

UNIT 1

THE STUDY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

1.1 Introduction

The writing of history has spanned several centuries and its development into an academic discipline testifies to the importance of history in the society. History, as the study of the past, makes a society or nation to have knowledge about itself. History also illuminates the present and satisfies men's curiosity about the past. There is hardly any nation that does not have its own written history in the present age. Thus the present status of history naturally presupposes the existence of professional historians, that is, people who are trained in the art of writing history. These historians are creative about the 'histories' of specific groups or communities, cultures, nations and continents. Therefore, this unit focuses on historiography the study of the writing of history. It introduces us to what historiography is all about, the problems encountered in the writing of history, the significance of historiography and the different schools of historiography.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- explain the meaning of historiography.
- discuss the history of historiography.
- discuss the significance and the basic issues of historiography.
- describe the different schools of historiography.

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

1.3 Defining Historiography

Historiography is a broad term which has a wide usage and embraces a number of issues. We shall first look at what historiography is before defining it. Historiography is not exactly the same as the collection of historical evidence or the editing of historical sources. It is also not restricted to the exercise of historical thought and imagination or the criticism of historical writing. It is much more than the philosophy of history or the history of history writing. But, it is related to all the above concepts and it overlaps some of them. In other words, it is much more than all the above ideas. **So what is historiography?**

In the first place, it is seen as the craft of writing history therefore, it is the art of historical writing. It is the means for communicating in writing what the historian thinks he knows about the past. In another sense, the collection of historical writings available in an area or a nation is also referred to as historiography. Thus when we speak of Zambian historiography for example, we could be referring to all, or at least the known written histories of the people of Zambia; and Mining historiography for example would mean the available historical works on mining.

Historiography refers to the development of history as a discipline or to a body of historical works on a specialised topic. In the early modern period the term historiography tended to be used to mean simply the writing of history. It should be noted that historiography is not the study of events in the past directly, but the changing interpretations of those events in the works of individual historians. Historiography tries to understand how the past has been studied by different historians and what prompted a particular historian to adopt a particular line of thought in the writing of a particular topic in history.

Additionally historiography is the study of how history is written and how our historical understanding changes over time. It is the study of the way history has been written—the history of historical writing. Historiography considers the approaches used by historians and seeks to understand how and why their theories and interpretations differ. In different words, historiography is the study of the methods of historians in developing history as an academic discipline. The historiography of a specific topic covers how historians have studied that topic using particular sources, techniques, and theoretical approaches. Scholars discuss historiography by topic such as historiography of Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Central Africa or Second World War for example.

Historiography in another aspect is concerned with the interpretations of history. It is the study of other people's understanding of the historical process and the historian's craft. By historical process, we mean the trend of past events and the historian's craft is the duty before the historian, i.e., the discovery of what happened in the past. Historiography does not deal with specific histories in the sense that it does not seek to discover what happened in the past nor give an account of past events. Instead, it looks into what others have written about history and how they have interpreted the past. Historiography therefore traces the trend of historical thought both in particular countries, areas and in the world at large.

1.4 Brief History of Historiography

Before the late 18th century, historiography did not stand at the centre of any civilisation. History was almost never an important part of regular education, and it never claimed to provide an interpretation of human life as a whole. This larger ambition was more appropriate to religion, philosophy, and perhaps poetry and other imaginative literature. However, beginning in the nineteenth century, with the development of academic history, there developed a body of historiographic literature. Historians aimed to reconstruct a record of

human activities and to achieve a more profound understanding of them. This conception of their task started with the development of “scientific” history and the simultaneous rise of history as an academic profession.

Historiography came into being as a part of the epistemological or knowledge revival of the 19th Century European enlightenment. Since then many number of works have been produced on historiography all over the world. These works trace the successive stages of development in historical writing from ancient to the modern period. These include the evolution of ideas of the historian, changing techniques in historical writing and transformation in the attitude towards the nature of history itself.

Precisely, the study of modern historiography is said to have its beginnings with Edward Hallett Carr's 1961 work *What is History?* and his challenge to the traditional belief that the study of the methods of historical research and writing were unimportant. His work remains in print to this day. Critical historiography in the 1960s focused, for example, on the exclusion of the roles of women, minorities, and labor from written histories. According to these historiographers, because historians in the 1930s and 1940s were themselves products of their times; their models of who was important to history reflected the cultural attitudes of that period for example such as a bias towards well-connected European males.

Many historians from that point onward devoted themselves to what they saw as more accurate representations of the past, casting a light on those who had been previously disregarded as non-noteworthy. Thus the study of historiography demands a critical approach that goes beyond the mere examination of historical fact. Historiographical studies consider the source, often by researching the authors, their position in society, and the type of history being written at the time.

1.5 Basic issues studied in historiography

Historiography as the study of how history itself is written or handed down over time takes into consideration the various means by which a historical source is formed, such as the credibility of the sources used, the motives of the author composing the history, and its authenticity. Historiographers tend to differentiate these sources in terms of written and oral histories. Oral history is more dynamic because it is spread by word of mouth, while written history is fixed and emphasises the recording of facts. Historiography tries to place these various sources into a specific context. This means that the historiographer does not merely accept the content of a source at face value, but traces the source looking for various keynotes in its formation.

One can understand a historical source as conceived from within a certain perspective and with a precise objective tied to its very construction. Historical events can be seen as biased by the particularities of their recording and presentation. The historiographer acts like a history detective, seeking to untie the logic of the construction of history. One of the questions the historiographer must ask is how some facts remain included or excluded from a history. Inclusions or exclusions can be found by comparing different accounts of a single event. In contrasting these sources, one can understand not only the event from a less biased perspective, but identify the precise perspective of the composer of the source. According to this perspective, historiography outlines the influence of cultural or ideological ideas within any given source.

Historiographers can thereby classify history in terms of categories such as a Zambian historiography or cultural historiography. This allows the historiographer to look for trends in historical writing within a certain framework that illuminates a particular way of writing history. Historiography therefore does not consider history as the objective recording of events, but as a medium which explains the way of life of the producer of the historical source. Precisely, the specific basic questions considered in historiography are:

- Who wrote the source (primary or secondary)?
- For primary sources, historiography focuses on the person in his or her society, for secondary sources, we consider the theoretical orientation of the approach for example, Marxist or Annales School, ("total history"), political history, etc.
- What are the authenticity (validity), authority, bias/interest, and intelligibility of the source?
- What was the view of history when the source was written?
- Was history supposed to provide moral lessons?
- What or who was the intended audience?
- What sources were privileged or ignored in the narrative?
- By what method was the evidence compiled?
- In what historical context was the work of history itself written?

1.6 The Significance of Historiography

Historiography is an interesting area of debate and argument about previous and current representations of the past or history. Historiography helps with understanding how the past is represented. It also enables historians and students of history teachers, to have reasonable understanding of how individual historical topics have been approached in the past and how they are explained in the present. Historians and students of history should have a broader and deeper understanding of the relevant historiography, otherwise advances in historiographical knowledge that has taken place over the past two or three decades may be all but ignored. Most commonly this is revealed as a dialogue ‘between the present and the past’. New generation often interpret evidence in the light of recent events and regularly re-evaluate the thinking of previous generations. Historians also constantly discover new evidence and often historiographical change comes with an increased emphasis on this new information.

In a broader sense, historiography is a guide for evaluating the historians' own interpretation of historical events. For instance historiographical debates force historians as well as students to confront the difficult questions of interpretation, the existence of 'truth' in history and the different ways historians use evidence. Facts and evidences are critical to historical interpretation. The conflicting emphasis on different forms of evidence can change the meaning of events. Therefore, historiography helps historians to structure their own thinking and encourages them to consider different ways of viewing the same evidence. Some of the common topics in historiography include reliability of sources used in terms of authorship, credibility of the author and the authenticity or corruption of the text. Thus understanding of the past is a universal human need and the telling of history has emerged independently in the civilisations around the world.

1.7 Schools of Historiography

There have been a set of thinkers, historians and philosophers, who feel that history, should not just consist in the investigation of particular areas of the past. According to such thinkers like Herder, Hegel, Marx, Buckles, Spengler, and Toynbee, the historian should also be preoccupied with the discovery of the grand order that laid beneath the historical developments. To this end, they have come up with several theories to explain the entire historical process. The following are some of the schools of historiography;

Historicist: This was a late 19th Century scientific approach to history pioneered by von Ranke. This was based on the objective study of primary sources. Ranke believed that the study of such sources would allow a reconstruction of history – as it actually was. The Historicist's view on sources is that sources can and should be used to reconstruct the past. According to the role of history was that of free will people in the past were in full control of their own destinies. The methods of creating history were that of positivism which embraced

human agency in history. Historicism believed in the use of sources to provide an accurate and complete vision of the past.

Accidentalists: Believe that accidents are the driving force of historical change. The Accidentalists embrace chaos theory which stipulates that lessons cannot be drawn from the past as there is no path to history. The methods of creating history is that of narrative – chronology. The creation of narratives of the past – analysis plays less role as the role of accidents is most important.

Intentionalist: This School states that intentions and personalities of key individuals drive historical change eg. Hitler’s master plan created and caused the Holocaust. The view on the role of history is that of teleology which stipulates that lessons can be drawn from history because it has a path which we can choose to follow or change. The method of creating history is through biography – hagiography i.e the “Great Men” method which creates chronological narratives. Often look at the agency of one individual in history.

Hegelian: This school believes that intellectual movements and the progress of ideas are the driving force in historical change. Hegel saw history as a constant progression towards true freedom. Studies of ideas such as the Renaissance are often Hegelian in character. There is no much focus on the use of sources but the main focus is more of a focus on why things happened rather than what happened.

Marxist: Economic forces are the main driving force in historical change. Karl Marx relied heavily upon statistical data to show that exploitation and class conflict drove history. Like the Hegelians the main focus is more of a focus on why things happened rather than what happened.

Structuralist: Political and military structures are the main driving force of historical change. Also known as a functionalist position. The understanding of this school is that the role of history is determinism. Lessons cannot be drawn from history because it has a path which cannot be changed. The method of creating history is that of meta-narrative – total history.

Annales: Named after *Annales* and pioneered by historians such as Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. This school focuses on the principle that environment and culture shape history over the long term and that history defies categorisation. The use of sources is not the main focus but focus more on why things happened rather than what happened.

Terminologies: Historiography, history, sources

Activity

1. Discuss the various definitions of historiography.
2. Explain the significances of historiography to historians.
3. Describe the steps involved in the critical examination of historical sources.
4. Compare and contrasts the styles of historiography between the Hegelian and the Annales Schools.

Summary

This unit discussed the broad understanding of the concept of historiography. It has been demonstrated that historiography is a broad term which has a wide usage and embraces a number of issues. Broadly historiography has been discussed as the study of the writing of history. This unit also discussed a brief history of historiography. In particular, it has been discussed that historiography was introduced in the nineteenth century, with the development of academic history. Basic issues studied in historiography such the critical examination of sources, the selection of particular details from the authentic materials in those sources, and

the synthesis of those details into a narrative that stands the test of critical examination have also been discussed. Other issues discussed in this unit include the significance of historiography. Precisely, it has been discussed that historiography helps with understanding how the past is represented. It also enables historians and students of history teachers, to have reasonable understanding of how individual historical topics have been approached in the past and how they are explained in the present. Schools of historiography such as historicism, Annales, Hegelian including their underlining principles have also been explained

UNIT 2

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

2. Introduction

A historical research involves a systematic collection and critical evaluation of information relating to past occurrences of a particular phenomenon. It is undertaken to answer questions concerning causes, effects or trend relating to past events that may shed light on the present practices or behaviour. In this lecture, we will discuss the various purposes of conducting historical research as well as fundamental steps in the process of research such as selection of research topic, data collection and formulation of historical research questions. This lecture will also provide a valuable discussion on the principles of historical research as compared to other non-history disciplines.

2.1 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- explain the meaning and purpose of Historical Research. .
- describe the fundamental steps involved in Historical Research.
- compare and contrast principles involved in Historical and Non-historical Research.

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

2.2 What is Historical Research?

Historical research is a critical investigation of events, development and experiences of the past, careful consideration of past evidences from the perspective of information sources validity and subsequent interpretation of the concerned evidences. It is the systematic collection and evaluation of information to describe, explain, and understand actions or events that occurred sometime in the past. In historical research, there is no manipulation or control of variables as in experimental research but an attempt is made to reconstruct what happened during a certain period of time as completely and accurately as possible.

Historical research is concerned with exploring the meaning and relationship of events using primary and secondary historical information as its resource. It endeavours to find out what happened in the past and to reveal reasons for why and how things happened. Historical

research involves the studying of a problem, an issue, event or phenomenon in the past and information gathered from the past serves as the information to be interpreted. It involves describing what was or happened. Historical research is also largely based on interpretation and a projection of results and interpretation onto current issues, problems including procedures. Broadly, historical research is a systematic process of describing, analysing and interpreting the past based on information on specific sources as they relate to the topic under study.

Historical research is significant because it enables a researcher to explore and explain the meanings, phases and characteristics of a phenomenon or process at a particular point of time in the past. The variable focus of historical research is time. The essential aim is to identify forms of a chosen phenomenon or incident in a temporally defined situation and environment. The strategy of historical research is also suitable in other disciplines as it enables a researcher to focus on exploring the historical forms of phenomena. The strategy of historical research is concerned with defining and explaining events in the past based on interpretations. Various research approaches can be used in historical research. A researcher can use a variety of methods of analysis. For example, Qualitative analysis is the standard, but quantitative analysis can also explain the past.

2.3 The Purposes of Historical Research

Historical research is carried out for various reasons. It serves for revealing the unknown historical facts or events; answers questions which have not been answered yet; searches for events and relations in the past whose consequences reach up to present; it also assesses activities by individuals, agencies and institutions in the past which have contributed to the present's success. However, the ultimate concern of a historical research is the possibility of gaining the knowledge of events and actions (in the course of time) which are no longer available for direct inspection. These happening have been preserved in material forms (as archival, written, archaeological etc.) and immaterial (oral tradition) forms. Therefore historical research is concerned with the task of piecing past events and actions together for an understanding of the theme under study.

The other significance of historical research is to ascertain and describe history of any area of human activity, subject or event by means of systematic processes. For a researcher to be able to ascertain historical process there must be a time connection which the research subject has

passed, so that there is something to study. The main task of historical research is to gather all available information and sources as to a particular period, topic, and subsequently to classify, arrange, clarify, evaluate, elaborate and publish them by means of systematic methods.

Undertaking a historical research is also meant to achieve a clear perspective of the present. Thus historical research is also meant to confirm, refute or complement findings stated in secondary sources. This is because contemporary problems or issues are understandable only on the basis of their past. Historical research can provide us not only with a hypothesis or suggestion for the solution of current problems but also with greater appreciation of what the past plays in the progress of the society.

Historical research on the other hand is concerned with the task of reconstructing the events of the past thereby helping to provide some experience of those events, which would not otherwise have been availed. Most of our life's experience is vicarious, and is dependent on the direct experience of people's knowledge of life. Historical research is also concerned with a task of reconstruction which involves the searching of relics or traces, verifying and organising them when found, analysing and making valid interpretations from them and presentation of the results. In so doing, the ethics of the historians' craft is being fulfilled. Similarly, the historian can with varying degree of accuracy, assume the "actual" occurrence from various incomplete accounts or records of that occurrence. These accounts or records which may take oral, written or material form are the relics or traces of the actual occurrence. As such historical research is not only an indispensable venture for a present understanding of the past but also a compass for the times to come.

