



Remembering Philosophical and Historical Research

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1. Introduction

Philosophical and Historical methods of inquiry form the basic foundations of knowledge in education. In such methods, major emphasis is laid on the researcher's analytical bent of mind and insight into various concepts, issues and practices of education system. In spite of its importance in the field of Educational Research, both the Philosophical and Historical researches are losing their rigour and have created a void in the field of education.

2. Nature of Philosophical Research in Education

Philosophical studies in education aim at:

- Assessment of the status of knowledge through analysis of meanings and relationships of different concepts and expositions underlying the assumptions.
- A fruitful synthesis of ideas from different fields concerning educational theories and practices.
- In other words, a researcher in the area of educational philosophy aims at analyses of meaning and nature of different educational concepts and the relevance of different kinds of educational practices. One requires development of deep understanding and fresh insights in the educational concepts, principles, issues and problems and making normative inducements on and evaluations of educational practices and recommendations for doing things in a better way. It also leads towards developing criteria for governing aims and objectives of education and parameters for curricular process and clarification of concepts. Policy formulation, curriculum, teaching-learning processes, evaluation, teachers' and learners' expected roles, etc. are some of the major functions of Philosophical inquiry in education.

3. Nature of Historical Research in Education

A study of the history of educational developments and changes in their social, political and economic contexts is essential for better understanding of educational problems of the present times. Especially with regards to policy making in education, the policy makers and planners should take a note of certain historical findings which may guide them in formulating policies for present and the future. An analysis of the trends of educational developments in their historical context is useful in projecting educational plans with reasonable degree of probability. Historical researches have some unique features:

- They aim at developing knowledge of the past events within a particular framework of time and a socio-political-economic-cultural context.
- The researcher digs into significant data and does not have control over the data since the situation under study does not exist in the present.
- The total amount of information which originally existed at the time of the actual occurrence of the events, does not survive till the date of the investigation. Hence, only those data which have survived becomes the focus of the study.
- Data concerning the past events are available through different sources: Primary and secondary sources.

4. Factors Impeding Philosophical Research

The process of philosophical research starts with the identification of appropriate themes. At this stage every care has to be taken to ensure that the chosen theme is capable of yielding a system of thought with sound justification.

Secondly, the researcher has to collect all the possible data relevant to the theme from the available literature wherein, most of the sources will be literary in nature such as, write-ups or expressed opinions of the philosophers concerned, and commentaries on the relevant philosophical works appearing in the forms of books, journals, transcriptions, recordings, research reports, etc. One must be clear about the relevance of data and the way to collect it. Also, the authenticity of the sources of the data and the nature of the data needs to be ensured.

Nextly, classification and interpretation of the data which completely rests on the analytical insight and the synthesizing ability of the researcher. The task of the researcher is chiefly ascribing a significance, meaning, purpose and relatedness to a common end, and to an apparently heterogeneous mass of data. But in this process, there is every possibility of reflecting our subjectivity in the process.

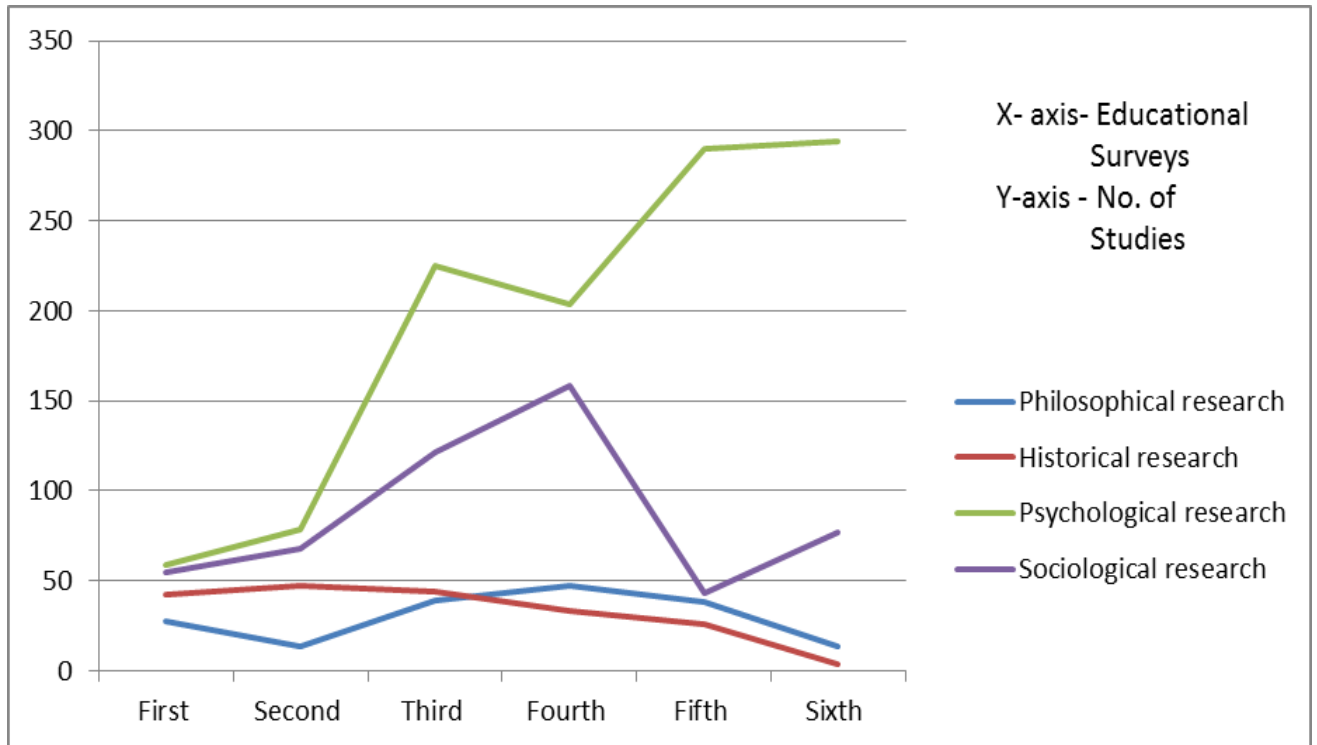
Last stage of the work may be identified with the reporting of the study for which the researcher should take care for clarity and precision of presentation. The researcher has to work rigorously starting from the first stage to the reporting and has to collect data from various sources, as one source would not provide sufficient and authenticate data to the researcher.

