Collecting social data:
Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic

Agenda

Thursday, 08 October 2020
10:00-12:00

Charlene Deacon, JET Education Services

Educational research in a time of crisis - Bootcamp methodology

Tshepo Baloyi, JET Education Services

Experiences with using or planning to use remote methods – telephonic; online; WhatsApp based; etc

Reflection:

What are we compromising
and what are we gaining?

Amreen Choda and Itago Winnie, Genesis Analytics

Research and data gathering in a time of lockdown and social distancing

Dr Musawenkosi Mabaso, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

Producing updated policy-relevant health research during a time of national crisis: Insights from the HSRC's Human and Social Capabilities research programme

Charlene Deacon and Tshepo Baloyi, JET Education Services

- **Julia de Kadt:**
  - I'd love to hear a bit more about pros/cons and management of the integrated peer review process.

  So, what we did was, in some cases; we had 2 or possibly 3 peer reviewers. This was not done as planned, and it wasn't something we thought about before hand but it turned out well and we were able to apply it across the two subsequent bootcamps but was not planned in the other bootcamps, as it sort of rose. We also found that some peer reviews were more closer to the process, and when you had 2 or 3, one of them would rather be involved near the end and this actually helped in the collaboration, as it brought the expert much closer to and during the process, and having someone with an outside view really helped. My view is that, the next time we started iterating it out, we found out that it was very helpful because it builds the lot of strength when you got a bit of depth, as reviewers have different views and this allows the JET editing team to kind of integrate those things. You have to manage it like relationships and communicate clearly the scope of work etc.

  - This programme is incredibly inspiring! I'd love to hear a bit more about thoughts around what aspects/dimensions of this approach will be most valuable to continue into the post-lockdown period?

  The one thing I think we've realised is that we could do this before lockdown as we can after lockdown. Perhaps there are some ways to unlock different aspects of the education systems through more collaborative approaches and it may not just be for research but also for writing workshops for example that could be done more across different languages. This is the idea I am sitting with at the moment, it's not necessarily a research strategy but is using the same format for a different content. To add, in terms of taking this post-lockdown is that one another thing is that we've made connections and collaborations across the world, not just in South Africa. If now, I do research in one of the people we're collaborating with; they've shown in interest in terms of exchanging of ideas and papers. This is something we can also acknowledge during our bootcamps, the importance of relationships and collaborations- of which is something we never had in the past.

- **Naiema Taliep:** This is really amazing and innovative. How did the group address the accessibility to online platforms for the vast majority of South African learners?

In this case, we weren't dealing with South African learners from the school level, but we were dealing with Graduates mainly from the honours level upwards. I think it's obvious if they didn't see the thing online, then they weren't going to be able to apply. I think using this kind of platform, we would need to find ways- the online is not necessarily the answer but it creates more collaboration for more creative thinking.

- **Tara Polzer Ngwato:** What software/programme did you use for the programme management tool?

We used mainly the google platforms. As an NGO in South Africa, we have a full package of the google drive, so it was shared google sheets, google docs and google docs etc.

- **Mmakoae:**
  - This is a very interesting session and clearly forces researchers to question a lot that we take for granted. Did you have to match participants and researchers in terms of age and other demographics to ensure that cultural differences don't come on the way?

  We had researchers across the world and across cultures. Obviously in the commonwealth bootcamp, many spoke English, but nonetheless; it is also sometimes a second language for many and I think what we discovered from age-group wise, we had like from 25-35 applying and we didn't have to match them per se as they had to submit CVs and provide motivations on their chosen theme. They also had to submit a 2 pager outlining their research interest and the qualities of being a social change agent. These are some of the requirements we followed in order select people.

  - Thanks Charlene! Tshepo please elaborate more on your experiences with ensuring privacy of participants when they take surveys from home.

  With regards to ensuring the privacy of participants, data was only accessible by the me, the study coordinator. The google form was circulated, and it outlined how their privacy will be ensured. So, as part of this, their responses were only accessed by me and I ensure that this were not shared with anyone. The commander did not even have access to these responses.

JET Education Services website: www.jet.org.za

Amreen Choda and Itago Winnie, Genesis Analytics

- **Julia de Kadt:**
  - This is fascinating, and not a method I have any experience with! I'd love to hear what considerations guide the choice of your 'voice'? And whether this plays out in response rates or the types of answers received.

  The considerations that guided our choice of 'voice', is really dependent on who the respondents are. For instances, in a case of youth; we tend to use a woman's voice because that tends to be soft so that they would feel comfortable, especially knowing that they are speaking to a woman. Also, if the respondents are women and if we are working in a programme that is specifically targeting women, we are most likely to use a woman who would make that phone call to these women. Our decision in terms of voice plays out in our response rates, for instance in the past we found that when we were using a man's voice and if there respondent was a woman, they felt less comfortable responding.

  - I'd love to know whether you've experimented with platforms other than Zoom? What are the reasons you tend to use Zoom?

  No we have not experimented with other platforms other than Zoom. I know there are other platforms such as MicroSoft Teams and Webinars, but our reasons for using Zoom is our preference as a company, our familiarity with this application and we've built our capabilities to interact with a larger group of people using. Zoom has worked really well and just setting up to have the security measures is easy to navigate, limiting participants, ensuring security is on and blocking other people in accessing the call. So far, this has worked for us.

- **Tshepo Baloyi:** Do you reimburse for data and airtime? If yes, is there a guiding SOP for doing this?

So, for IVR, we did not reimbursed for airtime because the call itself is free on the recipient. But giving airtime as an incentive for completing the call, so that's something we've done. In terms of the guidelines of how this works, usually we do not reimburse more than a day's wage in airtime, transport or data because this might also lead to response bias.

- **Comments:**
  - **Charlene Deacon:**
    - One of the methods JET projects utilize is creating face to face hubs (COVID-19 protocols apply) with internet access - i.e. a blended online/face to face.
    - An interesting fact - data in many other countries was cheaper than expected for our bootcamps - not the case in all.

Dr Musawenkosi Mabaso, HSRC

- **Julia de Kadt:**
  - What a fantastic breadth of research! Would love to hear any thoughts around why you think numbers dropped with the second survey? I also wonder about research fatigue amongst potential participants?

  When we did this the second time around, remember it was more or less the same group of people with access to the website and all study links and I think people were sort of fatigued. There was a great response rate on the first survey, and the drop was so huge for the second survey- and this was a huge challenge. Also, the surveys were back-to-back, hence; there was no time in between.

  - Would also love to hear about your experiences reaching more hard to reach groups under lockdown conditions?

  In terms of reaching the hard-to-reach participants, there were specific sampling and methodologies we applied such as snowballing/ respondent-driven sampling.

- **Tara Polzer Ngwato:** How is HSRC approaching the under-represented groups? Weighting? Targeting the survey at these groups in some way?

  Yes, we used weighting to deal with the under-represented groups.