ASUMPTIONS RELATED TO SURVEYS

- respondents are able to understand the questions being asked
- questions are understood in the same way by all respondents
- respondents are willing and able to answer such questions
MODEL OF SURVEY RESPONSE PROCESS

Fig. 1  A simple model of the survey response process. Source: Groves et al. 2004, p. 202

Four Stages of Cognition Required for an Accurate Response to a Survey Question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Stages</th>
<th>Cognitive Stage Definition</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Causes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Comprehension</td>
<td>Respondent interprets the question</td>
<td>Respondent does not understand</td>
<td>Unknown terms, ambiguous concepts, long and overly complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Retrieval</td>
<td>Respondent searches memory for relevant information</td>
<td>Respondent does not remember/does not know</td>
<td>Recall difficulty, questions assume respondent has information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Judgment</td>
<td>Respondent evaluates and/or estimates response</td>
<td>Respondent does not want to tell, can’t tell</td>
<td>Biased or sensitive, estimation difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Response</td>
<td>Respondent provides information in the format requested</td>
<td>Respondent can’t respond in the format requested</td>
<td>Incomplete response options, multiple responses necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Categorization of Problems in Answering Survey Questions (Johnson, 2013; Miller and Willson at the July 2010 ESCAP workshop in Bangkok, available on the project website. www.unescap.org/stat/disability/pre-pilot-training/)
BEST PRACTICES/KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SURVEY-ITEM DEVELOPMENT (ADULTS)

1. Use simple, common words
2. Use easy-to-understand syntax
3. Use concrete, specific, unambiguous wording to reduce misunderstanding and various item interpretations
4. Use exhaustive, mutually exclusive response categories
5. Avoid leading questions
6. Avoid double-barreled questions
7. Avoid negative wordings
8. Use context, including reference groups and reference periods, to increase response accuracy and aid recall
9. Minimize social desirability bias by eliminating the interviewer, offering anonymity to respondents, legitimizing the less socially desirable responses by
   · using an example in the question, using response scales in lieu of dichotomous yes/no responses, and discouraging the use of the “don’t know” category

MYWEB SURVEY CHALLENGES

1. young children as respondents 7 AND 8 YEAR
   - the types of words they understand compared to adults
   - the attention span

2. cross-cultural nature of the survey
   - differences in interpreting the concepts, response scales, question format

3. CROSS-CULTURAL AND YOUNG CHILDREN
   - the commonalities and differences in children’s well-being across national contexts and languages
   - cultural differences in the connotations of the language used
SPECIFIC ADVICES FOR THE DESIGN OF SURVEYS BASED ON CHILDREN’S COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- TO AVOID
  - vague quantifiers in questions about behavior frequency
  - partially labelled options,
  - ambiguity in question phrasing for those in the 7–11 age group (Borgers & Hox, 2001; Borgers, de Leeuw, & Hox, 2000; Flavell et al., 1993)
  - especially long surveys

Key Recommendations

1. Focus on concrete, clear, and salient reference groups, like school or family
2. Avoid abstract constructs
3. Avoid items that are ambiguous, carry multiple meanings, or are double-barreled
4. Use what is salient and relevant to how a target construct is organized and thought of
5. Ask parents to report only on what they know and observe
6. Proactively tackle lack of variability
7. Match response options with underlying constructs
YOUTH WELL-BEING – DEVELOPING AND SELECTING SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What topics should we talk about?
- What kinds of questions should we ask (and how many)?
- What age groups could answer the questions?
- What is the best way for children and young people to do the questionnaire?
  - Talking to experts
  - Talking to young people
- Testing questions
- Updating and testing questions again
COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING

- a tool for pre-testing survey questionnaires
- in-depth, semi-structured interviews
- a small number of respondents similar to those targeted in the survey

“to study the manner in which targeted audiences understand, mentally process, and respond to the materials we present – with a special emphasis on potential breakdowns in this process” (Willis, 2005, p. 3)
COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING

- HOW RESPONDENTS UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION
- HOW RESPONDENTS ARRIVED AT THEIR ANSWER

- especially important in assessing younger children’s difficulties with surveys
- a particularly useful tool for the designers of cross-cultural and cross-national survey questions
How children from different countries understand, interpret and process questions?

Comprehension
How children understand and interpret the question/concepts and whether the question gathers the intended information?

Retrieval
How children retrieve relevant information from their memory?

