

The development of a research plan

The research plan (1)

- In practice, a research plan is mostly directed at an organisation for the acquisition of funds. As a result, the content of the research plan corresponds to the funding criteria of the funding organisation.
- Even from a pure methodological perspective, there is no single way of writing a research plan but some pieces of information are commonly presented - and expected.

The research plan (2)

- A research plan is designed to inform others about how you wish to put your research idea into practice.
- It answers the questions:
 - *What* is the research about?
 - *How* is the research going to be carried out?
 - *Why* is this particular research approach chosen?

Sections of a CESRT research plan

(1)

- A general introduction
 - broad introduction to the area of research that progressively moves to the specific topic of the research
 - historical relevance
 - (critical) literature review
 - presentation of concepts, philosophies, theories
 - the main issues involved
 - relevant, current research including available results

- Identification of the problem/opportunity
 - specify the issue that forms the basis of the research
 - different perspectives on the issue
 - existing knowledge + gaps
 - main research questions
 - rationale

Sections of a CESRT research plan **(2)**

- The objective(s) of the research

The main objective is the main reason/drive for of the research and the sub-objectives are the particular issue to be researched.

The objectives of the research are written in a clear and precise manner.

Each sub-objective can only cover 1 issue.

Action-oriented verbs are used to write the objectives.

Sub-objectives are listed numerically.

Sections of a CESRT research plan **(3)**

- **The study design**

A study/research is designed in a way to answer specific research questions.

The research can have one or a combination of types and designs, e.g., comparative, cross-national, qualitative/quantitative research, theoretical, evaluative, empirical, cross-sector, experimental, etc.

Context of the research and the research population (e.g., organisation, group, community; size, social profile...)

Limitations of the research

Ethical considerations (i.e., preservation of confidentiality)

Sections of a CESRT research plan (4)

- The methodology

The identification and justification of chosen data collection instruments:

Primary sources: observation, interviews, questionnaires

Secondary sources: written documentation (policy papers, research papers, media, literature, personal records)

Strengths and weaknesses of instruments

Reliability and validity of instruments

Identification of how ‘things’ will be measured

Sample inclusion (if applicable)

Data analysis approach, e.g., computer (statistical) programme, by hand?

Sections of a CESRT research plan **(5)**

- The dissemination strategy

- reasons for disseminating the research
- form of dissemination anticipated
- targets of the dissemination
- potential use of the research results (e.g., curriculum dev., consultancy, stakeholders)

- The time frame

Research time is limited; researchers need to manage their time accordingly.

A research plan is divided into stages and activities.

A date is indicated to identify the completion of a stage or activity.

It is useful to include some 'buffer' time towards the end of the research process in case a stage or activity takes longer than anticipated.

Sections of a CESRT research plan (6)

- Bibliography

All sources used in preparation of the research plan need to be listed at the end.

All available information on the source needs to be identified.

Harvard style should be used for the bibliography, for citing and for referencing.

Sections of a CESRT research plan **(7)**

Optional

- **Proposed structure for the research report**

The presentation the research and the organisation of the material into chapters.

Basic research report components are:

- Title page
- Table of contents
- List of figures
- List of tables/illustrations
- Abstract/Executive summary
- Introduction
- Body of the report (divided into chapters and sections)
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Appendices
- Bibliography/Reference list