PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Philosophical Research

A phenomenological study is designed to describe and interpret an experience by determining the meaning of the experience as perceived by the people who have participated in it. What is the experience of an activity or concept from the perspective of particular participants? That is the key question in phenomenology. Rooted in philosophy and psychology, the assumption is that there are many ways of interpreting the same experience and that the meaning of the experience to each person is what constitutes reality.

This belief is characteristic of all qualitative studies, but the element that distinguishes phenomenology from other qualitative approaches is that the subjective experience is at the center of the inquiry. It is different in that phenomenology makes a distinction between the appearance of something and its essence. The central research question aims to determine the essence of the experience as "perceived by the participants." Phenomenology moves from individual experience to a universal essence and always asks what is the nature or meaning of something. Interviewing multiple individuals is the typical data collection approach.

Phenomenology addresses questions about common human experience. A phenomenological researcher who was asked to study, for example, the integration of special needs children into a regular classroom would focus on asking what this experience means to the parties involved: the special needs children, other students, and the teacher. Whether or not the integration plan is working is not the important issue; what matters is how the students and the teacher experience it. "In the same way that ethnography focuses on culture, a phenomenological study focuses on the essence or structure of an experience. Phenomenologists are interested in showing how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experience" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 7).

In the process of phenomenological research, the researcher must first identify a problem for which, in order to better understand its features or to develop better practices or policies, an examination of shared experience is necessary. Broad philosophical assumptions must be specified and examined with a view to bracketing out personal experience Interview data are typically collected from those who have experienced the phenomenon, but other data sources may be used, including observations, art, poetry, music, journals, drama, films, and novels. The key questions involve exploring what has been experienced in terms of the phenomenon and what contexts affected or influenced those experiences.

Analysis is conducted by identifying significant statements or quotes (called horizontalization) and from those developing clusters of meaning and themes. A textual description is used to illuminate what was experienced, whereas the structural description illuminates the context that influenced the experience, how it was experienced, in what conditions and situations. After examining these descriptions and the researcher's own experiences, a composite description is written that conveys the overall essence of the phenomenon. This also is called the essential or invariant structure.

The following are examples of topics that have been studied by phenomenological researchers:

- The meaning of aging

- How children think about the environment
- Math anxiety
- The experience of insomnia
- Forgiveness and reconciliation
- Shame
- Chronic pain
- Disappointment in teacher–student relationships
- Daydreaming
- Loneliness
- The experience of re-reading
- The experience of studying a foreign language

In a study by Eva Alerby (2000), the thinking of children and young people was examined through drawings and interviews to understand how they think about the environment. The article attempts to visualize the way in which children and young people think about the environment. Anna Kirova-Petrova (2000) examined the experiences of loneliness among linguistically diverse students in order to address pedagological implications.

The participants in a phenomenological study are chosen because they have been through the experience being investigated and can share their thoughts and feelings about it. The distinguishing data collection method in a phenomenological study is the personal, unstructured interview. The interviews may be lengthy (1 or 2 hours), and there may be more than one interview with each participant. The researcher typically interviews 10 to 25 individuals who may come from a single site or different sites. Tape-recording the interviews facilitates the subsequent analysis.

Phenomenological researchers also typically explore their own experiences related to the topic of interest prior to conducting interviews in order to examine their own biases and assumptions. The concept of bracketing is used in phenomenological research. Bracketing involves the researcher intentionally setting aside his or her own experiences, suspending his or her own beliefs in order to take a fresh perspective based on data collected from persons who have experienced the phenomenon.

From an analysis of the interview data, the researcher writes descriptions of the participants' experiences and how those experiences were perceived. From the analysis, the researcher derives an overall description of the general meaning of the experience. This is done through a process called reduction. Think of reduction as a way to reflect. It is a phenomenological device that aims to bring aspects of meaning into nearness or focus. It is not so much a procedure as a certain thoughtful attentiveness.

Phenomenology is not the same as phenomenography, although the differences are difficult to grasp for novice researchers. Phenomenography has its roots in a set of studies of learning among university students in the 1970s concerning why some students were better at learning than others. Phenomenology is rooted in a philosophical method and involves the understanding of the essence of the phenomenon, whereas phenomenography has a distinct empirical orientation focused on investigating the experience of others and their subsequent perceptions of the phenomenon—their reflections on the phenomenon. Both approaches investigate the human experience.