Judgement
How children come up with their answer?
| Number of rounds | 3 + Ro – UK  
|                 | R1 + R2+ R3  
|                 | DE, HR, HU, ES, LV, UK |
| Number of interviews conducted per round, per sub-group and overall | 12 per delivery partner  
|                 | 8 year olds / grade N=24 per country  
|                 | 7 year olds/grade N=12 per country  
<p>|                 | 36 per each delivery partner |
| Number of interviewers | 4 per each delivery partner (two pairs) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration of interviews</th>
<th>up to 45 minutes (2x20 min, 5 minute br.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think-aloud vs. verbal probing</td>
<td>verbal probing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concurrent vs. retrospective probing</td>
<td>concurrent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varieties of probes administered</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording</td>
<td>Use of audio recording Reliance on notes taken by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI rounds</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ALL** 26

* - member of the MYWEB national research team
### Age, gender and grade distribution of respondents in all rounds per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>28 (+7 Ro)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>195</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>75 (40%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>114 (60%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>93 (48%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>102 (52%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>42 (21.5%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R1-R3, N=201 including Ro
COGNITIVE INTERVIEWS PROCEDURE

Interviewer A
- Asks child for permission
- Explains process
- Asks child for opinions/reasons for their answers/their understanding of EACH of the questions

Child (aged 7 or 8)
- Reads each question aloud
- Writes down their answer to each question WITHOUT HELP
- Answers the questions of Interviewer A e.g. ‘Are there any words in the question that you did not understand?’

Interviewer B
- Observes Interviewer A and the child
- Makes notes about:
  - things the child finds easy/difficult
  - likes/dislikes about the question
  - Reasons for answers, opinions, and body language
THE QUESTIONNAIRE  ROUND 3

1. HOW HAPPY DO YOU FEEL WITH THE WAY YOU LOOK?

2. CAN YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF AT THE SCHOOL?

3. CAN YOU CHOOSE WHAT YOU SAY AT HOME?

4. HOW OFTEN DO YOU LAUGH?

5. HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS WITH YOUR MOTHER?

6. HOW OFTEN DO YOU WALK OUT OF OR LEAVE YOUR HOME?

THANK YOU
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The testing objectives</th>
<th>Examples of probes used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to test using response scales</td>
<td>Why did you choose that particular answer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does this chosen answer mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you see as the difference, if any, between ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to test understanding of the question/ item/ phrase/ word/time frame and/or context</td>
<td>In your own words, what do you think this question is trying to find out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there a question or word that you do not understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When answering this question, what did the phrase/ word .... mean to you? Please give an example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to test the attractiveness of the question/ response format and how this could be improved</td>
<td>How did you find answering this question? Why do you say that? How did you feel when answering this question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to test gender appropriateness of the question</td>
<td>Do you think this question makes sense and works for both boys and girls? Why yes or why not?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average duration of interviews by round - minutes

R1: 45.5 minutes
R2: 35.6 minutes
R3: 29.8 minutes
RESULTS

children’s understanding of new/adapted measures of well-being

1. appropriateness of different question formats and layout, and type of answering

2. children’s comprehension and appropriateness of question formulations and wording

3. children’s understanding, recalling and judgement in specified response format (response scales)

4. children’s understanding, recalling and judgement in specified different time frames and context.
1. QUESTION FORMATS AND LAYOUT TYPE OF ANSWERING

- the single question per page format is much easier and more understandable for children than a multi-item question layout in the form of table
- circling an answer was much easier for children than making a check mark within a table grid
- instructions (if necessary) related to the answering format should be written before the question/item so that the item and response scale represent a whole
11. FOR EACH LINE CHOOSE ONE ANSWER AND PLEASE MARK WITH ✓
DURING THE LAST WEEK, HOW OFTEN DID YOU...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EVERY DAY</th>
<th>MOST DAYS</th>
<th>ONCE OR TWICE</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>I DON'T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEEL SCARED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET WORRIED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAUGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET ANGRY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After testing, this question...

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ANSWERS

8. HOW OFTEN YOU LAUGH?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EVERY DAY</th>
<th>MOST DAYS</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>I DON'T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

...became this question
Open ended QUESTIONS

CAN YOU PLEASE TELL ME ONE THING THAT MAKES YOU VERY HAPPY?

After testing, this question...

...became this question

PLEASE WRITE DOWN WHAT MAKES YOU VERY HAPPY
2. QUESTION FORMULATIONS AND WORDING

- problems were detected primarily for expressions that were
  - used in figurative senses (e.g., one thing)
  - more ambiguous (adult, normally, enough),
  - not age appropriate (e.g., decide, complaint),
  - or not embedded in a specific culture (e.g., hobby, being happy with)
- conditional question formulations (‘if – then’)

Open ended QUESTIONS

CAN YOU PLEASE TELL ME ONE THING THAT MAKES YOU VERY HAPPY?

After testing, this question...

...became this question

PLEASE WRITE DOWN WHAT MAKES YOU VERY HAPPY
QUESTION FORMULATIONS AND WORDING

8. DOES YOUR FAMILY NORMALLY HAVE ENOUGH MONEY?

After testing, this question...

