



TRENDS AND AREAS IN RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES IN ASSAM

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Abstract:

Social Science research is the systematic method of discovering new facts or verifying old facts, their sequences, interrelationship casual explanations and the natural laws which govern them. This kind of research involves the application of scientific method for the understanding, studying and analyzing of social life in order to modify, connect or verify the existing knowledge as a system. The modern social science research in India began with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Gradually the research in social science in India got its impetus through various government and non-government institutions including the establishment of higher educational institutions. Assam has also made some progress, so far as the social science research is concerned. Still there are fertile ground for social science researcher to have their research work in this part of India. There are many tribal societies and communities in Assam as well as entire Northeast India which are yet to be scientifically studied. Therefore, an attempt has been made through this paper to study the present status of social science research in Assam as well as the institutions that contributing in it. Further it has also highlighted some aspects of social sciences which yet to be explored. The study is primarily based on the secondary data and reviewing of previous literature related to the theme.

Keywords: Assam, institutions, social science, Research, University

Introduction:

Social Science research is the investigation or study of human behaviour and their relationships. The prime objective of social science research is to discover new facts or verify and test old social facts. This kind of research tries to understand human behaviour and its interaction with the environment and social institutions. Social Science research is the systematic method of discovering new facts or verifying old facts, their sequences, interrelationship casual explanations and the natural laws which govern them. This kind of research involves the application of scientific method for the understanding, studying and analyzing of social life in order to modify, connect or verify the existing knowledge as a system. The modern social science research in India began with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Gradually the research in social science in India got its impetus through various government and non-government institutions including the establishment of higher educational institutions. Assam has also made some progress, so far as the social science research is concerned. Still there are fertile ground for social science researcher to have their research work in this part of India. There are many tribal societies and

communities in Assam as well as entire Northeast India which are yet to be scientifically studied.

Rationale of the Study:

Social Science research is important for a number of reasons. It helps to predict human behaviour and its relationships with other components of the society. Moreover, it promotes to increase the welfare of humanity and also facilitates the development of knowledge, specifically in the field of social studies. Social science researchers have lacked concerted efforts in the study of privileged and non-privileged persons and groups in the rural population. Assam exhibits a great diversity in population composition. The state is often regarded as a living anthropological museum. Besides religious and linguistic divisions, the population of the state may be divided into three groups: SC, ST and Non-Scheduled population. There are sixteen scheduled castes and 23 tribal groups in the state. This ethnic, religious and linguistic composition of population of Assam would essentially help to understand the varied and complex nature of socio-economic life of women vis-à-vis men in the state (Das, 2012:11-12). Therefore, to understand various issues related to the society and community in Assam

and scope for research in these areas of social sciences the present study has been undertaken.

Objective of the Study:

This main intention of this paper is to study the present status of social science research in Assam as well as the institutions that contributing in it. Further it has also highlighted some aspects of social sciences which yet to be explored, which includes issues related to women, tribal people, tea tribes and other subaltern groups of the Assamese society.

Methodology:

The study is primarily based on the secondary data and reviewing of previous literature related to the theme. The theme is related to the trends and areas of research in social sciences, hence extensive use of internet or online resources have been utilized for the purpose.

Procedure of Social Science Research:

Social Science research is done in various steps which are considered very inevitable. Firstly, the formulation of research problem in which all other steps are depending on. Secondly, the review of existing related literature which is the most essential and unavoidable step in the research process to identify the research gap between the previous studies and the present theme. Thirdly, the development of hypothesis which is the tentative assumptions made to test their logical and empirical consequences. Fourthly, the research design, the conceptual structure in which the research should conduct. Fifthly, the sample design i.e., the procedure of sample for the research problem. This is followed by the collection of data from the sample already selected. Other important steps that a social science researcher has to followed are project execution, analysis of data, hypotheses testing, generalization and interpretation of data and lastly, the preparation of the report or thesis.

Current Trends and areas of social science Research in India;

Social Science Research is becoming a more complex, collaborative activity. There is a growing focus on the real-world application, societal impact, and commercial return of academic research. The technology has growing importance as a tool to enable more complex and collaborative research across disciplines. Social science is a key discipline dealing with aspects of the society-relationships among groups of people within a community. The most common subjects in the social sciences are Anthropology, Archaeology, Economics, Geography, History, Law, Linguistics, politics, psychology and

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Sociology. Apart from these traditional disciplines, there are certain disciplines which are not very widely taught but fall under social science research and teaching as they draw upon the parent social science disciplines of sociology, history, psychology etc. Examples of these are Social work, women's studies, law and governance, community medicine, educational studies, studies in science policy etc. (Adeppa, 2020:6-7). It is very difficult to obtain information on the number of institutions engaged in social science research, the area of their work, and source of funding and research output. However, the institutions conducting social science research can be classified into six categories-(i) the social science departments in universities and post graduate colleges under UGC, (ii) Specialized Universities- Agricultural universities and institutes of technology, management, etc., (iii) ICSSR supported research institutes, (iv) Autonomous research institutes specialized in social science research, (v) Government supported research units and (vi) Private consultancy Firms. The first four categories are the most active organization in the field (Adeppa, 2020: 5)

The creation of ICSSR was based on the realization that social research in India lacked a national organization that could actively work its expansion and promotion apart from securing support and reorganization from the government without being its control. Therefore, ICSSR was conceived as an autonomous body to expand social science research and to improve its quality, while attempting to develop strong linkages between of the findings of the social science research and policy formulation(ibid). Along with ICSSR different government and non-government institutions are also undertaking research in social sciences in India.