2.4 Steps in Historical Research

Historical research is quite different from experimental studies. But a historical researcher has to pass through similar stages such as selecting, stating and delimiting the problem. The steps in researching and writing the object of history are numerous. However, the important steps characteristic of the historical type of research are collection of data through primary and secondary sources, internal and external criticism of the data collected as well as presentation of facts in a readable form involving problems of organization, composition, exposition and interpretation. At the same time, conducting a historical research requires planning. And specific questions are considered such as where should a researcher of history

begin? What should the researcher be looking for? What documents are available and where can a researcher find them? How can historical research be made as good and as thorough as possible? The following steps give an overview of the process a researcher might take at each stage of a historical research.

2.4.1 Choosing a Topic

Finding a topic to write on is often an ordeal, but there are some steps that every researcher can take that should make the process easier. A researcher has to start with something that interests him or her. A researcher has to be curious about the people, events, documents, problems, or issues intended to be written about in order to ask the questions that will enable a research to write a good research paper. A researcher should not be afraid of issues that received a lot of attention. A good history paper might simply examine how various historians have interpreted an issue. How have historians interpreted the Question of World War One?

By far the greatest flaw in most research papers is that individual authors attempt to write on topics that are so broad that their paper lacks focus and originality. A topic must be defined narrowly if a researcher is to write an interesting, informative paper. A research should write on something that can be studied in depth and write about the topic within the available space. A topic of research must be defined according to the sources available.

Whichever subject one finds should be one that is interesting to the researcher. A topic that engages the interest of the researcher will be more enjoyable to research and write about, will result in more valuable findings, and will sustain the enthusiasm for an extended period of time. If a researcher feels compelled to choose a topic about which you have a strong moral or ethical opinion, be careful to gather materials that express opinions on all sides so that your own biases do not overwhelm the paper. After selecting a topic, a researcher needs to ask the following questions:

- ***Is the topic sufficiently narrow?*** If not, the researcher might not be able to do justice to the topic in the prescribed length or scope of the assignment.
- ***Is the topic feasible?*** If there are not likely to be enough sources available, or if you do not have the necessary technical or language skills, think about another topic.

- *Does the topic have enough probative and provocative value?* Because the key purpose of a historical essay is to put forward an argument, a topic about which a lot has been written or about which there is no debate might not lend itself to these goals.
- *Can the subject of research demonstrate my ability to research, interpret, organize, and convey important ideas?* These, in addition to a good writing style and presentation, are important aspects of the historical paper. If the answer to any of these questions is “no”, consider revising your topic or choosing a new one. Most people will select and reject several topics before finding one that meets all of these criteria.

Researcher’s tip: Read and Write down your thoughts. Some of your best ideas for a topic will come from reading books, journal articles, newspapers, or a magazine. You will see an issue that strikes your interest. Carry a notebook with you at all times to jot down ideas. As you do more reading, ask questions about your initial topic and then try to answer them. You may be able to start shaping the argument that you will be making in your paper.

2.4.2 Asking Historical Research questions

After a researcher has decided on a broad topic that should be investigated, there is need to start thinking about how to can organise and focus the research. A good way to do this is by deciding on a central research question. The researcher is expected to make sure that questions are focused and achievable. The research question should sum up what it is that a research intends to investigate. For example, your research questions might be:

- For how long has my family lived in Lusaka?
- What kind of education would I have had one hundred years ago?
- When was my house built and who lived there before me?

A researcher should focus the research by making a research question quite specific. For example, ‘What was life like in Lusaka in the past?’ is not a good research question, as it is far too broad and covers too wide a range of topics. Instead think about the time period and groups of people you are particularly interested in e.g. work and leisure activities, or life in the 1990s. A much more focused and good research question would be ‘What kind of work and leisure activities could I have done in Lusaka in the 1990s? After a researcher has decided on a central research question, follow-up questions should be asked that are related to

the particular areas of interest. These might be: ‘How much did factory workers earn in the 1990s?’, or ‘Where did working people go away on holiday?’

2.4.3 Acquisition of Materials

Once a researcher has decided on the research questions, the next task is looking at different sources. On whichever topic a historical research seeks to address it is usually based on primary sources and a thorough reading of secondary sources. A researcher has to find out what kind of primary and secondary sources might be needed for the research and where they can be found. The materials should be relevant to the topic of study. Primary sources are not always easy to find and sometimes their availability will help to determine or narrow the specific nature of your project. The internet is sometimes a good place to look for primary sources, provided that they come from a reliable institution. The most common primary sources are written documents. But primary sources can also include photographs, paintings, sculpture, architecture, oral interviews and even statistical table. A thorough reading of secondary sources will equip the researcher with a sense of interpretation. Needful is it to state that a researcher should not rely upon one secondary source, but to always incorporate the views of various sources as possible.

2.4.4 Critical Reading and Note Taking

After choosing a research topic and the acquisition of materials, the next stage in historical research is the art of critical reading and note taking. The researcher needs to read enough background material in order to understand what further questions need to be asked and to recognise the answers. It is also required that a researcher takes the time to read the acquired materials thoroughly and make sure that the vocabulary being used is understood. As the researcher reads the primary and secondary sources, questions should be asked not only about content, but also about the author’s conclusions. For examples questions such as what evidence does the author rely upon? Primary or secondary sources? Does the author consider counter-evidence? Are the author’s conclusions presented in an objective fashion? Can be asked. At the same time, the researcher needs to keep an open mind and look for counter-evidence.

A researcher should take notes as they read, using headings and subheadings that could easily be incorporated into an outline. Historians read source material carefully. It is not always

necessary to read every word, nor to read an entire book or article if the material you require is represented in a small portion of the complete work. In most books, an argument and structure is laid out in the introduction and conclusion and will begin each paragraph with a topic sentence. These will help a researcher to determine the usefulness of a source or portion of a source quickly. While reading, taking notes will help a researcher to understand, evaluate, and synthesize the subject. Although some researchers prefer today to take notes on a computer, a pad of paper or an index card is best, because this reduces the recording of irrelevant information and will be easier to organise later.

Above all, the notes taken should focus on answering the research question. Direct quotations should be recorded sparingly, because they will be used sparingly in the research report or dissertation. Instead, paraphrase and summarize the author's argument. Before moving on to the next source, the researcher needs to write down information about the source, so that it can be used to build on the research report. The researcher should always remember to record the complete citation (author, title, place and date of publication) and page numbers of all quoted and paraphrased materials. Failure to do so may result in a desperate return to the library to find a source that should have been recorded in the first place.

What note taking seeks establish is a regular procedure that will enable you turn to a given note without having to search through bundle of material. In order to have an orderly organised notes index cards are usually used by researchers. They are easy to manipulate and make organizing and reorganizing easier. Index Cards can however become cumbersome, intimidating, and easily misplaced. Notebooks are also mostly used and are easy to carry from place to place and make it easier to include commentary with your information

Researcher's top tip: A researcher has to ensure that they keep referring to the research question throughout the research. As a student researching history, try to constantly attempt to answer the question that you have set for yourself, rather than wander off onto other topics. Of course, if you have a lot of time to devote to your project, or you don't mind what research questions you answer, wandering off can be a lot of fun! However, your research might feel less satisfying if you never find any answers to the questions you had when you started.

2.4.5 Interpretation of Historical Information

After critical reading and note taking, the next step in historical research analysing or interpretation of the information or data. Interpretation is a way of making sense or understanding of a particular past event. The historian must therefore develop an interpretative concept since the evidences which history requires holding cannot speak by itself but needed to be enacted through interpretations by the Historian. This is also a way of sharing the findings of research. In the discipline of history an interpretation of historical information uses an understandable mode of historical writing and explanation. These include narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, content approach analysis, and so forth. It is helpful to know that depending on the point to be explained; a researcher might use only of these forms or might use different ones at various points in the research report or dissertation. A researcher should not be limited to one or another; the best papers will use all four. *The narrative approach deals with the questions in history while the descriptive approach with the how questions and the analytical approach with the why questions.* A systematic presentation of historical information and the blending of all three modes, or at least of the analytical with either narrative or descriptive, will produce a work of lasting value and interest, granting the authenticity of the factual content of the work.

For example, a research on the History of the National Archives of Zambia might use all the four approaches. A narrative paragraph (paper) may tell how the National Archives was established. A descriptive paragraph might give details of the physical appearance or design of the National Archives building. A brief exposition or discussion might consider how the National Archives is used for research. A researcher might then argue that the National Archives despite being an institution that holds a nations' memory, it also experiences challenges in its operations. In this example, it has been demonstrated that a narrative gives a portrayal, a descriptive tells how, an exposition states the rationale behind certain human action in historical context and an argumentative presents an understanding of what.

2.6 Principles of Historical Research

Historical research involves a unique disciplinary feature of studying change over time and it covers all aspects of human society. Political, social, economic, scientific, technological, medical, cultural, intellectual, religious and military developments are all part of history. Usually professional historians specialise in a particular aspect of history, a specific time period, a certain approach to history or a specific geographic region.

In the discipline of history; history does not repeat itself. History cannot repeat itself because history is not a living, thinking being. History is an intellectual discipline practiced by historians who try to make sense of the past. Because history is about change, nothing was ever “always” a certain way. Additionally, processes of historical change cannot be categorized as either simple progress or regression. Historical processes involve complex relations between interrelated factors. It’s different from the perceptions of non-historians who often romanticise the past. Equally, elsewhere history is viewed exclusively as a story of progress with everything constantly improving.

While in other disciplines information may be derived mainly from television, movies, and the internet as well as some books or magazines, in history all sources, even those original to a particular historical time period, have some biases, omissions, contradictions, or various other limitations. That does not mean that such sources are completely invalid and useless; rather it means that historians have to know and study much to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of different sources. In the researching and writing of history, there is emphasis on the value of primary sources; that is those sources actually dating from a particular time period, while understanding the limitations of such sources. More so the discipline of history requires historians to go to archives in search of original records.

The discipline of history further requires authors or researchers to list all the sources that they have used in footnotes and bibliographies in their works. This helps other scholars who are interested to find those sources, and it shows that the writer is careful, thorough, and honestly giving credit for the origin of the writer’s information. Providing footnotes and a bibliography is how historians demonstrate their methodology and support their conclusions.

History has not always approached history the same way. Historians know that the philosophy and methodology of history have changed over time and will keep changing.

Many different interpretations of all historical topics exist. Historians work to recognize the difference between facts and interpretations in their field. Historians familiarise with the historiography of their particular area of study i.e. history, philosophy and methodology of history.

History does not often make broad generalisations about people, ideas, events, or time periods in history. Historians tend to focus more on the specific, detailed developments that underpin the generalizations, and sometimes question or reject the generalizations themselves. History does not also assume that time periods are fixed and absolute, but instead has various ways of organizing history thematically and chronologically. Periodization, to historians, is a convenient form of broad organization. At the same time, while history cannot be 100% objective, historians try to recognize their own limitations and biases. Historians try not to place the values, beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes of the present onto the topics they study. Historians try to understand their topics in the context of how and why people of that era thought and behaved, and not how people think and act today.

Terminologies; Historical research, historical information, history

Activity

1. Discuss the significance and purpose of historical research. .
2. Explain the fundamental procedures involved in historical research.
3. Compare and contrast principles involved in Historical and Non-historical Research

Summary

In this lecture, we discussed the purpose of historical research, its fundamental process including the principles researching history. It has been demonstrated that historical research is concerned with the possibility of gaining the knowledge of events and actions in the course of time which are no longer available for direct inspection. It has also been highlighted that historical research investigates and analyses preserved material such as archival, written, archaeological and immaterial in the form of oral tradition and piece the past events and actions together for an understanding of the theme under research. At the same time topic

selection, formulation of history research questions, collection of information, review of sources and interpretation of historical information are important steps of historical research.

UNIT 3

SOURCES OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

3. Introduction

General research is the first stage of finding out more about an intended research topic. In general research, a researcher will look at secondary sources to help in working out what other researchers have already discovered about the intended research. This might highlight some gaps in the work that other researchers have done, that a research can help to fill. Primary sources are also an important base for historical research because they provide context to a research subject and they help in building a picture of the past. In this lecture, we will discuss the concepts of primary and secondary sources. In particular, the discussion focuses on the meaning and types of primary and secondary sources and how they can be used in historical research. In this lecture, we will also discuss the procedure of evaluating the validity and reliability of primary and secondary sources through internal and external criticism.

3.1 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- Explain the concepts of primary and secondary sources.
- Describe the various types of primary and secondary sources.
- Discuss the internal and external evaluating of primary and secondary source.
- Compare and contrast principles of reading primary and secondary sources.

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

3.2 Primary Information as a Source for Historical Research

In general, sources for historical research are divided into primary and secondary sources. The dividing factor is whether the author of the document was a direct witness of the historical event or whether the author merely offered a description of the events so-called “at second hand”. Primary sources are produced usually by a participant or observer at the time an event or development took place (or even at a later date). These sources are crucial for

historical research as they originated in the times which they deal with and form its only solid basis. They embrace authentic information and pieces of knowledge about the times, events and facts which are in terms of time closest to them. A primary source provides direct or first-hand evidence about an event, object, person, or work of art. Primary sources include historical and legal documents, eyewitness accounts, and results of experiments, statistical data, pieces of creative writing, speeches, and art objects. Interviews, surveys, fieldwork, and internet communications via email and blogs are also primary sources.

Visual and audio materials are other forms of primary sources. This includes materials such as maps, photographs, prints, graphic arts, and original art forms and can provide insights into how people viewed and/or were viewed the world in which they existed. Also audio visual materials such as Films, videos, TV programs, and digital recordings documentaries, feature films, and TV news broadcasts equally provide insights into the fantasies, biases, political attitudes, and material culture of the times in which they were created. Radio broadcast recordings, oral histories, and the recorded music of a particular period can also serve as primary source material.

Additionally, **government and church documents** are important sources of information for administrative, political, social and demographic history. In particular, government documents provide evidence of activities, functions, and policies at all government levels. For research that relates to the workings of government, government documents are primary sources. These documents include hearings and debates of legislative bodies; the official text of laws, regulations and treaties; records of government expenditures and finances; and statistical compilations of economic, demographic, and scientific data.

Archival material in the form of **Manuscripts and archives** are yet another form of primary sources. Among the types of documents which may be considered primary sources in the form of archives include; **Letters and diaries of participants or witnesses**. These are often private recollections, meant to be read only by the observer or one or two friends. The most valuable of these sources are those which were written as close to the time of the event as possible. **Tapes and transcripts of oral history sessions form part of archival information for research**. These are often the only way in which the memories of older members of communities have been preserved. They can be especially important sources of information from indigenous communities. **Memoirs and autobiographies** may have been meant as public documents, or may have been written to be shared with friends and family.

The weakness with such kind of primary sources is that they may have been written some years after the event that a researcher would be interested in and may represent the writer's rationalisations or attempts to make a coherent narrative out of the events.

Others include **business and personal correspondence**, diaries and journals, legal and financial documents, photographs, architectural drawings, objects, oral histories, computer tapes, and video and audio cassettes.

Primary sources are generated in different ways. There are primary sources which are consciously transmitted in the form of oral or written testimony or records kept and written by actual participants or witnesses of an event. Such kind of primary sources include, constitutions, charters, court-decisions, official minutes or records, autobiographies, letters, diaries, deeds, wills, permits, licenses, declarations, proclamations, certificates, bills, receipts, magazines, newspaper accounts, advertisements, maps, diagrams, books, paintings, inscriptions, transcriptions and research reports come under this category. The other category of primary sources is acquired through unconscious evidence in the form of remains, language, literature, arts and institutions of various types.

3.3.1 How to Research Primary Sources

A researcher needs to understand that primary materials are in various forms. Some are unpublished and published while others are in soft copy form and can be found online. Apart from being in a varied form primary sources are found in various locations. Some primary sources especially those that are in the form of archives are found archival institutions. However, there are two main types of archives that hold primary sources: private (or personal) archives and public archives. Private or personal archives are collections belonging to individuals or private organisations. To access them, a researcher needs to get permission from the owner of the archive. Many private archives are not widely publicised, for example many charities, sports clubs, groups or individuals may have a private archive. If an individual is researching the history of a particular club, group, society or organisation it's a good idea to contact them directly to ask if they hold any archive material that you could look at.