5. Factors Impeding Historical Research

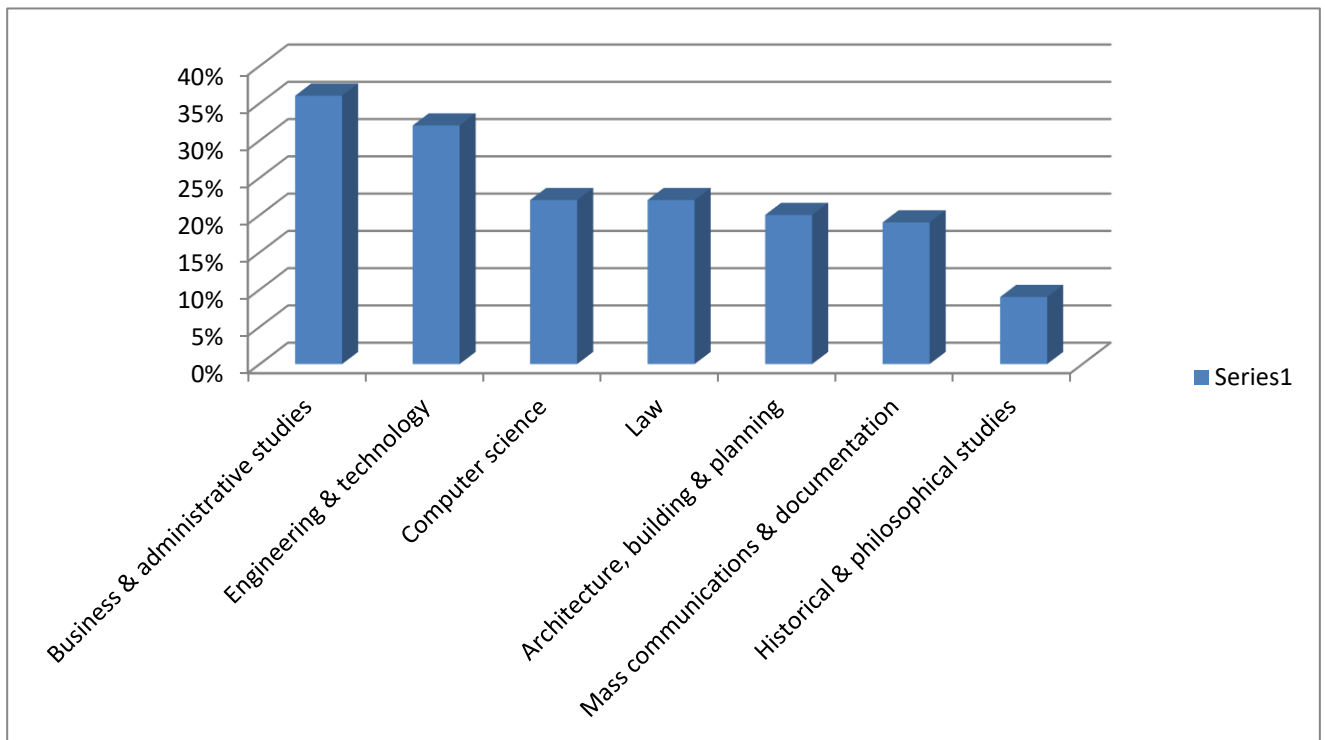
In case of historical research, primary resources are given first priority in historical studies with a view to authenticating presented facts. However, the second-hand information, which may be available in some distorted form needs to be considered with great care. The main feature of historical research is the evaluation of the data. The backbone of the historiography is the authenticity of data collected through different sources. The process of judging the validity, reliability and relevance of data is carried out through two devices i.e., external criticism and internal criticism.

External criticism is also called as lower criticism and is concerned with the testing the authenticity and genuineness of sources of the data. Once the sources are verified for their authenticity and genuineness, the content of the data is subjected to verification which is known as internal criticism of the data. Also called as higher criticism and is concerned with the validity, credibility of the content of document.

The total amount of information which originally existed at the time of the actual occurrence of the events, does not survive till the date of the investigation. Hence, only those data which have survived becomes the focus of the study. Data concerning the past events are available through different sources: Primary and secondary sources and establishing the authenticity of these sources becomes very difficult for the researcher.



Data Regarding Philosophical and Historical Researches in India



Data regarding philosophical and historical researches carried out in aboard.

According to the data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), it shows sector-level trends over the last 10 years from 2000/01 to 2009/10.

6. Conclusion

It seems that conducting historical and philosophical research is not an easy task. In philosophical research we need analytical bent of mind to understand the deeper concepts of philosophy. It is also

very difficult to decipher the vernacular languages written in the ancient scriptures. Moreover, in philosophical research a researcher is not in a position to enter into the deeper layer of the philosopher's mind to decode the meaning out of the construction of the philosophers, whereas, in historical research the researcher has to dig deep into the history. Sometimes it is difficult to have access to primary data and thus the researcher has to rely heavily either on the remains/ fossils or secondary data. So, it becomes rather authenticate and reconstructs the reality.