

Surveys in E-Learning Research: Methodology, Key Issues and Resources

I. Methodological Issues

1. Sample Selection

- Various approaches to sampling can be adopted, depending on the goals, nature of the study and availability of information on the population characteristics
- Before collecting the data the researchers might want to specify the sampling frame (i.e. the proportion of the population to be surveyed) and determine the degree of its representativeness
- In chapter 3 of report of ICT use in South African universities (<http://www.cet.uct.ac.za/files/KnowledgeBase/VirtualMobiusCompleteReportWithAppendices.pdf>) Czerniewicz and Brown described their approaches to sample selection for online and print surveys across various institutions and groups of participants

2. Print vs. Online Delivery

- a) Online questionnaires are typically cheaper to produce, pilot, administer and deliver
- b) Online Questionnaires can produce dozens of usable responses instantly and data can often be easily saved onto Excel
- c) Sampling can be a issue with online instruments in so far as only the participants who go online and can and want to be involved will complete the questionnaire
- d) Print questionnaires can often help to reach for the participants which would be impossible to survey in an online mode
- e) However, mode of questionnaire delivery can be used as one of the variables in the analysis of quantitative data, because the choice of an online survey option does not mean better IT skills or competence with online media
- f) Sometimes both an online and a paper version of the instrument can be used at the pilot stage, but the choice of the questionnaire mode for the main study should depend on the nature of the study, time and resources available
- g) When a questionnaire is delivered online a paper version can sometimes be offered as an option

3. Using Qualitative Research Methods to Enhance the Quality of Survey Instruments:

- a) Piloting the survey items with groups of the participants with characteristics similar to those of the target population
- b) Conducting interviews in order to identify the issues that are important to the respondents and exploring them with a larger base of participants in the main survey
- c) Face-to-face or online focus groups to pilot the instrument or capture a wider range of perspectives on the issues identified in the survey

II. Existing Surveys on E-Learning Experiences:

- a) Oxford Brookes Pathfinder Learning Technologies Survey:
<https://mw.brookes.ac.uk/display/GR001/Learning+Technologies+Questionnaire>
- b) Kennedy et al.'s survey on learner technology skills, access and use of ICT in Australia (see Appendix A)
http://www.bmu.unimelb.edu.au/research/munatives/natives_report2006.pdf
- c) ECAR Annual Study of IT Use in the USA (see Appendix B)
<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ers0706/rs/ERS0706w.pdf>
- d) Student Views of E-Learning Questionnaire at the University of Edinburgh
<http://homepages.ed.ac.uk/jhaywood/papers/seusissreport%20print%20version.pdfv>

III. Most Popular Online Survey Tools:

- a) Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com)
- b) Bristol Online Surveys (www.survey.bris.ac.uk)
- c) Questionmark Perception (www.questionmark.com)