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Research Methods Workshop

Week 2 : Information Challenge (Part 2 of 3)

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Information Challenge

- There is so much information available
- Focus on information useful in getting the job done do not waste time on information only of 'interest'
- Stay focused on your information needs

Data v. Information

- Data- undigested facts and figures which have been gathered but not processed
- Information- data that has been processed and selected for your needs
- Information overload is really a data overload
- Information can be combined with a manager's experience and insight to become knowledge to enable effective action

Types of Information

Quantative

How much? How many? How frequently? How likely? How quickly? Gives you breadth of information.

Qualitative

Non numerical requirements which is subjective- What? Why? How? Gives you depth of information.

Collecting Data

- **Primary Data**

Gathered by you or your team for your own purposes.
Could include surveys, commissioned reports, meetings with consultants.

- **Secondary Data**

Gathered by other people for their own purposes.
Includes: journals, reports, commercial databases.

Collecting Secondary Data

- Know what you are looking for- draw up a briefing if others are helping or doing the research.
- Use all the clues available- indices, contents pages, scan journals, search engines- do not read more than you have to.
- Do not get side- tracked

Collecting Formal Primary Data

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Face to face
- Telephone
- Postal
- Email

Questionnaires

- Do not ask too many questions
- Easy questions first, sensitive questions in the middle, classification questions at the end (age etc.)
- Simple logical structure
- Avoid leading questions
- Avoid jargon
- Avoid words which can be interpreted in many ways such as reasonable or satisfactory
- Avoid multiple questions
- Use open questions with care- they take longer to analyse

Types of Questions

- Likert Scale- strongly agree, slightly agree, neither agree or disagree, slightly disagree, strongly disagree
- Semantic differential- sliding scale, circle the mark which most closely resembles your view 1-5 etc.

Interviews

- Structured- set questions and format, prescriptive
- Semi- structured- set of topics but more freedom in how interviewer asks questions
- Unstructured- up to interviewer what questions are asked and how
- Get more in depth information from unstructured interviews but the data is more difficult to analyse as interviewer has more influence over the information gathered
- Can use focus groups

Collecting Informal Primary Data

Use your network:

- At work- courses, contacts, previous jobs
- Family, friends
- Contacts from leisure activities
- Your time in education- school, college, university
- Be careful, are these people the best to ask, is the information correct, do they have a vested interest, will the information be available on time?

Quality Information

- Relevant
- Current
- Adequate
- Timely
- Reliable
- Cost- effective

Discussion

- 1) Where is your data (i.e. empirical evidence) will be coming from?
- 2) Who are the stakeholders in your research?
- 3) How are you planning to approach them?
- 4) What tools will you be using (i.e. interview, questionnaire. Survey or what?
- 5) What kind of data / evidence you will be seeking and why?