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## HISTORICAL RESEARCH DESIGN: WAY, STRENGTH AND DRAWBACK

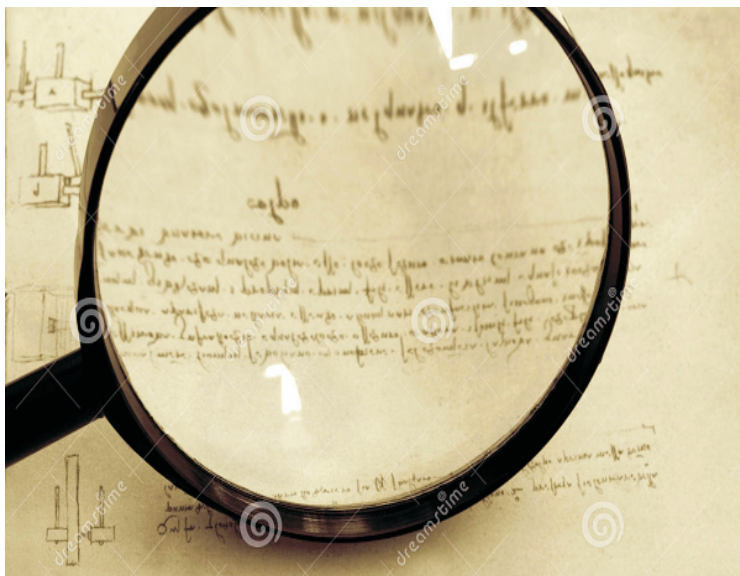
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### ABSTRACT

**H**istorical research is the process of methodically examining past events to give an account of what has happened in the past. Historical research can also mean gathering data from situations that have already occurred and performing statistical analysis on this data just as we would in a traditional experiment. The one input difference between this type of research and the type described in the first paragraph concerns the manipulation of data. Since historical research relies on data from the past, there is no way to manipulate it. Studying the grades of older students, for example, and younger students may give some insight into the differences between these two groups, but manipulating the work experience is impossible. Therefore, historical research can often lead to present day experiments that attempt to further explore what has occurred in the past.

**KEYWORDS:** Manipulate, statistical analysis,



### INTRODUCTION :

Historical research involves interpreting past events to predict future ones. In Stan's case, he's interested in examining the reasons behind the Holocaust to try to prevent it from happening again. Historical research design involves synthesizing data from many different sources. Stan could interview former Nazis, or read diaries from Nazi soldiers to try to figure out what motivated them. He could look at public records and archives, examine Nazi propaganda, or look at testimony in the trials of Nazi officers. Historical research is the process of systematically examining past events to give an account of what has happened in the past.

- It is not a mere accumulation of facts and dates or even a description of past events.
- It is a flowing, dynamic account of past events which involves an interpretation of these events in an attempt to recapture the nuances, personalities, and ideas that influenced these events.
- One of the goals of historical research is to communicate an understanding of past events.
- Historical Research publishes the work of established scholars and assists new researchers with their first articles.
- A procedures supplementary to observation in which the researcher seeks to test the authenticity of the reports or observations made by others.
- The historical method is employed by researchers who are interested in reporting events and/or conditions that occurred in the past. An attempt is made

to establish facts in order to arrive at conclusions concerning past events or predict future events.

### • Steps to Follow

- Isolate the problem
- Collect source materials, including primary and secondary sources
- Evaluate source material
- Formulate hypotheses
- Report and interpret findings

### • Primary Sources of Information - Direct outcomes of events or the records of eyewitnesses

Original documents

Relics

Remains

Artifacts

### • Secondary Sources of Information - Information provided by a person who did not directly observe the event, object, or condition

Textbooks

Encyclopedias

Newspapers

Periodicals

Review of research and other references

### • External Criticism - Asks if the evidence under consideration is authentic. The researcher checks the genuineness or validity of the source. Is it what it appears or claims to be? Is it admissible as evidence?

• **Internal Criticism** - After the source is authenticated, it asks if the source is accurate, was the writer or creator competent, honest, and unbiased? How long after the event happened until it was reported? Does the witness agree with other witnesses?

### • Establishing the Genuineness of a Document of Relic

- Does the language and writing style conform to the period in question and is it typical of other work done by the author?
  - Is there evidence that the author exhibits ignorance of things or events that man of his training and time should have known?
  - Did he report about things, events, or places that could not have been known during that period?
  - Has the original manuscript been altered either intentionally or unintentionally by copying?
  - Is the document an original draft or a copy? If it is a copy, was it reproduced in the exact words of the original?
  - If manuscript is undated or the author unknown, are there any clues internally as to its origin?
  - Checking the Content of a Source of Information
- What was meant by the author by each word and statement?  
How much credibility can the author's statements be given?

