural norms of the society that is being studied.
- ◆ Conduct the research with professional integrity (honesty, transparency, objectivity).

Pre-research:

- ◆ Include ethical guidelines in all research proposals and contracts.
- ◆ Decide whether or not participants shall receive remuneration and, if so, under what form.
- ◆ Consider the special needs and rights pertaining to each target participant group (e.g. children).
- ◆ Explore the option of involving individuals from the local community as interviewers.
- ◆ When dealing with sensitive or emotional issues, seek advice from psychologists on how to minimize distress to participants.
- ◆ Compile a contact list of referral agencies for participants in need of support or assistance.

During research:

- ◆ Ensure that the data collection occurs in a neutral and secure setting.
- ◆ Give sufficient information about the nature of the research study to the participant.
- ◆ Obtain the (written) informed consent of participants.
- ◆ Minimize participant stress or discomfort by avoiding undue intrusion.
- ◆ Respect the right of the participant to remain silent on issues too sensitive to discuss.
- ◆ Consider any concerns or issues raised by the participant – even if these may not be pertinent to the research objectives or relevant to the data collection.
- ◆ Maintain a positive attitude and a neutral or emotionally acceptable expression when interacting with participants.
- ◆ Take the necessary steps to avoid false expectations following participation.

Post-research:

- ◆ Treat all information obtained from participants as confidential.
- ◆ Protect the anonymity of participants.
- ◆ Undertake reasonable measures to maintain the security of data.

Checklist – Interviews

When planning, conducting and analysing interviews, the following actions should be observed:

Planning interviews

- ◆ Allocate time for:
 - Creation of an interview's guideline – list of topics to be discussed;
 - Arranging a suitable time and place for the interview;
 - Conducting interviews;
 - Transcription and analysis.
- ◆ Allocate costs for conducting, transcribing and analysing interviews;
- ◆ Define criteria for selecting respondents;
- ◆ When appropriate, obtain access from relevant authorities or respondents;
- ◆ Communicate a reasonable estimate of the interview duration;
- ◆ Minimize interviewer effect when pairing up interviewers with respondents.

Conducting interviews

- ◆ Describe the nature of the research;
- ◆ Explain the purpose of the interview;
- ◆ Describe how the interview will proceed;
- ◆ Describe methods to assure confidentiality and anonymity;
- ◆ Obtain informed consent and permission to record the interview;
- ◆ Collect relevant background information from the respondent;
- ◆ Maintain appropriate levels of control over the interview (timing and direction);
- ◆ Maintain a non-judgemental and neutral attitude toward the respondent;
- ◆ Monitor the interview for:
 - Key issues;
 - Underlying meanings;
 - What was left unsaid;
 - Inconsistencies;
 - Misleading answers;
 - Exaggerated answers;
 - Pacifying answers given to please the interviewer.
- ◆ Use prompts and probes when appropriate (Please refer to Table: Interviewing Tactics) ;
- ◆ Take field notes, including relevant descriptions of the interview context, non-verbal communication, etc. ;
- ◆ Thank respondents for their time and help.

Analysing Interviews

- ◆ Consider effects of interview context;
- ◆ Consider effects of the presence of recording equipment;
- ◆ Consider difficulties associated with transcription;
- ◆ Look for common themes across interviews;
- ◆ Protect the respondent's identity when using extracts;
- ◆ Present extracts in context of the discussion and of the interview situation;
- ◆ Acknowledge impact of interviewer's effect on the collection and interpretation of data.

Checklist – Self-administered Questionnaires

A well-constructed questionnaire should have the following characteristics or elements:

Planning: Allocated time for:

- ◆ Design
- ◆ Production
- ◆ Pilot
- ◆ Modification of initial draft
- ◆ Production of final draft
- ◆ Distribution
- ◆ Completion
- ◆ Follow-up with non-respondents
- ◆ Analysis

Allocated costs for the production, distribution, transcription and analyses.

When appropriate, access from relevant authorities or respondents

Constructing:

- ◆ Clear format
- ◆ Appropriate cover page:
 - Description of the nature of the research
 - Explanation of questionnaire purpose
 - Assurances of confidentiality and anonymity
 - Written acknowledgement of informed consent
 - Clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire
 - Return address and targeted return date
 - Note of thanks to respondents
 - Assigned serial numbers for easier tracking
 - Clear and unambiguous questions
 - Checks against duplicate questions
 - Inclusion of relevant questions
 - Exclusion of irrelevant questions
 - Suitable ordering
 - Checks against misspellings, grammar errors and typographical errors

Checklist – Report Writing

When writing up research, be sure that the final report contains the following elements:

- ◆ Clear and logical organizational structure
- ◆ Defined context and key themes that are logically presented and crossreferenced
- ◆ Appropriate and effective writing style for the report's objective and audience
- ◆ Citations and full references given for all sources referred to or consulted
- ◆ Effective use of tables, diagrams and other illustrations
- ◆ Correct spelling, grammar and use of punctuation