

Data gathering tool – selection and design

Discussion document

Preamble

This document draws heavily from Katrin Girgensohn's report on the COST Action 15221 Training School, December 2017. One of the desired outputs of the training school was the development of a replicable data gathering tool for use with key informants. That output links directly to one of the research objectives of our COST Action as noted in the MoU, namely to:

- Develop a replicable, reusable data gathering instrument, for use with key informants in order to capture their individual purposes, processes, knowledge, skills and values which lead to their success, effectiveness and productivity, in each of the four areas (data gathering instrument).

Training school participants developed data gathering tools using three different methods:

1. Focus groups
2. Surveys
3. Interviews.

1. Focus groups

Proposed parameters and approach. Have at least one participant out of each participating country i.e. at least six focus groups. Participants should not necessarily be seen as representatives of their countries rather as key informants in their own right.

Complete the focus groups online – using Adobe connect or other platform (Google Hangouts?)

- Issue of language. In English or not? What about translation?
- Questions: start with easier ones, low stake questions (L), go on with middle (M) and then high-stake (H). Formulate as neutral as possible

Potential questions:

- Is this your first time being in an (online) focus group?
- How do you feel about that?

Purpose

- You are successful in TWLR in your field. What motivated you to achieve that?

Values

- What do you believe is important in order to excel in TWLR?

Processes

- What are the most important actions or steps that have led to fulfilling your potential in TWLR?
- What helps or hinders your productivity?
- Who are the people who have influenced you throughout your career?

Knowledge

- What is the role of knowledge in TWLR?
- In what ways has your knowledge been acquired and developed?
- How are you updating your knowledge?

Skills

- Many of you are mentors. What guidelines or recommendations do you give your mentees to acquire the skills or competencies that are central in TWLR?

Synergy

- What is a common requirement for being successful in TWLR?
- How do you perceive the link between these four areas?

Methods questions

- Would it be better to hold local, national focus groups instead? As well?
- How will transcribing the data be managed?
- Analysis: how will the data be analysed? who will do the analysis?
- Development of CHES model: Centralized Higher Education Supports Model

2. Surveys

The survey has been designed to find out about teamwork/network of “stellar persons”.

Questions of survey: <https://form.jotformeu.com/71826539614362>

Section 1 Basic information

1. Your discipline
2. How many people are part of your team?
3. Which roles do you undertake as part of your role in your team? (Research, Teaching, Writing, Learning, Team Management)
4. Describe your activities in the team
5. How would you describe your career stage: New academic (1-3), Early career (4-9 years), Mid career (10-20), Established (21+ years)

Section 2

In the following section we ask you to describe your experience of each of core areas: Research, Teaching, Learning and Writing both individually and within the team context. This will include but should not be limited to your motivation, philosophy, theoretical approach and key activities. We would like you to address each one. There is no word limit.

Teaching, Research, Learning, Writing

We are interested in the inter-relationships, interactions and synergies that occur among these four aspects of your work individually and within the team. Please describe you experience in this regard.

In your career to date, what experience, activity or education has been most supportive of your development individually and within the team?

Section 3

What advice would you give to new colleagues joining your team to assist them in developing as an academic both individually and as a team member? Please reflect on each of the core areas of research, writing, teaching and learning and on their interactions.

Please indicate using the following scales the importance of each activity in your current work portfolio (scale from 1-6 from not important to very important):

Research, Writing, Teaching, Learning

Methods questions

- Length of survey? Too long; too demanding of participants and will lead to lack of engagement.
- Have a shorter survey to preempt/prepare for the focus group?
- Fewer open questions and more Likert type questions to see if there are patterns in the group?
- Reference to other questionnaires that exist? Identification of existing questionnaire which might help? e.g. drawing on Elbow and Belanoff *A Community of Writers* <https://maynoothuniversity.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/being-a-writer-adapted-from-elbow-and-belanoff>, *Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey* (PIRLS) 2017, Times Higher Education (THE) Teaching Survey 2017. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/the-teaching-survey-2017-results-and-analysis>

3: Interviews (semi-structured?)

Phase 1: Selection and pre-survey

Random selection from two higher education institutions in each country and then across countries. Ensure representation across different institutions (public and private, large and small and so on). Also sample should cover different disciplines.

Phase 2: Interviews and Index cards

Questions:

- Did you always want to become an academic?
- What obstacles did you have to overcome?
- What is your biggest achievement?
- What are you most proud of? In all of the four areas (ask for each area explicitly)
- How did you manage to do that?
- How did you get there? Which obstacles did you have to cross?
- Habits: which habits have you built deliberately, why and how?
- What makes a successful academic in the area of teaching, writing and researching?

Interviewees are asked to write down the topics they talk about and should group those cards in categories during the interviews so that you get pictures of the connections.

Phase 3: Focus groups based on analysis of index card models

Afterwards, the researchers try to integrate all those pictures into one and conduct focus groups on the subareas.

Other questions/comments

Idea of asking “what advice would you give young colleagues as a mentor” seems to be a good one, regardless of method of data gathering.

Language problems: How can people express themselves adequately when it is not in their own language? On the other hand, how could translation happen without causing differences?

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