ESRC Data Management Plan

Existing Data

The research objectives require qualitative and quantitative data that are not available from other sources. Some data exists that can be used to situate the background to the proposed research (e.g. from published papers, and project management textbooks), and the knowledge and experiences from Richard's previous career as Project Manager within IT Consulting will also be leveraged to guide the research. However, as the proposed research is intended to investigate business-to-business relationships, and ultimately propose new approaches to manage large, complex software implementations, it is essential that we collect data directly from the subject matter experts - professional project managers in industry.

Information on Data

Due to the lack of appropriate and sufficient secondary data, the research project involves primary data collection through 1) public data; 2) semi-structured interviews; and 3) focus group discussions with people identified through profiling techniques.

1. Public Data

Where possible, we will use online and/or electronic archives. This will involve extracting and processing quantitative data relating to the scope of software implementation projects and the size of the teams involved. Key search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria, variable codes and metadata will be refined and agreed during the initiation phase of the project. Preliminary searches indicate that an initial dataset, which will be useful for guiding subsequent interview questions, can be generated. Data relating to the search terms and metadata will be stored electronically in Microsoft Word format.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews with Individuals

We anticipate undertaking 25-40 semi-structured interviews with professional project managers. Data will be collected and stored using digital audio recording (e.g. MP3) where interviewees permit. In case they do not consent to being voice recorded, data will be captured as notes by the interviewer during the interviews. Interview notes will then be typed up according to agreed formats and standards. Where interviews are audio recorded, the files will be sent to a professional transcriber on an encrypted USB stick for subsequent transcription.

3. Focus Group Discussions Matched to Profiles

The sample frame for the focus groups will be derived from public data. Numbers of focus groups will depend on geographical and other variations in patterns; how quickly a robust pattern of findings emerges; and the scope for identifying and convening the appropriate groups. Whether recorded (in video or audio) or not, the event will be transcribed or documented using agreed formats and standards for handling the issue of multiple voices, interruptions, labeling of participatory and visual activities, and so on.

All transcripts will be in Microsoft Word. During the definition phase, the metadata, procedures and file formats for note-taking, recording, transcribing, and anonymising semi-structured interview and focus group discussion data will be developed and agreed. Focus group and interview transcripts will be coded in NVivo.

Quality Assurance

The PI will be responsible for overall quality assurance. While interview and focus group protocols are being developed in the definition phase, standards and systems for note-taking, recording (if possible), transcribing and storing visual data from participatory techniques such as drawings, and use of metadata will also be defined. Quality control for the qualitative data collection will be assured through refresher focus group practice sessions, and each transcript will be checked for consistency with agreed standards.

Backup and Security

All of our raw data and subsequent analysis will need to be backed up regularly to comply with good academic research practices. Qualitative data will be backed and secured by the PI on a regular basis and metadata will include clear labeling of versions and dates. There are some potential sensitivities around some of the data being collected, so the project will establish a system for protecting data while it is being processed, including the anonymisation of interviewees, the use of passwords and safe back-up hardware, and the use of encryption during transit to the professional transcriber.

Ethical Issues

A letter explaining the purpose, approach and dissemination strategy (including plans to publish results) of the research, and an accompanying consent form (including to share data) will be prepared. A clear verbal explanation will also be provided to each interviewee and focus group participant. Commitments to ensure confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring recordings are not shared; that transcripts are anonymised and details that can be used to identify participants and their employer, are removed from transcripts or concealed in write-ups. As the highly focused nature of the research means that many employers or indeed customers of the participants may be easily identifiable despite efforts to ensure anonymity or confidentiality, where there is such a risk, participants will be shown sections of transcripts and/or report text to ensure they are satisfied that no unnecessary risks are being taken with their interview data. It is envisaged that some participants may become uncomfortable with all of the interview being recorded. In such circumstances, recording will be paused or sections of text will be expunged from shared transcripts, and an indication made that this is the case.

Expected Difficulties in Data Sharing

We do not envisage any difficulties in the sharing of data as the PI is also the sole researcher within the project.

Copyright/Intellectual Property Right

The PI and employing institution (Lancaster University Management School) will jointly own the data generated. Online and archival sources will be cited and clearly acknowledged in the database and research outputs. Permission will be sought from secondary sources if used to share the findings of the research on public websites.

Responsibilities

The PI is also the sole researcher on the project. As such, he will direct the data management process overall, including metadata production, recording of interviews, data extraction and processing, day-to-day cross-checks, back-up, security and quality control activities. A professional transcriber will be responsible for transcription of audio recordings.

Preparation of Data for Sharing and Archiving

It is not envisaged that the raw data will be shared with any third party, however results from analysis of the raw data may be shared with other researchers within Lancaster University Management School who may perform in collaborative or mentoring capacities.