CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY
4.0 Introduction

The term ‘Methodology’, means, the system of collecting data for research projects. It is a way to solve research problem systematically. This research is based on the objective of the present study.

4.1 Type of research

The present study follows the general method of historical research. It provides a method of investigation to discover, describe and interpret what existed in the past. In general, history is a meaningful and an organized record of past events. Of course, it is not merely a list of events arranged chronologically, but a valid integrated account of social, cultural, economic and political forces that had operated simultaneously to produce a historical event. Historical research attempts to establish facts so as to arrive at conclusions concerning past events. The main purpose of historical research is to arrive at an accurate account of the past so as to gain a clearer perspective of the present. According to John W. Best (1977), “The historian must depend upon the reported observation of others, often witness of doubtful competence and sometimes of doubtful objectivity.” Historical research has great value in the field of educational research because it is necessary to know and understand educational achievements and trends of the past in order to gain a perspective on present and future directions. It is useful for predicting the future.

Historical research can be qualitative or quantitative (or a combination). The type of approach should be determined by the issue addressed and the data available. Historical research deals with the meaningful record of human achievement. It is used to understand the past and understand the present in the light of past events and developments. Historical analysis may be directed towards an individual, an idea, a movement or an institution. However, none of these objects of historical observation can be considered in isolation. People cannot be subjected to historical investigation without some consideration of their interaction with the ideas, movements and or institutions of their times. The focus merely determines the points of emphasis towards which historians direct their attention.
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Through the enactment of this method in the present study, the researcher has tried to determine and present truthfully the important facts about the life, achievements and contribution of the great academician and politician Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. The present study on Dr. Mookerjee and his contributions towards educational practice and thought, enabled the researcher to critically analyze and narrate the immense contribution of his, towards the national system of education and anti-communalism. With the application of this methodology, the researcher elucidates the relevance of the educational policies and contributions of Syama Prasad Mookerjee with reference to the present context of the dynamic society.

4.2 Sources of Data

Historical data are usually classified into two main categories as follows:

1. Primary sources, which, are eyewitness accounts. They are reported by an actual observer or participant in an event. “Finding and assessing primary historical data is an exercise in detective work. It involves logic, intuition, persistence, and common sense…” (Tuchman, 1994, p.319)

2. Secondary sources, are accounts of an event not actually witnessed by the reporter. The reporter may have had a word with an actual observer or read an account by an observer, but his or her testimony is not that of an actual participant or observer. Secondary sources may sometimes be used, but because of the distortion in passing on information, the historian and the researcher uses them, only when primary data are not available, which unfortunately is frequently the case. As Tuchman (1994) points out, finding the secondary sources is only the first step. The researcher must then verify the quality of such source material.

✓ Primary Sources of Educational Data

Many of the old materials mentioned in the preceding section provided primary evidence that was thought to be useful, specifically in studying the history of education. Some of them are listed here.
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- Official Records and Other Documentary Materials

This category includes records and reports of legislative bodies and State Departments of Public Instruction, city Superintendents, Principals, Presidents, Deans, department Heads, educational committees, Minutes of school boards and boards of trustees, surveys, charters, deeds, wills, professional periodicals, brochures, school newspapers, annuals, bulletins, catalogs, courses of study, curriculum guides, athletic game records, programmes (for graduation, dramatic, musical, and athletic events), licenses, certificates, textbooks, examinations, report cards, pictures, drawings, maps, letters, diaries, autobiographies, teacher and pupil personnel files, samples of student work, and recordings.

- Oral Testimony

- This category includes interviews with administrators, teachers and other school employees, students and relatives, school patrons or lay citizens, and members of governing bodies.

- Relics

This category includes buildings, furniture, teaching materials, equipment, murals, decorative pictures, textbooks, examinations, and samples of student work.

Thus, Primary sources are eye witness accounts and are the only solid bases of historical enquiry. A primary source of data is the life blood of historical research, and secondary sources, which may be used in the absence of, primary data. Primary sources of data have been described as those items that are original to the problem under study. On the other hand secondary sources are those that do not bear a direct physical relationship to the event being studied. They are made up of data that cannot be described as original. These are the accounts of an event provided by a person who did not directly observe the event, object or condition.

In the present study, historical data from primary sources includes:

- letters written by Syama Prasad Mookerjee to Rabindranath Tagore, and vice-versa,
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- letters written by Jawaharlal Nehru to Syama Prasad Mookerjee and vice-versa,
- letters written by Mahatma Gandhi to Syama Prasad Mookerjee and vice-versa.

It also includes books written by Syama Prasad himself, such as:

- Convocation Speeches and Reports (1947-1953) by Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee,
- Educational Speeches by Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee,
- Selected speeches in Bengal Legislative Assembly (1937-1947) by Syama Prasad Mookerjee.
- Personal‘ Diaries’ of Syama Prasad Mookerjee which were written both in English and Bengali,
- Syama Prasader Diary O Mrityu Prasanga by Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay.
- Kashmir Issue

All these have been critically examined and evaluated with the motto of reducing subjectivity as far as possible.

