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The credibility and accuracy of any historically account depends on the type of approach that the historians use in the course of their work.

Historians must be conversant with available methodologies and approaches in order for them to handle evidence collection and interpretation in the best way possible (Green, 1999). Historical research and analysis is not an easy task as it seems due to the technicalities involved. Historical methodologies and approaches consist of concepts and techniques used by historians to explore and highlight different types of historical events (Green, 1999). Each historical approach tends to challenge previous approaches as it attempts to improve historical research and analysis.

This paper will discuss different types of types of historical approaches used by historians and the contribution that each approach makes to the general field of historical studies. Empiricism is a historical methodology that is based on the theory that human knowledge is gained through knowledge and experience. This approach refutes the argument that human beings possess some innate ideas that can not be imparted through experience (Green, 1999). According to the empiricism approach, history can only be retrieved through sensory perception and scientific experiments. The empiricism historical approach emphasizes the fact that historians must test their theories and hypotheses through physical observation of events and other natural phenomena rather than mere intuition. The empiricism approach is widely used in philosophy and history when conducting a theoretical inquiry. The hypotheses used in this approach must be testable using scientific methods.

Empiricism completely opposes rationalism which emphasizes on intuition and reason as definite sources of knowledge. The use of human senses to perceive and conceive historical knowledge and other types of knowledge is what the empiricism approach focuses on (Green, 1999). The Empiricism approach was widely developed by Aristotle and is among the early historical approaches.

Historical materialism is a concept developed by Karl Marx and has become a very important methodological approach in the conception of history. This approach is used in the study of economic history and the general society. The historical materialism approach emphasizes the fact that the economic activities that human beings engage in give rise to the non-economic features of the society (Howell, 2001). Political structures and social classes come as result of economic activity. The original argument of the materialism approach was that human beings have to produce the fundamental necessities of life to guarantee survival.

Despite this methodological approach being used to understand historical developments and the society in general, it also emphasizes on the importance of production relations in sustaining economic production. Division of labor is key to maintaining the production network where human beings perform different duties in the production of the various necessities of life (Howell, 2001). The ability to use means of production such as human knowledge and raw materials characterize the success of the Marxist ideology. The materialism approach tries to highlight the modes of production that the society has employed over time. This approach sets to highlight the economic history of the society by examining the modes of

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production used in the society through time (Howell, 2001). In the course of interacting with nature, human beings are able to produce their material needs in different ways.

According to Marx, the productive forces in the society determine the mode of production to be adopted by that society. Some of the modes of production that Marx came up with include communism, feudalism and capitalism as they follow each other in chronological order (Green, 1999). Materialism is a methodological approach that helps historians to fully comprehend the basis of change that constantly takes place in the human society. According to Marx, the human history is coherent in the manner that productive forces and modes of production are inherited from one generation to another as they continue to be improved and developed in tandem with technological advances and changing human needs. The struggle between different social classes for economic resources is what makes history (Green, 1999). The materialism approach is against the idea of human history being perceived as a series of accidents.

The materialism approach emphasizes the fact that the present can only be understood by studying the past. Past events and activities shape the present both socially and economically. There are various observations through which history can be developed using the Marxist ideologies. To begin with, the social development of a society is entirely dependent on the amount of productive forces that the society has (Green, 1999). Social relationships within the society stem from production relations which human beings have no choice but to get involved. Productive forces determine whether production relationships develop or not. The mode of production

plays a critical role in determining the rate at which the production forces develop. According to Marxist beliefs, the society is founded on its relations of production and modes of production.

Economic exploitation in the society is brought about by a particular social class that uses the state as an instrument of forming and protecting their production relations (Green, 1999). The materialism approach also disputes the fact that the historical process is predetermined. Social classes within the society struggle and in the process form the actual historical process. The society goes through various stages of economic transformation as a natural way of sustaining itself. The social science approach is one of the major methodologies used by sociology historians in an attempt to try and understand the sociological history of a particular society. Social science uses scientific method to analyze and understand the past social life.

The field of social science is very wide and handles a lot of disciplines including historical research and analysis of social history (Howell, 2001). This approach does not deal with natural sciences but it employs the same methods used in studying natural science to explain and analyze the social life of a particular society. The social science approach uses both quantitative and qualitative techniques to interpret and come up with a definite historical account of the social life in a particular society. According to this approach, history can just be studied the same way mathematics and other natural sciences are studied. The social science approach was largely influenced by the industrial revolution that emphasized moral philosophy (Howell, 2001).