‘normally’ already means it is ‘not always’

…became this question

‘…YOUR PARENTS HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY YOU FOOD AND CLOTHES

difficulties in finding the right balance between the level of generality and specificity of question formulation in surveys for young children
2. QUESTION FORMULATIONS

Children without major difficulties comprehend questions that enquire about:
- frequencies of specific activities, behaviours or affect

- e.g. about child-parent relationships, bullying, children’s positive and negative affects
3. RESPONSE FORMAT – TESTED RESPONSE SCALES

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ANSWERS

I AGREE A LOT
I AGREE A LITTLE
I DISAGREE A LITTLE
I DISAGREE A LOT

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ANSWERS

ALWAYS
SOMETIMES
NEVER

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ANSWERS

ALWAYS
OFTEN
RARELY
NEVER

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ANSWERS

I DON'T KNOW

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ANSWERS

I

CHOOSE ONE ANSWER AND PLEASE MARK IT WITH ✓

EVERY DAY
MOST DAYS
ONCE OR TWICE
NEVER

FOUR OR MORE TIMES
TWO OR THREE TIMES
ONCE
NEVER

EVERY DAY
MOST DAYS
SOMETIMES
NEVER
1. HOW HAPPY DO YOU FEEL WITH THE WAY YOU LOOK?

“I am happy, although sometimes I get angry with my friends”,
“because I feel very well”,
“because I am very happy and I like to be at school”
“I am always happy”, ES

“... when you are happy, can play with friends, go somewhere”,
“I feel good, and something cheerful is happening around”,
“I like to be cheerful” LA
1. HOW HAPPY DO YOU FEEL WITH THE WAY YOU LOOK?

After testing, this question...

...became this question

1. HOW HAPPY (or satisfied) DO YOU FEEL WITH THE WAY YOU LOOK?
FREQUENCIES SCALES – general 3 and 4 point scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE ANSWERS

(‘Not so often’),
RESPONSE FORMAT (RESPONSE SCALES)

For the general formulation such as

‘Do you...’, ‘Have you...’, ‘Can you...’

children spontaneously expect and respond with dichotomous answers, (e.g. ‘yes / no’ or ‘I can / I cannot’).

if a frequency scale is used the recommended introductory formulation is ‘How often you...?’
4. TIME FRAMES

DURING LAST WEEK (FROM MONDAY TO SUNDAY), HOW OFTEN DID YOU...?

“I was thinking about three days”; “About the last and this week”: “I was talking about time from first grade until today”; “I was thinking about autumn” (GB).

SINCE YOU JOINED THIS CLASS, HOW OFTEN HAVE THE FOLLOWING THINGS HAPPENED TO YOU AT SCHOOL?

“One month and 21 days”; “Four years”, “Already in the kindergarten... All the time in this school...” (LV).
13. **FOR EACH LINE CHOOSE ONE ANSWER** AND PLEASE MARK WITH ✅

**DURING THIS SCHOOL YEAR, HOW OFTEN HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS HAPPEN TO YOU AT SCHOOL?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FOUR OR MORE TIMES</th>
<th>TWO OR THREE TIMES</th>
<th>ONCE</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I WAS MADE FUN OF OR CALLED NAMES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I WAS LEFT OUT OF GAMES OR ACTIVITIES BY OTHER CHILDREN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **HOW MANY TIMES WERE YOU LEFT OUT OF GAMES OR ACTIVITIES BY OTHER CHILDREN AT SCHOOL?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FOUR OR MORE TIMES</th>
<th>TWO OR THREE TIMES</th>
<th>ONCE</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**HOW OFTEN YOU LAUGH?**
4. CONTEXT

HOW OFTEN ARE YOU MADE FUN OF OR CALLED NAMES AT SCHOOL?

“In the school, at home, at my friend's place”,
“In other places also” (LV)

“in the streets”; “at the sport club, at school, at home... all”;
“child care centre, kindergarten, schools” (DE).

„At school but also in the park and when I am with my friends
„Not at home”
“Both in the school and outside”
“in school but also in other places”
„in friend’s house” (ES)

“In the neighbourhood” (HR)

“Everywhere” (HU, ES)

“in the kindergarten” (HR, LA)
4. TIME FRAMES

TO USE
- general formulations
- very short time frames such as *yesterday*, *today*,
- in the case of slightly longer time periods (e.g. *last week*) to ensure that the time-frame reference is explained in detail and unified throughout the questionnaire
General CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A simplified questionnaire on subjective well-being could be carried out with 7 and 8 year olds with support from a class teacher
✓ a survey designed for self-completion by 7 and 8 year olds should be as short as possible
✓ the layout of questions should be simple – one question item per page
✓ only one type of instruction for selection and marking the answer (e.g. circling) should be used throughout the whole questionnaire
✓ the wording and focus of the question should refer to only one experience or type of action

TO AVOID USE OF
• conditional question formulations (‘if – then’)
• ambiguous words
• exact periods of time and space
THANK YOU

http://fp7-myweb.eu/