Historical Research

History usually refers simply to an account of the past of human societies. Gottschalk referred to this as 'history as record', He further stated that "The process of critically examining and analyzing the records and survivals of the past is called historical method. The imaginative reconstruction of the past from the data derived by that process is called historiography (the writing of history)".

Historical research has been defined as the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events. It involves a critical inquiry of a previous age with the aim of reconstructing a faithful representation of the past. In historical research, the investigator studies documents and other sources that contain facts concerning the research theme with the objective of achieving better understanding of present policies, practices, problems and institutions. An attempt is made to examine past events or combinations of events and establish facts in order to arrive at conclusions concerning past events or predict future events.

Historical research is a type of analytical research. Its common methodological characteristics include

    a.   Identifying a research topic that addresses past events.
    b.   Review of primary and secondary data.
    c.   Systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences with the help of techniques of criticism for historical searches and evaluation of the information.
    d.   Synthesis and explanation of findings in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events.

Historical studies attempt to provide information and understanding of past historical, legal and policy events. The historical method consists of the techniques and guidelines by which historians use historical sources and other evidences to research and then to write history.

THE PURPOSE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Conducting historical research in education can serve several purposes as follows-

    a. It enables educationists to find out solutions to contemporary problems which have their roots in the past i.e. it serves the purpose of bringing about reforms in education. The work of a historical researcher sometimes sensitizes educators to unjust or misguided practices in the past which may have unknowingly continued into the present and require reform. A historical researcher studies the past with a detached perspective and without any ego-involvement with the past practices. Hence it could be easier for educationists to identify misguided practices thus enabling them to bring about reforms.
    b. It throws light on present trends and can help in predicting future trends. If we understand how an educationist or a group of educationists acted in the past, we can predict how they will act in future. Similarly, studying the past enables a researcher to understand the factors/causes affecting present trends. In order to make such future predictions reliable and

trustworthy, the historical researcher needs to identify and clearly describe in which ways the past differs from the present context and how the present social, economic and political situations and policies could have an impact on the present and the future.

c. It enables a researcher to re-evaluate data in relation to selected hypotheses, theories and generalizations that are presently held about the past.
d. It emphasizes and analyzes the relative importance and the effect of the various interactions in the prevailing cultures.
e. It enables us to understand how and why educational theories and practices developed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

These are as follows-

a. It is not a mere accumulation of facts and data or even a portrayal of past events.
b. It is a flowing, vibrant report of past events which involves an analysis and explanation of these occurrences with the objective of recapturing the nuances, personalities and ideas that influenced these events.
c. Conducting historical research involves the process of collecting and reading the research material collected and writing the manuscript from the data collected. The researcher often goes back-and-forth between collecting, reading, and writing i.e. the process of data collection and analysis are done simultaneously are not two distinct phases of research.
d. It deals with discovery of data that already exists and does not involve creation of data using structured tools.
e. It is analytical in that it uses logical induction.
f. It has a variety of foci such as issues, events, movements and concepts.
g. It records and evaluates the accomplishments of individuals, agencies or institutions.

SCOPE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

a. General educational history of specific periods such as (a) ancient India, (b) A during British rule, (c) Independent India etc.
b. History of specific levels of education (a) primary education, (b) secondary education, (c) tertiary education etc. in India.
c. History of specific types of education such as (a) adult education, (b) distance education, (c) disadvantaged education, (d) women's education in India.
d. Historical study of specific educational institutions such as (i) University of Mumbai, (ii) Aligarh Muslim University and so on.
e. Role of the teacher in ancient India.
f. History of specific components of education such as (a) curriculum, (b) text-books, (c) teaching-learning methods, (d) aims and objectives of education, (e) teacher-student relationships, (f) evaluation process and so on.
g. History of national education policies in India.
h. History of admission processes in professional / technical courses (medicine, engineering, management) in India.
i. History of teacher education.
j. Historical biographies of major contributors to education such as Mahatma Gandhi, Maharshi Karve, Maharshi Phule, Shri Aurobindo, Gurudev Tagore and so on.

k. History of educational administration.
l. History of public financing of education.
m. History of educational legislation in India.
n. History of educational planning.
o. History of contemporary problems in India.
p. Historical study of the relationship between politics and education in India.
q. Historical study of the impact of the British rule in India.
r. Comparative history of education in India and some other country / countries.
s. Historical study of the system of state-sponsored inspection in India.
t. Historical study of education in specific Indian states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan etc.

