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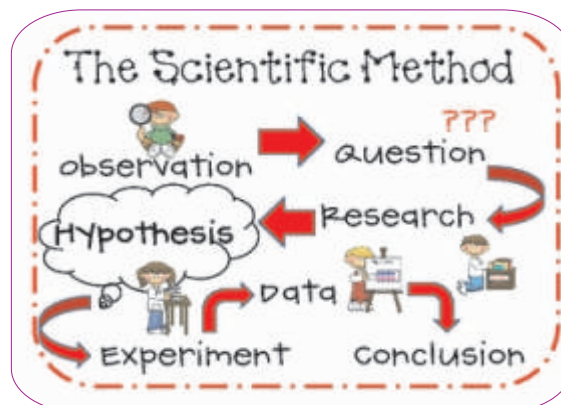
More.....



## THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD FOR WOMEN STUDIES

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### ABSTRACT :

**T**he scientific revolution has had a profound impact on society. Earlier, knowledge was always through deductive reasoning. This type of reasoning gave systematic knowledge: but it was knowledge which need not be 'true' knowledge in that it really portrayed reality. This reasoning was based on premises the truth or falsity of which were not important. This was because knowledge was not for the purpose of use in every day life. It was only an embellishment in the days of Aristotle and Socrates. No distinction was then made between values and facts. The world view was metaphysical and philosophical. For example, the description of the varna system of castes, by relating castes to the limbs of the body gives caste a rationale and a status. The theory appears logical but the catch lies in the premises adopted.

**KEYWORDS :** scientific revolution , systematic knowledge , metaphysical and philosophical.

### INTRODUCTION:

Later, ideas changed and knowledge was more and more put to use. A new way of thinking emerged. The immediate was more important than the ultimate. Factors were interconnected and a change in one caused a change in others. Hence identifying the cause :ecame important and the nature of things began to be questioned. The veracity of knowledge wad to be established by questioning the sources and there thus emerged a possibility of falsification. The test to verify was to apply knowledge to real life. This was the method f induction.

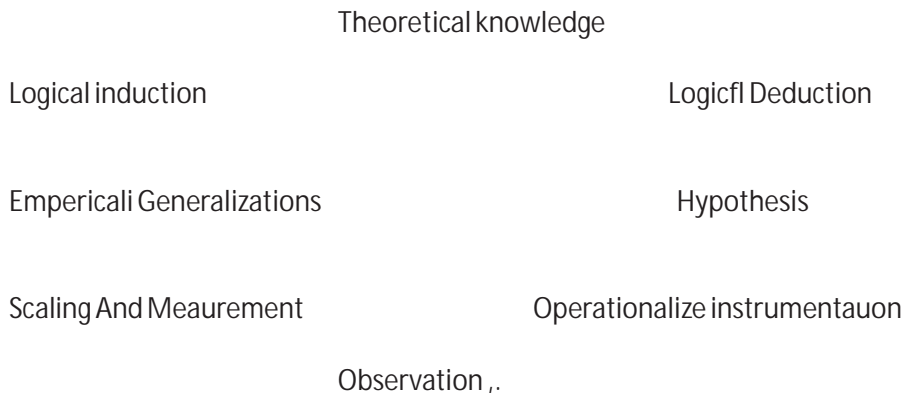
The modern method is to combine both deduction and induction. Deduction is used to formulate the problem and induction is used to test it. The need for a combination is ought about by the limitations in knowing reality. Even common sense knowledge can be false since we perceive reality in a limited and partial way and perception is influenced by intelligence, bias, prejudice. External phenomenon can be perceived but what cannot be perceived is also important. Often therefore hidden factors may exist which are missei our construction of reality.

The difference between true reality and empirical reality is that we observe on] latter and make inferences about the former. On the basis of assdptions we mal dictions and then observe them. Yet we can go wrong. What we perceive is always activity. With inter-subjectivity comes a common perception which gets translate objectivity. But, objectivity need not be true, since common perception can be because of common interests .Hence, even though all scientific knowledge is objective , all so called objective knowledge is not true.

