
UNIT 3 METHOD OF NOTES TAKING

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

Research methodology is a system of methods used for collecting data, information etc. for the solution of problems identified for research. The central idea of this unit is to bring out the importance of note taking in the process of research work. Although it is only one among the different methods while doing research it has enough significance since the accuracy in taking notes will help us to save a lot of time while preparing the final report, bibliography etc. The different methods of note taking are also dealt in this unit. The various types of note taking like summary, paraphrasing, précis, and quotation are also given importance here. The rules to be followed in each type of note taking are dealt in detail so that all methods of note taking and the errors to be avoided are clarified here. Hence by the end of this unit you will be able to:

- have a basic understanding of note taking method;
- know about the different methods of note taking;
- understand different types of note taking;
- make out the rules to be followed in the different types of note taking;
- know about the errors to be avoided while taking notes.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is an inquiry carried out scientifically to discover truth, to draw new conclusion and to bring out new facts. It is the way to acquire knowledge. According to Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Research is "an investigation undertaken in order to discover new facts, get additional information, etc." Another definition of research is that it is "any organised inquiry designed and carried out to provide information for solving a problem". Thus it is any activity which helps to gain fresh insight into something. It is a careful

search or inquiry into any subject matter, which is an endeavour to discover or find out valuable facts which would be useful for further application or utilisation. The above mentioned definitions and explanations specify all the major aims of research, i.e., discovery of new facts, verification and testing of old facts, analysis of interrelationships and causal explanations and development of new tools, concepts and theories. A research paper is that in which the conclusions and findings of such inquiry appear. It is through a research paper that we communicate our findings of research to others. When we have communicated to others, the ability to write clear is vital. In order to be meaningful and clear in communication we should first have a clear cut understanding of the research problem. Only then we will be able to express ourselves while communicating it to others. Language used in the paper should always be concrete and it should be specific.

In order to begin a research work we have to consult relevant sources of information. The sources of information can be primary or secondary. The primary sources provide data gathered at first hand and from which the researcher directly collects data that have not been collected previously. The secondary sources are those from which data are got at second hand, that is, sets of data that are taken from other people's original data. Whereas primary data are first hand information collected through various methods like observation, interviewing, mailing, etc., secondary data are data which are collected and compiled for another purpose. Primary sources include journal articles, research reports, conference papers, thesis, project reports, etc., bibliographies, reference books, reviews, directories, etc., form secondary sources. The researcher should be capable of sorting out the reliable material useful for his research work advanced by these sources. After determining the reliability and usefulness of the sources, we will have to take notes on it. In this unit, we are making a detail study of the method of notes taking in the process of research.

3.2 METHOD OF NOTE-TAKING

The clarity in reporting a research work is influenced by the reader keeping in view, how technical the problem is, the research's hold over his facts and techniques, his command over language and the form and fullness of notes, i.e., of the data and documentation. For keeping accurate records we need high quality notes and this shows the importance of note-taking in research. Thus notes taking is an important part while writing a research paper. This records the information of the sources that we will use while reporting our research work. Therefore, it is necessary that we should critically evaluate the texts or articles before we select them and then make necessary choices before taking notes on them. Otherwise, there is a chance to overload with information which will be time consuming.

To take effective notes, first of all, we should understand thoroughly the information contained in the sources. Then notes should be taken from it so as to develop knowledge and comprehension of the subject. Thus going through a source, making a decision about what is useful for a paper and writing notes on it should encourage the researcher to think more deeply and understand the relevance of the notes taken by him to the research topic. Again, he should also sort out the material he needs from other information surrounding it in the text, while taking notes on it. To make use of this information effectively in the research work, care should be taken to record it in such a way that it can be easily sorted, reorganised and incorporated in the paper.

We should take notes in such a way that it briefly summarizes the most important points of each source. Main points has to be stressed in the notes and it should be clear and concise as possible. The details that are unnecessary to the research area should be avoided. It is not always necessary to write complete sentences or even complete words. We can use abbreviations which saves a lot of time. But it should be used in such a way that we can understand them in the notes when we consult it later. One important thing to be remembered during note taking is that we should always remember to record the page number in the text or articles from which our note is taken. As far as possible, all bibliographical details has to be added for each source. If possible, we should also try to review the chapter or article after note taking so as to make it sure that we have not missed any important points and also to see that our notes are accurate and complete. The notes have to be recorded in such a way that we can easily locate all the points related to a particular subject and readily identify the source from which a piece of information is taken. Thus the requirements of a good not taking system are as follows: It should facilitate ready location of the recorded information when required; It should allow flexible handling and organising of information and all notes related to a particular concept of a topic should be available together.

There are different methods in taking notes. Some researchers take notes by hand on index cards or on sheets of paper of a note book. Some others prefer using a computer to take notes as it will save their time as well as improve the accuracy in transcribing the material from the sources. While collecting data by taking notes we should set down first the authors full name and complete title of the source. By doing this we will be able to locate the same source easily while working for the bibliography.

