***Meaning, Nature and Scope of Social Research***

Meaning and Definition

According to the Armstrong, research is “

A careful investigation or enquiry especially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge”.

Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of English Language defines research as

“Diligent and systematic enquiry or investigation in to a subject in order to discover or revise facts, theories, applications, etc.”

Thus, in common parlance, research refers to a search for knowledge. It can also be defined as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic; it is an art of scientific investigation. However, in Social Research, many scholars have given comprehensive definitions of research, although there is no consensus among them on a single, precise and comprehensive definition of social research. Redman and Mory have defined social research as a systematized effort to gain new knowledge. In the words of Donald Slessinger and Mary Stevenson,

Social research is a systematic method of exploring, analyzing, and conceptualizing social life in order to “Extend, correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aid in the construction of a theory or in the practice of an art”.

**Nature:**

Pauline V. Young in his ‘Scientific Social Surveys and Research’ says,

“Research may be defined as a scientific undertaking which by means of logical and systematized techniques, aims to:

• Discover new facts or verify and test old facts;

• Analyze their sequences, interrelationships and causal explanations, which are derived within an appropriate theoretical frame of reference;

• Develop new scientific tools, concepts and theories which would facilitate reliable and valid study of human behaviors.” Yet for other scholars, social research is a movement, a movement from the known to the unknown; a movement that seeks to find explanations to unexplained social phenomena, to clarify the doubtful, and correct term is conceived facts of social life.

**Scope of Social Research:**

Social Research as a discipline is a recent phenomenon. With the elevation in the status of social science research in the post-World War II period, the teaching of research methods has become popular. Since the 1950s, the Social Science Departments in the American Universities have been offering courses in research methods and over the years they have opined in popularity among the students. Universities in India have introduced research methodology in Social Science mostly in the 1970s. Concern with methods of research is common for any science when it decides to come down from the level of vague generalities and attempts to concentrate on specific problems of a much narrower focus. This fact was clearly made by Emile Durkheim in his short introduction to the Rules of Sociological Method. Durkheim said that the great sociologists prior to him Seldom advanced beyond vague generalities.