A standard topic list for conducting cognitive pre-tests

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Background

• The CIRF forced us to specify all individual steps we take in a pre-test project.

• Surprise: we already seem to have a standard way of executing pre-tests, but have not fully documented it.

• Input for the construction of a standard topic list.
Comparing CIRF Categories with elements of the original report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRF Categories</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Original StatNeth Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Research Objectives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Research Design</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2.2</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Methods, subsection Test procedure</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Ethics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not included</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Participant Selection</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Methods, subsection Test respondents</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Data collection</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Methods, subsection Test procedure</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Data analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Findings and recommendations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Conclusion, implications and discussion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Conclusions and recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Strengths and limitations</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not included</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Report format</td>
<td></td>
<td>Appendices:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• (test) questionnaire</td>
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<td>• test protocol</td>
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<td>• examples of recruitment letter, consent form etc.</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Methods, subsection Test questionnaire</td>
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Items in topic list

1) Reviews
2) Defining research questions
3) Designing the pre-test
4) Executing the pre-test
5) Analyses
6) Reporting
Step 1 Reviews

- Review of previous versions of the questionnaire.
- Review of previous evaluations.
- Desk review by methodologist identifying potential problems.
- Review of ‘common knowledge’.
- Review of translation procedure.
- Review of survey design, one mode or mix of modes.
Step 2 Research questions

• Based on outcomes of step 1.
• Combine research questions of clients:
  ➢ *National*: Statistical department of StatNeth, Research Institutes, Governmental Departments
  ➢ *International*: Eurostat, other NSI’s
• Define general and specific research questions for the pre-test:
  ➢ comprehensibility and validity
  ➢ mode specific issues
  ➢ flow of the interview
Step 3 Design of the pre-test

• Define test population and recruitment strategy.
• Choose test methods (cognitive interview techniques, observation, conversation analyses, small scale experiments).
• Choose (mixed of) mode(s) for pre-test.
• Design or compile the test questionnaire, i.e. scripted probes, alternative question texts, additional evaluation questions etc.
• Write protocol for test interviews with guidelines for test interviewer
Step 3 Design of the pre-test (organisation)

- Define project planning with strict time schedule.

- Choose project team members, include client, interviewers methodologists, content specialists, etc.

- Define plan for analyses and reporting, crucial for international projects or projects with several testing partners.
Step 4 Execution of pre-test

• Recruit test respondents.
• Plan appointments, keep in mind project schedule, availability of test interviewers, burden of test interviewers.
• Instruction for test interviewers. Explanation of protocol.
• Execution of test interviews.
• Reporting on individual test interviews.
• Evaluation meeting with test interviewers, first impression and the preliminary results.
Step 5 Analyses

- Triangulation: Based on the individual test reports and the findings from the reviews (history, evaluations, common knowledge, translation procedure, design) a spread sheet is composed.

- To get an overview of the most prevalent and significant problems a draft list of main findings was composed.

- Example of template of an international pre-test (ICT survey).
Step 6 Reporting

• Based on the analyses of the template a report is written for the client including recommendations.

• The Cognitive Interviewing Reporting Framework (CIRF) can be used as a standardised form to report on pre-tests to achieve completeness and comparability.
Discussion

• How to incorporate the topic list and CIRF to report on your pre-tests?

• Too many steps or more additional steps?

• Usefulness of the topic list and the CIRF?