How I Became a Pragmatist in Management and Organisational Research

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ABSTRACT

Whilst different approaches of management and organizational research exists, the nature of the research environment, the objectives the researcher seeks as well as the philosophical beliefs of the researcher informs largely the specific research methods the researcher adopts in the conduct of any research. As a researcher is naturally predisposed to a particular form of research orientation, the modern research environment however requires versatility. It is for this reason that researchers keeps fairly a balanced insight across different research orientations even as they still continue to hold on to their preferred philosophical and methodological stances.

For some, one is either positivist or interpretivist depending on the chosen methodology. But for others there is a middle ground where the methodologies at the two extremes are integrated which then creates a third strand for researchers to choose from. Yet for some other researchers, philosophy doesn’t matter, preconceptions about methodology doesn’t matter. What matters is pragmatism. Here, the research objectives and the kind of methodology that better aids in the attainment of the objectives is what remains paramount. And for an individual with a diverse background, that makes him/her exposed to different management and organizational environment, there cannot be fixation about research orientation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The way organizations are understood and the kind of management approaches individuals adopt in their quest to stir organizations to success are clear distinguishing reasons that informs the variety of research methods and approaches researchers use in exploring issues of organizational and management significance. In this paper I adopt a more personalized approach to the way management and organizational research is understood. In the process, I attempt to articulate clearly my preferred methodological stances. But those stances will relate more practically to the management and organizational context I find myself. These will be done by addressing the following issues:

1. Perspectives and theories of organizations
2. My philosophical underpinnings of truth and the search for truth in organizations
3. My preferred methodological stances in the light of organizational theory and my philosophical underpinnings

I must indicate in this beginning that several authors have written on the nature of management and organizational research and the processes they prefer as they embark on research in the field. As I discuss this topic from a personal perspective, the arguments I raise will still relate significantly to their insights.

II. DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF ORGANISATIONS

Even though there is generally a consensus on what constitutes an organization, some albeit slightly differences can be noted. Again the way the researcher understands what constitutes an organization also informs how he/she chooses to research the organizational environment. According to Amitai Etzioni (1964: 1), an American sociologist, “Our society is an organizational society. We are born in organizations, educated by organizations, and most of us spend much of our lives working for organizations. We spend much of our leisure time paying, playing, and praying in organizations. Most of us will die in an organization, and when the time comes...
Etzioni proceeds to define an organization as “Social units (or human groupings) deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals”. (p:3) Etzioni includes corporations, armies, schools, hospitals, churches, and prisons as being part of organisations, while excluding tribes, classes, ethnic groups, friendships, groups, and families.

Etzioni (1964) identifies three important characteristics of an organization to include the following:

1. Divisions of labor, power, and communication responsibilities, divisions which are not random or traditionally patterned, but deliberately planned to enhance the realization of specific goals;

2. The presence of one or more power centers which control the concerted efforts of the organization and direct them toward its goals; these power centers also must review continuously the organizations performance and re-pattern its structure, where necessary, to increase its efficiency;

3. Substitution of personnel, i.e., unsatisfactory persons can be removed and others assigned their tasks. The organization can also combine its personnel through transfer and promotion. (p:3)

Etzioni’s understanding of what constitutes an organization is therefore that, even though organizations are deliberately constructed, we cannot see an organization to be different or isolated from human existence. Our very existence depends on the organization. We become part of an organization directly or indirectly from birth to death. An organization is therefore the context within which most of human activity is conducted.

Also Scott (1992:10) sees organizations as “social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals”. He added that “The development of organizations is the principle mechanism by which, in a highly differentiated society, it is possible to get things done and to achieve goals beyond the reach of the individual”.

Both Scott and Etzioni find the organization as a social structure. Goals and objectives result in the creation of the structure. Meaning, an organization is consciously constructed to reflect a focus on the attainment of specific goals and objectives. Relationships existing in an organization are one of authority relationships where there is a concerted effort by everybody concerned towards the organizational goals.

Gandhi and Shah (1992: 273) also indicated that “organizations are not just instruments for the implementation of certain objectives: they shape and are shaped by people, in their actions and ideas and histories are contained memories of their past, their origins, of traumatic splits, of dramatic campaigns, of hope and despair. The selection of a particular kind of structure, as well as the internal processes followed by any organization is a statement of political consciousness”.

The perspective provided by Gandhi and Shah presents quite an opposing force to that of Etzioni and Scott where Ghandi and Shah maintains that organization goes beyond the formation of a structure to attain goals and objectives but it emerges naturally from continuous interaction among people over time to the extent that certain defining principles, values, norms and perceptions holds them together. This is different from the fact that the structure of an organization is deliberately constructed or patterned. According to Ghandi and Shah, values and norms for instance are important elements that holds people in an organization together and not necessarily the authority relationships.

