

Stance and Belief System of a Researcher in Qualitative Research: Philosophies and Paradigms

Devi Prasad Bhattarai

devipbr@gmail.com

Lecturer

Central Department of Education, T.U., Kirtipur

Abstract

This paper provides an idea on why novice researcher needs to understand the basic philosophy and paradigm of their underlying research problem. The paper aims to provide insights into research philosophies and paradigms so that a researcher could locate his/her research in a qualitative inquiry. To draw on the idea, the paper exemplarily utilizes my qualitative study of the doctoral program as an example which makes a needy researcher clearer in his/her philosophical arguments and worldviews and makes him/her position in a qualitative study. Methodologically, the paper is the product of a series of texts written centering on the qualitative research published by internationally renowned publishers, and the texts were selected by the discussion and talk about the philosophical texts during the doctoral student's seminars. The paper basically argues that a researcher needs to become clear about the research problem he/she is undertaking about research philosophy – ontology, epistemology, and methodology – and the paradigm in which his/her research problem rests. By this understanding, a researcher expectedly locates his/her research study appropriately with his/her underlying philosophical stance and belief system in a qualitative study.

Keywords: epistemology, interpretive – constructivist, methodology, normativity, ontology, paradigm, reductionism

Introduction

Scientific research and philosophical bases are deemed to be a fundamental requirement to understand the social structure in social science (Risjord, 2014); they do not only help a researcher direct towards set goals purposefully but also make the public convince and accept the research's final product lucidly. Philosophical notions in any research study logically lay a foundation and contribute to the understanding of ongoing debates on the methodological issue in social science (Scott & Usher, 1996). Given that questions of philosophy, the social science is always about "our place and universe" (Risjord, 2014, p. 1), therefore mysteriousness embedded in our place and universe always raises our curiosity to further explore the benefits for human beings or the universe itself. Usher (1996, p. 9) argues, "Science takes place within the context of human co-existence" reflects it as a social practice to bring out the unspoken and unexplored phenomenon about human

beings and the universe. In this sense, I understand that research philosophy is a belief about how any piece of research can be accomplished through employing different methodologies to unveil unspoken and unexplored phenomena embedded in our society.

The questions of our philosophy of social science according to Risjord (2014, p.1) subsume three different broad themes: “normativity, “naturalism” and “reductionism”. The questions belonging to normativity are concerned with the “place of value in social scientific inquiry” focusing on the “theorization about the origin, the function of values, rules and norms within human society” (ibid). Likewise, naturalism is related to “the relationship between the natural and social sciences” and its questions concern the “successful methods of natural sciences” (ibid). On the other hand, the questions concerning “how social structure is related to individuals who constitute them” are a matter of reductionism (ibid).

These questions belonging to these three different themes are important in view of social science because these open an avenue for rethinking the social phenomena from various corners with different lenses. However, debates on them are ongoing in the philosophy of social science about values and facts, and their underlying philosophical paradigms (See, Risjord, 2014; Oliveira, 2013). The overlapping of each other is experienced when we talk about normativity and naturalism, and naturalism and reductionism (Risjord, 2014). For example, those who argue for reductionism are “motivated by naturalistic commitments” (ibid, p. 11), thus pressing us to understand them subtly in scientific study. On the other hand, these broad themes can have several connections such as normativity is sometimes perceived to be equivalent with “practical rationality” (Oliveira, 2013, p. 94) make us think of applying them flexibly in social science.

In essence, what I understood from the above discussion is that a novice researcher particularly faces one of the challenges is an epistemological justification and a methodological clarification about every bit of his/her research premises to be accomplished. It is because; every question related to scientific investigation is deeply informed and guided by philosophical assumptions which, as Williams and May (1996, p. 136) point out, “enable us to understand our actions, assumptions, and consequences”. Thus, this paper aims to provide insights into research philosophies and paradigms so that a researcher could locate his/her research in a qualitative inquiry. So, in the subsequent titles, I will succinctly discuss and elucidate why philosophical perspectives are important for carrying out any social research, and why a researcher should have a philosophical orientation while engaging in a scientific investigation. These ideas will be discussed concerning my research problem of the doctoral study.

