

POLI 343

Introduction to Political Research

Session 1-Why Do Research

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Rationale for Scientific Research in Politics

The Meaning of Research

The heart of University work and research is about understanding the behavior and problems of people in the society. An understanding of the nature of the problem would enable suggestions to be made for the solutions to the problem. The ability to find solutions to the problems of the Ghanaian society depends on an understanding of the society and the understanding comes from our ability to research.

What is Research?

Research in any discipline is an intensive and purposeful search and understanding of social, political and physical phenomenon. It is a method for the discovery of true values in a scientific way.

To research (re-search) is to search again, to take another more careful look, or to find out more. It is not merely the accumulation and communication of knowledge but a critical and scientific analysis of social facts and formulation of generalization as a basis for action and foresight.



What is Scientific Research?

Scientific research is based on taking a careful and critical look as opposed to casual observation. Scientific research assumes that very often when we take a look at an event, it may be prone to error. For that reason there is the need to take a second look, a third, fourth and many other looks. The essence of scientific research is also based on the realization that there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball. When we observe anything, what we see differs according to what we know, think or expect.

Therefore to observe scientifically involves previous training, experience or knowledge.

Scientific Research

Thus a person's biases affect what he knows of an object and the social scientist has to be aware of. Such biases in order to overcome errors in his observation. When we engage in scientific research we set out to challenge accepted beliefs by subjecting them to scrutiny through a set of standards. Thus the social scientist is engaged in challenging old beliefs, creating new ones and then starts a critical look at the new beliefs.

Social Science Research

Social science research can therefore correct accepted perception and expand it. Social science research does help the formulation of new concepts and explanations and thus heighten our awareness of where things fit in a larger framework. Social science research also help to expand existing perceptions in a society by formulating problems and solutions which are beyond the capabilities of common sense e.g. a non literate culture may see a problem in the society as due to the work of

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Social Science Research ;Cont'd:

The social scientist would use his research to formulate theoretical and methodological problems and thus asks questions like "the effects of the causes of political instability, inflation, lack of political parties etc. Social research therefore helps to develop and evaluate practices, concepts and theories of social relations and to develop and evaluate methodologies that are used to test these practices, concepts and theories.

The Purpose of Social Science Research

The main purpose of political science research is to discover new facts and on the light of the new facts enable the social scientist to confirm, revise or reject the existing theories and accepted practices. Research analysis is the result of studious inquiry into a problem that might have arisen out of a felt need in society e.g. the food problem, political conflict etc. The research incorporates new facts obtained specifically as a result of the investigation, it also gives the problem its proper values and correct interpretation and also offers the practical application of the conclusions for an effective solution of the problem confronting the society.



The Purpose of Social Science Research

The research process also serves as an effective form of training in scientific social investigation. It helps the researcher to develop critical faculties. Apart from serving as a medium of training in scientific social investigation and as sources of specific problems for the state or social reformers, it also provides an indispensable technique for future research workers to find out what methods and procedures of particular import have been used, what literature has been covered and what contributions have been made to arrive at the solution of the problem under investigation.



Summary

In this section, we have learnt about the meaning of political research and stated that is the search and discovery of true facts about a society as the first step towards finding solutions to the problems of the society. In the previous section we have learned about what research is all about for any society. In the following section we would look at the need for research. We will look at why there is the need to have the tools with which to carry out research.

Revision Question

- Give four examples of problems in your town or Community that would require research to find solutions.

