Prevailing Problems in the Design and Implementation of Comparative Surveys

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The main objectives of 3MC surveys

To get comparable results

- using input-harmonization (e.g., European social survey(ESS)) or output-harmonization(e.g., European Statistical System)

To get accurate results

- by having a solid central infrastructure

- by using reputable service providers

- by using QA and QC

To make sure data are used

Prevailing problems

- No strong central team

- Too many countries participating (one of Sir Roger's golden rules)

- Too much output harmonization, too little input harmonization

- Deviations from specifications including cheating

- Lack of know-how both centrally and in countries

- No real quality management

- Specific 3MC methodological problems

- High costs resulting in various shortcuts

Central coordinating team

CSES*	ECS**	ESS***	WVS****
Yes: the planning committee and secretariat are on standby for any questions about the guidelines prior as well as during data collection and to give advice on study design and methodology	Yes: this team checks the quality of the national surveys and encourages the national team to raise attention to problems of the data	Yes: well coordinated, supported by a number of advisory and consultant group	No: but there is the WVS Association that coordinates the network of the world's social scientists

*Comparative Study of Electoral System; ** European Company Survey
*** European Social Survey   **** World Values Survey

Best translation method

CSES	ECS	ESS	WVS
TRAP D (Translation, Review, Adjudication, Pre-testing and Documentation) and back translation for quality check	- TRAP D - Eurofound approved professional national translator teams - Gallup's online translation support system (WebTrans) is used	- TRAPD - SQP (Survey Quality packaging) program - national coordinators together with the central coordinating team and external agencies conduct translation verification, reliability and validity.	No general translation method in place. - E.g. in wave 6 (2010-2014) out of 59 countries only , 17 used a SPECIALIST translator, 5 received already translated version from WVS, 9 did not mention translation method at all

Sampling design

CSES	ECS	ESS	WVS
Probability sampling - quota and replacement samples have been accepted in limited basis.	Probability sampling only	Probability sampling only - no quota sampling at any stage - substitution of non-responding households and random–route sampling are forbidden	Mostly probability sampling - few quota sampling in round 5

Summary of findings from selected surveys

- ECS :
  - does a great job incorporating into its framework CCSG, CSDI documentation and a lot of other 3MC literature
  - provides full documentation of QA/QC process
  - has challenges with response rate; in 2009, ECS response rates range from 11% to 63%

Summary (Cont'd)

- CSES:
  - Ensures comparability by including 3MC expertise from EES, ISSP, etc. in preparing quality guidelines.
  - Specific challenge: some countries choose to modify certain questions, e.g., left-right placement of parties are dropped in Korea and Taiwan

Summary (Cont'd)

- ESS:
  - Excellent infrastructure; well designed survey methodology, simply stated guidelines and a view towards continuous quality improvement

- WVS:
  - No solid infrastructure
  - So many quality questions but no answers available
  - Lack of documentation
  - The survey covers 90% of the world population (Roger's rule kicks in)

So what about those prevailing problems

- A strong central team including a quality manager is necessary

- A quality management approach is needed to

  – Decrease the distance between users and producers

  – Control the implementation of processes using metrics

  – Find root causes of problems

  – Devote more resources to those processes that are most at risk

  – Coordinate responsibilities of different teams

  – Develop systems for more timely, almost real-time, interventions

- Capacity building is needed through
  - Accompanying materials justifying specifications
  - Checklists for all tasks that are not self-evident
  - Customized training of staff that are critical to success
  - Promotion of 3MC materials and activities
  - Continued methodological research

- New thinking about handling limitations in the data through
  - Audits and quality declarations
  - Information about what data are good for and what they are not so good for
  - Thinking about more powerful and interesting comparisons

Just one example (PISA goes overboard in Sweden)

- Sweden has dropped considerably in the ranking causing a national trauma

- The PISA results have been discussed or referred to in Swedish media almost every day since the beginning of November 2013

- Media are actually running the political agenda when it comes to education and school issues

- PISA results were the major issues in the recent elections, much more important than the economy, taxes, and employment

- There is currently no room for discussing the considerable criticism that exists on how PISA is conducted and analyzed