Methods and Materials

This paper is based on a qualitative research design that subsumes a rigorous review of the books published in the social science field dealing with emerging philosophies and paradigms and their underlined assumptions for the research. Selecting books was one of the problems since several books were focusing on the issues. Yet, the pressing need was to explore the more fundamental information on the area would require choosing books that could provide information sufficient and clear enough. With this rationale, I preferred the books stated in table no. 1 in terms of nature, scope, and contents through their frequent visits. After the selection of the books, they

were discussed and talked to the doctoral students during the seminars to be sure if they were corresponding the information to the study problem of this paper. Together with this, due consideration was given to the advice and feedback provided by my supervisors before I started writing this paper. The nominated books were read, and their notes were prepared subsequently which took a long time because of their overwhelming contents.

Table No 1: Major Books on Research Philosophy and Paradigm

S. N	Name	Materials	Authors	Publication
1.	The sage handbook of qualitative research (5 th ed.).	Book	Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2018). (Eds)	SAGE Publication.
2.	The foundation of research.	Book	Grix, J. (2004).	Palgrave Macmillan.
3.	The constructivist credo.	Book	Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (2013).	Left Coast Press.
4.	Critical realism, post-positivism, and the possibility of knowledge.	Book	Groff, R. (2004).	Routledge.
5.	Philosophy of social science: A contemporary introduction.	Book	Risjord, M. (2014).	Routledge.
6.	Research method in education: An introduction.	Book	Wiersma, W. (2000).	Allyn and Bacon.
7.	The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.	Book	Crotty, M. (1998).	SAGE Publication.
8.	Introduction to philosophy to social science.	Book	Williams, M., & May T. (1996).	UCL Press.

In addition to the reading of the books and preparation of their notes, to become updated with the contents discussed in the books, I partially selected some of the scholarly journals. The selection criteria for the journals were carried out if their contents would communicate the books selected. In the discussion and reflection, the information is more often than not utilize the same issue with multiple authors by employing the techniques of qualitative data analysis and interpretation.

Discussion and Reflection

This part involves discussion and reflections based on the review of the texts and the journal articles. The first deals with research philosophies – ontology, epistemology, and methodology – and the second deals with research paradigms and their underlying assumptions.

Research Philosophies

In this title, the discussion centers on some major research philosophies in connection with focus and guidance for investigators. The major research philosophies are epistemology, ontology, and methodology have been highly articulated and positioned in scholarly texts and literature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 2013; Grix, 2004). In general, "epistemology is intimately related to ontology and methodology; as ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies particular practices used to attain knowledge of it" (Krauss, 2005, p. 759). Therefore, as William and May (1996, p. 69) argue, "all philosophical positions and attendant methodologies, explicitly or implicitly, hold their view of social reality" provide insights and guidance to investigators in

undertaking research activities. In this regard, the major research philosophies will be succinctly discussed in the following way.

Ontology

Ontology, as Denzin and Lincoln, (2018, p.159) state, asks basic questions about “the nature of reality, and nature of human being in the world”. Ontology is the beginning point of any research, and then one can follow the epistemological and methodological positions in a logical way (Grix, 2004). As cited in Grix (2004, p. 59), Blaikie (2000) attempts to clarify ontological claims are ‘claims and assumptions that made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. Krauss (2005) presents ontology which subsumes the philosophy of reality, as an underlying belief system of a researcher, and as per the nature of the study, ontological assumptions could be different. However, it is not easy to differentiate ontological premises; it is, as Grix (2004, p. 59) argues, “difficult to understand how different scholarly traditions embedded in fundamentally different cultural context can have diverging views of the world and differing assumptions underpinning their particular approaches to social inquiry”. Ontology differs according to research paradigms, for example, positivistic paradigm upholds “naïve realism” which advocates for real truth or reality, whereas interpretivist ontology embraces “relativist ontology” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018, p. 216). Regarding my ontological position, I discuss later in a separate tile after discussing remaining philosophies and research paradigms.