Largely public archives are often preserved in archival buildings or institutions while others in the same buildings as libraries, and are available for everyone to access and use. Archives usually hold printed and handwritten documents, images, films and objects that are stored

away and are not on general display. A researcher usually needs to make an appointment or make an application in order to see specific items or documents in a public archive. Some archive catalogues are usually available online so that a researcher can search the collection and decide what they want to look at before the visit.

In order to get the most out of the time spent in the archives, a researcher needs to plan ahead. After looking at the online catalogue and making notes of the material that a researcher would like consult, the next recommended step would be contacting the archive either through a telephone or email. This is also meant to inquire if the archive can recommend other items in their collection that might be useful to the research. A researcher needs to book an appointment to visit the archive, giving plenty of notice so the archivists can have the material ready for the researcher. It's the duty of the archivists to help access and understand the material, and they are trained to help researchers to understand how to make good use of the archives.

It is important for researchers to understand that sometimes archives that may seem useful might turn out not to contain any relevant information at all. Similarly, something that a researcher wouldn't expect to be of much help by its description in the catalogue may prove to be a helpful source. Therefore researchers should also ensure that they are guided by the material. However the researcher should always keep the focus. Likewise some archives can contain a wealth of information, and sometimes the volume of material can seem overwhelming. In such a situation, the researcher should always remain focused on the topic of study or research.

Primary sources are also held in local libraries. This is especially true if an individual is researching the history of a particular location or area. The local library might not only hold useful material for a particular research topic, but might also have display and exhibitions that would provide leads to other collections of primary sources that could be useful. Additionally, some primary sources can be accessed online. There are different types of websites that may lead a researcher to primary sources such as local history websites for museums, galleries among others. Many local history organisations share information about their own projects on their websites, as well as details about any upcoming events, and useful links to other sources that could help researchers with their own research.

In historical research, primary sources are used critically because no primary source on its own can give a complete picture of the past. Using sources critically makes a historical

research more balanced and measured. Thus reading primary sources to answer the central research question, requires thinking about how reliable and useful each source would be and understand that there is no such thing as a completely accurate and neutral source. A researcher of history needs to be critical of each source by considering its strengths and weaknesses, thinking about who might have created it and if their opinions were biased in a particular way, and the reason for its creation. For example some typical types of primary sources such as politicians' speeches have a strength in that they demonstrate some political concerns of the time and have a weakness in that the politician could have had an ulterior motive (to win public support, for instance) and might not present things in the same way that others would have at the time. Likewise primary sources in the form of dairies could have strength as it describes the thoughts and experiences of one individual in detail but it have weaknesses because one person's story might not be representative of wider opinions and experiences. More so diary-writers might write in ways that put themselves in the best possible light.

3.3.2 Secondary Information as a source for Historical Research

Secondary sources of information are **based on primary sources**. They are generally written at a later date and provide some discussion, analysis, or interpretation of the original primary source. Examples of secondary sources include published works such as journal articles or books, but may include radio or television documentaries, or conference proceedings, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, biographies, obituaries and bibliographies. Mostly, secondary sources interpret other research within them and include second hand accounts or analysis.

The sources of information transmitted by one who was neither a participant in, nor an eye witness of the original event. In other words, in secondary sources a middle man comes in between the original witness and the present consumer. The emphasis of secondary sources is to interpret primary sources, and so can be described as at least one step removed from the event or phenomenon under review. Secondary source materials, then, interpret, assign value to, conjecture upon, and draw conclusions about the events reported in primary sources.

In an academic historical research considerable emphasis is placed upon using scholarly materials. These are usually described as academic peer reviewed or refereed scholarly materials. This is because in peer-reviewed journals also called refereed, the articles are reviewed by other experts in the same field of study before they are accepted for publication.

In scholarly journals also called academic the articles are written by academics but the articles are not always reviewed by experts in the topic the author is writing about before publication. In the article, the author's credentials are listed and are relevant to the subject of the article. At the same time, a bibliography or citation list is included at the end of the article, allowing a researcher to trace the information on which the author has based the paper. Largely, scholarly, academic and peer reviewed, refereed journals are often published by a university press or academic association. The intended audience is professionals, researchers, or students in the discipline; and the language is often technical, requiring prior knowledge of the field.

However, there is also a role for non-scholarly material since it often reflects contemporary thought and is popular. Also, there may be little scholarly material available on a given topic. If a researcher uses sources such as newspapers or popular magazines, clearly point out that your information reflects a "commonly accepted position" but is "difficult to verify or refute".

3.4 Evaluation of Primary and Secondary Sources

As the historian draws his conclusions and generalisations on the basis of primary and secondary sources, it is essential to check up their authenticity and reliability. It is the duty of the historian to doubt every statement until it has been critically tested. **External and internal criticisms** are used as a means of evaluating historical information. In particular external criticism is aimed at establishing the authenticity or genuineness of the primary or secondary sources of information. It is concerned with the genuineness of the document itself, whether it really is what it purports to be and whether it reads to the original.

The '**External Criticism**' is of a less intellectual type of criticism of the documents. It includes examinations of document like manuscripts, books, pamphlets, maps, inscriptions and monuments. The problem of authenticity of document arises more in case of manuscripts than the printed documents because the printed document have already been authenticated by the editor. A researcher of history has to resort to a number of tests to determine the authenticity of a particular document in his proposed area of research such as authorship. The first question while examining the authenticity of a document is its author. Even the anonymous writings can provide us useful and important knowledge. But the discovery of an author's or writer's name adds the authenticity of the information because of the character, connections and trust worthiness of author determines the authenticity. The Date of

Document, the time, place and of publication of the document must also be inquired to determine the authenticity of the document. In the modern publications year and place of publication is indicated on the book or document on the title page or back side (over leaf). However in old manuscript where the data and place are absent it can be found out from the language or from the date of birth and death of author.

Additionally, external criticism should be conducted because the researcher or historian would come across textual errors which may be either unintentional or deliberately committed. Unintentional error can take place in the copies of the documents (originals are not available). These mistakes may be caused by the author, typist or printer. For example intention error may creep in when effort is made to modify, supplement or continue the original. This problem can be overcome through textual criticism.

The meaning of words often changes from generation to generation. Therefore through external criticism, the historian can find out the meaning and sense in which it has been used in document. The misinterpretation of terms may lead to misunderstanding of the historical development. In this way, even after the historian established the authenticity of the documents and discovered the meaning of the text his duty is not over. He is confronted with another important problem the credibility of document which needs **internal criticism**.

Therefore, **Internal Criticism** concentrates on ascertaining whether the documents under study are original, whether the document content is accurate and whether it corresponds with the historical events. Internal criticism deals with the meaning and trust worthiness of the statements that remain within the document. It is aimed at evaluating the accuracy of the documents collected. The internal criticism also focuses on errors, omissions and additions in documents in copying, printing, and translation. It is also an important factor in determining the validity of historical information. As such, a research worker must make use of both internal and external criticism for assessing the reliability of the document. The validity of the historical facts, can verify by comparing them with the statements of other authors.

While collecting the material the researcher must remember that a document contains the idea of the man who wrote. A historian must analyse the contents of the documents with a view to determine the real meaning. As such, a researcher must try to avoid the laps such as avoid the reading into meaning which author did not mean to convey, etc., and make a sincere effort to find out the facts even if they are contrary to his set notions and theories. A historian or

researcher of history must be able to understand the literal and real meaning of the document which is termed as 'Positive Criticism'. It reveals us with the author's conceptions and general notion which he represents. On other hand, historians sometimes come across documents which contradict each other. Hence the need of eliminating statements and facts which are obviously wrong and false arises.

Therefore, historians have come to hold the view that all that cannot be proved must be temporarily regarded as doubtful because of the incompetency and unreliability of the author which prevents him from telling the truth even when he knows. To assess the correctness of the fact, historian must ascertain whether author had opportunity to know the facts as an eye-witness or not by asking questions such as what was his source of information and how much time elapsed between the event and the record? However the dependable testimony depends on a number of factors such as ability and willing to tell the truth, accuracy of report and independent corroboration. However, it may be noted that there is a possibility that a skilful liar may deliberately create the condition, i.e. ability and willing to tell the truth with accuracy to establish the credibility of his statements. Therefore, in those cases the credibility must not be accepted without proper investigation. Moreover, if there is agreement between documents, a historian cannot draw the conclusion that the facts are definitive but must ensure that the facts are harmonious and prove each other are interconnected.

Specifically, when evaluating primary sources, the following questions might be asked to help ascertain the nature and value of material being considered:

- Who created this source, and when was it created?
- Why was it created?
- In what contexts was this source created?
- Is it credible? What makes it so?
- What are the limitations of using this source in your research?

Similarly, when evaluating secondary sources, the following questions might be asked to help ascertain the nature and value of material being considered:

- Is this source scholarly or popular? What makes it so?
- Who is the audience for this source, and how does the audience shape it?
- What is the purpose of this source? What is its perspective?

- How does it help a researcher to support his/her research?
- Is this source scholarly or popular? What makes it so?
- Who is the audience for this source, and how does the audience shape it?
- What is the purpose of this source? What is its perspective?
- How does it help you support your research?

Terminologies: Primary sources, secondary sources, internal criticism, external criticism

Activity

1. Briefly discuss the meaning and origin of primary and secondary sources.
2. Compare and contrast the characteristics and types of primary and secondary sources.
3. Describe the procedure of evaluating primary and secondary sources.

Summary

In this lecture, we discussed the primary and secondary sources as information bases for historical research. Specifically this lecture explained the meaning of primary sources as produced usually by a participant or observer at the time an event or development took place (or even at a later date). Primary sources discussed include manuscripts such as letters, diaries, journals, memos, memoirs, and autobiographies. Secondary sources have been discussed as products of primary sources. This lecture also demonstrated that primary and secondary sources don not provide a complete factual reflection of the past to a historian and therefore they have to be evaluated. Further, this lecture provided the procedures of evaluating primary and secondary sources through internal and external criticism of sources.

UNIT 4

INTERNET AS A RESOURCE FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

4. Introduction

Using the Internet as a resource for historical research helps to locate relevant materials for a research project. In the recent past, Internet has become a major tool for historians because a large quantity of documents such as photographs, newspapers and letters have been digitised and made available to the public. This development has been encouraged by the introduction and growth of the World Wide Web (www), an Internet interface with graphical, sound, and video capabilities. Many academic scholars, organisations, departments, colleges and universities have begun to produce Web sites with valuable materials. Thus students writing history papers or presenting on historical topics have access to a wide range of historical documents on their computers. This unit intends to provide information on how student researchers of history can access historical materials online, how they can evaluate online sources including the challenges involved in researching dealing with such sources.

4.1 Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- explain how to access historical sources on the internet.
- describe the criteria of evaluating internet historical sources.
- discuss the challenges of using internet for historical research.

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

4.2 Finding History Resources on the Internet

Among other ways to find sources for a historical topic is by using search engines. These are electronic devices that check through as many as several Web pages and other Internet sites looking for references to the word or phrase which a researcher may have entered in a particular search engine's search box. Some examples of common and most used search engines include **yahoo, google and google scholar**. Each one works somewhat differently from the others, although most claim to display the best searches first. However, to obtain better results, it would be helpful to use most or all of the search engines in

your search for the material needed for a research project. At least some search engines would allow a researcher to include long sentences of the topic of research others would require enclosing all phrases or proper names in quotation marks. Unfortunately, search engines sometimes display hundreds of documents that have the word or phrase that a particular researcher wants but which are irrelevant to historical inquiry. For example, Google when asked to search for sites about history of Zambia will display a number of items relating to Zambia in general and might not even have footnotes. Many such sources are what is known as popular history, that is history written for the general public, often by non-scholars such as journalists for example.

Generally these will not be appropriated as sources to use in academic paper, dissertation and thesis. Search engines such as Yahoo for example, searches its own subject directories and can also provide search results from other search engines. Researching online requires flexibility and creativity and attempting searching using different words and phrases. Sometimes a researcher will search for something online and will not find anything relevant. This doesn't necessarily mean that there is no relevant material available. The researcher might need to change your search terms to find suitable results.

4.3 Finding Primary and Secondary Sources on the Internet

There are different types of website that may lead a researcher to primary sources: Many local history organisations share information about their own projects on their websites, as well as details about any upcoming events, and useful links to other sources that could help a researcher with their own research. These would sometimes include links to museums, galleries, libraries and archives within or outside the area or country. Local libraries and archives might also have their catalogues online, so you can have a look at what items they have before visiting in person. More so there also exists archives websites. Some archives and heritage organisations have uploaded digital copies and images of their collection for researchers to view online. This means that a researcher can have access to primary sources online. If the collection is not available online, a researcher would still be able to search the archive's catalogue to see if it holds any useful material. And can then book an appointment to visit the archive in person.

However, a problem in using primary source material is that sometimes a researcher cannot determine whether the document had been accurately and completely transcribed or translated. Sometimes, these on-line documents will not provide any information about the date or dates of the documents, who collected them into the compilation, who transcribed or translated them into the English of the on-line document for example. Neither would there be any clue about the location of the source material (manuscript or printed) on which the on-line document was based. Historical scholars or researcher

usually want all or at least most of this information, so that they can judge the document's accuracy and completeness.

On the internet, there are secondary sources which can be classified into at least two categories. One is scholarly materials, developed usually by professionally- trained historians, i.e., persons who have earned at least one graduate degree in history. Many such historians hold the Ph.D. and teach in a college or university. Such persons have skill and experience in making judgments about sources and in using critical thinking to interpret the facts they find in their research. Some amateur historians (i.e., historians without such credentials) have sufficient experience and/or judgment to write excellent scholarly history as well.

The other category of secondary sources is popular history. It is usually produced by non-professional historians, such as journalists, novelists, or other writers. Much of the secondary source material one finds on the Internet falls into this category. Usually, someone who is an enthusiast about a given historical subject decides to write about that subject, then puts that writing on the Internet. Such work is not subject to the criticism of historians, as is the case with much of the secondary source material written by professionally-trained historians and published as books or articles in historical journals.

Like the primary sources, there are also various web sites and search engines that would be specifically used to access secondary sources of a scholarly kind. Google Books (advanced) can be used to find books on a particular topic of research. Many titles in Google Books include a limited preview of the text that would help a researcher decide whether they want to buy or borrow a copy through their library. However, some titles do include the complete text. Similarly there are a number of tools a researcher can use to find scholarly articles written on historical topics. Although many articles are freely available on the web, vast amounts are not. This is not to say that internet search engines are not an important part of your search, in fact [Google Scholar](#) is an excellent tool, it just means that your research should not end there. There are also databases such as [JSTOR: the Scholarly Journal Archive](#). This is a full-text journal database of more than 1,200 titles in the fields of African studies, anthropology, architecture, Asian studies, biological sciences, botany, ecology, economics, education, film, finance, folklore, history, language, literature, mathematics, middle east studies, music, philosophy, political science, population/demography, religion, sociology, and statistics.

Using the Internet to find secondary sources for historical research is more problematic than using it to search for primary sources. Secondary sources are historical materials (usually in writing) produced by persons who were not on the scene when the events being described took place. Rather, those persons

did historical research, using primary sources, secondary sources, or both. There are also relatively few recently-published secondary historical works on the Internet for at least two related reasons. One is that almost all such writing is copyrighted. Such works are for sale. In many cases, authors earn royalties on the profits made by publishers. Neither authors nor publishers wish to give away on the Internet that for which they would otherwise be paid. Also, professional historians who teach in universities publish materials in book or article form partly to obtain tenure or to seek promotion from one tenured faculty rank to another. In general, those persons who make decisions about tenure and promotion do not, at the present time at least, recognise much of historical publications produced directly for the Internet.