✓ Secondary Sources of Educational Data

Secondary sources are the reports of a person who relates the testimony of an actual witness of, or participant in, an event. The writer of the secondary source may not have been at the scene of the event but merely reported what the person who was present there said or wrote. Secondary sources of data are usually of limited worth for research purpose because of the errors that may result when information passes from one person to another.

Most history textbooks and encyclopedias are examples of secondary sources, for they are often several times removed from the original and firsthand account of events. Of course, some material may be a secondary source for one purpose, while a primary source for another. For example, a high school textbook in American history is ordinarily a secondary source. But if one was studying the changing
emphasis on nationalism in high school, then the American history textbooks would be a primary document or source of data.

In the present study, the secondary sources include the biographies of Syama Prasad Mookerjee as well as books written on him by various authors, such as:

- A phase in the life of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee (1937-1946) by Dr. Anil Chandra Banerjee
- The life and times of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee: A Complete Biography by Tathagata Roy and many others.

Thus books written on him by various authors about his work historical reviews on Syama Prasad Mookerjee under study has been extensively examined and evaluated objectively.

4.3 Internal and External Criticism

It has been noted that the historian does not often use the method of direct observation. Also, past events cannot be repeated at will. Since the historian must get much of the data from the reports of those who witnessed or participated in these events, the data must be carefully analyzed to sift the true from the false.

Trustworthy, usable data in historical research are known as historical evidence. So validated information can be accepted as a trustworthy and proper basis for the testing and interpretation of a hypothesis. Historical evidence is derived from historical data by the process of criticism, which is of two types: external and internal.

Internal Criticism

After the authenticity of historical documents or relics has been established, there is still the problem of evaluating their accuracy or worth. Although they may be genuine, sometimes they do not reveal a true picture. In case of the writers or creators, it is necessary to find out whether they are competent, honest, unbiased, and actually acquainted with the facts, or were they too antagonistic or too
sympathetic to give a true picture or whether they had any motives for distorting
the account. It is also important to find out whether they were subject to pressure,
fear, or vanity. Again, the researcher has to find the time gap between the actual
event and the record of their testimony, and also measure its accuracy. Lastly, it is
important to check the consistency of the record with other witnesses.

These questions are often difficult to answer, but the historian must be sure that the
data are authentic and accurate. Only then may he or she introduce them as
historical evidence, worthy of serious consideration.

Internal criticism is also called higher criticism. It is concerned with the validity,
credibility, or worth of the content of the document. Apart from the textual
criticism, it also deals with factors like competence, good faith, bias, and general
reputation of the author. It is positive in nature and helps the researcher to discover
the literal and the real meaning of the text. Even though both positive and negative
criticisms are essential in the historical research, the researcher should not go so far
so as to be hyper critical.

**External Criticism**

External criticism establishes the authenticity or genuineness of data. Various tests
of genuineness may be employed to find out whether a relic or document a true one
rather than a forgery, a counterfeit, or a hoax.

Establishing the age or authorship of documents may require intricate tests of
signature, handwriting, script, type, spelling, language usage, documentation,
knowledge available at the time, and consistency with what is known. It may
involve physical and chemical tests on ink, paint, paper, parchment, cloth, stone,
metals, or wood. It is required to see whether these elements are consistent with
known facts about the person, the knowledge available, and the technology of the
period in which the remains or the document originated.

After the identification of data as primary and secondary sources, the researcher
tried to establish the authenticity of the source and also the validity of its contents.
The process of establishing the authenticity of the data is termed as external criticism and that of establishing the validity of the content is called internal criticism. External criticism is also called as lower criticism and it checks the genuineness and authenticity of the source material. It helps to determine whether it is what it appears or claims to be and whether it reads true to be original. It aims to save the researcher from being the victim of a fraud. To determine the genuineness of the historical data, the researcher must possess a rich fund of historical and general knowledge. If he/she does not possess knowledge of these fields, he/she may acquire training in the fields that are closely related to his/her historical problem or may seek the help of competent experts in the field.

In the present study, the data used is mostly in the nature of written materials. In case of primary source, such questions such as whether the author was a first-hand observer or not, the timeline of the source, the place of the written material etc are dealt with.

4.4 Conclusion

It is apparent that historical research is difficult and demanding. The gathering of historical evidence requires long hours of careful examination of such documents as court records, records of legislative bodies, letters, diaries, official minutes of organizations, or other primary sources of data. Historical research may involve travelling to distant places to examine the necessary documents or relics. In fact, any significant historical study would make demands that few students have the time, financial resources, patience, or expertise to meet. For these reasons, good historical studies are not often attempted to meet academic degree requirements.

Hence, in the present study, the researcher had tried her best in scrutinizing the sources, and finding whether they were unbiased, trustworthy and well-versed with the written facts.
References


“The problem of education can never be fully solved in a manner acceptable to self respecting Indians, until and unless it is left in the hands of a Government representing the national will and freed from foreign domination.”

- Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee