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# **Affirmative Action and African-American Employment in California Higher Education**

Affirmative Action and Minority Employment in California Higher Education

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

Exploring the concepts of affirmative action encompasses the need to employ an appropriate method. Investigating affirmative action and minority employment in California higher education requires the consideration of a descriptive, qualitative method. The selection of the subjects for this study will be also identified along with the instrumentation used, the data collection procedure, and data analysis approach. The descriptive method of research encompasses identification of the assumptions and limitations of the selected method, which will also be discussed in this chapter.

## **Research Method**

The applied research methodology in this study is the qualitative method due to the descriptive approach in interpreting the data obtained for this study. The research design is the overall plan in terms of connecting the concepts and performing the needed exploration of the given problem question. Descriptive approach articulates what the obtained data requires and the methods that will be used to obtain, information for analysis, which will be used to answer the given research question. The main objective of the descriptive approach is to provide accurate and validated factors that encapsulate the relevant variables pertaining to the research question (learngen. org, 2001). Descriptive research attempts to describe, interpret, and explain the conditions of the preset question. In this study, the central

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theme of exploration is whether affirmative action has an effect on African-American employment in higher education 10 years before and 10 years after the implementation of affirmative action. Part of the method used in this approach is to conduct a case study wherein past cases involving affirmative action in employment of African-Americans in higher education will be investigated. The rationale for choosing this method is to analyze the interrelationship between the different attributes. For this research, a case analysis will be used to determine if the preferred qualitative method will compliment the objectives of this study (Zucker, 2009). The case analysis will look into the personal experiences revealing tension, motivations, and internal strivings that points out the behaviors, decisions, and evidence of affirmative action on African Americans in the higher education sector.

In this study, the phenomenon to be explored is the state of affirmative action and how it changed the employment situation of African-Americans in the higher education sector. The investigation will be done by analyzing court cases and reports involving African-Americans being denied of opportunities in the higher education sector such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Abbington v. Board of Education of Louisville* (Uscourts. gov, N. D.). The decisions in the aforementioned cases will be evaluated and analyzed together with other literatures pertaining to the issues of employment of minorities in higher education. According to Laws and MacLeod (2004), the use of historical and progressive data in exploring the given research problem will help establish the foundation of the concepts being investigated. In this regard, Court cases involving affirmative action, historical data, legislations, and statistical data pertaining to affirmative

action will be used to draw analysis. There are several types of case studies that can be used as identified by Tellis (1997) such as exploratory case studies, descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative. For this study, the most appropriate type of case study approach will be the evaluative case study because it includes a deep account of the phenomenon being evaluated including identification of relevant constructs, patterns, and themes (Tellis, 1997; Soy, 2006).

A case study approach requires conducting thorough investigation of historical records about affirmative action towards minorities. The study will cover the basic concepts, processes, methods, and terminologies pertaining to affirmative. Furthermore, the employed method for this study will focus on gathering information, Court decisions, and relevant literature to be analyzed. Any significant information found in the preliminary study will be cross-examined to determine correlations between the data. Identifying the correlation of the concepts between the selected literatures involves determining its relevance to the topic of discussion (producttraceability.org, 2012). Any literatures found from online and or library research will be cross-examined for significant findings.

## **Selection of Subjects**

Selecting the subjects for this study will take consideration of their relevance to the topic of discussion. For this study, there will be no particular subjects to use, but rather utilize the statistical and other quantitative data sources that present information regarding the percentage of African-Americans working in the higher education sector in California. The process of selecting the materials is based on the requirements of the problem question. Since

the exploratory problem for this study is focusing on affirmative action in the employment of African-Americans in higher education in California, it is imperative that evaluating affirmative action in the described settings should be on the available statistical evidences from the federal and state employment agencies. The study has a very specific location to explore, which is the State of California. Any similar institution evaluated for this study may only provide secondary data, but will be able to point out the important findings needed to describe the affirmative action in California. In order to determine the gaps and variations in percentage of African-Americans employed in the higher education, secondary data from independent studies showing employment rate of minorities will be used as point of comparison with the findings from other similar research studies. In addition, historical data from the California and U. S. Department of labor will be used to determine fluctuations in the employment of African-Americans in the higher education sector 10 years before and after the implementation of affirmative action.

