

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This section defines descriptive analysis, justifies the use of descriptive analysis, and explains how the more qualitative (subjective) data (the goals, objectives and expectations of VOTE by the stakeholder groups) and the more quantitative (objective) data (economic and demographic) were combined to evaluate recent and current VOTE efficacy and to project trends to forecast VOTE viability.

Descriptive Analysis

Emory [12-13] states:

At the most elementary level, an inquiry may be made only to report some data, perhaps statistics. ... The next level of investigation is description. A descriptive study tries to discover answers to the questions of who, what, where, and sometimes how. At this level, the researcher attempts to describe or define a subject, often by creating a profile of a group or problems, people, or events. Such studies may be a single variable frequency distribution, or they may involve bivariate or multivariate relationships. They may or may not have the potential for drawing powerful inferences. They do not answer the question "why." The descriptive study is popular in business research because of its versatility across disciplines.

Emory adds: [19]

Researchers also have obligations. They are expected to develop a creative research design that will provide answers to important business questions. Not only should researchers provide data analyzed in terms of the problem specified, but they should also point out the implications that flow from the results. In the process, conflict may arise between what the decision maker wants and what the researcher can provide. The decision maker wants certainty and simple, explicit recommendations, while the researcher often can offer only probabilities and hedged interpretations.

He also insightfully notes: [19]

The researcher will inevitably have to consider the political situations that develop in any organization. Members strive to maintain their niches and may seek ascendancy over their colleagues. Coalitions tend to form, and people engage in various self-serving activities, both overt, and covert. As a result, research is blocked or the findings of objectives of the researcher are distorted for an individual's self-serving purposes.

Using Emory's suggested categories:

1. Who - The basic and primary stakeholder groups of Vocational, Technical and Occupational Education [VOTE] in United States, specifically the wage payers (business), the wage earners (workers), the nation at large as government, and self-employed entrepreneurs, primarily farmers and ranchers.
2. What - How well VOTE appears to be meeting their implicit and overt expectations and goals.
3. Where / When - In the United States after the Second World War (1945), and especially after the end of the Vietnam conflict (1973).
4. How - By comparison of actual results described by governmental and other reliable data with the stakeholder's implicit and overt goals.
5. As indicated, "why" will not be answered. Some intermediate mechanisms are posited (such as special or idiosyncratic word usage), and a plausible conceptual framework (the accretion model of economic evolution) proposed, but a final or ultimate "why" is not attempted.

Data and Information Analysis

The procedure was to use the explicit and attributed objectives, goals and expected outcomes of the stakeholder groups, [largely qualitative data] combined with the known “laws” of economics and extant historical (economic) data [largely quantitative data] to probe and analyze the past, current and as far as possible future validity.

The goals, objectives and expectations of VOTE by the various stakeholder groups, while subjective and in some cases implicit and attributed, can in many cases generate testable hypotheses for which objective or positivistic data exist. For example, one of the most basic “assumptions” for an employee or wage earner about VOTE is that the following chain of reasoning is valid:

1. I want to earn more money.
2. VOTE is one way to accomplish this.
3. I have participated in VOTE.
4. Therefore, I will earn more money.

The existing governmental economic data allows testing and validation of the conclusion in item (4). A conclusion not in conformance with known facts or conditions indicates either an incorrect (application of) logical inference or, one or more incorrect starting assumption(s).

The reviewer is cautioned that it is entirely possible to begin with incorrect assumptions, apply valid logical / mathematical operations and still obtain “correct” results or conclusions, therefore correct results do not “prove” the validity or correctness of the initial assumptions or starting “facts.” An example may help to make this more clear.

1. Assume that $1 = 2$

2. It is logically and mathematically correct that if $a = b$ then $b = a$
3. It is also logically and mathematically correct that if equals are added, the sum is also equal. That is, if $a = a$ and $b = b$, then $(a + b) = (a + b)$ is a “true” or valid statement.
4. Performing the indicated operation of $(1 = 2) + (2 = 1)$ the results are $[(1 + 2) = (2 + 1)]$ or $3 = 3$ which is a “true” statement, but one which does not prove that $1 = 2$.