III. ORGANISATIONAL THEORIES

Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) define organizational theory as “how groups and individuals behave in varying organizational structures and circumstances” (p. 1). Organizational theory has its roots across different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics and history. The understandings drawn from these dimensions leads to a construct using social and behavioral theories that informs the way individuals are prepared to look at an organization. And that is the basis of Organizational theory (Bergson, 1992).

For the purpose of this paper I prefer to look at organizational theory from two different perspectives. On the one hand are classical and neo-classical organizational theories that emerged and started to develop from the late 19th century into the middle of the 20th century and on the hand are the post classical theories of which many and related theories are abound. However the most salient issues from the various dimensions of organizational theory will only be discussed. This paper is not intended to present a detail discussion on organizational theory.

IV. CLASSICAL APPROACH OF MANAGEMENT

The classical approach to management (1900-1930) was the product of the first concentrated effort to develop a body of management thought. In fact, the management writers who participated in this effort are considered the pioneers of organizational studies. The classical approach recommends that managers continually strive to increase organizational efficiency in order to increase production. (Sarker and Khan, 2013).

Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) identifies the tenets of the classical school of management as:
The goals of organizations can only be related to production and economic nature.

Systematic and scientific processes of inquiry within any production setting should uncover a one best way of production.

When people become experts in their task and they are assigned work only according to their expertise it leads to maximum production.

Rational economic principles are the basis of actions by people and organizations.

The classical approach can be divided into mainly three distinct areas. These are:

a) Scientific management
b) Administrative management
c) Bureaucratic management

Scientific management theory:
Scientific management consists primarily of the work of Frederick W. Taylor, Frank and Lilian Gilbreth, and Henry L. Gantt. Frederick W. Taylor (1856-1915) is commonly called the father of scientific management because of the significance of his contribution to this theory. Taylor sought to create a mental revolution among both workers and managers by defining clear guidelines for improving production efficiency. Taylor postulated that there was one ‘best way’ for each job and his efforts were to minimize the strain on the human body when performing any task. Taylor held that efficiency could be maximized if all the tasks involved in production could be divided into a series of simple movements and operations. Each worker then had to be trained to perform one of these simple operations. (Sarker and Khan, 2013; McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2014).

The scientific management theory stood on four prongs:

Firstly, Taylor used time and motion studies to understand how long it took for a particular task to be completed. He then proceeded to breaking down the task into smaller units in ways that it could be simpler and less stressful for an individual to undertake.

Secondly, Taylor set targets for each task and then proceeded to finding the individual who could perform the task. Even after identifying the said individual, Taylor recommended that the individual should be taught and directed on how he/she could perform the task appropriately. Taylor indicated that where there is a mismatch between the needs of the task and the individual who can actually perform the task, productivity and efficiency will not be enhanced.

Thirdly, Taylor recommends cooperation on the part of management for the employee to ensure that all the work he/she has been assigned is carried out successfully. According to him it was wrong for management to assume that once an employee has been assigned work, the task was going to be accomplished. Supervision and monitoring was therefore key if the work was to be done successfully.

Fourthly, Taylor contends that division of work was so paramount. Here, management has to be clear on what it roles are whereas the roles of the employees are also known. Taylor argued that by dividing the work between management and employees it created an atmosphere of teamwork where there are inter-dependencies between employees and management to get the work done.

Administrative management: Whereas scientific managers emphasize job design in the study of organizations and management, Administrative management focuses on organizational efficiency. Even though the notable contributor to the administrative management theory was Henri Fayol, there were other well-known contributors as Chester I Barnard, Alvin Brown, Henry Dennison, Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick, J. Mooney and A C Reily, and Oliver Sheldon. (Sarker and Khan, 2013).

Henri Fayol (1841-1925) in his book General and Industrial management presents a management philosophy that still guides many modern managers. Because of his writings on elements and general principles of management, Henri Fayol is usually regarded as the pioneer of administrative theory (Sarker and Khan, 2013). The general principles of management suggested by Fayol are still considered useful in contemporary organizational practices.

According to Fayol, individuals and departments need to subordinate their interests to those of an organization. The function of management is to plan, organize, command, coordinate and control and, at the same time, it has to be competent enough to elicit ‘loyalty and obedience’ from the workers. Fayol’s examples to discuss his management principles were drawn often from the French army.