This methodology employs the use of data and theory depending on what discipline the historian intends to study. Empirical observations and logic are the major components of the social science historical methodology. This approach differs with the materialism theory in the sense that the evidence collected is thoroughly studied using scientific methods. The social actions of a particular society are studied using statistical techniques such as open-ended interviews and questionnaires that are administered to a sample population. This approach is very comprehensive compared to the previous methodologies in the sense that it explains and describes historical findings rather than just predicting (Howell, 2001). The social science approach tests all hypotheses to establish the truth in them.

All the possible explanations of a particular social action are provided by this approach. The study of social and cultural issues of the society has led to the development of new methodologies and approaches in order to increase the chances of coming up with more accurate results (Tosh, 2000). Social history has been replaced by cultural history due to the fact that the culture of the society preserves all the aspects of a particular society. Anthropology is a social science discipline that tends to explain the cultural orientation of different societies.

The study of social and cultural histories of a particular community is very vital in the sense that it helps give a particular sense of identity to the community. Anthropology uses scientific and statistical methods to explain how the society is set up socially and culturally. This new approach aims at describing the society in detail since the social science approach only deals with social life. This new approach bases its explanations on real facts rather

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than predictions and imagination. Social trends in the society are what forms social history which is established by using scientific methods.

Social history explores how ordinary people within a society live (Tosh, 2000). Both political and intellectual histories are justified by the findings in the social field. The new social history approach explores the social history of a society in detail including labor history, family history, ethnic history, educational history together with demographic history. The new social approach is extended by the cultural approach that was established recently.

The new cultural approach focuses more on cultural traditional customs, arts, languages and cultural interpretation of historical experiences (Tosh, 2000). The new cultural approach challenges the materialism approach which only highlights economic changes as a source of history. The cultural approach takes a lot of time because of the many cultural elements explored during research and analysis. Gender history is another type of historical approach that specifically explores the past from the gender perspective. This method tends to focus on the history of women and their changing roles in the society (Tosh, 2000). This type of historical approach has only been in place for a very short time but the impact it has made to the general field of history can not be underestimated.

The gender approach faced a lot of challenges in its initial stages as many people were reluctant to accept women history as a historical discipline. This made the proponents of this approach to change its name from women history to gender history. This approach has gained a lot of support because many women are now getting interested in the historical profession. Women

historians have been accused of being biased as they tend to highlight feminine issues rather than the general gender issues (Howell, 2001). The gender approach is categorized under supplementary history because women were conspicuously missing in the majority of previous historical recordings.

This approach focuses on highlighting and position and role of women in history. Women play a very important role in the history of any community and the fact other historical methodologies do not highlight their contribution; the supporters of the gender approach have always challenged the credibility of previous historical approaches (Howell, 2001). The post modern historical approach includes both post-structural and post-colonial histories. The postmodern historical approach completely challenges all other traditional approaches by stating that there is a very thin line between facts and fiction. Postmodernists perceive all historical accounts as fiction. The postmodern approach encourages historians to use history as a way of promoting an ideology (Tosh, 2000). This methodology focuses on revising recorded history with an aim protecting social minorities from oppression.

Postmodern history plays a major role in exposing past injustices with an aim of correcting them. The post-modern approach is always criticized for being radical and generalizing all historical events as fiction. Some of the injustices exposed by postmodern history include slavery, colonialism and other forms of oppression. The postmodern approach retells histories so that the oppressed groups in the society are empowered (Tosh, 2000). According to postmodernists, there is no way that the society can correct past mistakes if

in the first place the people are not aware of the mistakes that were committed in the past.

Postmodern historians argue that it is inevitable to avoid bias in history (Tosh, 2000). In conclusion, historical methodologies help historians a great deal in exploring the past. New historical approaches have been developed in order too explore the past in detail. The discovery of many historical disciplines has contributed to the changes experienced in historical approaches.

Each historical approach has got its theories and ideologies which gives historians the freedom to choose an approach that is relevant to their areas of specialization. Historical methodologies have completely change the way historical studies are conducted and as a result enabling the society to understand its past and at the same time use the historical knowledge to shape the present and the future.

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