Lesson No 14	Methods of Child Study

SUMMARY

The transformation of an infant, totally dependent on adults, into an independent person with complex abilities has always attracted much attention. In order to understand children's behaviour and thought more systematically, it is important to know specific techniques of studying children.

In this lesson, you learnt about some of the methods and ways of researching children's development.

RESEARCH AND STUDY OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Build Your Understanding

Research with children builds our understanding of their behaviour, nature of responses and ways in which they learn. Children's skill acquisition may vary according their specific social group. Parental expectations may also differ from group to group. Observations would be speculations till a systematic examination could be built as evidence in support of or to negate the hunch.

Hence, the process of investigating and deriving inference from a body of facts and figures comprises research. It can be of many kinds with several ways of collecting data referred to as techniques of studying human behavior

TYPES OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is framework or detailed procedures for carrying out the research systematically. The nature of the problem to be studied guides the selection of the research design.

Cross Sectional Research	Longitudinal Research	Case Study	Experimental Design
- Way of collecting data from a group of people of different ages at a particular time - Quick as the data is gathered at one point of time	- Study of research issues collecting information from a set of people at different intervals of time over a decided period - Rich and useful information is gathered - Expensive and difficult to sustain.	- In-depth study of individuals, groups or institutions - Combination of several techniques	- Two or more groups are compared under similar conditions where each group may get a different treatment (intervention) known as control group and experimental group

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF STUDY

To identify the methods or techniques of gathering data depends upon –
- Age of the children
- Their literacy level
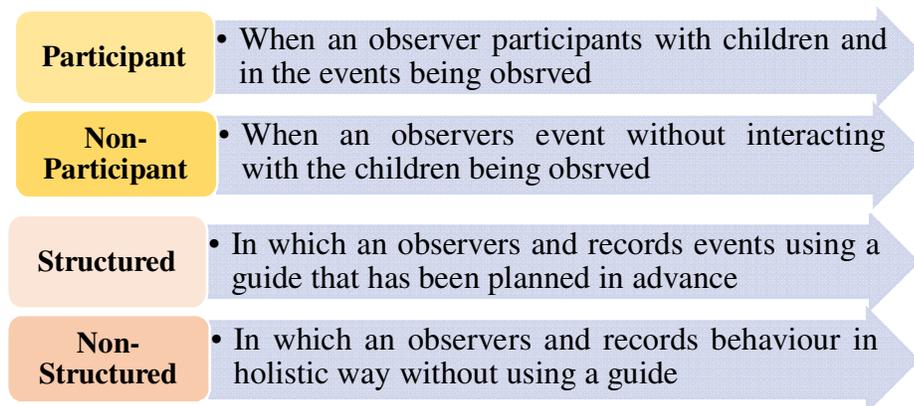- Ability of the children

SELECTING A TOOL

A good tool must possess certain characteristics discussed below –

Reliability	Validity	Standardisation
Implies that on repeated use, tools should give consistent or stable results.	Refers to the fact that the tool should assess or measure what it is supposed to measure, and not something else.	It is a process of establishing the reliability and validity of the tool by administering it on a large population

OBSERVATION

- A method for understanding changes during early childhood and gaining insightful learning regarding behaviour patterns of children.
- To observe means to examine an object, or an individual, or group of people, or an event with all of the senses. Observation being directly observing behaviour with the purpose.
- Useful technique and a supplement to other techniques.
- It is important to plan the procedure before-hand to ensure good results.
- **Time-Sampling:** requires taking short and uniform time periods to observe to note down children's behavior.
- **Event Sampling:** Can be used for noting only specific behaviours
- **Checklist:** a list of parameters on which the teacher (or parent or other adult) checks the behaviours or traits.
- **Specimen Description:** may write notes on everything that happens in his or her presence. Audio-visual devices may also be used for recording the observations.
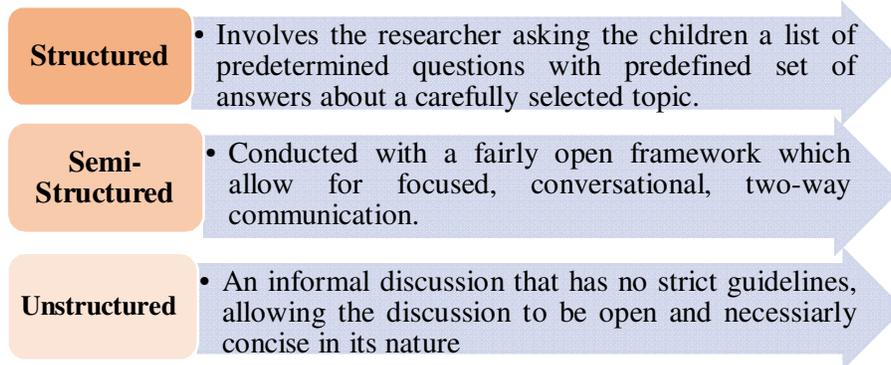
TYPES OF OBSERVATIONS

