Chapter 3

Pragmatism and Non-Native English Speakers:
Pragmatism Paradigm for Social Science Research

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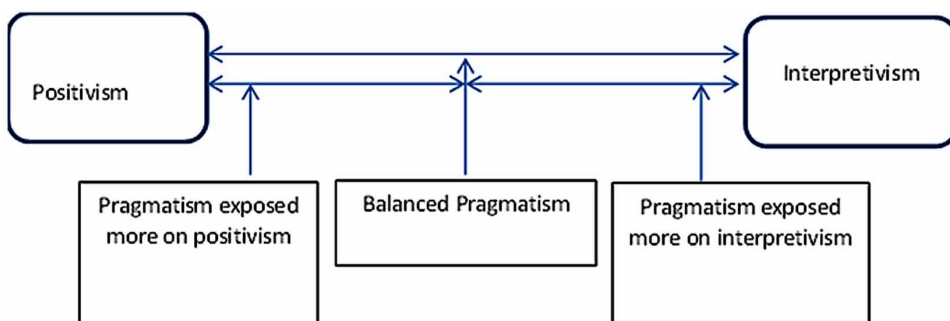
ABSTRACT

The debate of application of research philosophy in social science research is trending. One side takes the positivism while another side depends on interpretivism, some other believes critical realism and the rest stand with pragmatism. Yet, the understanding on and interpretation of ontological argument and epistemological positioning of the pragmatism is criticized. Accordingly, the authors are motivated to critically argue that gap with empirical research evidence from management disciplines in Sri Lanka. The pragmatism followers contend that all beliefs, knowledge, and scientific concepts are provisional and defined by their practical application in ongoing experience, not by their correspondence with antecedent truth or reality (Carlsen and Mantere, 2007). Hence, recent social sciences studies are rooted in pragmatic ideas, practice-based approaches thereby harvesting the intersubjective knowledge. Thus, this chapter acknowledges the paradox of whether the definition of pragmatism could be universal or differs contextually research scholars.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter helps a budding researcher in understanding the "pragmatism paradigm". The chapter could be read quite easily, even if one has only a minimal background on the topic of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. To provide a basic understanding to the 'pragmatism paradigm', the chapter is concisely summarized, which serves as an introductory chapter.

Figure 1. Continuum Visualization of Pragmatism

"Pragmatism" Overview

The ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances derive and direct the research philosophies. All research philosophies are "ism" driven (positivism, interpretivism, realism, pragmatism and many more). When we take as a continuum the positivism lies on the one extreme and interpretivism lies on the other extreme while the realism and pragmatism hang in-between the two. However, it must be noted that the "ism" travels throughout the continuum (figure 1). Here our job is to investigate only one "ism" *i.e.,* pragmatism. The pragmatism may lie anywhere on the continuum, but it will take different shapes based on the point on which you hang your research. If you hang it exactly in-between the two extremes, it becomes balanced pragmatism, if you lie towards the left-hand side your pragmatism effort is highly exposed to positivism and if it is vise-versa your pragmatism effort is highly exposed to interpretivism. Moving on the continuum and taking a decision on the point of pragmatism is totally depends on your experience.

The experience directs your point on the line based on the philosophical underpinnings *i.e.,* your ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The two extremes go with their own set of assumptions, but pragmatism does not stick to any of them individually but argues all are connected to a situation. Accordingly, it could take any

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