

The merits and demerits of each philosophy education essay



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Introduction:

This essay will discuss two research philosophies. It starts by giving a brief account of each. Followed by a discussion on the preferred philosophy which will be adopted for the research project, i. e. social constructivism alongside post positivism In this discussion the merits and demerits of each philosophy, are given along side the research strategies associated with each as well as the rationale for adapting social constructivism.

Here, a brief history of each outlines philosophy:

Post positivism arose out of dissatisfaction with some aspects of the positivist stance. Whereas positivists accept an objective, apprehendable reality, post positivists acknowledge an objective reality that is only imperfectly apprehendable (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This position holds that human intellectual mechanisms are flawed and that life's phenomena are basically intractable, and therefore, one can never fully capture a " true" reality. A key distinction between the positivist and post positivist views is that the former stresses " theory verification" and the latter " theory falsification" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 107).

Despite some important differences between the positivist and post positivist paradigms, the two perspectives share much in common (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Ponterotto, 2002). A goal for both is an explanation that leads to prediction and control of phenomena. Both perspectives emphasize cause-effect linkages of phenomena that can be studied, identified, and generalized, and both paradigms proffer an objective, detached researcher role.

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Furthermore, both paradigms operate from both a nomothetic and etic perspective. Positivism and post positivism serve as the primary foundation and anchor for quantitative research.

Whereas, constructivists hold that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual, rather than it being an externally singular entity (Hansen, 2004). The constructivist position espouses a hermeneutical approach, which maintains that meaning is hidden and must be brought to the surface through deep reflection (see Schwandt, 2000; Sciarra, 1999). This reflection can be stimulated by the interactive researcher-participant dialogue. Thus a distinguishing characteristic of constructivism is the centrality of the interaction between the investigator and the object of investigation. Only through this interaction can deeper meaning be uncovered.

Qualitative research and the seeds of constructivism-interpretivism can be traced back to Kant's (1781/ 1966) Critique of Pure Reason. According to Hamilton (1994, p. 63), Kant's position was that " human perception derives not only from evidence of the senses but also from the mental apparatus that serves to organize the incoming sense impressions" and that " human claims about nature cannot be independent of inside-the-head processes of the knowing subject."

Another significant figure in the development of constructivism was Dilthey (1894/1977).

Proponents of constructivism-interpretivism emphasize the goal of understanding the " lived experiences" (Erlebnis) from the point of view of those who live it day to day (Schwandt, 1994, 2000). Dilthey believed that <https://assignbuster.com/the-merits-and-demerits-of-each-philosophy-education-essay/>

every “ lived experience” occurs within a historical social reality. He further believed that these lived experiences may be outside the immediate awareness of the individual but could be brought to consciousness.

Understandably, the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm provides the primary foundation and anchor for qualitative research methods. Linking it to the philosophy of constructivism-interpretive and the research on leadership styles prevailing in Risxcel.

My research project will adopt constructivism-interpretivism instead of post positivism. The ensuing discussion explains why:

The methodology to be used for the research will be influenced by social constructivism which is often in combination with interpretivism (Mertens 1998, Bryman 2008) because its underpinnings are appropriate to act in response to the leadership in Risxcel. Social Constructivist-interpretist holds the hypothesis that folks seek an understanding of the world in which they work and inhabit, Creswell (2009). In this area, “ folks build up subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings focussed toward some objects or things on leadership... The aim of research is to extract participants’ views of the leadership styles prevailing in Risxcel. Such views will be extracted from CEO, managers and staff as the researcher visits the context and seek an understanding of leadership styles prevailing at Risxcel, however such an understanding can only be made possible by seeking the views and perceived experiences of those working on leadership positions at the college. From this point of view, this research will require an understanding community, i. e. Risxcel staff’s subjective meanings of leadership. Adopting

