

II : SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH: MEANING AND SCOPE

Meaning and Scope:

Sciences are broadly divided into natural (physical) sciences and social sciences. Social sciences include various disciplines dealing with human life, human behaviour and institutions. e.g. Anthropology, History, Economics, Education, Commerce, Demography etc.,. Social sciences are not exact science like physical sciences. It deals with human beings. Human nature and mans environment are so complex, that it is more difficult to comprehend and predict human behaviour than the physical phenomena. It is difficult see the underlying uniformities in the diversity of complex human behaviour.

Social science research

Social science research is a systematic method of exploring, analyzing and conceptualizing human life in order to extend, correct or verify knowledge of human behaviour and social life. Social research seeks to find explanations to unexplained phenomena, to clarify the doubtful and correct the misconceived fact of social life. It involves the application of scientific method for understanding and analyzing of social life in order to correct and verify the existing knowledge as a system. The main idea behind social research is to discover new inter relations, new knowledge, new facts and also to verify old ones. Human behaviour may be involved by certain values and laws. The main purpose of social research is to discover those laws which can be proper guidelines for studying human contact and behaviour.

According to P.V. Young, we may define social research as “the systematic method of discovering new facts and verifying old facts. Their sequences inter relationship, causal explanations and the natural laws govern them”. From the above definition we can identify the following,

Characteristics of Social Research

- Social research deals with social phenomena. It studies human behavior and their feelings.
- Social research is carried on both for discovering new facts and verification of the old ones.
- Social research tries to establish casual connection between various human activities.

Nature of Social Science Research

In contrast to the physical science the social science lack the power of exact prediction; this is attributed to the “erratic”, idiosyncratic and irregular nature of human behaviour. Social scientist point out that the low predictable potential in social science is due to our limited knowledge of relevant variables operative in the group like customs, traditions etc.,. The cause and effect are difficult to be segregated clearly. The present state of development of social science is far behind physical science. Merton advises to social scientist against their despair; it is possible to develop border applicability.

Objectives of Social Research

The major objectives of social research are listed as follows:-

- a) The aim of social research is to discover new facts and verifying or testing old facts.
- b) It tries to understand the human behaviour and its interaction with the environment.
- c) It tries to find out the casual connection between human activities and natural laws governing them.

Functions of Social Science Research

The important functions of social science research are discussed below;

a) Discovery of facts and their interpretation.

Social research provides answer to questions of what, when, how and why of man, social life and institutions. Discover of facts and their inter relationship help us to discard distortions and contribute to our understanding of social reality.

b) Diagnosis of problems and their analysis.

Our society has innumerable problems such as poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, social tension etc.,. The nature and dimensions of such problems have to be diagnosed and analyzed. An analysis of problems leads to an identification of appropriate remedial actions.

c) Systematization of knowledge.

The facts discovered through research are systematized and the body of knowledge is developed. It contributes to the growth of theory building.

d) Control over social phenomena.

Research in social science provides first hand information about the nature of social institutions. This knowledge helps us to control over the social phenomena.

e) Prediction.

Social research aims at finding an order among social fact and their casual relations. This affords a sound basis for prediction in several cases

f) Development planning.

Systematic research can give us the required data base for planning and designing developmental schemes and programmes.

g) Social welfare.

Social research can identify the causes of social evils and problems. It can thus help in taking appropriate remedial actions. It also provides guideline for social welfare.

Scope of Social Science Research

The fields of social science research unlimited and the materials of research are endless.

Every group of social phenomena, every phase of human life and every stages of past and present development are materials for the social scientist. The area of research in various social sciences provides vast scope for research in social sciences.

The main scope of social research are :

- Social research provides new insight in to the organized society and its social structure.
- Social research also provide new horizon in scientific explanation; advanced and tested principles of procedure and suggested new concepts.
- Another scope of social research is that exemplified by studies and attempt to test or challenge existing theories and revise them the light of new evidence.
- Social research helpful to establish new theory and established techniques of exploration.
- Social research also provides contributions to existing stone of fruitful ideas, methodology and basis understanding of social life and control of its problems.