4.4 Evaluation Criteria for History Resources on the Internet

The challenge in using the Internet to do historical research is that the quality of sources varies greatly. Unlike books and journals, which go through a filtering process such as editing or peer review, information on the Internet is mostly unfiltered. Therefore, how can a researcher know whether or not an Internet resource is appropriate for a research project? A researcher should evaluate Internet pages to make sure that they are appropriate information sources for a particular scholarly research. Therefore, just like print materials, when evaluating Internet resources a researcher should ask questions, using five evaluative criteria: accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage.

Accuracy should be questioned in relation to how reliable and free the particular information is from error. The researcher should be aware that anyone can publish on the Internet. Resources in that medium are not usually verified by editors or peer reviewers. The Internet, by its nature, imposes no standards to ensure accuracy, as is the case with some other media. In order to determine accuracy of internet documents or information a researcher is supposed to ask questions such as Who wrote the page or document and can you as a researcher contact them?, What is the purpose of the document and why was it produced? Is this author or person qualified to write this document? The researcher should look out and ensure that a particular author online provides e-mail or a contact address or phone number. The researcher should also be in a position to Know the distinction between author and Webmaster.

The authority of the internet documents should always be inquired by asking who authored or developed the material. Sometimes it is difficult to determine authorship of Internet sources. Even if the author's name is included, there is often no indication of that person's qualifications. Who is the publisher or producer of the site? Unfortunately, sites do not always indicate publisher responsibility. Sites developed by a university, college, library, or other scholarly organization carry more authority than one whose

author is an amateur enthusiast with a personal home page on the Internet. Also, look for evidence of how the information in the site is documented. Are there footnotes and/or a bibliography? Often this is not the case. If there is such documentation, what is the quality of the sources revealed?

The researcher also needs to establish the objectivity of internet information or documents. It is important to find out what goals or objectives a particular page of information intends to meet, how detailed it is and what opinions are expressed by the author. The researcher should establish whether the site's information is presented with a minimum of bias, or is there an attempt to sway the opinion of the audience? If the producer is commercial, do business concerns affect presentation of the information? If the producer is an organization with an ideological agenda, is that agenda reflected in the treatment of the historical material? Producers of Internet materials do not always clearly state their goals or aims. The Internet sometimes functions as a "virtual soapbox."

Currency of information or document is another important point of inquiry in the evaluation of internet sources. It is key for a researcher to find out when the content of information or documents online were produced and updated. For example the researcher should ask such questions as: Is the content of the work up-to-date? Is the publication date clearly labelled? How up-to-date are the links (if any)? Are the links current or updated regularly? Unfortunately, dates are not always included on Internet pages. Even when there are, it is not always clear whether they refer to when the information was written, when it was placed on the Internet, or when it was last revised.

The other important aspect to consider when evaluating internet information is Coverage. The researcher should find out what topics are included in the online document or site? Are these topics explored in depth? Note that Internet pages can begin with one topic but link to other unrelated topics. Even when the topics are related, the linked material may be inferior in quality to the site to which it is linked. It is sometimes difficult to determine the extent of coverage of topics in Internet sites. The researcher might find that certain pages require special software to view the information and others are not free but will be accessed at a cost or fee. However, the Internet is only one source of historical information. It can be useful for researching certain topics but might not be useful for others. To research a topic thoroughly, a researcher should use a variety of sources, including libraries and hard-copy materials. Apply the evaluation criteria mentioned above for all resources.

4.5 Challenges and problems of using Internet for Historical Research

Using the Internet as a resource for historical research and writing provides useful, convenient research resources for students and other history scholars, especially with respect to primary sources.

Nevertheless, there are also several challenges and problems that researchers may experience when searching for information online. Searching for historical resources on the Internet is not as easy as doing a name or subject search in a library catalogue. Some subject directories or search engines organises sources and groups of sources around various historical themes, but a researcher must often go far beyond the most obvious topics and subtopics to find useful material. Also, sometimes the titles provide inadequate information. Often, a researcher must examine many indexes. Search engines provide the most direct path, but they present problems as well. Each uses its own methodology to search, but they all depend on finding the exact words or phrases one gives in the search command box. Some provide so many titles; most of them irrelevant to the searcher's purpose. In the case of both search methods, a researcher must be patient. A researcher's patience will often be rewarded, however, and the extra time spent searching must be balanced against the convenience of finding sources on one's own desktop, rather than having to take the time to look for materials in libraries or wait for weeks for books to arrive via Inter-Library Loan. However, the Internet is only an additional resource to libraries, archives and not a substitute for them.

Another problem that a researcher might encounter when selecting a link, would be a message informing that the server (computer) on which the material resides somewhere in the world is not accepting a researchers' request and suggests trying again later. An immediate retry sometimes gets results but sometimes not. At times a researcher will get a message stating that the site does not have a DNS number. Though sometimes an immediate retry provides the needed information, from time to time a researcher will find that the material needed is available but, for one or more reasons, a researcher will have to wait a long time for the system to load. A related problem is that links lead one to messages stating that the material requested is "not found," meaning probably that, the link, when created, was good, but the document or directory is no longer on the Internet or has a different address. Sometimes this difficulty can be overcome by using a search engine to do a title search.

The researcher's search of subject directories has undoubtedly revealed that most historical sources on the Web relate to the United States and to Europe (especially western Europe). Asia, Africa, and South America are barely represented. While there are probably many reasons for this, one must surely be that most Web sites have been developed in the United States and Europe, many of them by history departments at colleges and universities which offer a majority of their course work in various aspects of the history of the peoples and nations of the West. However much one may deplore the Western "bias," if that is what it is, it is probably worse only by degree than the same disparity one finds in printed materials.

The issue of quality control, with respect to careful transcription and editing from the original primary source documents, is less serious now than in the earliest years of the Internet but still exists for some sites. Some of the Scholarly history secondary sources or information continues to be rare and often difficult to find. It would be very helpful if more of history departments at some college or universities would increase the rate of developing a subject list of recent on-line scholarly works such as theses and dissertations, including journal articles and papers presented at conferences.

The historical profession, through its various international, national, regional, and state organizations, needs to use the Internet more effectively to disseminate historical information and ideas. This process has begun. Copyright considerations and reluctance by college and university history departments to consider on-line publications in making tenure or promotion decisions will probably continue to hinder change. But, the Internet is a revolutionary communications delivery system with which the history profession must come to terms.

Terminologies: Search engines, Internet, Primary sources, Secondary sources, Historical resources.

Activity

1. How can you use an internet search engine for historical research?
2. Explain the evaluation criteria for online primary and secondary sources.
3. Discuss the challenges and problems experienced in using the internet for historical research.

Summary

This unit discussed the use of internet for historical research. It demonstrated how search engines such as Google Scholar, JOSTOR including Yahoo can be used to access historical information. The unit has highlighted specific internet sites that provide primary and secondary resources for historical research. At the same time the unit has discussed the fact that although internet as a very useful resource for historical research, online document may not be authentic and researchers need to evaluate or assess them. In this regard this unit explained the criteria for evaluating both primary and secondary sources by asking relevant questions on the authority, accuracy, currency, objectivity and coverage of online information.

UNIT 5

WRITING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL IN HISTORY

5. Introduction

This unit looks at proposal writing in the discipline of history. Before starting a research project, scholars or academicians often have to write research proposals. Academic research proposals are generally written as part of the initial requirements of writing a thesis, research report, or dissertation. They generally follow the same format as a research paper, with an introduction, a literature review, a discussion of research methodology and goals, and a conclusion. This unit looks at the principles of writing a research proposal, its purpose and significance. It also looks at the basic structure of a research proposal.

5.1 Learning outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- explain the meaning of a research proposal.
- discuss the purpose and significance of a research proposal
- discuss the structure of the research proposal.
- describe the process of proposal writing

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

5.2 A Research Proposal and its purpose?

A research proposal is an important document that explains what the researcher intends to investigate and how the investigation will be carried out. A research proposal is also considered as a research plan or suggestion which describes ideas for an investigation on a particular topic. Generally, a research proposal addresses several key questions such as what research questions will be addressed, how they will be addressed, how much time and expense will be required for the research. It also looks at what prior research has been done on the intended topic of study including how the results of the research will be evaluated. Precisely, research proposals contain extensive literature reviews and provide persuasive evidence that a need exists for the proposed study. In addition to providing a rationale, a proposal describes detailed methodology for conducting the research

consistent with requirements of the professional or academic field and a statement on anticipated outcomes and/or benefits derived from the study's completion.

The goal of a research proposal is twofold: to present and justify the need to study a research problem and to present the practical ways in which the proposed study should be conducted. The design elements and procedures for conducting research are governed by standards of the discipline in which the problem resides; therefore, in the discipline of history, guidelines for research proposals are more exacting and less formal than a general project proposal. The other reason of writing a research proposal is to make sure that a researcher's report, writing, dissertation or thesis is guided by an outline. In fact the research proposal is some sort of an outline to guide a researcher through the research. Research and writing in academia is an uncertain pursuit in which the researcher's ideas will keep changing and sometimes into areas, which may not be connected to the intended study. A research proposal helps the researcher to remain focused on the intended study.

There are also other various reasons students of history are required to write research proposals. Among many other reasons, it is meant to help develop skills in thinking about and designing a comprehensive research study; facilitating learning how to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature to determine that a research problem has not been adequately addressed or has been answered ineffectively and, in so doing, become better at locating pertinent scholarship related to the intended topic of study. Writing research proposals also helps students or researchers to improve the general research and writing skills as well as the practice identifying the logical steps that must be taken to accomplish one's research goals. At the same time as students or researchers write research proposals they critically review, examine, and consider the use of different methods for gathering and analysing information related to the research problem. And also nurture a sense of inquisitiveness within students or researcher and to help see themselves as active participants in the process of doing scholarly research.

5.3 Beginning the Proposal Process

A good starting point in the proposal writing process is by reflecting on a number of questions; a researcher should ask what is it that they want to study, why the topic is important, how it is significant, what problems it will help solve, how it will build upon already existing research and what exactly should be planned and achieved in the time available. In general, a convincing research proposal should document the researchers' knowledge of the topic and demonstrate their enthusiasm for conducting the study. The topic, subject or theme that a researcher decides to research is important in the success of the research project. The research should pick on a

topic in which they are interested. A researcher's interest in a topic will sustain the research. If a researcher is interested in a particular topic or subject, they will enjoy reading the materials related to that area and will put more time and effort into that work. For example the researcher will be motivated to collect the required data, analyse it and find results. This is because all research requires thorough thought, writing and reading before the proposal and thesis was finalised. If the researcher is interested in the intended topic of research, it would be an exciting exercise.

Topic selection requires that after identifying what interests a researcher in a particular area of study the next step should be identifying specific keyword or important words for the topic. The researcher should focus on the actual aspect they are interested in and express it in specific keywords. For example if the researcher is interested in the Archives as a topic or subject of study, they have to state specific aspect that they would want to research about Archives. The keywords in the subject of archives include collection, depositing and preservation. The researcher might think of what to concentrate on based on these keywords.

The next step after identifying the keywords, the researcher has to concentrate on **defining the topic**. Defining the topic involves analysing and linking the identified keywords. Out of these keywords there are a number of topics that can be studied. For example, the researcher might want to research on how the archives are collected, deposited, preserved at the National Archives of Zambia or might want to research the policy that governs the collection, depositing and preservation of archives in Zambia.

Thereafter, the researcher should focus on **formulating the topic**. For example the one can formulate a topic such as the process of collection, depositing and preserving archives in Zambia in the colonial period, 1935-1919. The researcher should search for articles, books, archives, newspapers and other relevant materials to the research topic. This information will help the researcher develop clarity over the selected topic. This topic will also be helpful in the formulating of a research problem later on. As the researcher reads various sources on the topic should take notes which will be included in the literature review.

Therefore, a good research topic should be researchable meaning that it should be a subject where research instruments i.e. questionnaire, oral interview schedules can easily be formulated and interviewees or study population sampled. The objectives that will be formulated on the topic should be measurable. The topic should make a contribution to existing knowledge. The researcher should ensure that the findings of the study will contribute to the body of knowledge.

It should also be clear, focused and provocative meaning it has to be open to varied views and interpretations.

The next step that follows topic selection is **title selection**. A title means the main heading of the research. The title of the proposal describes what the research is about. It highlights a summary of the key ideas in a proposal. For example, a title such as *Archives in Zambia: A History of their Collection and Preservation, 1964-1991* shows that the study is on Archives. It also shows that the study will analyse the history of collecting and preserving archives. It can also be understood that the research will be conducted in Zambia and covering the post-independence period. Therefore in title selection the researcher should identify the keywords for the title by identifying the important issues in the intended research. The formulation of title will involve linking the keywords relating to the topic and issues to be discussed. Therefore, an effective research title should be brief and specific, in this way the title becomes clear and focused. The title should also be in line with the set objectives and aims of the study. The words used in the title should clearly reflect the focus of the study. The title should be clear and unambiguous meaning that it should not lead to various interpretation of the study. It should also reflect a link between the independent and dependent variables (qualities), these help bring out variations in explaining the findings of the research. Independent variables are explanatory variables that the researcher uses to explain variations in the dependent variable. A dependant variable is usually one and depends on the independent to bring out variations.

5. 4 Structure and process of writing a Research proposal

This basic structure of research proposals may vary between projects, fields or disciplines, but they all have these three components namely an introduction, literature Review and Research Designs and methods. The first component of the research proposal is the Introduction. This component attempts to establish that a problem or research gap exists that needs investigation through research. It provides the necessary background or context for your research problem. It provides an understanding to the readers on what a researcher wants to do. In the introduction a researcher asks questions such as: What is the central research problem? What is the topic of study related to that research problem? What methods will be used to analyse the research problem? Why is this important research? What is its significance, and why should someone reading the proposal care about the outcomes of the proposed study? Specifically, an introductory part of the research proposal is divided into the following components:

- Background to the Study

- Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the study
- Aims and Objectives of the Study
- Research Questions
- Significance of the Study
- Limitation of the Study
- the Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks,
- Literature Review
- Research Designs and Methodology.

5.4.1 Background to the study

The background to the study provides an overview of the research problem that a particular researcher intends to undertake. It gives background information that orientates the reader to the context of the intended research. Background information plays a significant role in research because it helps clarify what has brought about the need for the study and demonstrates the researcher's view of the research problem. It also demonstrates that the research problem or gap exists and needs to be addressed. An effective background to the study should be brief, specific and provide a glimpse of the research problem. It provides the readers an idea of how the proposal is structured. It should also be informative and persuasive since it attempts to enlighten the reader about the research problem and indicates an urgency of addressing the problem.

5.4.2 Statement of the Problem

The next component of the introduction is the Statement of the Problem. This part, also known as a research problem means an issue or concern that a research intends or wants to resolve. It could be a gap in the existing knowledge that need to be investigated or an area in a particular field that has not been investigated before that need to be explored and made known. For example a researcher may ask a question why history of archives creation in colonial Zambia has not been historicised. A Researcher might also wonder why some archives pertaining to Zambia are still being preserved in Zimbabwe. Therefore, such kind of concerns may result in the formulation of a research problem. The research problem must be researchable meaning that the identified problem should be able to be investigated through the collection and analysis of data. The research problem should clearly show the urgency of the research and indicate that the research is definitely needed. Additionally, a research problem is effective through having these qualities; it should be brief and clearly stated. The reader should be

informed about a definite issue that needs to be solved because the problem should stand out clearly and easily recognised.