Bureaucratic Management: Bureaucratic management is another stream of classical theory of management. It is “a formal system of organization that is based on clearly defined hierarchical levels and roles in order to maintain efficiency and effectiveness”

Max Weber (1864-1924) was the first of management theorists who developed a theory of authority structures and relations based on an ideal type of organization he called a bureaucracy. Weber argued that purpose directed all human action. Therefore, to understand and explain any action it was important to comprehend the meaning or motive behind the action. (Desouza, 2011)

According to Weber, there were various types of actions such as ‘affective’ or ‘emotional action’ which stem from an individual’s emotional state at a particular time, ‘traditional action’ which is based on established custom, habit and not much thought and lastly ‘rational action’ which involves a clear awareness of goal (Desouza, 2011)
V. NEO-CLASSICAL APPROACH OF MANAGEMENT (1930-1960)

The Neoclassical approach grew out of the limitations of the classical theory. The classical approach focused on jobs and machines without thinking about the human side of work. The social and psychological needs of workers were not addressed through the classical approach and this started affecting organizational performance (Sarker and Khan, 2013). There are mainly two elements of neoclassical theory of management. They are Human Relation Movement, and Organizational Behavior.

Human relation movement: In 1941, Elton Mayo published a study he made between 1927 and 1932 into the working conditions and productivity levels at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago and came out with very interesting findings. The studies focused on behavior in the workplace. In one experiment involving this group of workers, for example, researchers monitored how productivity changed as a result of changes in working conditions. The Hawthorne studies and subsequent experiments lead scientists to the conclusion that the human element is very important in the workplace.

The Hawthorne Experiments opened the flood gates for more studies along the neoclassical school. The human relation movement included many who researches and writings were to do with interpersonal and social relations among the members of the organization. Human relation movement argued that workers respond primarily to the social context of the workplace, including social conditioning, group norms and interpersonal dynamics. (Sarker and Khan, 2013).

According to Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) the viewpoints of organizational theorists within the human relation school can be summarized along four fundamental assumptions:

- The reasons for organizational existence is to serve human needs.
- An organization needs people as much as people need the organization.
- There has to be a fit between people and the organization. Or else the people will suffer, or the organization will suffer or even both the organization and the people will suffer when there is not fit.
- Where there is a fit between people and organizations that is considered good both the people and the organization benefits.

The human relations school believes that taking care of workers that is the organization putting measures in place that satisfies the emotional and psychological needs of workers will invariable greatly enhance productivity and efficiency. It is a “chicken and egg situation” where one can never have eggs without the chicken itself. So organizations must take care of their employees for their organizations to be taken care of.

Organizational behavior: Sarker and Khan (2013) explains that the organizational behavior theory involves the study of attitudes, behavior and performance of individuals and groups in organizational settings. And that it is multidimensional and interdisciplinary in the application of knowledge drawn from behavioral sciences (Psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc.) to the management problems.

Much of the discussions under behavioural schools can as well be considered under organizational humanism in modern management theory. Behavioral scientists who contributed significantly to the development of the behavioral school are are Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Chris Argyris, Frederick Herzberg, Rensis Likert, Kurt Lewin, Chester Barnard, Mary Parker Follett, George Homans and Warren Bennis (Sridhar, nd)

Appraisal of the classical and neoclassical approaches

Classical approach made a significant contribution to the development of management theories. This perspective is posited on three prongs (Sarker and Khan, 2013). Whiles the focus of scientific management was on employees within organizations and on ways to improve their productivity, the focus of administrative theory was on ensuring organizational efficiency. On the other hand bureaucratic management regarded the importance of positions within organizations and the people occupying the positions. If managerial inconsistencies were removed as well as creating the right service conditions, the proper functioning of organizations and the people occupying the positions. If managerial inconsistencies were removed as well as creating the right service conditions, the proper functioning of organizations will always remain at any point in time. (Sarker and Khan, 2013). The classical approach articulated a more generalized approach to the principles of management. It made a clear distinction between operative activities and managerial activities. It also identified the application of scientific method to the problems of management.

However, Sarker and Khan (2013) contend that the criticism of the classical approach is across three levels. First, the theory is said to be too formal, secondly, it is more appropriate for stable and simple organizations than for today’s dynamic and complex organizations. Thirdly, it often prescribes generalized management principles without taking into consideration particular management and organizational context.

The neoclassical approach also has limitations. Sarker and Khan (2013) identifies first, that it lacks the precision of the classical theory because human behavior is unpredictable. Secondly, its conclusions lack scientific validity and suffer from a clinical bias, its findings are tentative. Lastly its application in practice is very difficult because it requires fundamental changes in the thinking and attitude of both management and workers.