3.3 CARD STYLE

If we are taking notes on cards we should record each piece of information from a source in a separate card. For each source the complete bibliographical information has to be recorded on one card, which will be our bibliographical card. Thus this is not only helpful for accuracy and organisation but also, technically while compiling the bibliography. If we are taking notes on cards, we should mention the name of the author as usual and the name of the book is to be underlined. While taking down the matter, we should leave some margin on the left side of the card. The card possessing the material from an article from a book should first mention the name of the author and then the title of the article in inverted commas with the work cited underlined and mentioning the page no:.. If there are two authors, we should mention the name of the first author and write the other or 'et al'. For e.g.: Kootz , Harold, et al, ' Management ' Mc Graw-Hill International Book Company, New Delhi, 1980. p. 120. If the publication is an edited one, we should use 'ed.' after the name.

For multiple notes from the same source, we should record a short form of the title and author's last name in the upper right hand corner of each card. We should always record the page umber from which our summaries, ideas, paraphrases or direct quotes have been taken in the lower right hand corner. Materials taken from journal should indicate the name of the author, title of the article within inverted commas and also the volume and details of the journal along with the page number. For e.g.:-Ananthu, T .S. "Hind Swaraj- Its Relevance Today." Gandhi Marg. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, Vol. 31. NO. 2, July- September 2009. Pg no. 192.

In order to facilitate organising and reorganising information, subject or topic headings on the cards can be written in pencil. To make note taking on cards more convenient and easy sometimes two sets of cards are used. One is source cards and the second is known as note cards. Source cards are used for noting bibliographical information and the note cards are used for actual note taking. In the source cards, bibliographic information should be recorded in the proper bibliographic format. 'Author's name, the title of the book, the publisher's name and the place and year of publication. On the note cards information from a printed source is recorded. To make it more flexible, it is better to note a single fact or an idea on each card and to use only one side of the card. In the body of the card, first, the name of the author and the title of the book or article may be noted in order to avoid making any mistake in identifying the concerned source card. The page number of the source from which the idea or fact has been taken also is to be noted. Thus, the two sets of cards together will facilitate in arranging the notes appropriately for drafting the report.

3.4 NOTE BOOK STYLE

In this method, we should record all information on a single page or a series of pages in the note book. We should write all the bibliographical details including the author, title, place of publication, publisher and year of publication at the top of the page of each source. Notes should be recorded in the middle of the page leaving wide margins. In the right hand margin page numbers of the source from which we have made the notes has to be recorded. The specific topic to which each piece of information is related can be noted in the left hand margin. For each source we are consulting, a new page can be allotted. Notes can be listed according to topic also. But here care should be taken to list the page numbers because otherwise it will be very confusing.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. Define Research. What is its importance.?

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2. Distinguish between primary and secondary sources of information.

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- 3 .What is the importance of note taking in research?

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3.5 NOTE TAKING IN A COMPUTER

Notes can be entered in a computer and these notes will be handy. We can enter the notes into a word processor as separate files in one directory. Otherwise, we can enter all notes in a single file rendering new name or phrase for each new note. In the first method the needed notes can be moved to appropriate place in our draft by copying and pasting method. For a short paper, it is better to opt the computer method and if it is a longer one which makes use of many sources, it is better to opt the cards system because card system is the most suitable method of note taking. It meets all the requirements of a good recording system. Cards are tougher and so can withstand handling. As they are compact, they can be handled easily and can be stored conveniently in boxes. Also the cards are most flexible while arranging, rearranging, grouping, and classifying information.

3.6 TYPES OF NOTE-TAKING

Different types of note-taking include –summary, paraphrase, quotation and précis.

Summary

If we want only the general idea of a large amount of material, it is better to summarise it. This type of note taking describes and rewrites the source material without specific concern for style and expression. But it should be done with great care and in this type of note taking we should try to keep the material as short as possible. Quotation marks may be provided for key phrase that cannot be paraphrased. Name of the author and page number also has been mentioned in the note.

Paraphrase

It is restating the material in our own words. As we have to restate the thought, meaning and attitude of another person in our own words, paraphrase may be considered as the most difficult type of note taking. In order to be sound and perfect, in paraphrasing we should try to rewrite the original in about the same number of words as possible. In text citation may be provided to the source by mentioning the author and page number in the paraphrase. Care should be taken while paraphrasing exceptional words and phrases in the original. It is better to retain by enclosing them within quotation marks. We should always try to avoid word by word copying as far as possible in this type of note taking. Paraphrasing will help the researcher to understand the author's ideas rather than just mechanically copying them.