### • Evaluation

Statement of hypotheses

External and internal criticism of sources  
Observation and experimentation  
Technical terminology  
Generalization and prediction

**OBJECTIVE:**

To discuss the Historical Research Design on the light of Way, Strength and Drawback.

**METHODOLOGY:**

It is completely based on literature review.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION:****Way / Steps of Historical research:**

**There are several steps that someone like Stan has to go through to do historical research:**

- 1. Formulate an idea:** This is the first step of any research, to find the idea and figure out the research question. For Stan, this came from his mother, but it could come from anywhere. Many researchers find that ideas and questions arise when they read other people's research.
- 2. Formulate a plan:** This step involves figuring out where to find sources and how to approach them. Stan could make a list of all the places he could find information (libraries, court archives, private collections) and then figure out where to start.
- 3. Gather data:** This is when Stan will actually go to the library or courthouse or prison to read or interview or otherwise gather data. In this step, he's not making any decisions or trying to answer his question directly; he's just trying to get everything he can that relates to the question.
- 4. Analyze data:** This step is when Stan goes through the data he just collected and tries more directly to answer his question. He'll look for patterns in the data. Perhaps he reads in the diary of the daughter of a Nazi that her father didn't believe in the Nazi party beliefs but was scared to stand up for his values. Then he hears the same thing from a Nazi soldier he interviews. A pattern is starting to emerge.
- 5. Analyze the sources of data:** Another thing that Stan has to do when he is analyzing data is to also analyze the veracity of his data. The daughter's diary is a secondary source, so it might not be as true as a primary source, like the diary of her father. Likewise, people have biases and motivations that might cloud their account of things; perhaps the Nazi soldier Stan interviews is up for parole, and he thinks that if he says he was scared and not a true Nazi believer, he might get out of jail.

Once Stan has gone through all of these steps, he should have a good view of what he wants to know about his question. If he doesn't, then he goes back to step two (formulating a plan) and starts again. He will keep doing steps two through five until he finds something that he can use.

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

- To uncover the unknown (i.e., some historical events are not recorded).
- To answer questions (i.e., there are many questions about our past that we not only want to know but can profit from knowing).
- To identify the relationship that the past has to the present (i.e., knowing about the past can frequently give a better perspective of current events).
- To record and evaluate the accomplishments of individuals, agencies, or institutions.
- To assist in understanding the culture in which we live (e.g., education is a part of our history and our culture).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

There is no one approach that is used in conducting historical research although there is a general set of steps that are typically followed. These include the following steps although there is some overlap and movement back and forth between the steps:

1. Identification of the research topic and formulation of the research problem or question.
2. Data collection or literature review.
3. Evaluation of materials.
4. Data synthesis.
5. Report preparation or preparation of the narrative exposition.

### Identification of the Research Topic and Formulation of the Research Problem or Question:

This is the first step in any type of educational research including historical research.

- Ideas for historical research topics can come from many different sources such as current issues in education, the accomplishments of an individual, an educational policy, or the relationship between events.

### Data Collection or Literature Review:

This step involves identifying, locating, and collecting information pertaining to the research topic.

- The information sources are often contained in documents such as diaries or newspapers, records, photographs, relics, and interviews with individuals who have had experience with or have knowledge of the research topic.
- Interviews with individuals who have knowledge of the research topic are called oral histories.
- The documents, records, oral histories, and other information sources can be primary or secondary sources.
- A primary source is a source that has a direct involvement with the event being investigated like a diary, an original map, or an interview with a person that experienced the event.
- A secondary source is a source that was created from a primary source such as books written about the event. Secondary sources are considered less useful than primary sources.

### Evaluation of Materials:

Every information source must be evaluated for its authenticity and accuracy because any source can be affected by a variety of factors such as prejudice, economic conditions, and political climate. There are two types of evaluations every sources must pass.

1. External Criticism—this is the process of determining the validity, trustworthiness, or authenticity of the source. Sometimes this is difficult to do but other times it can easily be done by handwriting analysis or determining the age of the paper on which something was written.
2. Internal Criticism—this is the process of determining the reliability or accuracy of the information contained in the sources collected. This is done by positive and negative criticism.
  - Positive criticism refers to assuring that the statements made or the meaning conveyed in the sources is understood. This is frequently difficult because of the problems of vagueness and presentism.
  - Vagueness refers to uncertainty in the meaning of the words and phrases used in the source.
  - Presentism refers to the assumption that the present-day connotations of terms also existed in the past.
  - Negative criticism refers to establishing the reliability or authenticity and accuracy of the content of the sources used. This is the more difficult part because it requires a judgment about the accuracy and



authenticity of what is contained in the source.