In order to come up with an effective research problem or Statement of the Problem, the researcher should start with assessing or examining the selected research topic and establish any concerns that could be associated with it. This is because the statement of the problem usually starts with an idea the researcher might have as to what kind of a problem they want to resolve or what questions the researcher wants to answer in a selected topic. The researcher should also reflect on key issues in the topic and the independent and dependent variables of the study. Thereafter, the researcher should ask the following questions such as; Is there something wrong or disturbing on the selected topic (in the process of preserving archives or usage of archives for example)? Is there something theoretically unclear or in dispute related to the topic or title selected? Why is this a problem? After identifying what the problem is, the researcher should formulate the statement of the problem by explaining why this is a problem and how it affects people, institutions or society. The researcher should indicate what it is they know about the problem, through personal observation and research. The next step after stating what the researcher has identified the problem should be to explain the implications likely to follow if the problem is not addressed. The researcher should use the statement of the problem to show that the researcher is definitely needed.

5.4.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study.

The next other component of the introduction of the research is the Aims and Objectives of the Study. In particular, the aims of the research study are intentions, goals as well as what the research needs to achieve. In other words, an aim is referred to as a general statement which shows the purpose of a research study. Generally it is a statement about what the researcher hopes to achieve by the end of the study. Further the aim shows the aspirations and expectations of the researcher stated in general terms that are not easily measurable. An effective aim of the research study should always be stated in general terms and provide directions for research development. At the same time, they should be broad enough to lead to specific objectives.

The importance of aims and objectives in a research study is that they play a role of pointers that highlight the intention and direction of the study. They also reflect the outcome of the research and portray the overall expectation of the study. Through analysing the aims of the study, one should be able to assess the study and evaluate its progress. Aims are also important because they assist in the formulation of objectives as they pinpoint the purpose of the study. They also reflect the aspirations

and expectations of the researcher. They further help in identifying whether the researcher is urgently needed or not.

Additionally, the next section that follows the aims of the study in a research proposal is the part of objectives. The objectives are intentions or purposes stated in specific measurable terms. They provide opportunities for evaluation the end results. In a research, an objective is a particular statement that relate to the defined aim of the study. Specific objectives are constructed from the aim of the study and they constitute the means by which the aim or goal of the study could be achieved. They specify what the researcher will do in the study. Objectives are operational. They state specific tasks that will be carried out by the researcher to accomplish the aims of the study.

The significance of objectives is that they guide decisions in the selection of respondents or interviewees, research instruments and the study area. This helps the researcher to avoid the collection of data, which is not strictly necessary for understanding and solving the problem identified. Objectives also help to limit the scope of the literature review. They help the researcher to be precise about what to accomplish. They also help organise the studying clearly defined parts. Further, objectives serve to clarify the variables of the study. This helps in the evaluation of the study. Objectives are also important because they break up the aim into achievable and measurable components and serve as a guide for evaluation. Additionally, objectives provide a common consistent focus for many activities in research. Some unity in emphasis as well as common focus is needed to achieve the goal of the study, this facilitates sequencing. In other words, the objectives should narrow the study to essentials. They should also cover the different aspects of the problem and its contributing factors in a coherent way and in a logical sequence. They should systematically address the various aspects of the problem, particularly the key factors that are assumed to influence or cause the problem.

5.4.4 Research Questions

Following the Aims and objectives of the study is a section of Research Questions. The research questions are formulated from the objectives. They focus on the issues that the researcher seeks to answer. These questions guide the research process by addressing the variables of the study.

5.4.5 Significance of the study

The next part is the Significance of the study. This section outlines the importance of the research study. It describes in detail why the study is of significance. While there are no prescribed rules for establishing the significance of the proposed research study, a researcher should attempt to address some or all of the following:

- State the research problem and give a more detailed explanation about the purpose of the study than is stated in the introduction. This is particularly important if the problem is complex or multifaceted.
- Present the rationale of the proposed study and clearly indicate why it is worth doing; the researcher should be sure to answer the "So What? Question [i.e., why should anyone care].
- Describe the major issues or problems to be addressed by the research. This can be in the form of questions to be addressed. Be sure to note how your proposed study builds on previous assumptions about the research problem.
- Explain the methods that the researcher plans to use for conducting the research. Clearly identify the key sources a researcher intends to use and explain how they will contribute to the analysis of the topic.
- Describe the boundaries of the proposed research in order to provide a clear focus. Where appropriate, state not only what the research plans to cover, but what aspects of the research problem will be excluded from the study.

5.4.6 Limitation of the Study

Limitation of the Study is another component of the introduction in the research proposal. The part focuses on challenges or problems anticipated by the researcher such as time, financial limitation that might influence the scope of the study. Others could be inaccessibility of certain information. However, the researcher should make an attempt to state how the challenges were overcome.

5.4.7 Conceptual framework or Theoretical Framework

The Limitation of the Study is followed by the section on the **Conceptual framework or Theoretical Framework**. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks are significant aspects of every research proposal. These frameworks guide the process of research and provide the foundation for establishing its credibility. In particular, conceptual and theoretical frameworks define how a researcher formulates a research problem, investigates the problem and the interpretation of the data accruing from such an investigation. Thus, the inclusion of a theoretical or conceptual framework in a research proposal is an important requirement of sound research. By definition, a conceptual framework is the researcher's explanation of how the research problem would be explored. The conceptual framework presents an integrated manner of considering a problem under study. Likewise, a theoretical framework refers to

the theory that a researcher chooses to guide a specific research Imenda (2014). Thus a theoretical framework is considered as the application of a theory or a set of concepts drawn from one and the same theory to offer an explanation of an event or highlight a particular phenomenon or research problem.

5.4.8 Literature review

The next component is Literature review. The literature review is written to place a research study within the context of existing information and other studies in the research topic. It gives recognition to other scholars who have written on the same topic/theme and it also allows a researcher to point out what is new about the intended research. The researcher should specifically indicate if the research is building on a previous study or a well-established theory; addressing certain gaps in knowledge that exist; or adding to existing knowledge by doing a study with a different or more complete methodology. In order to **write a good literature review, the following should be considered by the researcher;**

- **The researcher should cite**, so as to keep the primary focus on the literature relevant to the research problem.
- **The researcher should be able to compare** the various arguments, theories, methodologies, and findings expressed in the literature: what do the authors agree on? Who applies similar approaches to analysing the research problem?
- **The researcher should also be able to contrast** the various arguments, themes, methodologies, approaches, and controversies expressed in the literature: describe what the major areas of disagreement are, controversy, or debate among scholars?
- **Further the researcher should also be able to critique** the literature: Which arguments are more persuasive, and why? Which approaches, findings, and methodologies seem most reliable, valid, or appropriate, and why? Additionally, the researcher should pay attention to the verbs they use to describe what other authors said for example such as asserts, demonstrates, argues.
- **The researcher should also link** the literature to their own topic of research and investigation: at this stage the researcher can explain how their own work draw upon, depart from, synthesize, or add a new perspective to what has been said in the literature.

5.4.9 Research Designs and Methodology

The next part of the research proposal is the section on **Research Designs and Methodology**. The purpose of this section is to describe the research plans and approach. It provides a full description of the general research design, as well as the specific methods and procedures intended to be used in the research project. The researcher should describe the overall research design by building upon and drawing examples from the review of the literature. The researcher should be specific about the methodological approaches planned to undertake to obtain information and the techniques to be used to analyse the data. **This section must be well-written and logically organized because a researcher is not actually doing the research, yet, the reader must have confidence that it is worth pursuing.** The objective here is to convince the reader that the overall research design and proposed methods of analysis will correctly address the problem and that the methods will provide the means to effectively interpret the potential results. The designs and methods should be unmistakably tied to the specific aims of your study.

When describing the methods the researcher should always cover the following:

- Specify the research process that will be undertaken and the way the information collected will be interpreted in relation to the research problem. The researcher should not just describe what they intend to achieve from applying the methods chosen, but state how they will spend their time while applying these methods e.g. recording text from interviews to find statements about the archives (that is if this is your topic of study).
- The researcher should ensure that the methodology is not just a list of tasks; it is an argument as to why these tasks add up to the best way to investigate the research problem. This is an important point because the mere listing of tasks to be performed does not demonstrate that, collectively, they effectively address the research problem. The researcher should clearly explain this.
- The researcher should anticipate and acknowledge any potential barriers and pitfalls in carrying out the research design and explain how they plan to address them. No method is perfect; therefore, the researcher need to describe where they anticipate challenges may exist in obtaining data or accessing information.

Additionally, the way a researcher describes the methods used varies depending on the topic of study:

If the topic of study is an incident or event, in the discipline of history, the event or incident that represents the case to be studied is usually bounded by time and place, with a clear beginning and end and with an identifiable location or position relative to its surroundings. The subject of analysis can be a rare or critical event or it can focus on a typical or regular event. The purpose of studying a rare event is to illuminate new ways of thinking about the broader research problem or to test a hypothesis. Critical incident case studies must describe the method by which a researcher identified the event and explain the process by which he/she determined the validity of this case to inform broader perspectives about the research problem or to reveal new findings. However, the event does not have to be a rare or uniquely significant to support new thinking about the research problem or to challenge an existing hypothesis. However, whether the event is rare or not, the methods section should include an explanation of (a) when did it take place; (b) what were the underlying circumstances leading to the event; and (c) what were the consequences of the event in relation to the research problem.

Further if the topic under research is a person (biography). The researcher needs to explain why they selected this particular individual to be studied and describe what experiences they have had that provide an opportunity to advance new understandings about the research problem. The researcher should mention any background about this person which might help the reader understand the significance of their experiences that make them worthy of study. This includes describing the relationship this person has had with other people, institutions, and/or events that support using them as the subject for a case study research paper. It is particularly important to differentiate the person as the subject of analysis from others and to succinctly explain how the person relates to examining the research problem for example, why is one politician in a particular local election used to show an increase in voter turnout from any other candidate running in the election. Such issues apply to a specific group of people used as a case study unit of analysis.

More so, if a research study involves a place. In general, a case study that investigates a place suggests a subject of analysis that is unique or special in some way and that this uniqueness can be used to build new understanding or knowledge about the research problem. A case study of a place must not only describe its various attributes relevant to the research problem such as

physical, social, historical, cultural, economic, political, but a researcher must state the method by which they determined that this place will illuminate new understandings about the research problem. It is also important to articulate why a particular place as the case for study is being used if similar places also exist, for example if a researcher is studying patterns of homeless street kids in open spaces, they need to explain why they are studying Lusaka rather than Kabwe. If applicable, the researcher need to describe what type of human activity involving this place makes it a good choice to study.

Additionally, if the research study deals with a particular phenomenon; a phenomenon refers to a fact, occurrence, or circumstance that can be studied or observed but with the cause or explanation to be in question. In this sense, a phenomenon that forms a subject of study or investigation can encompass anything that can be observed or presumed to exist but is not fully understood. In the social sciences, the case usually focuses on human interaction within a complex physical, social, economic, cultural, or political system. A case study of a phenomenon most often encompasses an in-depth analysis of a cause and effect that is grounded in an interactive relationship between people and their environment in some way. The choice of the case or set of cases to study cannot appear random. Evidence that supports the method by which researchers identify and choose their subject of analysis should clearly support investigation of the research problem and linked to key findings from your literature review. the researcher should cite any studies that helped a researcher determine that the case they chose was appropriate for examining the problem.

5.4.10 Bibliography or References Section

The final part of the research proposal is the Bibliography or references section. As with any scholarly research paper, a researcher must cite the sources they used. In a standard research proposal, this section can take two forms. **Reference** lists only the literature that were actually used or cited in the proposal while a **Bibliography** lists everything that a researcher used or cited in your proposal, with additional citations to any key sources relevant to understanding the research problem. In either case, this section should testify to the fact that a researcher did enough preparatory work to ensure the project will complement and not just duplicate the efforts of other researchers.

5. 5 Common Mistakes to Avoid When Writing a Research Proposal

- **Failure to be concise.** A research proposal must be focused and not be "all over the map" or diverge into on unrelated tangents without a clear sense of purpose.
- **Failure to cite landmark works in your literature review.** Proposals should be grounded in foundational research that lays a foundation for understanding the development and scope of the issue.
- **Failure to delimit the contextual boundaries of your research** e.g., time, place or people. As with any research paper, a proposed research study must inform the reader how and in what ways the study will examine the problem.
- **Failure to develop a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed research.** This is critical. In many workplace settings, the research proposal is intended to argue for why a study should be funded.
- **Sloppy or imprecise writing, or poor grammar.** Although a research proposal does not represent a completed research study, there is still an expectation that it is well-written and follows the style and rules of good academic writing.
- **Too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on major issues.** A proposal should focus on only a few key research questions in order to support the argument that the research needs to be conducted. Minor issues, even if valid, can be mentioned but they should not dominate the overall narrative.

Terminologies: Research proposal, Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Aims and Objectives of the Study, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Limitation of the Study, the Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks, Literature Review, Research Designs and Methodology.

Activity

1. Explain the meaning of a research proposal.
2. Describe the structure of the research proposal.
3. Explain the characteristics of the main components of a research proposal.

Summary

This unit looked at proposal writing in the discipline of history. A research proposal has been discussed as a research plan or suggestion which describes ideas for an investigation on a particular topic. This unit further discussed the structure and principles of constructing a research proposal. Specifically, it has been discussed that a history research proposal consists of the following components: Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the study, Aims and

Objectives of the Study, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Limitation of the Study, Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks, Literature Review and Research Designs and Methodology. **The unit discussed that the final part of a history research proposal is the Bibliography or references section.** A **Reference** lists only the literature that were actually used or cited in the proposal while a **Bibliography** lists everything that a researcher used or cited in your proposal, with additional citations to any key sources relevant to understanding the research problem. Further, the unit discussed the following common mistakes to avoid when writing a research proposal; **failure to be concise, to cite landmark works in the literature review, delimit the contextual boundaries of a research, develop a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed research, Sloppy or imprecise writing, or poor grammar, too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on major issues.**

UNIT 6

CONCEPTUAL, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

6. Introduction

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks as well as a literature review are important features of every research proposal. These frameworks guide the process of research and define how a researcher formulates a research problem, investigate the problem and the interpretation of the data accruing from such an investigation. Thus, the presence of a theoretical or conceptual framework in a research proposal is a must. In this unit, you will be exposed to discussions on the definitions of theoretical and conceptual frameworks, their significance in the research process and insightful suggestions on how they can be constructed and utilised for a specific research.

6.1 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- explain the concepts of conceptual and theoretical framework.
- discuss the significance of the conceptual and theoretical framework in research proposal.
- describe the process of compiling a literature review in a research proposal.

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

6.2 Conceptual framework

In the discipline of history concepts are mostly used than theoretical frameworks. A concept is an abstract or general idea that is drawn from a specific instance. A concept is a word or phrase that symbolises several interrelated ideas. Framing (outlining) is the formulation of plans and important details. In another way, it's simply a way of conceiving something. Therefore **a conceptual framework** is defined as a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry and used to structure a presentation. A conceptual framework is also a research tool intended to help a researcher to develop awareness and understanding of the situation under investigation and to communicate this. A conceptual framework is a useful tool which helps a researcher to make meaning of the findings of the research.

Conceptualisation is creating or ‘‘manufacturing’’ an idea or explanation and formulating it mentally. It is an act or formulating something by thinking up particular ideas or actions intended to deal with a problem or situation. A conceptualisation is an abstract, simplified view of the world that we wish to represent. Conceptualisation is an abstract, basic view of a particular event, situation, phenomenon or word that we wish to represent for some purpose. A conceptual framework helps researchers to organise their thinking and complete an investigation successfully. It must explain the relationship among interlinked concepts. It explains the possible connection between the variables and answers the why questions. To find out how effective ones conceptual framework is, one should analyse whether the set objectives have been addressed.

Unlike a theory, a concept does not need to be discussed to be understood (Smyth, 2004). In order to understand a concept, one needs to understand the links and associations that go with that concept. Researchers who understand concepts become more well-informed in their area of research. Understanding is greater and of higher quality if we understand the dynamics. As Tromp and Kombo (2014) argues, in research if one can understand a concept one becomes very close to owning it. A conceptual framework is also important in a study because it provides a clear link from literature to research goals and research questions. It helps in the formulation of the research design and provides reference points for discussion of literature, methodology and analysis of data. Conceptualizing the problem provides a means to connect ideas and information/data so that deeper connections can be revealed.