Present status of Social Science Research in Assam:

Social Science Research in Assam continues to focus on the traditional concerns of border trade, local administration, tribal customs and governance, regional movements, migration and insurgencies so on and so forth. There is also scope for finding critical engagement with the new social realities. The social researchers of this part of India should undertake research on new problems and issues. It must also be kept in mind that how much new policy thinking is going to benefit Assam. The benefit of this outcome to the national development and to eradicate the traditional problems of poverty and unemployment. The social science researchers

can study different conflicts, movements, persecution, through field studies and produce an enormous number of facts and figures to present the situation and a rational analysis of explaining the situation. There are other realities which comes from the people's perception of the reality. For example, Assam as well as North East India has been a veritable war zone since independence. Secessionism, insurgency, counter-insurgency, communal and ethnic conflicts and armed conflagration have rendered the region into a vital killing field. The confrontations led one section of the activists' take up arms and launch a prolonged insurgency while others remained passive supporters. A silent section of the population expressed their resistance through verse, songs, and stories (Sajal Nag, www. academia.edu). So, all these issues must be the areas of interest for the social scientists to have in depth study in the problems and issues and to suggest recommendations to the policy makers to solve the problems.

Social Science Research Institutions in Assam:

So far as the institutions of Social science research is concerned, the universities, and some other government non-government organizations are doing the work. Gauhati University, established in 1948 has been doing social science research activities since inception which includes Ph.D, M.Phil and other Masters Dissertation. Moreover, the faculties of this institutions have been conducting various research projects and contributed research papers in reputed national and international journals on social issues. The Dibrugarh University(1965), the Assam University(1994), The Tezpur Central University(1994), Assam Agricultural University(1969), The Cotton College State University, 2017(Previously Cotton College, 1901), Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University(2006), Bodoland University(2009), Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati(1994), The National Law University and Judicial Academy in Guwahati(2009), Indian Statistical Institute in Tezpur(2011), Tocklai Tea Research Institute in Jorhat(1911), North East Institute of Science and Technology in Jorhat(1961), Assam Rajiv Gandhi University of Cooperative Management in Sivasagar(2010), Assam Science and Technology University in Guwahati(2010), Assam Women's University in Jorhat(2013), Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development in Guwahati(1989), Kumar Bhaskar Varma University in Nalbari(Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health

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Sciences(2007), The National Institute of Technology in Silchar(1967) and Ananda Ram Borooah Institute of Language, Art & Culture(1989) are some of the institutions that have been carried out research in Social Sciences. The Majuli University of Culture (2019) is also a public state university dedicated for research. Four more universities were added to the list of state universities recently includes- the Bhattadeva University in Bajali(2019), the Madhabdev University in Narayanpur(2019), Rabindra Tagore University(2019) and Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya in Golaghat(2021). These universities will definitely provide research in social science in near future. Some of the earliest universities have also created Chair Professorship to conduct research in different areas, For example, Sri Sri Anirudhadava Chair, Sukhapha Chair in the department of History, Dibrugarh university.

Some of the private sector universities such as the Assam Kaziranga University in Jorhat(2012), The Assam Don Bosco University in Guwahati (2008), the Roya Global University in Guwahati(2013), The Assam Down Town University(2010), Krishnaguru Adhyatmik Vishwavidyalaya in Barpeta(2017), Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya in Nagaon(2013) are also providing research activities in social sciences in the region. The Central Institute of Technology in Kokrajhar (2006), the deemed to be university is also conducting research activities. Moreover, some of the regional branches of different central autonomous research institutes are also offering research in social sciences and also funding for the seminar, workshop, minor and major research projects to the researchers and educational institutions. These includes regional centres of ICSSR in Shillong, ICHR and NERO(UGC) in Guwahati. The institute of Tai Studies and Research in Moran (2001) is also dedicated to promoting knowledge and research. With the implementation of National Education Policy,2020, many colleges of Assam have started PG courses recently and some of them already received autonomous status form UGC, which included North Lakhimpur College, JB College in Jorhat, Nagaon College, and Aryavidyapith College in Guwahati. Some of these colleges also are also offering research based courses such as M.Phil and Ph.D.

Suggestions:

Though various steps have been taken for the development of social science research in

Assam, it has ample scope to proceed further. Due to some of the basic amenities like funding, laboratory facilities, documentation services etc. Still many aspects of the society are far from the social science researcher. Therefore, in this juncture the following suggestions and recommendations have been put forwarded. Firstly, research should be undertaken to understand the processes of socialization. Secondly, there should be sufficient amount of funding for social science researcher but they must be accountable to its proper utilization. Thirdly, Collaborative research in social science must be encouraged which also helps a researcher to get placement in somewhere else. Fourthly, there should be a provision for exchange of research ideas and innovations with other institutions of repute. Fifthly, traditional method of topic selection should be reduced and undertake research on the areas and aspects which are beyond the reach of previous researcher. All the issues and problems of the society or related to human being must be included in their research problem.

Conclusions:

From a brief survey of the present status of social science research as a whole in India and Assam in particular it has been observed that social sciences are entering upon a new era. There has been tremendous increased in the activities and interest in social science research during the last decade. The universities, colleges and research institutes of Assam are conducting research in diverse fields. It has also come to the light that the subjects other than social science have more opportunity in Assam but with the proper coordination between the funding agencies and social scientists the researcher from Assam can pursue their career in the subjects like social sciences. They can explore all the fertile ground of social issues hitherto not studied with the help of funding agencies such as ICSSR, ICHR etc.

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