Epistemology

Epistemology deals with the “theory of knowledge” with regards to “its methods, validation and potent ways of gaining knowledge of social reality” (Grix, 2004, p. 63). Traditionally, epistemology has been taken as of differentiating different kinds of “knowledge and non-knowledge” to be constituted (Usher, 1996, p. 11). But the meaning has changed over time, epistemology, as Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 195) state, asks the questions such as “how do I know the world” and “what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known”? For Blanche & Durrheim, (1999, p 3) "it is as the theory of grounds of knowledge, that is how things can be known, the rules or premises by which it is accepted that knowledge is generated". Risjord (2014) also adds epistemology to human knowledge stating that it asks the questions like what constructs knowledge and how knowledge is justified. With focusing on the importance of epistemology and ontology, Grix (2004, p. 58) views them as “footings” to a house, in the sense that they lay the foundations of the entire structure, and the same way they work with research. This also manifests that there needs a philosophical fabric on the ground of which any research practice can be grown up. Likewise, different research paradigms have different epistemologies, for example, positivism has “dualist/objectivist” epistemology, and interpretivism, it is “transactional and subjectivist epistemology” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 217). Equally, positivist and interpretivist paradigms have several other branches (Grix, 2004) and they may have different epistemological understandings of knowledge and social phenomena.

Methodology

Methodology simply deals with the process of acquiring knowledge. Methodology for Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p.159) is “the best means for gaining knowledge about the world”. Likewise,

Grix (2004) states that methodology, methods, and sources are closely interlocked and built on as per the researchers' ontological and epistemological assumptions. Since the methodology is concerned with how knowledge is gained, it, as Krauss (2005) contends, recognizes the specific practices employed to gain knowledge of it. Krauss (ibid) further states that the methodology used must fit the phenomenon of interest, and equally needs to be conscious that different phenomena may require utilizing different methodologies. Denzin and Lincoln (2018), for example, have suggested different methodologies for positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Particularly, positivist family and interpretivist family have their particular methodologies, such as positivistic methodologies generally involve "verification of hypothesis" and interpretivist utilizes "hermeneutic dialectical" methodology in nature (ibid, p. 216-217). The above carried out reviews of research philosophy have raised a query about how these philosophies are different as per research paradigms, and how these philosophies function together in line with the particular research paradigm.

Research Paradigms and Underlying Assumptions

Paradigm is the perspective or fundamental belief system or worldview of an individual; it is the way of understanding the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Paradigm, therefore, is "a basic set of beliefs" that guides behaviors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 195). Paradigm provides guidance to investigators selecting methods from an ontological and epistemological point of view (ibid).

In social science, scholars' effort has divided the research tradition into two opposing paradigms, "positivistic paradigm" and "interpretivist paradigm" (Grix, 2004, p.76-77). However, such division has contributed basic foundations to an inquiry that has resulted in enriching social science by prompting its scope and depth perpetually. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 195) provide a larger list of paradigms, they are "positivist, post-positivist, critical theory, constructivism, participatory action frameworks, feminism, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, cultural studies, queer theory, Asian epistemologies, disability theories, and transformative, indigenous and social justice theory". Similarly, Guba and Lincoln (2013, p. 55) have listed some other kinds of paradigm namely, "logical paradigm, scientific paradigm, naturalistic paradigm, judgmental paradigm, adversarial paradigm, modus operandi paradigm, and demographic paradigm." A noteworthy point to be pondered here is that they all have their underlying belief systems and notions on reality, value, and truth.

These all above-stated paradigms have their confrontations on the basic critical issues in terms of axiology, accommodation, commensurability, action, control, the foundation of truth, validity and voice, reflexivity, and postmodern representation (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018). Therefore, any of these paradigms could be utilized by a researcher as an umbrella for exploring the meaning of social phenomena. However, my reviews of several philosophical texts and periodic published scholarly articles make me realize that no one particular paradigm in social science is dominant. As Scott (1996, p. 76) argues by "ontological, epistemological, and methodological stance, and their relationships" we can identify the research paradigm of research. So, I will carry out the succinct elaboration of some major research paradigms with their assumptions as follows and argue for the place where my research project resides.

Positivism

Positivism is a paradigm linked to empirical science (Crotty, 1998; Usher, 1996; William & May 1996). The entrance of positivism in social science is the result of “empiricist assumptions about the nature of the social world” (William & May 1996, p. 70) which focuses on observed and measured phenomena. This paradigm follows the scientific method in which direct experience is observed and such observation is always carried out by the scientific method (Crotty, 1998). The focus is on the objectivity of scientific knowledge which is accurate and certain (Crotty, 1998; William and May 1996). In doing so, observation and experiment are basic to constitute scientific laws which are essentially important to verify the objective meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Crotty, 1998). In the same manner, Usher (1996, p. 25) asserts that such observation is always “value-neutral and atheoretical” in nature. It means observation does not have any connection with an individual’s bias and prejudice that is, free of bias and prejudice.

