Chapter 6

Delphi Technique

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Definition of Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique was developed to collect experts' opinions in a certain field (Winzenried, 1997). The Delphi study process essentially provides an interactive communication structure between the researcher(s) and the experts in a field, in order to develop themes, needs, directions or predictions about a topic (Neill, 2003, p. 1). The technique uses a series of questionnaires to collect knowledge, judgement or opinions of experts in answering a complex question (Roth, 1990). Delphi is a way to achieve consensus using expert opinions (Kalivoda & Simpson, 1992); it involves experts co-operating in solving a general problem (Buckley, 1995). The Delphi technique is one way to obtain an exact opinion arrived at by consensus of experts (Siraj, 2008). It is categorised as an approach for structuring the group communication process so that it is effective in allowing a group of individuals to solve a complex problem (Linstone & Turoff, 2002).

According to Linstone (1978, p. 405), in its simplest form, the Delphi technique is a carefully designed series of individual interrogations (usually conducted by written questionnaires) interspersed with information and opinion feedback. In the Delphi process, the focus is on how the opinion of experts in the group regarding the discussion differs in defending various types of situations and how the opinion of group members differs among themselves (Wilhelm, 2001). A Delphi study is aimed at achieving a consensus and consistent opinion from a panel of experts in two or more successful rounds in a particular research subject (Yang, 2003).