Quotation

Direct quotation may be used for documentation of a major argument where a foot note would not be sufficient and where paraphrasing the passage might cause misinterpretation. The exact words of an author or the exact words from an official publication must be quoted. Quotation notes are necessary because it will enable us to capture the opinion of experts on the subject. It will also help us to show that we have carried out research in that area carefully and also to show that there is an authoritative opinion on the topic we have discussed in the research area. Where a few paragraphs or sentences are required to

be quoted from a quotation which is very long, it is permissible to omit sections of an original passage by a procedure called ellipsis. To indicate ellipsis three spaced full stops(—) are inserted. An ellipsis can occur at the beginning or the end of a quotation. Use double quotation marks at the beginning and the end of quotation. We should never forget to acknowledge the quotations by way of a footnote or otherwise.

Other rules to be followed while taking quotation notes include:

- We should always try to quote from primary and secondary sources.
- The quoted material selected should be important and well phrased
- We should always use exact words of the source
- If at all possible, we should quote key sentences and short passages instead of entire paragraphs.
- Quotation marks should be used in the notes so as to distinguish it from summary and paraphrase. If we are downloading a text and taking quotation from it into our paper, we should always remember to place quotation marks around the words taken from the source.

Précis

This is quick summary notes. It can be used to review an article or a book or create an abstract. The original source has to be condensed here with precision and directness so that the tone of it is preserved. It is better to write the précis note in our own language, but exceptional phrases from the original can be retained here by enclosing it in quotation marks. Documentation also should be provided.

3.7 NOTES FROM FIELD RESEARCH

In some instances we will be expected to conduct field research. This work will require different kinds of notes kept on charts, cards, notes pads, a research journal, or a computer. If we interview knowledgeable people, we should make careful notes during the interviews and transcribe those notes to our draft in a polished form. If we conduct a questionnaire, the results will become valuable data for developing notes, graphs and charts for our research paper. In summarising, paraphrasing, quoting or *précis*, it is important to keep an accurate record of the pages and other numbered sections. Care should also be taken to be in a middle way between not taking too much of notes and not recording too little. We should try to be both thorough and concise. Accuracy has to be maintained not only in quotations but also in summarising and paraphrasing the original sources.

Good note taking will help us a lot in avoiding plagiarism which is the act of taking ideas , passages, etc., from an author and presenting them as one's own. Writers plagiarise when they present the words or ideas of others without making it clear that these are not their own words or ideas. In order to make sure that we have not plagiarised, we should see that each of the phrase or ideas borrowed from other sources are credited to that source. Acknowledgement of the source is that which distinguishes a scholar from a plagiarist. In the MLA Hand book For Writers of Research Papers, Sr.Joseph Gibaldi has mentioned of different forms of plagiarism. According to him, “the most blatant form of

plagiarism is to obtain and submit as your own a paper written by someone else. Other, less conspicuous form of plagiarism includes the failure to give appropriate acknowledgement when repeating or paraphrasing another's wording, when taking a particular apt phrase, and when paraphrasing another's argument or presenting another's line of thinking". Thus plagiarism is a failure to acknowledge borrowed material.

In order to avoid plagiarism we should always make a list of all the writers and sources from which we have used viewpoints in our research work and should acknowledge the same. Acknowledgement may be made in several ways- (1) in the bibliography (2) within the text, either by specific reference or parenthetical reference or (3) in a foot note which is the commonest form of acknowledgement.

3.8 ERRORS TO BE AVOIDED

The most common and serious error in taking notes is to copy the wording of the source directly, either word-for word or with minor changes. This not only prevents the researcher in processing the information fully into their mind, but also encourages plagiarism since the notes find their way directly into the paper. The best way to avoid this is not to look at your sources as you write your notes. In that way we will be sure to use our own words. Including too many details in notes will slow down our research work. If we are doing this, we are not distinguishing between significant and insignificant information. Notes are meant to be concise. Direct quotation should be used only when we have a special purpose. If we use a direct quotation we should copy it accurately. We should remember to include page number on notes. Otherwise, we will have to spend valuable time, returning to the sources to find page numbers. Note taking is thus an important phase in the process of research and it helps a lot in saving our time, if we go about it in an organized way, during the presentation of Research paper which is dealt in the next unit.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. Explain the different methods of note taking.

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2. What are the requirements of a note taking system?

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3. Explain briefly plagiarism and describe how you can avoid it.

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3.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a detail study about the note taking method and its importance in the Research process. While taking notes for research, many methods can be adopted by researchers according to their convenience. It can be done either by writing down in papers or separate cards and arranging them in an order or by using a computer. The common types of note taking method include summarising, paraphrasing, précis and quotations which is also given due importance in this unit. Rules to be followed while taking notes are also explained here. As conclusion, the importance in the accuracy in note taking to avoid plagiarism is mentioned.

3.10 KEY WORDS

- Paraphrase** : Expression of meaning of passage in other words.
- Précis** : Abstract or a summary.
- Summary** : Abridgement or statement of chief points.
- Quote** : Copy or repeat passages from.
- Plagiarize** : Take and use as one's own

3.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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