However in taking a more mediating position, Amitai Etzioni (1964: 2) asserted that “not all that enhances
rationality reduces happiness, and not all that increases happiness reduces efficiency”. If classicalist insistence on rationality operates within an environment that supports it leads to the hoped for results that both management and employees consider to be beneficial, certainly they are all going to be happy. On the other hand if a conducive and relational environment exist in an organization that leads to everybody giving off his/her best, that will obviously lead to efficiency. (Etzioni, 1964).

Amitai Etzioni (1964:2) asserts further that “within limits, happiness heightens efficiency in organizations and, conversely, without efficient organizations much of our happiness is unthinkable. Without well-run organizations our standard of living, our level of culture, and our democratic life could not be maintained. Thus, to a degree, organizational rationality and human happiness go hand in hand”

Here, Etzioni accepts the fact that every organizational theory has limitations despite its strengths. It is for managers to understand the environment within which they find themselves as well as their organizational context so as to proceed on a model or theory that can generate the needed results.

VI. SOME CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF ORGANISATIONS

I provide below three contemporary theories of organizations and these emerged from the mid-20th century onwards:

**T. Burns and G. Stalker (Mechanistic and Organic systems)**

T. Burns and G. Stalker (1961), proposes the mechanistic and organic systems which in their view are two formally contrasted management systems.

According to T. Burns and G. Stalker a mechanistic system is a situation whereby the management differentiates functional tasks into problems and tasks facing the organization as a whole and breaks it down into more manageable units. They contend that the task has to be pursued with techniques and purposes more or less distinct from those of the concern as a whole.

On the other hand T. Burns and G Stalker (1961) present an organic system as being the contributive nature of special knowledge and experience to the common task of the concern. This is achieved by seeing the individual task as being part of the total situation of the concern.

**Paul Lawrence and J. Lorsch (Contingency theory)**

On organizations and their relationship to the external environment, Paul Lawrence and J. Lorsch in their book Organization and Environment (1967) discussed organizations whose structure was contingent on the kind of environment or other conditions in which they functioned and this lead to the emergence of the contingency theory. The Contingency theory emphasizes that in order to be effective an organization needs to develop appropriate matches between its internal organization and the nature and demands of its external environment. (Desouza, 2011)

**Gross and Etzioni (Compliance Model)**

According to Gross and Etzioni (1985) organizations are planned, deliberately structured social units, which are constantly reviewing their performance and restructuring themselves accordingly. Organizations concern with performance and their tendency to be far more complex than natural units make informal control inadequate and reliance on identification with the job impossible.

Most organizations cannot rely on their participants to internalize their obligations, to carry out their assignments voluntarily, without additional incentives. Hence organizations require a formally structured distribution of rewards and sanctions to support compliance with their norms, regulations, and orders. Those whose performance is in line with the organizational norms will be rewarded and those whose performance deviates from it will be penalized.

VII. MY PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS ON THE NATURE OF TRUTH AND THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH IN ORGANIZATIONS

Ontological and epistemological assumptions of a researcher constitute an important first step in the conduct of any research. Ontology and epistemology influences the methods and processes the researcher chooses to undertake any research. Ontology and Epistemology establishes the identity of the researcher which then gives credence and justification to the research paradigm he/she chooses.

Wand and Weber (1993:220) defines ontology as "a branch of philosophy concerned with articulating the nature and structure of the world."

According to Hirschheim et al (1995:20), epistemology represents "the nature of human knowledge and understanding that can possibly be acquired through different types of inquiry and alternative methods of investigation."

Different ontological and epistemological positions are as a result of the different theories organizational researchers, theorists and practitioners are predisposed to. Following the theories of organizations discussed earlier, the classical organizational theories of Taylor, Fayol and Max Werber that emphasizes order, rationality and cause and effect decisional context follows an objectivist/positivist ontology and epistemology whiles theories along the neoclassical school led by the human
relations school of the Hawthorne experiment and the organizational school reflects a constructionist/interpretivist ontology and epistemology.

The objectivist and positivist believe that organizations can only be treated as separate entities from human existence. And the methods adopted to study organizations therefore must reflect a scientific process where the researcher or organizational actors are separated from the organization itself. The positivist posit that sense perceptions of the individual and theory-free observational data are to be accepted as the only means of scientific knowledge in organizational study. (Reed, 2006)

The constructionist on the other hand believe that the meanings and interpretations that organizational actors places on happenings and developments in organizations play a key role in how organizations should be understood and studied. Constructionism emphasizes the need for understanding subjects in specific research situations and not general. The Understanding should emerge and evolve overtime within their said localized environments. These call for methods that are altogether opposed to the methods of natural science been advocated by the positivist. (Reed, 2006).