In other words, historical research in education may be concerned with an individual, a group, an idea a movement or an institution. If a historical study focuses on an entire country/society/system, i.e. if it is broad in scope, it is said to be a macro-level historical research. On the other hand, if its focus is narrow and includes a selective set of people or events of interest, it is said to be a micro-level historical research.

STEPS IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The essential steps involved in conducting a historical research are as follows

a. Identify a topic/subject and define the problems/questions to be investigated.
b. Search for sources of data.
c. Evaluate the historical sources.
d. Analyze, synthesize and summarize interpreting the data / information.
e. Write the research report.

Since most historical studies are largely qualitative in nature, the search for sources of data, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing and summarizing information and interpreting the findings may not always be discreet, separate, sequential steps i.e. the sequence of steps in historical research is flexible.

Let us now look at each of these steps in details.

a. Identify a topic and define the problem

According to Borg, "In historical research, it is especially important that the student carefully defines his problem and appraises its appropriateness before committing himself too fully. Many problems are not adaptable to historical research methods and cannot be adequately treated using this approach. Other problems have little or no chance of producing significant results either because of the lack of pertinent data or because the problem is a trivial one."

Beach has classified the problems that prompt historical inquiry into five types-

b. Current social issues are the most popular source of historical problems in education. E.g. Rural education, adult and continuing education, positive discrimination in education etc.

c. Histories of specific individuals, histories of specific educational institutions and histories of educational movement. These studies are often conducted with "the simple desire to acquire knowledge about previously unexamined phenomena".

d. A historical study of interpreting ideas or events that previously had seemed unrelated. For example, history of educational financing and history of aims of education in India may be unrelated. But a person reviewing these two researches separately may detect some relationship between the two histories and design a study to understand this relationship.

e. Historical studies aimed at synthesizing old data or merge them with new historical facts discovered by the researcher.

f. A historical inquiry involving reinterpretation of past events that have been studied by other historical researchers. This is known as revisionist history.

On the other hand, in order to identify a significant research problem, Gottschalk recommends that four questions should be asked:

a. Where do the events take place?
b. Who are the persons involved?
c. When do the events occur?
d. What kinds of human activity are involved?

The selection of a topic in historical research depends on several personal factors of the researcher such as his/her motivation, interest, historical knowledge and curiosity, ability to interpret historical facts and so on. If the problem selected involves understanding an event, an institution, a person, a past period, more clearly, it should be taken up for a research. The topic selected should be defined in terms of the types of written materials and other resources available to you. This should be followed by formulating a specific and testable hypothesis or a series of research questions, if required. This will provide a clear focus and direction to data collection, analysis and interpretation i.e. it provides a structure to the study.

b. Search for sources of data

Historical research is not empirical in that it does not include direct observation of events or persons. Here, the researcher interprets past events on the basis of traces they have left. He uses the evidence of past acts and thoughts. Thus, through he/she does not use his/her own observation but on other people's observations. The researcher's job here is to test the truthfulness of the reports of other people's observations. These observations are obtained from several sources of historical data. Let us now try to discuss various sources of historical data.

Sources of Historical Data

These sources are broadly classified into two types:

a. Primary Sources

Gottschalk defines a primary data source as "the testimony of any eyewitness or of a witness by any other of the senses, or of a mechanical device like the Dictaphone – that is, of one who was present at the events of which he tells. A primary source must thus have been produced by a contemporary of the events it narrates."

In other words, primary sources are tangible materials that provide a description of an historical event and were produced shortly after the event happened. They have a direct physical relationship to the event being studied. Examples of primary sources include new paper report, letters, public documents, court decisions, personal diaries, autobiographies, artifacts and eyewitness's verbal accounts. These primary sources of data can be divided into two broad categories as follows:

(i)   The remains or relics of a given historical period. These could include photographs, coins, skeletons, fossils, tools, weapons, utensils, furniture, buildings and pieces of art and culture (object d' art). Though these were not originally meant for transmitting information to future generations they could prove very useful sources in providing reliable and sound evidence about the past. Most of these relics provide non-verbal information.