The testing of hypothesis is important. Hypothesis are those that are deducd from theoretical knowledge. For testing a hypothesis empirical validation is required. In the research process, we start with a body of knowledge which is often theoretical. This knowwledge is a set of general propositions which have been

previously tested. Now, a hypothesis is usually stated in an abstract form. It has to be operationalized before one can use it. Instruments devised and with the help of observation, a measurement is made. This leads to empirical generalizations which via logical induction bring forth a new explanation which becomes a part of existing knowledge.

### DIAGRAM of A PARADIGM OF RESEARCH PROCESS



If however research has to be done in an area which has not been explored much and does not have adequate theoretical knowledge then one starts at the 'Hypothesis stage'. A proposition is loosely formulated and a tentative deduction is made on the basis of one's own assumption. The process then develops as before but the empirical generalizations lead to a formulation of a new theory which contains dependent-independent variables. These causes-effects have to again be explored hence one starts all over again. Hence he makes a one and half circle to complete the research.

### AN ILLUSTRATION

In a study I made on "Women's participation in the labour force". the rationale of the study drew from the fact that some women work for wages outside the home, some do not. It is through work outside the house that women relate themselves to others. If women are arranged according to educational qualification, a curvilinear trend emerges. Women's work participation is high at the illiterate level, drops after matriculation, increases with higher education. Also, women's work is related to the occupational prestige of the husband. Husbands' jobs carrying lowest prestige had correspondingly higher work participation by wives; so did the higher prestige jobs, occupied by husbands have correspondingly high participation of women in high prestige jobs.

However the occupational prestige of women's to that of the men's had a linear trend. This linear trend could be explained by the fact that the family being a unit of social stratification in society, peace has to be maintained within it. Hence the status husband determines the status of the family wife and children. There is no ambiguity about the man's participation in the work force but the wife's job has to be -

- 1) consistent with the status of her husband to keep the social status of the family.
- 2) but be slightly inferior to that of the husband to retain the man's dominance in the family. The disparity of education of women and men, means a smaller proportion of women who are well educated. It is only at the two extremes -the bottom and the top that the wife can get jobs consistent to her husband's status. These explanations can be fitted into generalizations but they have to be tested with more studies, to become valid.

A deductive hypothesis is proved or disproved.

An inductive hypothesis is confirmed or disconfirmed.

It is very dangerous to have preconceived notions because then we put questions according to it. For example, it is a general impression that farmers have large families. But empirical studies show that it is not farmers, but traders who have large families. It is important to pose the right question in research. A good piece

of research is one that asks the right questions; innovative research is one where how questions are asked.

Another hypothesis about farmers' small families can be cited in this context, it was found that persons who have experienced downward mobility can perceive the fact that the future of their children is more important than their own economic gain. If in the parents' generation there was a larger family and it impaired downward mobility with the break up of the family land holding, then a farmer in such case tended to opt for a smaller family. Also, educated parents have smaller families because they want the children to have better education and stand a better chance in the world, and are willing to invest their education. Such an investment is expensive and can only support few children.

The assumptions we start with are highly conditioned and with changes in society, these are questioned and new truths evolve. No third person objectivity is ever possible all of us are part of a system

## TYPES OF RESEARCH

### Theoretical Research

Research conducted within a discipline about theoretical premises enables each discipline to delimit its care. An attempt is made to understand the inter-relationships within a discipline in an assumption that this will help in solving society's problems. A problem arouse curiosity and attract attention because of some difficulties in society. There are two dimensions to any problem scientific and practical. A solution is not always ensured. Sometimes, even if the scientific aspect is solved the practical aspect can be left out.

### Applied Research

This research also has a scientific aspect. One draws from theoretical propositions to understand the problem. This research is most often interdisciplinary. While making a research proposal what kind of knowledge we are interested in is the question to be asked.