- Firsthand accounts by witnesses to an event are typically assumed to be reliable and accurate.

Historians often use three heuristics in handling evidence. These are corroboration, sourcing, and contextualization.

- Corroboration, or comparing documents to each other to determine if they provide the same information, is often used to obtain information about accuracy and authenticity.
- Sourcing, or identifying the author, date of creation of a document, and the place it was created is another technique that is used to establish the authenticity or accuracy of information.
- Contextualization, or identifying when and where an event took place, is another technique used to establish authenticity and accuracy of information.

### HISTORICAL SELF ASSESSMENT

1. Define the historical method of research.
2. List the five steps to be followed in conducting a historical investigation.
3. Differentiate between the following primary and secondary sources by placing an "X" in the blank before each primary source.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Original documents
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Newspapers
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Textbooks
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Artifacts
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Encyclopedias
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Periodicals
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Relics
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Reviews of research
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Remains
4. Define external criticism.
5. Define internal criticism.
6. List six pertinent questions to be considered in establishing the genuineness of a document or relic.
7. List two pertinent questions to be considered when checking the content of a source of information.
8. List five factors to be considered when evaluating historical research.
9. Discuss three advantages of historical research

### Data Synthesis and Report Preparation:

This refers to synthesizing, or putting the material collected into a narrative account of the topic selected.

- Synthesis refers to selecting, organizing, and analyzing the materials collected into topical themes and central ideas or concepts. These themes are then pulled together to form a contiguous and meaningful whole.

Be sure to watch out for these four problems that might be encountered when you attempt to synthesize the material collected and prepare the narrative account.

1. Trying to infer causation from correlated events is the first problem. Just because two events occurred together does not necessarily mean that one event was the cause of the other.
2. A second problem is defining and interpreting key words so as to avoid ambiguity and to insure that they have the correct connotation.
3. A third problem is differentiating between evidence indicating how people should behave and how

they in fact did behave.

4. A fourth problem is maintaining a distinction between intent and consequences. In other words, educational historians must make sure that the consequences that were observed from some activity or policy were the intended consequences.

### Strength Drawback:

- Many current educational practices, theories and issues can be better understood in the light of past experiences.
- Researchers can apply scientific objectivity in attempting to determine exactly what did happen in the past.
- If well-done, this research involves systematic, objective data collection and analysis.
- Disadvantages of Historical research:
- In conducting historical research, the researcher can neither manipulate nor control any of the variables.
- There is no way; historical researcher can affect events of the past.
- Historical research can't collect data by administering instruments.
- Historical research excessively relies on secondary source of data.
- Some examples of problems in Essays written?historical research Attendee record from?by elementary school children during the Civil War High school?two different school districts over a 40-years period graduation diplomas from the 1920s
- Historical research is necessary to define the situations of the past and its meaning in the light of the present problem.
- It can provide a perspective for decision making about educational problems, and it assists in understanding why things are as they are.
- Educational reform and even social reform are functions often served by historical research.
- Issues are often better understood and probably better dealt with-if the historical perspective is known.
- The research is not physically involved in the situation under study.
- No danger of experimenter-subject interaction.
- Documents are located by the researcher, data is gathered, and conclusions are drawn out of sight.

### Drawback:

Historical research is limited to whatever data are available. As with other types of research, historical designs have their own unique strengths. For one thing, it is usually easier to see the big picture if the picture is of the past. During an event, people can get swept up in the moment and not see the full picture. This is particularly true when an event starts small and builds. But hindsight allows researchers, as well as normal people, to see the outcome of the event and trace it backwards to its source. Historical research problems are identified in the same way as problems of other types of research. It is much better to study in-depth a well-defined problem with one or more specific well stated questions or hypotheses, then to investigate either too broadly stated problems or a problem for which insufficient data are available(Gay,1997).

### CONCLUSION:

The sources of historical information are commonly classified as primary or secondary. 'Primary sources are firsthand access of the events or experience under study; secondary sources are accounts



at least one level removed from the event or experience' (Wiersma, 1996). According to Wiersma(1986) a basic rule of historical research is to use primary sources whenever it is possible to locate them. Historical evidence is derived from historical data by the process of criticism, which is of two types; external and internal. 'External criticism in historical research evaluates the validity of the document-this is, where, when and by whom it was produced'(Wiersma, 1986, p.223). 'Internal criticism evaluates the meaning, accuracy and trustworthiness of the content of the document' (Wiersma, 1986, p.224). Wiersma (1986), states that central ideas or concepts must be pulled together and continuity between them is developed. As a substantial period of time-say, several years-is covered by the research study, the ideas can often be organized chronologically. The final step of historical research methodology is characterized by decision making about the research problem. At the final step conclusions are formulated, and any hypothesis introduced earlier is either supported or rejected.

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