

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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Historical research is –

“the process of systematically examining past events to give an account of what has happened in the past”

- *(Johnson, chapter 12, p.1)*

It is “the systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects, or trends of those events which may help to explain present events and anticipate future events”

- *(Gay, 1981, p. 432)*

Purpose of Historical Research

- **To reconstruct the past systematically and objectively.**
- **To Discover the unknown historical events that occurred in the past.**
- **To find answers to questions about the past.**
- **To cause-and effect relationship between two historical events.**
- **To study relationship between the past and the present.**
- **To understand the significance of past events.**

Steps in Historical Research

- 1. Selection and defining the problem to be answered.**
- 2. Locating the Sources and Information required.**
- 3. Criticism of the sources and information obtained from the sources.**
- 4. Presentation and Interpretation of Information.**

Sources of Data Collection in Historical research

In historical research there are two type of sources for gathering data about past events----

1. Primary Sources-

These contain evidence that is closest to the event under investigation as recounted by observers and participants.

The primary sources allow use of data based on testimony of eye-witnesses, or observations made with human senses or by a mechanical device. Thus, these are original sources representing firsthand account.

Primary sources are-

- **Archival records - (governmental, institutional, commercial)**
- **Internal letters, speeches, summaries or minutes of conferences and meetings,**
- **Photographs, buildings**
- **Chronicles and diaries**
- **Drawings and**
- **Motion picture films, tape recordings and video recordings etc.**

2. Secondary Sources-

“It contains information reported by a person who did not directly observe the event, object, or condition” - *(Key, 1997, p.1)*

“A secondary source may be one or more steps removed from the primary source in terms of time, place or authorship. A source becomes a primary or secondary source depending upon its proximity to the actual event under investigation” - *(Powell, 1991, p.140)*

Secondary sources are :

Textbooks

Encyclopedia

Monographs

Articles in magazines

Autobiographies

Family History

Laws

“Secondary sources are perhaps best used for rounding out the setting or filling in the gaps between primary sources of information”

- (Powell, 1991, p.140)

Criticism of Sources and Information

In Historical Research, the researcher has to determine the authenticity and accuracy of historical documents. Any document used for historical research must pass tests of both external and internal criticism.

External Criticism-

External criticism refers to the evaluation of a document in order to test its authenticity; the genuineness or validity of the source.

This involves determination of “validity, trustworthiness, or authenticity of the source”

-- *(Johnson lectures, chap12, p.5)*

Internal Criticism-

Internal criticism involves determination of reliability or accuracy of the information contained in the resource.

It is concerned with accuracy of the document involving “the competence and integrity of the author, and the occasion of origin of the document”

--(Goldhor, 1969, p. 103).

Internal criticism evaluates the accuracy and truth worthiness of the content and data contained in that particular source or document.

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