Chapter 4

Research Philosophy:
Paradigms, World Views, Perspectives, and Theories

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the philosophical developments in the academic research field and provide a framework for non-native English-speaking budding researchers. Revealing the philosophical stance of the authors of a research paper is crucial in understanding their arguments. Therefore, an understanding of this historical evolution is useful in justifying authors' choices and presenting them clearly in the research report. Authors' perceptions of different theories, perspectives, and worldviews influence and affect many aspects of research, and it is important to mention personal stances on them in the research report at the very beginning. The choice of underpinning philosophy is significantly influenced by the author's psychosocial, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Multivism is a dynamic position of a researcher who is not confined to the bipolar-disordered extremism of objectivism and subjectivism of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The origins of Western philosophy go back to the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato (424-348 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC). Research and knowledge were highly valued by these philosophers; Socrates (470-399 BC) has said that 'there is

only one good; knowledge, and one evil; ignorance and Aristotle has mentioned that 'the educated differ from the uneducated, as the living from the dead'. In fact, this seems to be in line with the teachings in the Eastern philosophers such as of Gautama Buddha (563-483 BC) who called this evil of ignorance as 'avijja' about 100 years before Aristotle (Saliya, 2010).

Awareness of the authors'/researchers' philosophical stance is crucial in understanding their arguments. Therefore, an understanding of this historical evolution is useful in justifying your choices and presenting them clearly in the research report. Awareness and understanding of the different theories, perspectives and worldviews influence and affect many aspects of research, and it is important to mention your stances on them in the research report at the very beginning. The choice of underpinning philosophy is significantly influenced by the author's socio-economic and cultural background.

PARADIGMS AND WORLDVIEWS

"Choosing a paradigm is important because it allows you to start forming research questions (RQs). This is useful, even if your questions start off vague" (Gournelos et al., 2019, p. 8)

Paradigm is the entire sets of beliefs, values, techniques that are shared by members of a community (Kuhn, 2012). Guba and Lincoln (1994) who are leaders in the field define a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or worldview that guides research action or an investigation. Paradigms are thus important because they provide beliefs and dictates, which, for scholars in a particular discipline, influence what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted. The paradigm defines a researcher's philosophical orientation and, as we shall see in the conclusion to this paper, this has significant implications for every decision made in the research process, including choice of methodology and methods. And so a paradigm tells us how meaning will be constructed from the data we shall gather, based on our individual experiences, (i.e. where we are coming from). It is therefore very important, that when you write your research proposal, you clearly state the paradigm in which you are locating your research.

Scholars have identified three main paradigms: positivism, interpretivism / constructivism and critical thinking. Pragmatism is also cited by some scholars as the latest paradigm shift. Positivists aim to explore, explain, evaluate, predict, or test theories. The goal of interpretivists as well as constructivists is to understand human behavior. Critical theorists aim to critique social reality, liberate, empower people, and propose solutions to social problems. The pragmatic paradigm refers to a worldview that focuses on 'what works' rather than what might be considered

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