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THE DELPHI TECHNIQUE: ITS METHODOLOGY
AND POTENTIAL FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNERS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This study had two objectives:

- (i) To examine methodological difficulties in using the Normative Delphi Technique as a tool for educational planners; and
- (ii) To explore the potential of the Normative Delphi Technique for educational planners in Developing Countries.

To achieve the above objectives, an experimental-type Delphi was carried out, using a group of fourteen New Zealand experts in the field of Educational Planning, who had worked as consultants or advisers in Developing Countries. A three phase Delphi procedure was employed combined with a follow-up evaluation of the study by the respondents.

On the basis of this experimental Delphi study it was concluded that the Technique may be potentially viable as an instrument for gaining consolidation and consensus of respondent opinion, but that methodological difficulties exist within the Technique. These include : the selection of subjects, character and clarity of Round One, type and effect of information feedback and the number of rounds used. It was suggested that these difficulties could easily be overcome and that, the Delphi Technique may complement, and indeed expedite existing educational planning procedures in Developing Countries such as Commissions of Enquiry, Ministry Plans and Research Studies.

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INTRODUCTION

The future of education seems to be universally uncertain, probably more so in Developing Countries where education has often been regarded as a tool for solving such problems as poverty, over-rapid population growth and political stability. It is this uncertainty of what lies ahead in education that has brought to prominence the Delphi Technique as one instrument to generate consensus of opinion concerning the solutions to present and potential problems and issues in education.

Developed during the 1950's, the Delphi Technique has traditionally used experts, via a series of intensive questions interspersed with feedback, to arrive at consensual opinion and judgements.

In education, the use of the Technique has been concentrated in the area of educational planning. Despite its popularity, methodological difficulties in Delphi's use have been identified, and in the present study an experimental-type investigation is carried out to explore some of these difficulties, and to ascertain the potential of the Technique particularly for educational planners in Developing Countries.

The report of this investigation then, consists of four chapters. The first provides background details about the Delphi Technique, its uses and applications, and then highlights the objectives of the present study, and the reasons why these objectives were chosen.

In Chapter Two an outline is given of the design of the experimental-type study used to collect information on some of the methodological difficulties involved with the Delphi Technique. This is followed by a discussion of the results obtained. The report concludes with a chapter on an evaluation of the potential of the Delphi Technique for educational planners in Developing Countries.