According to Tromp and kombo (2014) good conceptual framework should have the following qualities:

- Should be clear and concise.
- Language used should be simple and straight forward.
- The conceptual framework should be self-explanatory.
- Should have supportive evidence of ideas used.
- It should be logical and address the title, research objectives and statement of the problem.
- It should be consistent with the literature review.
- It should also show a link between the literature review and the study problem. It should develop a set of guiding principles against which judgements and prediction might be made.
- It should act as a reference point from which to locate the research questions within contemporary theorising.

- It should provide a structure within which to organize the content of research and to frame conclusions within the context.

6.2.1 Strategies of framing a Conceptual Framework

As a student, you might find the process of designing a conceptual framework a demanding task. However, what is important to note is that a conceptual framework for your research is something that is constructed, not found (ready-made). It incorporates pieces that are borrowed from elsewhere, but the structure, the overall coherence, is something that you build, not something that exists ready-made. It is important for you to pay attention to the existing theories and research that are relevant to what you plan to study, because these are often key sources for understanding what is going on with these phenomena. Thus, to come up with an effective conceptual framework, the following strategies will be useful:-

Designing an effective conceptual framework requires the analysing of a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of inquiry. First and foremost, it is mandatory for researchers to have a focus on reflection. This is to ensure an assessment of situations from social, economic and philosophical perspectives. As such, a researcher has to be clear about the objectives of the research study. Factors such as independent and dependent variables and research questions should also be included into perspective. Correspondingly, defining the key issue or problem to be addressed as well as defining its practical boundaries in a necessity. The other strategy demands the identification of key uncertainties or gaps in knowledge about the situation or the questions that need to be answered by the study.

There is also need to for the selection of concepts. This means that a research should select the concepts to be used in relation to the problem. At this stage, the focus should be on alternative ideas that bear directly on the research problem or situation. Creation of options is yet another strategy needed for preparing an effective conceptual framework. It demands the formulation of possible actions prior to selection. This addresses the aspect of establishing sequences for creating ideas. The perception of the circumstances gives rise to ‘‘mental sets’’ in relation to those circumstances. By mental sets is meant the researcher’s knowledge of what to do and the potential outcomes. Additionally, seeking the tools for conceptualisation is equally cardinal. That is the very tools for the highest level of abstract thought. At this stage ideas are linked as well as their relationship identified.

6.2.2 Challenges faced in constructing a Conceptual Framework

There are numerous challenges experienced in the process of designing a conceptual framework. Largely, the main challenging task involves designing a framework that a researcher can communicate through effectively. This includes selecting appropriate language for the descriptions of concepts under study. Descriptors form the common language reference points for discussion, judgements and reporting.

Another challenge pertains to disunity in themes within the conceptual framework which is a major weakness. It is important to note that elements of each theme in a study overlap considerably and it is therefore important to understand that themes are parts of a linked context rather than isolated strategies making independent contribution to the situation under consideration. As kombo and Tromp (2006) states, some researchers write ideas that are isolated, yet in a conceptual framework elements of each theme should overlap.

Further, another challenge faced in planning a conceptual framework has to do with a researcher not be quite conversant with the research objectives and the literature that informs the problem under study. The literature should support the investigation through the conceptual framework. This is to mean that it should provide reference points from which conclusions can be made following the data analysis in the dissertation or thesis. There is yet another challenge that is associated with replication of conceptual frameworks of other researchers without an effort to inquire if the framework fits in the current research study.

6.3 Theoretical Framework

According to Imenda (2014), a theoretical framework refers to the theory that a researcher chooses to guide a specific research. Thus a theoretical framework is considered as the application of a theory or a set of concepts drawn from one and the same theory to offer an explanation of an event or highlight a particular phenomenon or research problem. For example, this could refer to the evolution theory or any similar pre-existing generalisation that could be applied to a specific research problem, deductively. Similarly, Grant and Osanloo (2014) defined a theoretical framework as a guide for research based on an existing theory in the field of inquiry that reflects the hypothesis of study. In other words, it is a guide that is often borrowed by the researcher from existing theories to develop a research inquiry. A theoretical framework synthesizes existing theories and related concepts and empirical research, to develop a foundation for new theory development. As such, it serves as a foundation upon which a research is constructed.

On the same view, Sinclair (2007) likens a theoretical framework to a map or travel plan which provides a path to a particular location or destination. In Sinclair's view, when planning a journey

in unfamiliar country, people seek as much knowledge as possible about the best way to travel, using previous experience and the accounts of others who have been on similar trips. Hence travel tips enable them to ascertain the abilities, expectations and equipment that may help them to have a successful journey with good outcomes. Similarly, a theoretical framework guides the research so that the researcher does not deviate from the confines of the accepted theories to make the final conclusions or contribution scholarly and academic.

Further, the theoretical framework is also described as a “blueprint” for the entire dissertation inquiry. It functions as the guide on which to build and support a research study. At the same time, it provides the structure to define how a researcher will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the research project as a whole, Grant and Osanloo (2014). Eisenhart (1991) also considered a theoretical framework as a structure that guides research by depending on a formal theory constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships. Thus, the theoretical framework consists of the selected theory or theories that undergird a researchers’ thinking with regards to how they understand and plan to research their topics, as well as the concepts and definitions from that theory that are relevant to their topic of study.

6.3.1 Guidelines in Formulating a Theoretical Framework

Selecting an appropriate theoretical framework for your dissertation research as a Masters student is an important and necessary process which **YOU** should engage. The selection of a theoretical framework requires a deep and thoughtful understanding of your problem, purpose, significance, and research questions. It is imperative that all four constructs of the problem, purpose, significance, and research question are tightly aligned and intricately interwoven so that your theoretical framework can serve as the foundation for your work and guide your choice of research design and data analysis. At the same time, it is worth noting that a theoretical framework is not something that is found readily available in the literature. You must review course readings and pertinent research literature for theories and analytic models that are relevant to the research problem you are investigating. The selection of a theory should depend on its appropriateness, ease of application, and explanatory power.

Therefore, developing an effective theoretical framework involves step by step strategies. Firstly a researcher needs to examine the thesis title and research problem. This is because a research problem anchors the entire study and forms the basis from which a researcher constructs a theoretical framework. Thereafter, a researcher is required to Brainstorm on what is considered to

be the key variables of the specific research. At the same time answer the question on what factors contribute to the presumed effect. This is followed by a review of related literature to find answers to the research question. The next strategy involves the listing of the constructs and variables that might be relevant to the research study and grouping these variables into independent and dependent categories. Another strategy involves the review of the key social science theories available in the field of study and the selection of a theory or theories that can best explain the relationships between the key variables in the specific research study. The final strategy requires a discussion of the assumptions or propositions of the selected theory and point out their relevance to the research study.

Another principle that is significant in constructing a relevant theoretical frame work involves the consideration for the discipline that the theory will be applied. The selection of a theory depends on the discipline or field of research. Even within a particular discipline, a specific theory or theories that resonate with the area of inquiry must be selected. The theory should agree with the methodology plan of the study and should be well developed to include several theoretical constructs. It is also mandatory that the specific concepts or theoretical principles selected should meet the objectives of the study. More importantly, the problem of the study, the purpose and importance of the study has to correlate with the theoretical framework. At the same time, the theoretical framework should be used in line with the research questions and should inform the literature review. Additionally, the theoretical framework should undergird the conclusions and recommendations based on the data analysis.

It is important to note that there is no one perfect or right theory for a research study, though certain theories are popular. However, the adaptation of a theory should reflect the understanding of the researcher regarding the study. The construction of a theoretical framework requires a thorough understanding of the of the research problem, purpose, significance and research questions of the study. The chosen theoretical framework must accentuate the purpose and importance of the study. In order to make an appropriate selection of a theoretical context, the researcher must consider the guiding principles of the study and the purpose of the study must entail noticeable aspects of the theoretical framework and must agree with the assertions of promulgated by the theorists of the selected theory.

Thus after the entire study has been conducted, the research findings accrued from the study must corroborate, extend or modify the existing theory that was borrowed for the study. At this point, the researcher may critique, develop and or expand the theory that served as a guide for the findings

gleaned from the study. This critique may or is often be carried out in the data analysis stage of the research the final conclusions of the study are drawn.

More importantly, at the start of any research study, it is important to consider relevant theory underpinning the knowledge base of the phenomenon to be researched. By addressing simple questions, the researcher can begin to develop a loosely-structured theoretical framework to guide the research. In this case for example, the following questions can be asked: What do I know about the phenomenon that I want to study? What types of knowledge are available for research? An appropriate theoretical framework is selected through conducting a literature review. The theoretical framework may change as the researchers consult more sources. It is advisable to develop the theoretical framework from the broader to the specific Kumar (2005).

6.3.2 Significance of the theoretical framework in the research study

The theoretical framework provides several benefits to a research study. The initial benefit is that it provides the structure in showing how a researcher defines the research study philosophically, epistemologically, methodology and analytically. The theoretical framework assists researchers in situating and contextualising formal theories into their research as a guide. This positions research studies in scholarly and academic approaches. Moreover, the theoretical framework serves as the focus for research and it is linked to the research problem under study, Ravitch and Carl (2016). The theoretical framework, thus aids the researcher in finding an appropriate research approach, analytical tools and procedures for a research inquiry. It makes research findings more meaningful and generalizable. Thus a research without the theoretical framework lacks accurate direction to the search of appropriate literature and scholarly discussions of the findings from research, Imenda (2014).

The theoretical framework guides and resonates with every aspect of the research process from the definition of the problem, literature review, methodology, presentation and discussion of the findings as well as the conclusions that are drawn. In this perspective for example, researchers should create theoretical frameworks that include a philosophical and methodological model to help design their work, a formal theory that provides context for the outcome of the events conducted in the research. Including data collection and analysis based on the theoretical framework. As stated by Grant and Osanloo (2014), without a theoretical framework, the structure and vision for a study is unclear, much like a house that cannot be constructed without a blueprint. By contrast, a research plan that contains a theoretical framework allows the dissertation study to be strong and structured with an organized flow from one chapter to the next. Theoretical

frameworks provide evidence of academic standards and procedure. They also offer an explanation of why the study is pertinent and how the researcher expects to fill the gap in the literature. Further, Eisenhart (1991) contends that the theoretical framework helps the researcher in considering alternative theories that might challenge his or her perspective, thereby enriching the strength of the study.

The theoretical framework of the study is also a structure that holds or supports theory of a research study. It presents the theory which explains why the research problem exists. Thus, the theoretical framework is but a theory that serves as a basis for conducting research. It helps the researcher see clearly the variables of the study and provides a general framework for data analysis.

A theoretical framework moves the research beyond the realm of the descriptive into the sphere of the explanatory. By this, it means that the theory connects together all the isolated aspects of empirical data into a coherent conceptual framework for a wider applicability Manion and Morrison (2007). Therefore, having some theoretical perspective guiding the research provides a framework within which to attempt to answer the research questions. Without a theoretical framework in a research study, the researcher can speculate at best or offer no explanation at all Lester (2005). It should also be noted that a theoretical framework is the central piece in the research problem. It helps a researcher to shape any inquiry by situating it within a scholarly discourse and links the study to the broader body of literature. By so doing, a theoretical framework provides a frame within which a problem under investigation can be understood, Bryman (2012). Additionally, the theoretical framework shapes research questions and helps to focus the study. It allows the researcher to narrow the research project to manageable size and at the same time offering a plan for data collection and operates as a tool to interpret research findings.

While theories are formulated to explain, predict and understand phenomena and in most cases to challenge and extend knowledge within the limits of the critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold the theory of a research. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research is being conducted.

The importance of utilising a theoretical framework in a dissertation study cannot be stressed enough. The theoretical framework is the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study. It serves as the structure and support for the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions. The theoretical framework provides a grounding base, or an anchor, for the literature review, and most importantly, the methods and analysis.

The theoretical framework connects the researcher to existing knowledge. Guided by a relevant theory, a researcher is given a basis for a hypotheses and choice of research methods. Articulating the theoretical assumptions of a research study forces a researcher to address questions of why and how. It permits a researcher to move from simply describing a phenomenon observed to generalizing about various aspects of that phenomenon. Having a theory helps a researcher to identify the limits to those generalizations. Thus, a theoretical framework specifies which key variables influence a phenomenon of interest. It alerts a researcher to examine how those key variables might differ and under what circumstances.

6.4 Literature Review

A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by an accredited scholars and researchers. It is a critical look at the existing research that is significant to the work that the researcher will be conducting. It involves examining documents such as books, journal articles and dissertations that are relevant to the topic of study. A literature review is important in research because it enables a researcher to study different kinds of literature related to the topic of study. By studying various literature, the researcher gets clarity and better understanding of the theoretical foundations related to the intended topic of study. At the same time wide reading also exposes the researcher to a variety of approaches dealing with the research issue. This contributes to a well-designed methodology. The researcher can avoid methods indicated in the literature to have failed and adopt new approaches. This will result in a significant study.

Literature review also provides the researcher, insight into what has already been researched on the topic of study indicating its strengths and weaknesses. This information guides the researcher in the formulation of theories or concepts that aim at addressing the identified gaps. An understanding of existing research helps the researcher to develop a significant problem which provides further knowledge in the field of study. It also helps in delimiting the researcher's problem. This is through highlighting what has been researched already and what would be useful to focus on in the current study.

There are different ways to organise a literature review. A researcher can make use of subheadings to bring order and coherence to the review. It is also helpful for a researcher to keep in mind that they are telling a story to an audience. A researcher should try to tell it in a stimulating and engaging manner. They should not bore them, because it may lead to rejection of a worthy proposal. A good strategy is to break the literature into "conceptual categories" or themes rather than systematically or chronologically describing groups of materials one at a time.

Additionally, since a literature review is information dense, it is important that this section is logically structured to enable a reader to understand the key arguments underpinning the proposed study in relation to that of other researchers.

