

Study Materials for 4th SEM (Paper-ANTACOR10T)

Unit - III - Tools and Technique of Data Collection

Observation

It is the oldest method of scientific investigation. The first knowledge of man about the Universe bloomed with his power of observation. Observation means the examination of phenomena or a thing without altering it. An observer can not impose anything on the phenomena, he watches the natural movement objectively.

Observation may be of two types -

Intensive Observation and Extensive Observation

Intensive Observation denotes an in-depth observation on a small closed community. Collected informations is expressed in the form of qualitative descriptions. Extensive Observation is just opposite to Intensive Observation. Here, Observation is applied on a large field. The Quantitative data are usually collected by using schedules and sorted out by applying statistical method.

Social-Cultural Anthropologists prefer Intensive observation or micro-level study. This type of Observation is totally informal and can be achieved by personal short-hand devices.

Two wings of Intensive Observations are :

A. Participant Observation

B. Non-Participant Observation

A. Participant Observation: An observer has to participate actively in the group under his study. He does not necessarily carry out all the activities as followed by the members of that group, but his presence, as an active member is valued in the group. Actual purpose of this participation is generally kept concealed.

B. Non-Participant Observation: A direct observation without any involvement. It is simply the watching and nothing of the phenomena as they occur in nature with reference to their cause and effect or mutual relationship. It is possible to study the village plan, habitation pattern, flora, fauna, water resources etc. by this method.

In **Participant Observation** method, the researcher has to collect the field data by participating in the activities of the people. For example, if one is studying the economic activities of the natives, he or she will participate in the economic activities of the informants and thereby he/she will observe and collect the data. In cases of marriage studies, or ceremonies, festivals etc., participant observation method is very useful.

However, when one does not participate in the ceremony or ritual activities, but collects the data by observing from a distance, this is called Non-participant method.

Participant Observation may be of two types according to the nature of participation - *Participant Observer or Observer Participant.*

When the observer is external of a group to start with and afterwards involves himself in the group, he/she is known as **Participant Observer**. But, sometimes, the observer is internal to the group and practices introspection to study the social reality i.e. he/she observes the other members of his own group. This type of observer is referred as **Observer Participant**.

In Social-Cultural Anthropology, all fieldworkers including the researchers and applied anthropologists belong to either of these two categories.