Topic 3: Research Paradigms

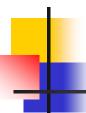
Hui Du

hdu@bjtu.edu.cn



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Ontology and Epistemology (1)

- Ontology
 - The starting point of all research and influences the method employed
 - Assumptions about the nature, existence and composition of the world
 - First of all, ontology, then epistemology, thirdly methodologies and method



- Two kinds of ontology
 - Foundationalism (Basicalism)
 - There exist basic beliefs, which are self-evident truth and infallible, incorrigible, indubitable, and certain. Non-basic beliefs must ultimately be justified by basic beliefs using deductive
 - Three Newton's laws are the basic beliefs of classical physics
 - Axioms are the basic beliefs of the Euclidean geometry
 - The world exists independently on people's knowledge about it



- Anti-foundationalism (Anti-Basicalism)
 - Society is socially and discretely constructed by people as participants
 - Social institution, laws, rules and regulations
 - Social phenomena and their meanings are accompanied by people and in the process of constant improvement
 - The world exists dependently on people's knowledge about it



- Epistemology
 - The way people advancing knowledge and understanding
 - Two kinds of epistemology: Positivism (Basicalism) and Interpretivism (Anti-Basicalism)
 - Hold different views on the same social phenomenon with different epistemology
 - Guide the choice of research methods



Research Paradigms (1)

- Research Paradigms
 - Understanding of both the ontology and the epistemology
 - The basis for identifying research method
 - Exist in the method adopted by the research



Research Paradigms (2)

- There kinds of research paradigms
 - Positivism
 - The most important one in the past few centuries
 - Can be traced back to Aristotle at the earliest
 - Scholars made important contributions include Bacon and Descartes
 - Empiricism, objectivism, scientific methods, and naturalism



- Characteristics of positivism
 - Based on foundationalism
 - Objectivity
 - Facts are independent of the researcher's personal values and beliefs
 - Universality
 - Looks for generalizations, universal laws, patterns or irrefutable facts



- Measurement and modelling
 - Discover the world by making observations and measurements and producing models of how it works
- Hypothesis testing
 - Based on the empirical testing of theories and hypothesis, leading to confirmation or refutation of them
- Quantitative data analysis
 - Strong preference for mathematical modelling and proofs, and statistical analysis



- Interpretivism
 - Formed in 1950s
 - Kant、Hegel、Weber、Herbert、Ervin、 Barney and Strauss made important contributions
 - Relativism, understanding, phenomenology, hermeneutics, idealism, semiotics and constructivism



Research Paradigms (6)

- Characteristics of interpretivism
 - Based on anti-foundationalism
 - Multiple subjective realities
 - No single version of 'the truth' and different groups or cultures perceive the world differently
 - Dynamic and socially constructed meaning
 - Language and shared meanings differ across groups and over time
 - Study of people in their natural social settings
 - Not in the artificial world of a lab as in experiment

Research Paradigms (7)

- Researcher reflexivity
 - Own assumptions, beliefs, values and actions will shape the research process and affect the situation
 - Be reflexive to acknowledge how they influence the research
- Qualitative data analysis
 - Strong preference for generating and analysing qualitative data
- Multiple interpretations
 - Will not arrive at one fixed explanation of what occurs





Research Paradigms (8)

- Critical research
 - Originates in 1970s
 - Scholars made important contributions include Habermas, Bourdieu, Foucault, Latour and Marx
 - Feminism, Marxism, Racism



- Characteristics of critical research
 - Combination of interpretivism and positivism
 - Firstly, society is created and re-created by people (interpretivism) – a golf club with separate committees for male and female members
 - Secondly, society possesses objective properties (patterns of power and control) that tend to dominate experiences and ways of people seeing the world (positivism) – the male captain has the first choice of dates to hold competitions, with the female captain choosing from the remaining dates



Emancipation

 Committed to freeing people from the power relations that shape society – help the women members in the golf club to organize themselves and to effect changes

Critique of tradition

 Do not accept the status quo, but question and challenge it - IS developers serve as a tool for managers to exploit employees

Non-performative intent

 Reject research aiming at improving managerial efficiency and control to maximize profits and enhance managers' control and power



- Critique of technological determination
 - Disagree that technological development follows its own rules and people must adapt to the technology
 - Argue that people can shape the technology developed
- Reflexivity
 - Research projects are often shaped by those with power and vested interests – governments can decide which topics to be funded and reviewers can decide which papers to be published

Choice of Research Paradigms (1)

- The choice depends on
 - The filed of research
 - Natural VS Social
 - Personal beliefs and values
 - Determine the knowledge want to create and shape the way perceive the world
 - Whether want to do a typical research in a field

Choice of Research Paradigms (2)

- Whether willing to take a risk and challenge the status quo
 - Positivism still predominates, especially in USA, and can still be a safer option
 - Interpretivism has been increasingly adopted and accepted in IS over the last 40 or so years
 - Although a growing community knows and argues for the critical research, it is not anywhere near mainstream



Discussion

- What's the research paradigm used by the case
- Choose a research paradigm for your research title and explain the reasons of the choice