Constructivism enables participants to give their subjective experiences which are socially and culturally constructed. It is anticipated that by applying social constructivism to this research, if the context will form the explanation of data. By applying Social Constructivism, the project therefore positions the acknowledgement of how the interpretation of data flows from historical experiences, personal and cultural (Creswell 2009). As Crotty (1998) notes, meanings are generated by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. In this case, it is anticipated that being informed and directed of the post positivist paradigm would have made the study somewhat “people-less” (Kitchin 2006: 6) as it ignores their views and beliefs within a study population otherwise highly charged with these, given the subject of leadership. Against this background, the research project adheres to the supposition by social constructivists that the “generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community” (Crotty 1998 in Creswell 2009: 9). Qualitative research strategies, i. e. individual in depth views and focus groups, will therefore be utilized in this research as they allow the researcher to extract participants views, experiences, beliefs on the subject of leadership. This being the case, quantitative research strategies, which are informed of post positivism would be inappropriate as will be further discussed below. Given that the research project will be using qualitative research strategies, a definition may be crucial at this point.

Qualitative research is a positioned activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of material practices, interpretive that makes the world noticeable. These practices ... turn the world into a series of

representations including photographs, field notes, and interviews, to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves a naturalistic, interpretive approach to the world. This explains that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, interpret phenomena and attempting to make sense in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3).

In addition to the issues noted above post positivism and its research strategies would not be appropriate for the research project because post-positivist assumptions hold true more for quantitative research than qualitative research which is called sometimes the scientific method (Creswell 2009). As well, post-positivists hold deterministic philosophy in which causes determine effects or outcomes, which are the reflection to the need of identification and the assessment of the causes that influence outcomes such as found in experiments (Creswell 2009). Also, has the intent to reduce the ideas into small, which discrete a set of ideas to test, such as the variables that comprise hypotheses and research questions. The knowledge is based on careful observation and measurement of the objective reality that exist in the world. It becomes paramount for post-positivists the development of numeric measures of observations and the study of the behaviour for individuals (Creswell 2009).

Challenges to Qualitative Research, while the project will utilise qualitative research as informed by social constructivism, it's notable that it is by nature demanding and time consuming. There is need for dedication to field work, collecting the data, gaining rapport and when it comes to data analysis, one must sort out through large of data before reducing them to a few themes (Creswell 1998). After analysis, one must contend with writing a lengthy
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piece of work as “evidence must substantiate claims” and quotes from population study inherently increase the length of the study (Creswell 1998: 17). It is also note worthy that social constructivism has been criticised for being too dependent of participants views and experiences and also being too subjective to researcher interpretation (Lincoln and Denzin 1994).

However to counter, this in the research project, reflexivity will be applied. This will involve seeking constant guidance from the supervision term when in doubt on how to interpret findings. This will also be the strategy used for countering possible bias.

In spite of the above acknowledged problems related with its utilization, the research project on leadership at Risxcel will utilise qualitative research due to the nature of the topic as well as my philosophical worldview position. In this instance, qualitative research will enable me to explore the Risxcel’s leadership styles within a given context in detail. And gleaned explanations on people’s views, behaviour, actions and beliefs as culturally, socially and historically informed. Indeed, the topic of the research project need to be explored in detail and as (Creswell, 1998) notes; qualitative research is the method suitable for research topics with no easily identified variables or explanations for behaviour and requiring explorations to be carried out.

As Creswell (1998: 17) comments, one must select qualitative research over quantitative research when the topic needs to provide a detailed view because “the wide -angel lens or the distant panoramic shot will not suffice to present answers to the problem , or the close up view does not exist”.

In conclusion, this essay has discussed two philosophies, i. e. social constructivism and post-positivism. It has also presented the philosophy which will be applied to the research project on leadership at Risxcel and given a rationale for its selection. In this selection process, the merits and demerits of each philosophy have been discussed, alongside the research strategies associated with each. While social constructivism clearly has its challenges, it was deemed more appropriate for the research project.