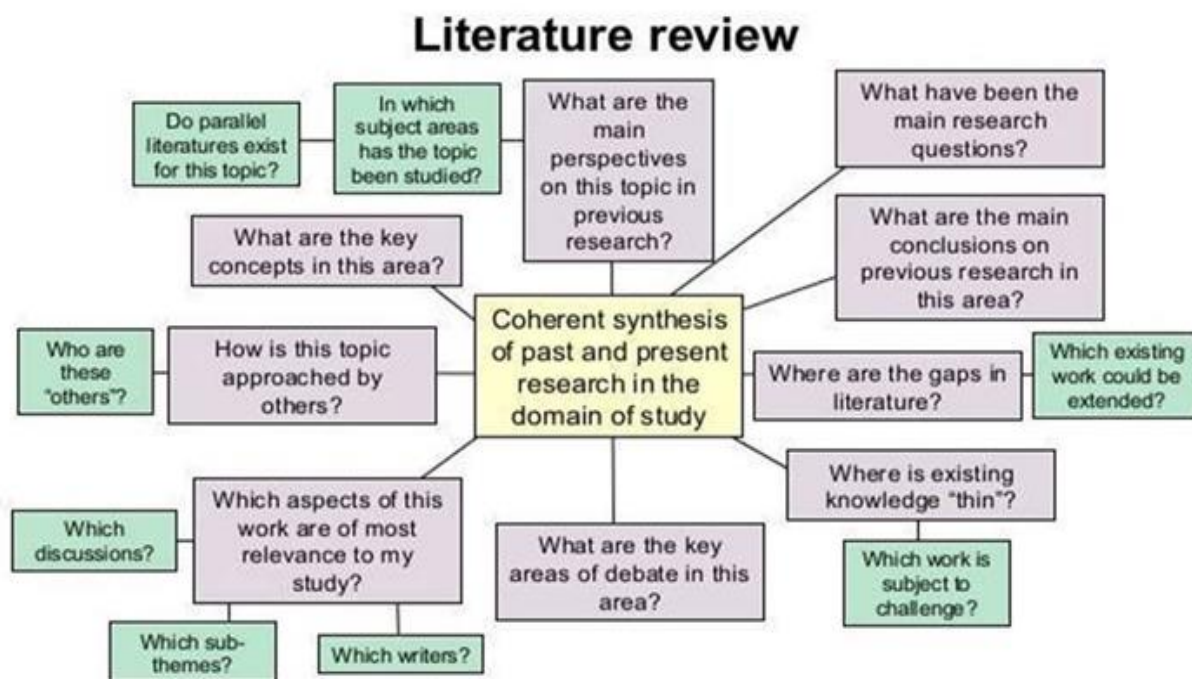
Generally the literature review is focused on providing background information and enabling historical interpretation of the topic of intended research in relation to the research problem. The following techniques are essential in reviewing literature:

- **The researcher should place relevant works in the context of their contribution to understanding the case study being investigated.** This would involve summarizing studies that have used a similar subject of analysis to investigate the research problem. If there is literature using the same or a very similar case to study, a researcher need to explain why duplicating past research is important e.g., conditions have changed; earlier studies were conducted long ago.
- **A researcher should describe the relationship each work has to the others under consideration that informs the reader why this case is applicable.** The literature review should include a description of any works that support using the case to investigate the research problem and the underlying research questions.
- **Further, the researcher should identify new ways to interpret prior research using the case study.** If applicable, a researcher should review any research that has examined the research problem using a different research design. The researcher should explain how the use of a case study design may reveal new knowledge or a new perspective or that can redirect research in an important new direction.
- **Also, the researcher should resolve conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies.** This refers to synthesizing any literature that points to unresolved issues of concern about the research problem and describing how the subject of analysis that forms the case study can help resolve these existing contradictions.
- **The researcher should point the way in fulfilling a need for additional research.** A literature review should examine any literature that lays a foundation for understanding why their case study design and the subject of analysis around which a researcher has designed your study may reveal a new way of approaching the research problem or offer a perspective that points to the need for additional research.
- **A researcher should expose any gaps that exist in the literature that the case study could help to fill.** The researcher should summarize any literature that not only

shows how the subject of analysis contributes to understanding the research problem, but how the case contributes to a new way of understanding the problem that prior research has failed to do.

- **A researcher should locate the research within the context of existing literature.** Collectively, the literature review should always place the case study within the larger domain of prior research about the problem. The overarching purpose of reviewing pertinent literature in a case study paper is to demonstrate that the researcher has thoroughly identified and synthesized earlier studies in relation to explaining the relevance of the case in addressing the research problem.

The following diagram demonstrates the techniques of writing an effective literature review.



As a researcher, it is crucial to understand that a literature review can suffer from the following problems:

- Lacking organisation and structure
- Lacking focus, unity and coherence
- Being repetitive and verbose
- Failing to cite influential papers

- Failing to keep up with recent developments
- Failing to critically evaluate cited papers
- Citing irrelevant or trivial references
- Depending too much on secondary sources

Terminologies: Conceptual Framework, Theoretical Framework, Literature Review

Activity

1. Explain the meanings and significance of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks in research proposal.
2. Compare and contrast the characteristics and roles of conceptual and theoretical frameworks research proposal.
3. Discuss the various strategies of writing an effective literature review.
4. Why is a literature review the important in a research proposal?

Summary

This unit discussed the definitions of theoretical and conceptual frameworks, their significance in the research process and insightful suggestions on how they can be constructed and utilised for a specific research. Specifically, a conceptual framework has been discussed as a research tool intended to help a researcher to develop awareness and understanding of the situation under investigation and to communicate this. A conceptual framework is a useful tool which helps a researcher to make meaning of the findings of the research. It also helps researchers to organise their thinking and complete an investigation successfully. It must explain the relationship among interlinked concepts. The unit also discussed a theoretical framework as a theory that a researcher chooses to guide a specific research. Thus a theoretical framework has been considered as the application of a theory or a set of concepts drawn from one and the same theory to offer an explanation of an event or highlight a particular phenomenon or research problem. The unit further discussed a literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by an accredited scholars and researchers. It has also been discussed that a literature review provides the researcher, insight into what has already been researched on the topic of study indicating its strengths and weaknesses. This information guides the researcher in the formulation of theories or concepts that aim at addressing the identified gaps.

UNIT 7

RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODOLOGY

7.1 Introduction

After writing a research proposal the researcher has to collect data and analyse or interpret it in various ways. Before the writing of a research report, the researcher needs to decide how to plan research designs and methodologies for the study. Therefore, this unit looks at the various research designs including methodologies that can be used in a historical research. The unit specifically describes research designs and methods as well as how they can be applied in carrying out a historical research study.

7.2 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- explain the concepts of Research Design and Research Method.
- discuss the types of Research Designs and Research Methods.
- compare and contrast the difference between Research Design and Research Method

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

7.3 What is a Research Design?

A research design can be defined as the structure of research. A research design is used to structure the research or to show how all the major parts of the research project work together to try to address the central research questions. **Research design** is a specific outline detailing how a chosen method will be applied to answer a particular research question.

The research design can also refer to the overall strategy that a researcher uses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, to effectively address the research problem. A research design constitutes the blueprint for the collection and analysis of information. A research problem determines the type of design a researcher can use, not the other way around.

Therefore, the function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables a researcher to effectively address the research problem as unambiguously as possible. In social sciences research, obtaining evidence relevant to the research problem generally entails specifying the type of evidence needed to test a theory, to evaluate a program, or to accurately describe a phenomenon. Research designs can vary considerably, but any effective design will do the following things:

- Identify the research problem clearly and justify its selection,
- Review previously published literature associated with the problem area,
- Clearly and explicitly specify hypotheses [i.e., research questions] central to the problem selected,
- Describe the methods of analysis which will be applied to the information collected

7.4 Types of Research Designs

There are a number of research designs that can be used in a historical research study. The following are some of the designs that could be useful in conducting a historical study among others. (University of Southern California Libraries: 2016).

7.4.1 Historical Research Design

The purpose of a historical research design is to collect, verify, and synthesize evidence from the past to establish facts that defend or refute the researcher's assumption. It uses secondary sources and a variety of primary documentary evidence, such as, logs, diaries, official records, reports, archives, and non-textual information that includes maps, pictures, audio and visual recordings. The limitation is that the sources must be both authentic and valid.

Historical research enables a researcher to explore and explain the meanings, phases and characteristics of a phenomenon or process at a particular point of time in the past. The variable focus of research in the discipline of history is time. The essential aim is to identify forms of a chosen occurrence in a defined situation and environment. The strategy of historical research is also suitable in other disciplines as it enables a researcher to focus on exploring the historical forms of phenomena. The strategy of historical research is linked to defining and explaining events in the past based on interpretations. Historical research, use

various approaches; for example a researcher can use a variety of methods of analysis but Qualitative analysis is the norm. More so, quantitative analysis can also explain the past.

Further a historical design is also based on these principles:

- The historical research design is unassuming meaning that the act of research does not affect the results of the study.
- The historical approach is well suited for trend analysis.
- Historical records can add important contextual background required to more fully understand and interpret a research problem.
- There is no possibility of researcher-subject interaction that could affect the findings.
- Historical sources can be used over and over to study different research problems or to repeat a previous study.
- In a historical design the ability to fulfil the aims of a research are directly related to the amount and quality of documentation available to understand the research problem.
- Since historical research relies on data from the past, there is no way to manipulate it to control for contemporary contexts.
- The sources of historical materials must be archived consistently to ensure access.
- Original authors bring their own perspectives and biases to the interpretation of past events and these biases are more difficult to ascertain in historical resources..
- It rare that the entirety of historical documentation needed to fully address a research problem is available for interpretation; therefore, gaps need to be acknowledged.

7.4.2 Case Study Design

A case study is an in-depth study of a particular research problem. It is often used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one or a few easily researchable examples. In other disciplines, the case study research design is also useful for testing whether a specific theory and model actually applies to phenomena in the real world. It is a useful design when not much is known about a phenomenon.

In history, a case study enables a researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of a certain past event or occurrence. The case or cases under research can be either single or multiple, similar or diverse. A case study focuses on a single case with the aim of producing

detailed and intensive information on the chosen case. The core feature of a case study is a narrow focus, which leads a researcher to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon. A case study also enables a researcher to make a specific interpretation of the phenomenon in a particular context. The case study should also aim to explore the dynamics, processes and structures of the phenomenon or past event in a manner that the results of the research are valid in broader socio-economic, political or cultural contexts.

As a research strategy, the case study has an unrestricted framework, which enables a researcher to use any of the choice of suitable methods of analysis. A researcher who uses a case study design can apply a variety of methodologies and rely on a variety of sources to investigate a research problem. It can also extend experience or add strength to what is already known through earlier research. The case study design can also provide detailed descriptions of specific and rare cases. The design can further provide detailed descriptions of specific and rare cases. Generally, social scientists make wide use of this research design to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of concepts and theories and extension of methods.

A case study can also have its shortcomings such as for example, a single or small number of study cases offers little basis for establishing reliability or to generalize the findings to a wider population of people, places, or events. The case may not be representative or typical of the larger problem being investigated. For example if the criteria for selecting a case is because it represents a very unusual or unique phenomenon or problem for study, then the interpretation of the findings can only apply to that particular case.

7.4.3 Descriptive Design

Descriptive research designs help provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem; a descriptive study cannot conclusively ascertain answers to why. In history a descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the past status of the phenomena and to describe "what existed" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation.

7.4.4 Narrative Design

Narrative research enables a researcher to explore the meanings of human action and phenomena constructed in narratives. Narrative as a concept combines stories and narration. A narrative research strategy focuses on the types of stories told about the researched

phenomenon or event. The starting point in this kind of design strategy is the idea of language and language use as a primary element in the construction of meanings.

7.4.5 Longitudinal Design

This kind of design enables a researcher to explore and explain change and development over a long period of time (i.e. years and decades). The basis of longitudinal research strategy is that a researcher reviews a phenomenon or past event, observing any changes in it and analysing the factors that might have influenced the change or the consequences of the change over a long period of time.

7.4.6 Exploratory Design

An exploratory design is conducted about a research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to. The focus is on gaining insights and familiarity for later investigation or undertaken when problems are in a preliminary stage of investigation. The goals of exploratory research are intended to produce the following possible insights: Issues get refined for more systematic investigation and formulation of new research questions. Also, direction for future research and techniques get developed. This design is a useful approach for gaining background information on a particular topic. Exploratory research is flexible and can address research questions of all types (what, why, how). It also provides an opportunity to define new terms and clarify existing concepts.

In a non-history discipline, a longitudinal study follows the same sample over time and makes repeated observations. With longitudinal surveys, for example, the same group of people is interviewed at regular intervals, enabling researchers to track changes over time and to relate them to variables that might explain why the changes occur. Longitudinal research designs describe patterns of change and help establish the direction and magnitude of causal relationships.

8.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Designs

On the general term, the research design is viewed from two perspectives, **quantitative research design or qualitative research designs, which both have** extended components. They can both be used or applied distinctively or together. **A *quantitative research design*** is used to examine the relationship between variable by using numbers and statistics to explain and analyse its findings and there are four types of quantitative research design:

- Descriptive design research: As the name implies, it is intended to describe the present status of this type of design that does not require a hypothesis to begin with. These analyses are generated from existing data.
- Correlational design research: This seeks to discover if two variables are associated or related in some way, using statistical analysis, while observing the variable.
- Experimental design research: This is a method used to establish a cause and effect relationship between two variables or among a group of variables. The independent variable is manipulated to observe the effect on the dependent variable. For example, a certain group is exposed to a variable and then compared with the group not exposed to the variable.
- Quasi-experimental design research: This experiment is designed just like the true experimental design, except that it does not use randomized sample groups. Also, it is used when a typical research design is not practicable.

A Qualitative research design, on the other hand, is exploratory in nature as it tries to explore not to predict the outcome. It seeks to answer the questions of what and how. *A qualitative research design* is used to explore the meaning and understanding of complex social, economic, political, cultural environments, like the nature of people's experience, using case studies for example. *A quantitative research design* displays characteristics such as the following ways; An outline question stating the problem that needs to be solved; has a set order and procedure used to answer these questions?, analyses the data generated and draws its conclusion after the data has been organised and analysed so that the conclusion drawn from the findings is not predetermined.

Besides these characteristics identified above, *a qualitative research design* also intends to understand, describe or discover the findings. The researcher is usually the primary instruments that formulates the question and interprets the meaning of the data. The information used are mostly documented words from interviews, newspapers videos, etc. More than one type of information is collected during this research, from the field, where the participants are. In other words, the research goes beyond the intended scope, so making it emergent because the method of research changes and different types of data might be collected as the research goes on.

8. 2 What is a Research Methodology

Whereas a Research design is a plan to answer a research question, a research method is a strategy used to implement that plan. Research design and methods are different but closely related; because good research design ensures that the information obtained will help the researcher answer their research question more effectively.

Just as research designs can be categorised into quantitative and qualitative designs, research methods are equally classified into quantitative and qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods mostly used in the discipline of history used by historians in the collection of information (data) during research include the following:

- **Open-ended surveys:** While many surveys are designed to generate quantitative data, many are also designed with open-ended questions that allow for the generation and analysis of qualitative data. For example, a survey might be used to investigate not just which political candidates voters chose, but why they chose them, in their own words.
- **Focus group:** Discussion among a group of people about a topic to gather opinions that can be used for further research. In a focus group, a researcher engages a small group of participants in a conversation designed to generate data relevant to the research question. Focus groups can contain anywhere from 5 to 15 participants. Social scientists often use them in studies that examine an event or trend that occurs within a specific community. They are common in market research, too.
- **In-depth interviews:** Asking open-ended questions verbally to respondents. Researchers conduct in-depth interviews by speaking with participants in a one-on-one setting. Sometimes a researcher approaches the interview with a predetermined list of questions or topics for discussion but allows the conversation to evolve based on how the participant responds. Other times, the researcher has identified certain topics of interest but does not have a formal guide for the conversation, but allows the participant to guide it.
- **Interviews**, which may be structured, semi-structured or unstructured;
- **'Postcards'**, or small-scale written questionnaires that ask, for example, three or four focused questions of participants but allow them space to write in their own words

- **Oral history:** The oral history method is used to create a historical account of an event, group, or community, and typically involves a series of in-depth interviews conducted with one or multiple participants over an extended period.
- **Content analysis:** This method is used by sociologists to analyse social life by interpreting words and images from documents, film, art, music, and other cultural products and media. The researchers look at how the words and images are used, and the context in which they are used to draw inferences about the underlying culture. Content analysis of digital material, especially that generated by social media users, has become a popular technique within the social sciences.
- **Secondary data,** including diaries, written accounts of past events and reports.

8.3 Quantitative Research Methods

Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collection through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. In particular some of these methods include the following process of collecting information;

- **Surveys involve the** list of closed or multiple choice questions that is distributed to a sample (online, in person, or over the phone).
- **Experiments involve a** situation in which variables are controlled and manipulated to establish cause-and-effect relationships.
- **Observations require** observing people in a natural environment where variables can't be controlled.
- **Content analysis involve** systematically recording the presence of certain words or themes in a set of texts to analyse communication patterns

8.4 How to analyse qualitative and quantitative data

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing,

comparison, and pattern finding. It always involves what ‘mind work’ Researchers always engage their own intellectual capacities to make sense of qualitative data (Hatch 2002). Qualitative or quantitative data by itself can’t prove or demonstrate anything, but has to be analysed or interpreted to show its meaning in relation to the research questions. The method of analysis differs for each type of information i.e qualitative data and quantitative data.

