

Philosophical underpinnings of case study research design

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The dissertation adopts a critical realist philosophical stance. As illustrated by Figure... below, realist studies are customarily positioned between constructivism and positivism. Predominantly, positivism (pegged on survey and other multivariate techniques) has occupied a dominant position in scientific enquiry. Positivism asserts that findings obtained from experiments and surveys – to hold true. In this view and as Figure... portrays, it references a World One view and as such, integrates objective and tangible interpretations of phenomena.

Conversely, constructivism asserts that the truth of a subject matter references a specific belief system, within a certain context. These assertions postulate that reality consists of multiple realities that individuals possess within their minds. Researchers affiliated to this paradigm rebut the possibility of ascertaining what is real, and accordingly, reject the possibilities of discerning an objective account of causality.

Thus, individuals are in a position to formulate interpretations of reality based on their own account(s) (Easton, 2010). Therefore, Word Two relates to constructivism, as guided by its reference to the subjective nature of the mind. As regards realism, researchers affiliated to this paradigm assert that a “real” world is in existence, and therefore could be discovered.

Nonetheless, they go a step further to clarify that this perceived real world is imperfectly apprehensible. Following these assertions, it could safely be assumed that World Three encapsulates the realism paradigm, such that, it is composed of abstract features that originate from individual’s minds that however – exist independently of any one individual (Guba & Lincoln, 1994;

Healy & Perry, 2000; Magee, 1985). Put differently, realism entails that an individual's perception would not be construed to represent reality – as constructivism would. On the contrary, an individual's perception of realism is regarded as a window to reality, whereby an account of reality could be triangulated with other complementary accounts, therein (Healy & Perry, 2000).

Referencing the aforementioned pertinent arguments and as regards this dissertation, a complete adaptation of a realist paradigmatic approach would not particularly articulate the forwarded core overriding arguments. This is particularly true, owing to the fact that the study is striving to operationalize a social science phenomenon. Hence, its underlying tenets ascribe to deepening the understanding of the endogenous entrepreneurial processes (i. e., micro-foundations) – of building dynamic alliance portfolio management capabilities that heterogeneously enhance the sustained entrepreneurial growth of E. F. SMEs. As explicated, this research endeavour involves an overriding human element, in conjunction with their real-life experiences. As such, constructivism may favour the phenomenon under scrutiny, however, in line with my endeavour to simultaneously furnish rich contextual postulations and to a respectable extent, provide the causal explanation of prevailing activities/actions (Welch et al., in press) – my overriding arguments reference the critical realism paradigm, within Word three (cf. Figure....).

This positioning endows the potential to reconcile conflicting phenomena. In a rejoinder, noting that qualitative research is regarded as being context

sensitive, a concerted effort has however been expended towards decontextualisation. Hence, the richness of context is seemingly regarded as an impediment to theorising within the field, contrary to the predominating affirmation positing that the very essence of case study research designs is akin to rich contextual representations (Welch et al., in press).

Of importance, it is imperative to acknowledge that case study research designs are not representative of the adopted paradigm and/or the integrated ontological and epistemological choices (as forwarded, hereafter). Thus, it could pertain to a variety of perspectives that are drawn from differing ontological, epistemological, and methodological premises, whereby – they are positioned within a continuum, from realism to constructivism (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010). Following this depiction, Figure.... illuminates that this study is predominantly positioned within the critical realist paradigm, whereby it is situated at the intersection of critical realism and moderate constructivism – as influenced by the study’s comprehensive research problem.