The narrative around ontology and epistemology seems to suggest of the fact that apart from positivism and constructionism there is no any form of ontology and epistemology. But other forms of ontological assumptions and epistemological principles have emerged more recently as a challenge to pure positivism and constructionism. For instance Reed (2006) talks of “realism” or “critical realism” (cited Putnam, 1990; Reed 1997; 2001; 2003; 2005b; Fleetwood 1999; Akroyd and Fleetwood 2000; Clark 2000; 2003; Lopez and Potter 2001; Dannermark et al. 2002; Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004). Realism according to Reed (2006) maintains that “Organization is necessarily embedded in pre-existing material and social reality that fundamentally shapes the structures and processes through which it is generated, reproduced and transformed”(p.41).

The epistemological principles and theoretical practices through which we attempt to understand and explain organization must focus on the underlying real or generative structures and mechanisms through which the interrelated entities and processes that constitute it are generated, sustained and changed. By rejecting the material determinism inherent in positivism and the cultural relativism endemic to constructionism, critical realism provides a meta-theoretical framework in which explanatory theories and models of historical and structural change in organizational forms and processes can be developed(Reed 2006, p. 41).

My preferred ontological and epistemological notions are one of pragmatism. According to Mackenize and Knipe (2006) pragmatism has no commitment to any particular form of ontology or epistemology. Pragmatism is all about understanding the research context in which one finds him/herself and determining what works in the circumstance. According to Merton (2005: p.26) early pragmatist “rejected the scientific notion that social inquiry was able to access the ‘truth’ about the real world solely by virtue of a single scientific method” (cited in Mackenze and Knipe, 2006)

In pragmatism, the central point is the research question. Once that is understood, the rest is about the researcher being able to determine data collection methods that are appropriate and what method of analysis to be used so that the results will lead to attaining the objectives of the research problem. This is done without commitment or loyalty to any research philosophical orientation.(MacKenze and Knipe, 2006)

VIII. MY PREFERED METHODOLOGICAL STANCES

My preferred methodological approaches to management and organizational research are informed by my ontological and epistemological perspectives. Let me at this very early stage indicate that I prefer my approach to be labelled “pragmatism in organizational and management research” By pragmatism, I mean the organizational and management context I find myself have influenced my preparedness to want to appreciate both qualitative and quantitative styled methodologies, which are reflected in the interpretivist and positivist organizational theories respectively. In whatever context I find myself, the search for truth will be informed by the methodology that is suitable, appropriate and practicable. And I set my preamble for Pragmatism as first, a discussion of both Quantitative and Qualitative research methodologies in the light of organizational and management theory. And second, a discussion that seeks to integrate the two.

IX. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The theoretical basis

The approaches and Methods employed by Quantitative researchers reflect a positivist view. The free encyclopedia defines positivism as “a philosophy of science that information derived from logical and mathematical treatments and reports of sensory experience is the exclusive source of all authoritative knowledge, and that there is valid knowledge (truth) only in this derived knowledge”. The free encyclopedia adds that positivist claims that “society, like the physical world, operates according to general laws”.

Positivism is embedded in classical organizational theory where theorist from this paradigm search for causal relationships in relation to organizations and
Classical organizational theorists believe that adopting rationality, orderly and scientific approaches to organizational management remains the surest way to higher organizational productivity and efficiency (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson 2014).

In classical organizational theory, the emphasis is a clear organizational structure that spells out functions, roles and responsibilities among members. Once this has been achieved, effectiveness and efficiency in the way things are done must be a matter of course. It is the belief of the classical organizational theorists that each individual contributions to organizational success can be measured and quantified (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2014).

In order to establish the rationality, effectiveness and efficiency that the classicalist theorist seek, classical researchers become susceptible to quantitative methodology. This requires gathering data, analyzing and evaluating the data through sensed perceptions. Sensed perceptual data is through what the respondent sees, hears, touches, smells and taste which all can be expressed in a quantity that is verifiable. (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). Classical organizational studies lead by Taylor, Weber and Fayol underlie the principles of quantitative methodology. Also, in more recent studies of T. Burns and G. Stalker Mechanistic organization (1961) and Gross and Etzioni compliance model (1985), elements of quantitative methodology are contained.