Participant	• When an observer participants with children and in the events being obsrved
Non-Participant	• When an observers event without interacting with the children being obsrved
Structured	• In which an observers and records events using a guide that has been planned in advance
Non-Structured	• In which an observers and records behaviour in holistic way without using a guide

Advantages	Disadvantages
✓ Provides direct information about behavior of individuals and groups.	✓ Expensive and time-consuming
✓ Helps to gather data when the situation is real and not artificially set up.	✓ Perception of observer may distort data
✓ Possible to obtain information where laboratory experiments cannot be conducted.	✓ Little control over situation
	✓ Behaviors observed may be a typical/not normal
✓ Helps to develop a holistic perspective.	✓ Results can change if the subject becomes aware they are being observed
	✓ The observer may not be able to note all the behaviors that occur.

INTERVIEW

- It is a technique that simply uses direct conversation with children to gather data.
- One person (Interviewer) questions the other (Interviewee) on certain issues and then draws conclusions from these conversations
- In-depth conversation that is guided by certain objectives.
- The face-to-face contact in interviews is useful in repeating, reframing and sometimes probing emotional issues.

- Can be audio-recorded or noted but audio-recordings are more accurate and need to be transcribed.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW

Structured • Involves the researcher asking the children a list of predetermined questions with predefined set of answers about a carefully selected topic.

Semi-Structured • Conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication.

Unstructured • An informal discussion that has no strict guidelines, allowing the discussion to be open and necessarily concise in its nature

Advantages	Disadvantages
✓ Powerful technique for studying in-depth issues.	✓ Intensive training is required.
✓ Questions can be re-worded or repeated in case these are not understood correctly.	✓ Face-to-face conversation can make children uncomfortable especially when the questions are intimate in nature.
✓ The interviewer and interviewee can proceed at their own speed.	✓ Writing and recording can make children feel conscious.
✓ Can be used with illiterate participants quite easily.	

QUESTIONNAIRE

- Is a tool that uses questioning as a strategy to gather responses.
- Consists of a set of written questions which calls for responses on the part of individual(s) or the subject(s).
- Very concise, preplanned set of questions to elicit information about selected topics

TYPES OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Closed Ended • Involves the researcher asking the children a list of predetermined questions with predefined set of answers about a carefully selected topic.

Open Ended • Conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication.
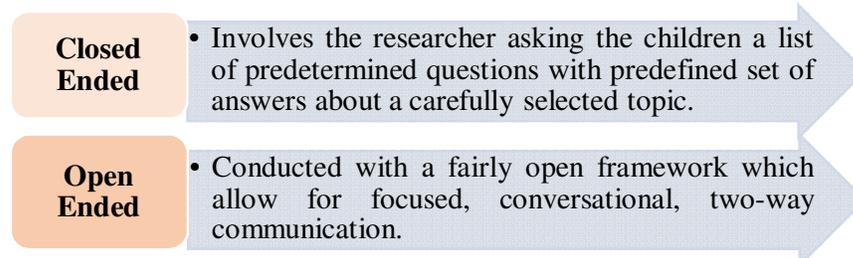
Advantages	Disadvantages
✓ Low cost and less time-consuming.	✓ Can only be conducted with literate respondents.
✓ Information can be collected from a large number of individuals in a relatively short period of time.	✓ No scope to clarify meaning of question.
	✓ No scope to explain the questions and the responses
✓ Yield data more comparable than information obtained through an interview.	✓ No scope for follow-up questions.
	✓ Possibility that the respondent may not answer all the questions.

ART AS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION

- ▪ Artistic forms of expression such as role play and drawings can be used with children to elicit their responses.
- ▪ These can serve as tools to gather meaningful data on children's behaviors and thought. It includes –

Role Play - is a method in which different individuals assume a role, playing themselves or another person in a given situation or scenario, based on the objectives. It facilitates identification of complex human interactions.

Drawings as Sources of Conversation - In recent years, researchers have made use of engaging children aged four to six years to respond to their own drawings. Drawings are analyzed on the basis of colour, intensity of strokes and their narratives.

REPORTING CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

Anecdotal Records	Portfolio
✓ Are detailed descriptions of important episodes which are written and maintained on a daily basis to record children's progress over a period of time. ✓ May encompass many aspects of children's development such as their behaviour, interaction, interests, likes, dislikes etc.	✓ Is a collection of children's work which reflects their development and progress. ✓ It includes children's writing, drawings, art and craft work, activity sheets, photographs, videos, etc. ✓ An evidence of children's growth, development and learning providing a rich and comprehensive picture of children's lives.

EVALUATE YOURSELF

Q1. Discuss different types of research to study child behaviour.

Q2. List the points to be taken care of while conducting:
- • An interview • Observation • Questionnaire

PRACTICE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

To identify any developmental variation in a child; which method will you prefer and why? Choose the method and identify developmental variation in a child of your neighbourhood. Also guide his/her parents with earlier interventions which can help child to grow in a holistic manner.