

## **Comparative Approach**

Therefore, comparative method essentially resembles the statistical method except that the number of cases it deals with is often too small to permit statistical methods. But it is necessary to understand that the comparative method is not an adequate substitute for the experimental method as in the case of natural sciences. But these weaknesses can be minimized in a number of ways. The statistical method is best to use as far as possible, except in cases where entire political systems are being compared, then the comparative method has to be used. The two can also be used in combination. In this comparative analysis it is the first stage in which macro hypotheses are carefully formulated, usually covering the structural elements of total systems, and the statistical stage is the second, in which through micro replications these are tested in as large a sample as possible. Second, too much significance must not be attached to negative findings: for example, rejecting a hypothesis on the basis of one deviant case especially when the sample is small. Rather, research should aim at probabilistic and not universal generalizations. Third, it is necessary to increase the number of cases as much as possible (though small samples are not of much use). Comparative politics has advanced because of the formulation of universally applicable theories or grand theories based on the comparison of many countries or political phenomenon within them. For

example, structural

functional analysis theory opened up a world of comparative research unknown before.

Fourth, increase the number of variables if not the number of cases; through this more

generalizations are possible.

Fifth, focus on comparable cases, i.e., those that have a large number of comparable

characteristics or variables which one treats as constants, but dissimilar as far as those

variables which one wants to relate to each other. This way we study the operative

variables by either the statistical or comparative method. Here, the area or regional

approach is useful, for example, while comparing countries within Latin America or

Scandinavia or Asia. But many scholars have pointed out that this is merely a manageable

argument, which should not become an imprisonment. Another alternative is studying

regions within countries, or studying them at different points of time as the problem of

control is much simpler as they are within the same federal structure. Here, it maybe

mentioned that the states within the Indian Union provide a rich laboratory for comparative

research that has not yet been undertaken. Many scholars feel that focus should be on

key or contextual variables, as too many variables can create problems. This not only

allows manageability but also often leads to middle range theorizing or partial comparison

of political systems. This has been used successfully in anthropological studies

as tribal

systems are simple. Political scientists can also do this by limiting the number of variables.

The case study method is used whenever only one case is being analysed. But it is closely connected with the comparative method, and certain types of case studies can

become an inherent part of the comparative method whenever an in-depth study of a

variable is needed prior to comparison with other similar ones. The scientific status of

the case study method is somewhat ambiguous because science is neither generalizing

nor a ground for disapproving an established generalization. But its value lies when used

as a building block for making general propositions and even theory building in political

science when a number of case studies on similar subjects are carried out. Case studies

can be of many types, for example, a theoretical or interpretative, theory confirming or

informing each useful in specific situations. Thus, the comparative and the case study

method have major drawbacks. Due to the inevitable limitations of these methods, it is

the challenging task of the investigator in the field of comparative politics to apply these

methods in such a way as to capitalize on their inherent strengths and they can be useful

instruments in scientific political inquiry. Many scholars have spent much of the post war

period constantly improving the use of these methods.