(ii)   Those objects that have a direct physical relationship with the events being reconstructed. This includes documents such as laws, files, letters, manuscripts, government resolutions, charters, memoranda, wills, news-papers, magazines, journals, films, government or other official publications, maps, charts, log-books, catalogues, research reports, record of minutes of meetings, recording, inscriptions, transcriptions and so on.

b. Secondary Sources

A secondary source is one in which the eyewitness or the participant i.e. the person describing the event was not actually present but who obtained his/her descriptions or narrations from another person or source. This person may or may not be a primary source.

Secondary sources, thus, do not have a direct physical relationship with the event being studies. They include data which are not original. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks, biographies, encyclopedias, reference books, replicas of art objects and paintings and so on. It is possible that secondary sources contain errors due to passing of information from one source to another. These errors could get multiplied when the information passes through many sources thereby resulting in an error of great magnitude in the final data. Thus, wherever possible, the researcher should try to use primary sources of data. However, that does not reduce the value of secondary sources.

In conclusion, the various sources of historical informationboth primary and secondary can be summarized as follows:

Sources of Historical Information

Searching for Historical Data

The procedure of searching for historical data should be systematic and pre-planned. The researcher should know what information s/he needs so as to identify important sources of data and provide a direction to his search for relevant data. Using his knowledge, imagination and resourcefulness, s/he needs to explore the kinds of data required, persons involved, institutions involved. This will help him to identify the kinds of records s/he requires and whom s/he should interview. Since a historical research is mainly qualitative in nature all the primary and secondary sources cannot be identified in advance. It is possible that as one collects some data, analyzes and interprets it, the need for further pertinent data may arise depending on the interpretive framework. This will enable him to identify other primary or secondary sources of data.

The search for sources of data begins with wide reading of preliminary sources including published bibliographies, biographies, atlas, specialized chronologies, dictionaries of quotations and terms. Good university and college libraries tend to have a great deal of such preliminary materials. This will enable a researcher to identify valuable secondary sources on the topic being studied such books on history relating to one's topic. For extensive materials on a subject, the researcher may need to go to a large research library or a library with extensive holdings on a specific subject. Such secondary materials could include other historian's conclusions and interpretations, historical information, references to other secondary and primary sources. The historical researcher needs to evaluate the secondary sources for their validity and authenticity. Now the researcher should turn his attention to the primary sources. These are usually available in

the institution or the archives especially if the source concerns data pertaining to distant past or data pertaining to events in which the chief witnesses are either dead or inaccessible. In case of data concerning the recent past, the researcher can contact witnesses or participants themselves in order to interview them and/or study the documents possessed by them.

However, it is not possible for a historical researcher to examine all the material available. Selecting the best sources of data is important in a historical study. In a historical study the complete "population" of available data can never be obtained or known. Hence the sample of materials examined must always be a purposive one. What it represents and what it fails to represent should be considered. The researcher needs to identify and use a sample that should be representative enough for wider generalization.

a. Evaluate the historical sources

The data of historical sources is subject to two types of evaluation. These two types are:

(i) External evaluation or criticism

This is sometimes also known as lower criticism of data. External criticism regards the issue of authenticity of the data from the psychological attitude of the researcher in that it is primarily concerned with the question, is the source of data genuine? External criticism seeks to determine whether the document or the artifact that the researcher is studying is genuinely valid primary data. It is possible to get counterfeit documents or artifacts.

External criticism of the sources of data is of paramount importance in establishing the credibility of the research. Although, theoretically, the main purpose of external criticism is the establishment of historical truth, in reality its actual operation is chiefly restricted to the negative role i.e. to identity and expose forgeries, frauds, hoaxes desertions and counterfeits. In order to identify such forgeries, researcher needs to look at problems pertaining to plagiarism, alterations of document, insertions, deletions or unintentional omissions. This will reveal whether the historical source of data is authentic or not.

Establishing authenticity of documents may involve carbon dating, handwriting analysis, identification of ink and paper, vocabulary usage, signatures, script, spelling, names of places and writing style and other considerations.

In other words, it examines the document and its external features rather than the statements it contains. It tries to determine whether (a) the information it contains was available at the time the document was written? (b) This information is consistent with what is known about the author or the period from another source?

In other words, external criticism is aimed at answering questions about the nature of the historical source such as -

- Who wrote it?
- Where?
- When?
- Under which circumstances?
- Is it original?

- Is it genuine? So on.

