Lec3 Paradigms

Research paradigms:

**Research** is the systematic process of collecting data and interpreting them in order to obtain answers for well-framed questions posed at the beginning of the process. Research contributes in the increase of acceptable knowledge. Researchers may have different purposes such as describing, exploring, and explaining.

**Paradigms:**

The way researchers regard and conduct research is highly influenced by the set of beliefs they hold; that is to say the paradigm they adopt. Practical considerations are the results of the philosophical commitments of researchers. A paradigm is defined as a conceptual framework that guides every step the researcher takes in his inquiry. A paradigm determines the way a researcher thinks about reality (ontology), about knowledge (epistemology), and about the role of values in research (axiology).

**Components of a paradigm:**

Ontology refers to the philosophy of existence, the way reality is viewed. Reality can be seen as a unique one that is free from the influence of any context, or multiple changing from one context to another and from one individual to another. The unique reality is comparable to facts while the multiple one is comparable to perceptions and meanings. Epistemology refers to what is viewed as valid knowledge by investigators. It examines the acceptable ways used to acquire knowledge. Sources of knowledge differ then from one paradigm to another. Axiology is thought of as the extent to which the researcher’s values, views, and stances can interfere in his research. Positivism and Interpretivism are two dominant paradigms that underlie a range of research types and approaches.

**Positivism**: because positivists value scientific approaches, they view reality to be unique and objective. According to this view, valid knowledge ought to be generated through rigorous methods of experimentation and testing. Observation provides reliable data, and investigating causality is a means to test laws and theories. Objectivity and detachment from the study are features that researchers maintain. This paradigm is associated with quantitative research. Large samples and highly structured data collection tools are preferred for their ability to generate measurements and to test hypotheses.

**Interpretivism**: one feature that distinguish Interpretivism is that reality is not a single truth, but it is multiple due to the multiple meanings given by people to experiences, and to the multiple perspectives from which they examine those experiences. For interpretivists, the subjective perceptions can constitute acceptable knowledge. Moreover, researchers’ stances influence the process of data gathering and interpretation. Because of the importance given to interpretation in this paradigm, it is associated to the qualitative research.

It is worth to note that no paradigm is inherently superior than another. A researcher does not choose a paradigm because of an assumption that it could the best choice. Rather, one should consider the paradigm that fits the research question guiding the study. Therefore, the appropriateness to the research question and objective is the criterion of selection.