In my own organizational and management setting, I can observe more practically that there is a clear link between happenings in my organization and the perspectives of classical organizational theory. The organizational structure in my organization attempts to establish rationality, clarity and order for its functions. For such a big institution, the structure is so tall and complex with the attempt to detail out roles that are both administrative and academic in nature.

The organizational structure and the way things are done certainly smacks of a classical-positivist understanding of how things should be done. There is the emphasis on authority and positional power with a well-respected chain of command.

The institution exist entirely different from the individuals who work in it and this is typified by the manner in which objectives, rules and regulations are widely communicated to everyone and each individual’s work is evaluated on the basis of what he/she is required to do. Individual responsibility is the key and not the collective. This is how all public sector institutions in Ghana are structured. Appraisals of staff performance both administrative and academic are a huge numbers game. That is quantitative targets are set compared to the targets achieved. A positivist philosophical underpinning resulting in quantitative methods informs research in this organizational context.

Underlying Principles of Quantitative Methodology

In order to carry out a study that is reflective of the quantitative school, certain principles must necessarily be obeyed. It is the belief of the Quantitative researcher that logically deductive conclusions can be arrived at when scientific explanations are expressed in a standardized form. For this reason they prefer that scientific explanations be stated mathematically as this will allow the scientist to use a well-established subset of the rules of formal logic or widely known as rules of algebra for evaluating, understanding and accepting the results of any inquiry (Lee, 1991).

The consequence is that, propositions will emerge and these propositions will be standards that any other proposition will be compared. Those that cannot be shown to be logically connected to or logically deducible from the standard proposition will be exposed as groundless. (Hanson, 1969 cited in Lee, 1991)

Lee (1991) indicates that when formal deductive logic and hypothetico deductive logic rules are employed, theoretical propositions emerging out of the analyzed data must be reflective of four requirements. That is falsifiability, logical consistency, relative explanatory power, and survival.

Lee (1991) explains Falsibility as the presence of inaccuracies in the empirical content of theoretical propositions that can be detected only through contradictory obeservation. Observations that disconfirm a prediction and thereby falsify the theory from which the prediction follows. According to Lee (1991) a test for Logical Consistency is that all of a theory’s propositions must be shown to be related to one another by the rules of formal logic, or be logically deducible from the same set of premises.

On the third requirement which is relative explanatory power. Lee contends that a given theory must be able to explain, or predict the subject matter as well as any competing theory. On the fourth and last requirement which is Survival, Lee explains that, while falsifiable, a theory must survive the actual attempts aimed at its disconfirmation through controlled empirical testing.

X. QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Basis

Qualitative researchers assume the position that people, and the physical and social artifacts that they create, are fundamentally different from the physical reality examined by natural science. So instead of following quantitative studies that verify or test the existence of various concepts and reality using what is known as the scientific method, in qualitative methodology, it is understood that people create and attach their own meanings to the world around them and to the
behavior that they manifest in that world. These meanings must be studied and understood in the context in which they occur (Lee, 1991).

Qualitative approaches therefore demand of social scientist and among other things, to interpret empirical reality in terms of what it means to the observed people. Researchers must collect facts and data describing not only the purely objective, publicly observable aspects of human behavior, but also the subjective meaning this behavior has for the human subjects themselves.

Organizational theorists within the neo-classical paradigm rely on qualitative approaches as they understand and study the processes through which organizations emerge. Neo-classicalist-interpretivist interpret meaning out of our subjective settings (organizations and cultures). This subjectivity is then relayed to the understandings and meanings we attach to others operating in different other cultures and organizations (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2014)

Interpretivist theorists believe that to set standards on the basis of which behavior of everybody should be measured in the same way is completely inappropriate. Interpretivist through their study of organizations pay critical attention to the subjective meanings people attach to the daily symbols of their lives through symbolic interactionism.

McAuley, Duberley and Johnson (2014) provides four defining elements in understanding Symbolic Interactionism. First, they contend that in understanding any object or subject of analysis, such as the self, identity, organization roles and so on, there is the need to look at both their intrinsic qualities and interactional context.

Secondly, they indicate that one should also consider the way in which the objects or subjects symbolize. This is because the everyday features of people lives ‘take on meanings and become objects for persons that elicit feelings and actions’ (Stryker and Ryan, 2003, p.5 cited in McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2014) and the ways in which these symbols become embedded in their daily interactions. The ways in which definitions of the situation and symbols are emergent and the ability of human beings to create and recreate their own meanings and definitions constitute the third and fourth respectively. Theories within the human relation school reflect interpretivist thinking. Elton Mayo for instance followed the qualitative approach in the Hawthorne study. The meanings and understandings people attached to interactions with others was key to this study.