(ii)   Internal evaluation or criticism

Having established the authenticity of the source of historical data, the researcher now focuses his/her attention on the accuracy and wroth of the data contained in the document. Internal criticism is concerned with the meaning of the written material. It is also known as higher criticism of data. It deals answering questions such as what does it mean? What was the author attempting to say? What thought was the author trying to convey? Is it possible that people would act in the way described in the document? Is it possible that events described occurred so quickly? What inferences or interpretations could be extracted from these words? Do the financial data / figures mentioned in the document seem reasonable for that period in the past? What does the decision of a court mean? What do the words of the decision convey regarding the intent and the will of the count? Is there any (unintended) misinformation given in the document? Is there any evidence of deception? And so on here, the researcher needs to be very cautious so that he does not reject a statement only because the event described in the document appears to be improbable. Internal criticism should also include establishing the credibility of the author of the document.

Internal and external criticisms are interdependent and complementary processes. The internal and external criticism of data requires a high level of scholarship.

b. Analyze, synthesize and summarize interpreting the data / information

The research should not only learn how to take notes but also learn how to organize the various notes, note cards, bibliography cards and memoranda so as to derive useful and meaningful facts for interpretation. Hence before beginning historical research, the researcher should have a specific and systematic plan for the acquisition, organization, storage and retrieval of the data. Following are some suggestions that may help you in systematizing your research efforts.

Usually historical studies are chiefly qualitative in nature since the data obtained includes verbal and / or symbolic material from an institution, society or culture's past. However, when the study involves quantitative data pertaining to the past events, you need to think carefully about the relevance of the data to your research. This is because recording and analysis of quantitative data is time-consuming and sometimes expensive. Examples of quantitative data in historical research include records of students' and teachers' attendance rates, examination results, financial information such as budgets, income and expenditure statements, salaries, fees and so on.

Interpretation of Historical Data

Once the researcher establishes the validity and authenticity of data, interpretation of the facts in the light of the topic of research is necessary. This step requires caution, imagination, ingenuity, insight and scholarliness. The scientific status of his study depends on these characteristics. The researcher needs to be aware of his/her biases, values, and prejudices and interest as these could influence the analysis and interpretation of the data as well as the perceptions of the researcher. He needs to make sense out of the multitude of data gathered which generally involves a synthesis of data in relation to a hypothesis or question or theory rather than mere accumulation or summarization. In doing so, he / she should avoid biases and unduly projecting his / her own

personality onto the data. The data should be fitted into a logically parsimonious structure. The researcher should be clear about the interpretative framework so as to become sensitive towards bias in other historical researchers' interpretations who have conducted research on the same or similar topics.

The researcher needs to identify the motives of the people involved in the event under study while interpreting the data. These motives may be multiple in natures and interact with each other. This makes interpretation of the data a difficult task. For example, a new government decides to change the prevalent textbooks. The motives here could be many such as its political ideology does not match the prevalent textbooks, it had a personal grudge against the authors of the prevalent textbooks or the ministers concerned wanted to derive personal glory out of his actions. These reasons may influence each other making the task of interpretation of data difficult.

Historical researchers can make use of concepts from other social and behavioural science disciplines in analyzing interpreting data. Some examples of such concepts may be bureaucracy, role, institution (from sociology), leadership, institutional effectiveness (From management), culture (from anthropology), motive, personality attitude etc. (from psychology) and so on.

The researcher also can make use of the concepts of historical time and historical space while interpreting the data. The concept of historical time makes use of a chronology of events i.e. the researcher needs to identify the chain of events (chronology) of substantive history and then try to understand the meaning of these events, the relationship among the events and the relationship of the events to the research topic. The researcher is studying more than one set of chronological data within the same time frame may gain increased insight into multiple events and their causes.

The concept of historical space deals with 'where' the event originated, spread or culminated. This could provide a different insight into the meaning of the data. The historical researcher can also use analogy as a source of hypothesis or as a frame of reference for interpretation i.e. He / she can draw parallels between one historical event and other events. Here, one has to be aware of similarities, differences as well as exceptions while comparing two historical events, otherwise, such an extrapolation will be unreliable. Also, it is risky to interpret an event by comparing with another event in another culture at another time.

Making Inferences and Generalizations in Historical Research

In order to identify and explain the 'cause/s' of a historical event, the research must be aware of his/ her assumptions which are then used in ascribing causation to subsequent events. Some examples of such assumption could include (i) history repeats itself, or (ii) historical events are unique. The researcher must make clear whether his / her analysis is based on the former assumption or the latter.