8.4.1 Analysing quantitative data

Quantitative data or information is based on numbers. Simple math or more advanced statistical analysis is used to discover commonalities or patterns in the data. The results are often reported in graphs and tables. Applications such as Excel, SPSS, or R can be used to calculate aspects such as the following for example:

- Average scores.
- The number of times a particular answer was give.
- The correlation or causation between two or more variables.
- The reliability and validity of the results.

8.4.1 Analysing qualitative data

Qualitative data is more difficult to analyse than quantitative data because they are drawn from a wide variety of sources and they can be radically different in scope. It consists of text, images or videos instead of numbers. There are therefore a wide variety of methods for analysing them many of which involve structuring and coding the information into groups, categories and themes. There are also a variety of computer packages to support qualitative data analysis or interpretation. Largely, systems for analysis of qualitative data involve language because often, the output from qualitative research will be in the form of words. For example, data or information collected from written texts or through in-depth interviews or transcripts of meetings are often in form of words. Some common approaches or systems for analysing qualitative data or language based data or information include:

- **Qualitative content analysis:** Tracking the occurrence, position and meaning of words or phrases. The researcher can start with some ideas about assumptions or themes that might emerge, and look for them in the information that might have been collected. A researcher for example might use a colour-coding or numbering system

to identify text about the different themes, grouping together ideas and gathering evidence about views on each theme.

- **Thematic analysis:** Closely examining the data to identify the main themes and patterns
- **Narrative Analysis:** This looks at the way in which stories are told within an organisation or society to try to understand more about the way in which people think and are organised within groups.
- **Discourse analysis:** This approach not only analyses conversation, but also takes into account the social context in which the conversation occurs, including previous conversations, power relationships and the concept of individual identity. It may also include analysis of written sources, such as emails or letters, and body language to give a rich source of data surrounding the actual words used.
- **Grounded Analysis:** This is similar to content analysis, in that it uses similar techniques for coding. However, in grounded analysis, a researcher does not start from a defined point. Instead, they allow the information to ‘speak for itself’, with themes emerging from the discussions and conversations. In practice, this may be much harder to achieve because it requires you to put aside what you have read and simply concentrate on the information.
- **Social Network Analysis:** This form of analysis examines the links between individuals as a way of understanding what motivates behaviour. It has been used, for example, as a way of understanding why some people are more successful at work than others, and why some children were more likely to run away from home. This type of analysis may be most useful in combination with other methods, for example after some kind of content or grounded analysis to identify common themes about relationships. It’s often helpful to use a visual approach to this kind of analysis to generate a network diagram showing the relationships between members of a network.

- **Conversation Analysis:** This is largely used in ethnographic research. It assumes that conversations are all governed by rules and patterns which remain the same whoever is talking. It also assumes that what is said can only be understood by looking at what went before and after. Conversation analysis requires a detailed examination of the data, including exactly which words are used, in what order, whether speakers overlap their speech, and where the emphasis is placed. There are therefore detailed conventions used in transcribing for conversation analysis.
- **Computer-Aided Analysis:** While much of the data generated by qualitative research is coded and analysed using just the researcher's eyes and brain, the use of computer software to do these processes is increasingly popular within the social sciences. Such software analysis works well when the data is too large for humans to handle, though the lack of a human interpreter is a common criticism of the use of computer software. There are many computer packages designed to support and assist with the analysis of qualitative (language-based) data, these include **NVivo**, **Atlas.ti** and the like. They are widely used to analyse large quantities of data, reducing the pressure on a researcher to read and code everything him- or herself

Terminologies: Research designs, Research methods, qualitative research designs, quantitative research designs.

Activity

1. Discuss the various research designs in qualitative research.
2. Explain the various research methods that can be used in a qualitative research.
3. Describe your understanding of quantitative research including the research method that can be used in this kind of research.
4. Discuss how data or information can be collected and analysed in a quantitative and qualitative research.

Summary

This unit looked at the various research designs including methodologies that can be used in a historical research. The unit specifically described research designs and methods as well as how they can be applied in carrying out a historical research study. The research design has also been referred to as the overall strategy that a researcher uses to integrate the different

components of the study in a coherent and logical way, to effectively address the research problem. Various types of research designs have been discussed such as historical, case study, descriptive and narrative among others. The unit further demonstrated that generally, the research design is viewed from two perspectives, **quantitative research design** or **qualitative research designs, which both have** extended components. They can both be used or applied distinctively or together. The unit explained that on one hand, a quantitative research design *is* used to examine the relationship between variable by using numbers and statistics to explain and analyse its findings and there are four types of quantitative research design. On the other hand a Qualitative research design is exploratory in nature as it tries to explore not to predict the outcome. It seeks to answer the questions of what and how. Finally the unit discussed the various research methodologies that are associated with qualitative and quantitative research designs.

UNIT 9

RESEARCH REPORT WRITING IN HISTORY

9.1 Introduction

An undergraduate research is essentially an extended piece of research and writing on a single subject. It is typically completed in the final year of a degree programme and the topic is chosen based on a student's own area of interest. It allows the student to explore a narrow topic in greater depth. The student works with a single supervisor chosen from their departmental faculty, and this individual provides guidance and support throughout the course of the research. Therefore, this unit focuses on the guidelines of how a student of history can write and structure a research report.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit you should be able to;

- explain the process of writing a research report in history.
- describe the components of a research report.
- discuss the contents of each part of a research report.
- explain common errors in research report writing

Time Frame: In this unit you are expected to spend approximately

- 2 hours 30 minutes study time
- 2 hours in class

9.2 Writing a History Research Report

A history research report is a written study compiled after the collection and interpretation of data or information on a specific historical topic/theme/person/event. In most universities this forms a significant part of the fourth year of an undergraduate degree. It is expected to be based around a series of primary and secondary sources (the volume and type depends on the project) and should include a comprehensive review of the existing historical literature (this is usually done in the introduction). Research reports are not 'taught' in the way that other modules are – they are individual projects supervised by academic members of staff. But in the main a student's experience will involve one-on-one supervisions.

The purpose of writing a research paper in history is to analyse primary and secondary sources and to answer a research question. The answer to this question should be expressed as an argumentative thesis statement. The research report is in many ways similar to the writing in professional scholarly history books and articles; the writing is thesis-driven and seeks to prove a point. It is important for a student of history to show why the topic matters, and how it relates to the time period under discussion, rather than why it should matter now; the student should keep the focus of the paper within a historical context, and consider the question, “Why did this topic matter to people at that time?” for instance.

History research reports papers can be written using different approaches. Some research reports are narrative organized like a story according to chronology, or the sequence of events and some are analytical organized like an essay according to the topic’s internal logic. Some papers are concerned with history not just what happened, of course, but why and how it happened, and some are interested in historiography i.e., how other historians have written history, specifically the peculiarities of different works, scholars, or schools of thought. Some research reports may emphasise social or cultural history, others political or military history, and still others intellectual or economic history. Different types of history research reports naturally require different amounts of research, analysis, and interpretation.

A research report provides an opportunity to students of history to share what was learned and what they decide to be true given the evidence that they collected. Largely, a lot of good research is lost because the historian does not communicate well their findings. Therefore, coherent writing of research reports is mostly encouraged and advised. Written communication develops and conveys ideas and knowledge in a coherent and organized manner. As 18th-century English cleric John Chapman said, “For a text to be recognized as a text rather than a haphazard collection of sentences, it must have an orderly and cohesive construction.” For historical writing, this means having unity and purpose throughout a research report.

Thus, any student of writing history research report should begin with an appropriate introduction which captures the attention of the reader. It should also identify the subject and purpose of the paper and indicate why it is significant, placing it into a historical context. The introduction should also include the argument of the research. As for the structure of the body of the research report, there should be a logical organization which

develops the argument throughout. Each paragraph of your research findings should focus on developing a specific element or theme of the argument and begin with a topic sentence that argues the point to be made in the paragraph. To finish, there should be a distinct conclusion which wraps up the argument and summarises the argument in some form. Throughout the paper, there should be smooth, coherent transitions between sentences and paragraphs. In terms of style and mechanics, writing should be concise and error-free in terms of grammar, spelling, and formatting.

Additionally, before embarking on any substantial writing for a research report, a student will need to check the exact requirements regarding: the word limit: maximum and minimum; and whether or not this includes words within tables, the abstract, the reference list, and the appendices; which chapters are expected to be included, in which order, and what kind of material is expected in each and the kind of content appropriate to place in the appendices rather than in the main text.

9.3 The Structure of the Research Report

While undergraduate research reports in social sciences generally have quite similar formats and features to other types of research reports such as natural sciences research reports, there are some distinctive elements of research reports in the discipline of history that undergraduate students of history should know about. The following is the structure commonly used in the writing of research reports in the discipline of history.

9.3.1 Preliminary Pages of the Research Report

For a research to be termed acceptable, the **preliminary pages** of the work must be all encompassing and concise enough to make a good meaning. Preliminary pages are the write ups that appear before chapter one of the research report. Standard preliminary pages have the following features in the following chronological order:

- Cover page
- Declaration
- Dedication
- Table of contents

- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- List of abbreviations or acronyms
- List of tables and figures

9.3.1.1 Cover of the Research Report

The cover page of a research report is the first page of the work which contains the following; full title of the research work conducted, the names of the student or author starting with surname followed by student's ID number, the name of the student's institution, a statement about the degree programme under which the research report is submitted and the date, month and year the research project was completed and submitted.

9.3.1.2 Declaration of the Research Work

This page comes immediately after the cover page. Every research work must be considered original and free of plagiarism. To this effect the declaration is more of an affidavit stating clear terms that the work is an original work and was not copied from any source. In declaring that the students or researchers work is original, it has to be done with full names of the student. It can also be done with the full names of the student or researcher's supervisor who guided the researcher. And the date the research was conducted.

The declaration page is mostly made by the student as follows for example students declaration this research report is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university. The student is required to sign above his/her names.

9.3.1.3 Dedication Part of the Research work

Dedication is one of the preliminary pages of the research work which has to do with dedicating the complete work to loved ones. It can also be a dedication to people that is held in high regard by the researcher or student.

9.3.1.4 Table of Contents part for the Research Report

This section shows the structure of the research report by indicating its chapters and sections. In particular, it lists the chapter and section headings with their corresponding page numbers.

9.3.1.4 Abstract Section of the Research Report

Essentially, the Abstract is a concise summary of the research. It depicts the central focus of the study. It should be able to stand alone in representing why and how a researcher did what they did, and what the results and implications are. It is often only one page long, and there may be a word limit to adhere to. The Abstract is an important element of a research report and will become a document in its own right especially if it is registered within any database. It can be best to write the Abstract last, once a researcher is sure of what exactly you are summarising. Alternatively it can be useful to write the abstract earlier on, as an aid to identifying the crucial main themes of your research, its purpose, and its findings, which could then guide the structure of the research report.

9.3.1.5 Acknowledgements of the Research Report

This is where the researcher appreciates people who contributed directly or indirectly in the actualisation or achievement of the research project. Acknowledgement in research work takes into consideration or cognisance the research project supervisor for availing time to make the students work a success, researcher's parents or loved ones for morally and financially supporting through the research project. A researcher can also acknowledge other people who may have had a contribution directly or indirectly towards the success of the work.

9.3.1.6 List of Abbreviations or Acronyms Section of the Research Report

The section explains all abbreviations and acronyms as used in the entire research report.

9.3.1.7 List of Tables and Figures Section of the Research Report

This section which also begins on a new page indicates a list of all tables and figures that might have been used for illustration or explanation in the research report.

9.4 Main Body of the Research Report

In the discipline of history the main body of a research report is comprised of sequential substantive chapters. The number of chapters varies according to the length of the research report but the average could be from three to five. The idea of the chapter structure is very much like the paragraphs of an essay in that each should address a different aspect of the

research report usually guided by specific objections but never lose sight of the main argument. In history unlike other disciplines, it is common for each chapter to deal with a different sub-topic within the overall topic, such as a different case-study, a different set of interview questions or different grounds for comparison of cases. The substantive chapters form the main substance of the research project and it is important to show careful use and interpretation of evidence, engagement with relevant findings. Analysis of information is expected and not simply description of information generated.

9.4.1 Chapter one of the Main Body of a Research Report

In a history research report, the first chapter of the main body is referred as the introduction chapter. It consists of all the components of the research proposal. It has content and form similar to that in the proposal however the only difference is that the future tense used in the proposal changes to the past tense. At this point, chapter one reports how what was suggested in the research proposal would have been implemented through research. Thus chapter one simply reports the application of the research proposal. The following are the specific components of chapter one or introductory part of the research report;

- Introduction
- Background to the study
- Statement of the problem
- Aim and objectives of the study research questions
- Significance of the study
- Conceptual framework
- Organisation of chapters

9.4.2 Substantive Chapters of the Main Body of a Research Report

Substantive chapters deal with different sub-topics within the overall topics. Usually, a different set of interview questions, sources or material would be required to compile each specific chapter.

9.4.3 Conclusion Chapter

The conclusion summarises the main points made in the argument of the topic and gives provide a synthesis of thought on the main argument. It is not a mere 'summary' of your research, but needs to be 'conclusions' as to the main points that have emerged and what they mean for your field. This chapter tends to be much shorter than the other discussion chapters.

9.5 Appendices

This section contains supporting evidence or other materials that could have been fully used in the discussions of the research report. In particular, this part presents research instruments that might have been used in the research process such as questionnaires or guide questions for oral interviews. It also includes any tables, figures, forms, or other materials that are not totally central to the analysis but that need to be included further reference.

9.6 Bibliography

This section includes all the bibliographic reference for each of the works cited in the footnotes or endnotes. This section may be divided into sections in alphabetical order as follows;

Primary sources: there are different types of primary sources that might be categorised as follows

- Unpublished primary sources which might include archives, manuscripts or unpublished primary sources.
- Published primary sources such as government reports or annual reports.

Secondary Sources

These are also categorised into the following for example;

- Published works such as books and periodicals.
- Unpublished works that might include seminar papers or dissertation/theses.

The structure of the research report has been explained above. As a further example, all the components are outlined below in the order of organisation or arrangement in a research proposal;

Format of a History Research Report

A. Preliminary Section

- Cover page
- Declaration
- Dedication
- Table of contents
- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- List of abbreviations
- List of tables and figures

B. Main Body

- Chapter one
 - Introduction
 - Background to the study
 - Statement of the problem
 - Aim and objectives of the study research questions
 - Significance of the study
 - Conceptual framework
 - Organisation of chapters
- Substantive chapters
- Conclusion chapter

C. Appendices

D. Bibliography

- **Terminologies:** Cover page, Declaration, Dedication, Table of contents, Abstract, Acknowledgements, List of abbreviations or acronyms, List of tables and figures Appendices and Bibliography

Activity

1. Discuss the process of writing a research report in history.
2. Explain the components of a research report.
3. With specific examples, discuss the contents of each part of a research report.
4. Describe the common errors in research report writing

Summary

This unit focused on the guidelines of how a student of history can write and structure a research report. The unit discussed that research reports in the discipline of history can be written using different approaches. While some research reports are narrative organised like a story according to chronology, or the sequence of events others are analytical organised like an essay according to the topic's internal logic. Additionally the unit demonstrated that while some papers are concerned with history not just what happened, of course, but why and how it happened others are interested in historiography i.e., how other historians have written history, specifically the peculiarities of different works, scholars, or schools of thought. Some research reports may emphasise social or cultural history, others political or military history, and still others intellectual or economic history. Different types of history research reports naturally require different amounts of research, analysis, and interpretation. Finally, this unit discussed the structure of a history report which included Cover page, Declaration, Dedication, Table of contents, Abstract, Acknowledgements, List of abbreviations or acronyms, List of tables and figures Appendices and Bibliography.

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