In my own context as a Management consultant and an Organizational Development Practitioner (RODP) specializing in Dynamic Team Building (DTB), Mentoring and Executive Coaching, I have had to employ interpretivist approaches in how I implement any of these interventions after I have settled on a proper diagnosis of the situation. My understanding is that human beings are not robots who are manufactured and intended to function in a predictable manner.

In a particular case of Dynamic Team Building, my task is always to build a working team by moving the group through five stages of Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing, and possibly, Adjourning if it is a project team (Tuckman and Ann, 1977). These processes require tact and a soft approach and not the hard approaches of Positivism. The facilitator or the leader must understand people emotions in ways that you are able to leverage on positive emotions whilst instituting processes and interactions that are assuring for people to get out of negative moods, so that you can drive the entire team to success. Today Dynamic Team Building is one of my key strengths.

Within this professional management and organizational development context, I become susceptible to qualitative styled methodology in the conduct of research. I know I am dealing with human beings and they cannot be programmed unlike machines. In order to gain a deeper insight into why people do what they do in their respective organizations so as to work with organizations to find solutions to their problems, qualitative methodology becomes the appropriate in this context.

Some Dimensions of Qualitative Research
Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the art of interpreting and understanding relationships existing between a researcher and the subject of research but also the reader (McCauley, 2004). Hermeneutics first emerged as a research tool based on the interpretative approach to understand literary and religious texts (McCauley, 2004). Over time however, hermeneutics has become so powerful that apart from being used in interpreting text and their meanings, hermeneutics now facilitates the interpretation of human behavior. This makes hermeneutics applicable in every social context in as far as the conduct of research is concerned. (Tice and Slavens 1983, pp. 293-299; Taylor 1979; and Bernstein 1978, 1983 cited in Lee, 1991)

Ricoeur, (1997:26) states that "there is no general hermeneutics……but only desperate and opposed theories concerning the rules of interpretation” Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000:52) identifies objectivist hermeneutics which results in the understanding of underlying meaning, not the explanation of causal connections. Also, McCauley (2004) indicates that there is what has been characterized as ‘alethic hermeneutics’, which has its focus on truth as an act of disclosure, in which the polarity between subject and object-as well as that between understanding and explanations is dissolved in the radical light of a more original unity.

Ethnography

According to Lee (1991) "Doing ethnography, as anthropologists put it, is doing an interpretation of the behavior of human subjects in their local settings. The anthropologist seeks to understand the meanings that the
local behaviors signify to the human subjects (the "natives") themselves.

Lee (1991) cites Geertz that in Ethnography the observer understandings can be arrived at by making the following formulations 'inside' versus 'outside', or 'first person' versus 'third person' descriptions; 'phenomenological' versus 'objectivist,' or 'cognitive' versus 'behavioral' theories; or, perhaps most commonly 'emic' versus 'etic' analyses. To this list, Geertz adds yet another formulation, "experience-near" versus "experience-far."

In analyzing the formulations pointed out, according to Lee(1991), Geertz indicates that he goes about "searching out and analyzing the symbolic forms -words, images, institutions, behaviors-in terms of which. .... ... people actually presented themselves to themselves and to one another". Lee concludes that this manner of interpretation proceeds by analyzing the meanings of these symbolic forms (among which Geertz explicitly includes manifest behaviors) with respect to one another, as well as to the whole that they comprise.

In ethnography, one test for the validity of an interpretation is the extent to which the behavior of the native does not strike the ethnographer as an absurdity, irrational, strange, surprising, or confusing. Thus, a good ethnography will be one that identifies these meanings and also understands the rational connection behind the actions that he or she observes and the meanings attached to them. A poor ethnography would rather leave the ethnographer with the impression of some of the actions as being irrational and confusing (Lee, 1991).

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory takes into consideration an individual, group or organizational collective experiences over time so as to develop a pattern or theory that can be used in predicting future responses and outcomes (Goulding, 2009). Processes of grounded theory are grounded on the ability to gather and analyze data and the results of which should lead to the generation of new theory. The theory evolves through the research process and this is a continuous interplay between analysis and data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992, Goulding, 2009)

Validity in its traditional sense is not an issue in GT. ( Charmaz, 2003). Charmaz (2006) defines the fundamental elements of GT as:

*Fit* has to do with how closely concepts fit with the incidents they are representing, and this is related to how thorough the constant comparison of incidents to concepts was done.

*Relevance*. A relevant study deals with the real concern of participants, evokes "grab" (captures the attention) and is not only of academic interest.

*Workability*. The theory works when it explains how the problem is being solved with much variation.