Some examples of 'causes' of historical events identified in prior researches include (i) strong ideology (eg. Maharshi Karve's ideology of women's education) (ii) actions of certain key persons (e.g. Mohamed Ali Jinnah's actions for India's partition), (iii) Advances in Science in technology (e.g. use of computers in education), (iv) economic / geographical / psychological / sociological factors or a combination of all these (e.g. privatization of education) etc.

The historian's objective is not only to establish facts but also to determine trends in the data and causes of events leading to generalizations i.e. he / she needs to synthesize and interpret and not merely summarize the data. These data, as in other types of researches, are obtained not from the entire population of persons, settings, events or objects pertaining to the topic, but from a small sample. Moreover, this sample is selected from the remains of the past. It cannot be selected from the entire population of documents or relics that existed during the period under study. Such remains may not be representative. This necessitates a very careful and cautious approach in locating consistency in different documents and relics while making generalizations. Also, the researcher should not rely on only one document pertaining to an individual from the past while making a generalization as it will not be known whether the individual held a particular opinion about an educational issue consistently or had changed it over a period of time. If he had changed his opinion, the researcher must find out when and how it was changed, under what conditions and what the consequences were. This makes it imperative that the researcher uses as many primary and secondary sources as possible on a topic. If the evidence is limited, he needs restrict the generalizability of his interpretations to that extent.

c. Write the research report

In a historical research, data collection is flexible. Besides, due to the relative lack of conclusive evidence on which valid generalizations can be established, the writing of historical research has to be a little free so as to allow subjective interpretation of the data. Thus reports of historical research have no standard formats. The presentation of data analysis, interpretations and the findings depend on the nature of the problem.

There are several board ways of reporting historical investigation as follows-

a. The researcher can report the historical facts as answers to different research questions. Answer to each question could be reported in a separate chapter.
b. He / she can present the facts in a chronological order with each chapter pertaining to a specific historical period chronologically.
c. Report can also write in a thematic manner where each chapter deals with a specific theme/topic.
d. Chapters could also deal with each state of India or each district of an Indian state separately.
e. Chapter could also pertain to specific historical persons separately.
f. The researcher can also combine two or more of these approaches while writing the research report.

In addition, the report should contain a chapter each on introduction, methodology, review of related literature, findings, the researcher's interpretations and reflections on the interpretative process.

PROBLEMS AND WEAKNESSES TO BE AVOIDED IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Some of the weaknesses, problems and mistakes that need to be avoided in a historical research are as follows-

1. The problem of research should not be too broad.
2. It should be selected after ensuring that sources of data are existent, accessible and in a language known to the researcher.
3. Excessive use of easy-to-find secondary sources of data should be avoided. Though locating primary sources of data timeconsuming and require efforts, they are usually more trustworthy.
4. Adequate internal and external criticism of sources of historical data is very essential for establishing the authenticity and validity of the data. It is also necessary to ascertain whether statements concerning evidence by one participant have influenced opinions of other participant or witnesses.
5. The researcher needs to be aware of his/her own personal values, interests and biases. For this purpose, it is necessary for the researcher to quote statements along with the context in which they were made. Lifting them out of context shows the intention of persuading the readers. The researcher also needs to avoid both-extreme generosity or admiration as well as extreme criticism. The researcher needs to avoid reliance on beliefs such as "old is gold" "new is always better" or "change implies progress". All such beliefs indicate researcher's bias and personal values.
6. The researcher needs to ensure that the concepts borrowed from other disciplines are relevant to his/her topic.
7. He/She should avoid unwarranted causal inferences arising on account of (i) oversimplification (causes of historical event may be multiple, complex and interactive), (ii) Faulty interpretation of meanings of words, (iii) inability to distinguish between facts, opinions and situations, (iv) inability to identify and discard irrelevant or unimportant facts and (v) Faulty generalization based on inadequate evidence, faulty logic and reasoning in the analysis of data, use of wrong analogy and faulty comparison of events in different cultures.
8. The researcher needs to synthesize facts into meaningful chronological and thematic patterns.
9. The report should be written in a logical and scientific manner. It should avoid flowery or flippant language, emotional words, dull and colorless language or persuasive style.
10. The researcher should avoid projecting current problems onto historical events as this is likely to create distortions.

Suggested Reading

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