### The basic questions that arise are 3 -

1. What are we studying?
2. How are we studying it?
3. Why are we studying it?

It is easiest to answer (1); (2) distinguishes between different interrelated factors such as which is cause and which is effect; (3) is the most difficult to answer. One has to put the explanation for cause-effect as part of a larger general law. A 4th question could be, what will happen to the problem? This question implies prediction. For social science only broad predictions can be made.

### Research Design

The detailed planning of the entire process of research is the design. Alternatives have to be known and a proper sequence of steps have to be spelt out.

### Phases-

- (i) Formulate the research problem
- (ii) Prepare a sample design
- (iii) Prepare or select the instruments of data collection (questionnaires, schedules)
- (iv) Detail the manner of collecting data
- (v) Put down what methods and techniques of analysis of data would be used
- (vi) Indicate how the report would be presented.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design depends upon what type of questions are asked and upon what the purpose of research are. To undertake research, some familiarity with the particular area is required otherwise one would not know what questions to ask and how to formulate a problem. A non-nutritional person for instance does not

have the background knowledge to do nutritional research.

### 1. Exploratory/Formulative

whenever some minimum knowledge does not exist, such knowledge is sought. The formulation of the problem here is to seek such knowledge. This is exploratory research.

### 2. Descriptive research

Descriptive research is used for fact finding. Different factors are identified and then properly described.

### 3. Causal or Experimental

A given hypothesis is tested for the connections between cause and effect but it postulates. Correlation may be established in descriptive types of research but which one is the cause and which the effect, is not determined in such a research. To do this, different types of evidence are needed. The independent (causal) variables change before the dependent (effectual) variables - the other facts that go with the independent variable are kept constant and only its change is studied for the effect it has on the dependent variable.

### 4. Panel Studies

This type of research deals the study of cross sections of societies at different points of time. The research design used is called panel design

## CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESEARCH

### Exploratory

It is important to ask questions about the kind of facts you are looking for. Insights have to be sought and the nature of peculiar cases have to be identified. Anthropological studies or field work is used in some cases. This is to be distinguished from the usual field study implied in a survey. Here field work means that, the investigator goes to the field and makes observations without any prior design to study. The bias of the investigator being a participant is immaterial because these case studies are only preparatory for further research. In exploratory research ingenuity and intuition are put to work. After exploratory research is done, its results can be used for further descriptive or causal research. In exploratory research the sequence of steps is not rigid. There may be many back and forth investigations.

### Descriptive

This sort of research has to be very tightly formulated because measurements are involved. Variables have to be identified and operationalized. Abstract variables have to be concretized. In social sciences as long as we can define a variable we can measure them. Sampling is an important technique in descriptive research. The N.S.S. is an important source of secondary analysis. Samples are selected according to the purpose of the research. Descriptive analysis requires random samples be used, as against exploratory analysis which may contain no sample or experimental analysis in which the sample need not be a random one. Instruments which are used to collect data are also important. Problems can arise at any stage - in data collection, processing, tabulation, interpretation. Hence accuracy is required.

### Experimental

All the rules that apply to descriptive research also hold good for experimental research. However there are additional requirements in the design itself. There are limited number of variables in this type of research as against many in descriptive research. These variables are manipulated and the change is measured. Three types of evidence feature in experimental research

(a) concomitant variator, i.e. when independent variable changes, the dependent one also does; similarly when

independent variable does not change, the dependent one does not change;

(b) evidence produced to show that the independent variable has changed before the dependent variable does; and

(c) evidence to show that other factors are not the cause of variation.

The population has to be divided into two groups the experimental and the control group. The variation between the two is crucial. The assumption is that when there is a change in the former, there is change in latter. The units are chosen parallel to each other in both groups, with respect to the distribution of variables. These two groups are not representative of the whole population hence results obtained are only for testing hypothesis and not for generalizations.

Once the research design is decided upon both time and cost for each step can be estimated. Choosing a sampling design is a problem. In Western countries there are companies that provide the sampling frame on a commercial basis (i.e. on payment). The rule for the preparation of a standard scale for a sample is that it should be applicable to the whole population too. Choice of the topic for research is subjective but the design of the research should be objective.

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