**Modifiability**. A modifiable theory can be altered when new relevant data is compared to existing data. A GT is never right or wrong, it just has more or less fit, relevance, workability and modifiability.

**XI. INTEGRATING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

As pointed out earlier, the appraisal of the classical and neo-classical approaches show strengths and weaknesses at both ends. In order to manage an organization more efficiently and successfully, the organizational context must be taken into consideration before deciding whether the classical-rational approach or a neo-classical-human relational approach will be appropriate. It is not forbidden to advocate a blend between classical and neoclassical approaches or positivist and interpretivist approaches (Sarker and Khan, 2013; Etzioni, 1964)

The counterclaims however, between quantitative and qualitative research as to which is perfect must be ignored and rather positives drawn from both which can even lead to a third strand. The organizational research environment is replete with lots of examples and ways in which integrating qualitative and quantitative research is possible. To the extent that some have argued that the integration of qualitative and quantitative research can stand as a strand of research on its own which can be seen differently from quantitative and qualitative research. The new strand has been named variously as multi-methods, multi-strategy, mixed methods, or mixed methodology (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddle, 1998; Tashakkori and Teddle, 2003 cited in Bryman, 2006)

As an academic, appreciation of both qualitative and quantitative methods remains imperative. My students' present proposals to be considered for their research projects and located in these proposals are both qualitative and quantitative methods. The lack of appreciation for both methods will mean that I will lack the capacity to supervise these research projects. From experience in supervising research projects over the last four years, I find that more than 90% of research projects presented by students come in the form of quantitative methods. My assessment of the situation tells me that more students seem to be comfortable with quantitative methods because of their preconceptions that quantitative methods ensure more validity and credibility.

Again it appears that quantitative methods for most students are quite easy to understand and follow in the research process, than it is for qualitative methods. The few who have presented proposals with qualitative methods are unable to explain clearly their processes of
data collection and whether the final piece can really stand the test of a good research or not.

Following the remarkable attention that qualitative methods have received in recent times, I recognize the responsibility as an academic to follow and understand qualitative methods just as I follow quantitative methods, so that I will be in a better position to encourage students to use either of them or both as the situation requires and to help them in perfecting their use.

Lee. (1991) provides a broader perspective on how quantitative and qualitative research can be integrated by providing understandings at three levels:  
**The understanding at the first level belongs to the observed human subjects.**

According to Lee, this understanding consists of the everyday common sense and everyday meanings that human subjects makes of the happenings around them and those which involves them. These are happenings within the naturally occurring environments that human subjects find themselves. How the researcher can observe these happenings and understand the meanings the human subjects attributes to the happenings gives rise to the understanding at the second level.

**The understanding at the second level belongs to the observing organizational researcher.**

Lee indicates that this understanding isthe researcher's reading or interpretation of the first-level, common-sense understanding. When capturing the common-sense understanding, Lee adds that the researcher might even be said to be replicating it. As Lee himself indicates, it can be observed that at the second level understanding, the methods that better aids the researcher's efforts are of qualitative-interpretive nature as methods such as the hermeneutical circle, and thick description are going to come very much in handy.

**The understanding at the third level also belongs to the organizational researcher.**

Lee explains that in order to test the empirical reality the researcher is investigating, he/she must develop constructs that belongs to him/her exclusively but has to be based on what is observed within the subjective environments of the objects. In effect, the subjective understanding informs the interpretive understanding. Developing an interpretive understanding lies in the use of methods and procedures that altogether are within the domain of qualitative approaches such as phenomenological sociology, hermeneutics, and ethnography. In order that the researcher develops constructs out of the interpretive understanding that stands the test of validity, Lee indicates that the researcher may refer back to the subjective understanding accomplishing this. One such way is to utilize the hermeneutical circle to verify the sensibility of what initially appeared to be "apparent absurdities." Another is for the researcher's to use his/her ability, based on the interpretive understanding, to read the behavior of the observed human subjects as rational, rather than as absurd, peculiar, pointless, irrational, surprising, or confusing.

Once the interpretive understanding has been properly and accurately constructed and also judged to be valid, it then provide the basis for developing the positivist understanding. Once the organizational researcher has completed the formulation of the theoretical propositions, Lee explains further that they must be subjected to control empirical testing. Here Lee refers to traditional positivist testing that is administered to theoretical propositions in the natural sciences. However, the propositions must first undergo testing that pertains to an additional, critical feature of social reality that distinguishes it from the physical subject matter of the natural sciences before going through the traditional positivist testing. This feature is the subjective understanding.

**REFERENCES**


