

Chapter

1

Research Methodology: An Introduction

1.1 MEANING OF RESEARCH

Research in common parlance refers to a search for knowledge. One can also define research as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic. In fact, research is an art of scientific investigation. Dictionary definition of research is a careful investigation or inquiry specially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge. Some people consider research as a movement from the known to the unknown. It is actually a voyage of discovery. We all possess the vital instinct of inquisitiveness. When the unknown confronts us, more and more our inquisitiveness makes us probe and attain understanding of the unknown. This inquisitiveness is the mother of all knowledge and the method, which one employs for obtaining the knowledge of whatever the unknown, can be termed as research.

Research is an academic activity and as such the term should be used in a technical sense. According to Clifford Woody, research comprises defining and redefining problems, formulating hypothesis or suggested solutions; collecting, organising and evaluating data; making deductions and reaching conclusions; and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulating hypothesis. D. Slesinger and M. Stephenson in the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences define research as "the manipulation of things, concepts or symbols for the purpose of generalising to extend, correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in construction of theory or in the practice of an art." Research is, thus, an original contribution to the existing stock of knowledge making for its advancement. It is the pursuit of truth with the help of study, observation, comparison and experiment. In short, the search for knowledge through objective and systematic method of finding solution to a problem is research. The systematic approach concerning generalisation and the formulation of a theory is also research. As such the term 'research' refers to the systematic method consisting of enunciating the problem, formulating a hypothesis, collecting the facts or data, analysing the facts and reaching certain conclusions either in the form of solution(s) towards the concerned problem or in certain generalisations for some theoretical formulation.