## **Instrumentation**

In terms of instrumentation, the study will utilize several relevant literatures revealing information about the developments of affirmative action in California higher education. These literatures will be examined for relative data and employ a descriptive interpretation of data correlations. However, the literatures will be screened for specific focus such as employment of minorities particularly the African-Americans. In addition, the instruments used in gathering information and evaluation of literatures will be online database, labor agency websites, and library research. In terms of ensuring

the credibility of the sources, the literatures and other materials for this study will only obtain from government agency websites, library, and academic databases such as Ebsco Host that provides peer-reviewed articles and publications. One way of ensuring credibility of the data from the sources is through the use of the triangulation method. Triangulation is being used to assess the methods used by the researched studies and other sources to determine whether the use of different methods will give the same results. For example, if a case study suggests that affirmative action towards African-Americans suggests did not increased the number of blacks employed in the higher education sector, therefore, the same findings should also appear in other studies. If two or more of the obtained sources suggests similar findings, despite the difference if study approach, all of the obtained sources can be considered as credible.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

Gathering data for this study will utilize searches of both electronic and library copies of literatures, peer-reviewed journals, articles, legislation, and statistical reports that reveals critical data pertaining to African-American employment percentage in higher education 10 years before and after affirmative action. The type of information will range from statistical studies from the labor department indicating the number of African-Americans employed in the higher education sector. In addition, prior research about affirmative action and Court decisions upholding the concept of affirmative action such as Brown v. Board of Education from law review websites. The most important type of data that will provide substantial evidence for this study are the statistical findings and results of study Jackson (2006), which is

about the perceived disparities in trends and analysis of impact of hiring practices of African-Americans. On the other hand, the articles and statistical findings from the United States Department of Labor particularly the 2011 report will be used as a source of statistical data for this study. Furthermore, the monthly black worker report released by the UC Berkeley Labor Center will be the source of statistical data of African-Americans working in the higher education in California. The first step in the process is to outline the relevant keywords such as affirmative action, African-American employment, University employment, qualifications, and California higher education. These keywords will be used to point the literature search to the appropriate materials online and from the library. In terms of online research, to ensure validity and acceptability of the searched materials, the literature search will be done academic and research repository websites such as Ebsco Host, Elsevier, Congressional Research Council, California Labor and employment, and JSTOR. In addition, secondary materials obtained from non-repository websites will also be used for the study, but will only rely on the information they provided as supporting information rather than a major conceptual origin.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

Analyzing the information gathered for the study will employ the use of interpretative and evaluative approach, which encompasses comparison of the obtained data. Cross-examining the findings from the collected literatures will reveal the significant arguments, which can be used to developed critical thinking and in-depth analysis of the less-obvious information. Furthermore, cross-comparison and interpretation of findings

from collected literatures will serve as the documentation review approach that case study method requires (Darke, Shanks and Broadbent, 1998). Hence, the case study method produces huge quantity of data from several sources; the obtained data will be organized according to category to make it easier in finding linkage between raw data that will lead the study to new insights and opportunities (Fidel, 1984).

Preparing a database beforehand will enable easier storage and retrieval of data for analysis. Throughout the analysis and evaluation process, the study will remain open to the possibilities of new findings and insights by triangulating the findings from obtained materials, which can further strengthen the findings of this study. The usual process of data analysis in a case study method involves cyclical, spiraling, and iterative process that transforms general information into a more specific observation (Fritz, 2008). Data analysis may begin during an interview or a survey, but the case study approach may render analysis to continue during transcription and continue to development throughout the study. Once the data are available and organized, the next step in the process is the coding of the data and identifying the relevant points or structure. Analysis data in a case study method will require moving beyond the initial impression such as the obvious findings that are perceived from reading the information from tables or graphs (Seidel, 1998). However, getting the in-depth meaning of the underlying correlations of the data will require a more extensive form of interpretation that looks over and under the obvious.



## **Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

The applied method in this study encompasses several assumptions and limitations. For one, the approach allows a detailed, holistic investigation of all the variables of the subject being studied. It can be assumed from this method that the gathered data is a mix of current and historical findings that were developed over-time and in most part contextual in nature. Due to the limited complexity of the method, the findings, discussion, and or language that can be used in the study are less technical, which can be easily understood by laypersons. In terms of the focus of discussion, it can be anticipated from the study that the given problem will be answered using immense amount of information extracted from collected materials. In effect, the study would be able to deliver significant findings that will bring light to the problem statement.

However, the very small sample size will prevent the study from delivering results that can be generalized to larger populations. Furthermore, the method has been a subject of criticism among the academic discourse due to the limitations in presenting results that can establish a general knowledge. Exposure to different studies that offer uniform results is likely to create biases that are sometimes difficult to cross check. In addition, exploring affirmative action in employment of African-Americans in California higher education limits the findings of the study to the concept of employment. Hence, affirmative action is considered as a socio-political issue in the State of California, limiting the study in the employment sector is likely to provide the study with limited findings that cannot be applied to affirmative action in college admission.

## Summary

This chapter describes the preferred method for the study, which is descriptive in nature. The characteristic of the study calls for a more specific approach in which the concept of case study method appears to fit more appropriately. Employing the use of case study will not require the use of quantifiable data generated by surveys, but rather to evaluate, review, and explore the underlying concepts of affirmative action in African-American employment in California higher education from contextual materials. Hence, the data gathering method will only involve researching and examining relevant materials from credible online and library sources. In terms of data analysis, the preferred method is the descriptive approach.

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