On the other hand, positivism assumes that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe the phenomena. Nonetheless, the nature of knowledge that positivists argue is referred to as “verified”, and hypothesis they constitute as “facts or laws” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 216). In positivism, it is argued that physics is considered science where empiricism is most noticeable (Crotty, 1998). So, this paradigm has a close affiliation to physical science because positivists, as Crotty (*ibid*) argues, are a greater lover of science. It is also the reason that positivism is seen to be articulated by different other names- “empiricism”, “behaviorism” and “naturalism”, which all these love to identify themselves as a “scientific approach” (Grix, 2004, p. 81).

Any research in a positivistic paradigm upholds objectivity which means, the context of “value-laden inquiry” (Risjord, 2014, p. 22), and such inquiry is verified in line with the objectivist perspective. Risjord (*ibid*) explains objectivity in terms of freedom of bias, intersubjectivity, and reliability. For this to happen, the positivist world is labeled as a mathematized world (Crotty, 1998) in which research needs to adapt powerful statistical tools, like probability and inferential assumptions as a scientific method to analyze the social world (Grix, 2004). This paradigm ignores and rejects multiplicities of reality and the concept of many beliefs (*ibid*), since scientific knowledge is utterly objective, valid, accurate and certain, and assigns scientific findings (Crotty, 1998). Further, how philosophies function in a positivistic paradigm is essential to understand how reality and knowledge are treated accordingly.

The ontology of positivism is “naïve realism” which is “real reality” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018, p. 216) that advocates absolute reality, which is achieved through the experimentation that results in objective truth, which is also universal. Ontology, therefore, raises questions about “what exists, what is the nature of the world, and what is reality” Usher (1996, p. 11) is the sole concern of positivist ontology.

The epistemology in this paradigm concerns “dualist/objectivist” in nature which results in “finding true” and knowledge accumulation through accretion- “building blocks” that adds to “edifice of knowledge” and has a “generalization and cause-effect linkage” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018, p. 216). This paradigm does believe in the “possibility of making causal statements” (Grix, 2004, p. 81) for the knowledge by employing the scientific experiment. The positivist epistemology, therefore, emphasizes “determinacy, rationality, impersonality, prediction” (Usher, 1996, p.11) which are basic assumptions to be understood. Equally, an emphasis is placed on the empirical theory that leads to the production of knowledge, which, rejects the “question of value and trust”, because it is believed that such knowledge is “value-free” (Grix, 2004, p. 11) which means it is free from the researcher’s subjectivity.

Methodologically, it perceives to constitute “regular relationships between social phenomena by using theory to generate hypothesis” (Grix, 2004, p. 81). Regarding such a method or theory, it purports and holds that all researchers should follow “methods and procedures of natural sciences” (Usher, 1996, p.11) for acquiring knowledge. For Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 216), the positivist paradigm prescribes “experimental/manipulative; verification of hypothesis; and chiefly employs quantitative methods”, which are the procedures to acquire knowledge.

From the above discussion, I came to know that my research project does not pursue the positivist worldview, because the epistemology, ontology, and methodology, all uphold the belief system of realism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This is contrary to my research’s worldview in terms of perceiving reality, sources of knowledge, and the process of gaining such knowledge. The detail of why this is contrary to the worldview of my research project will be presented after the discussion of the interpretivist research paradigm below.

Post-positivism

Post-positivism as a research paradigm came into the field of social science embracing the philosophy of critical realism which argues that scientific study is affected by the researcher’s background, values, knowledge, hypothesis, and theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Grix, 2004; Crotty, 1998; Usher, 1996). Particularly, Werner Heisenberg’s quantum theory, Sir Karl Popper’s principle of falsification, Thomas Kuhn’s structure of scientific revolutions, and Paul Feyerabend’s theory of anarchism (Crotty, 1998; William, 1996) play significant contributions in the emergence of the post-positivist paradigm to social science.

Post-positivism as a research paradigm falls between positivism and interpretivism; and positivism and parts of post-positivism share “a realist, foundationalist ontology” but positivist orients to “empirical realism” (Grix, 2004, p. 849). Thus, it discloses that post-positivist outlooks seem to twist the idea of positivistic notion and constitute relative statements, and to some extent subjective perceptions by challenging the objective certainties (Crotty, 2004). All the ideas and theses that post-positivism pursues are relatively different from the positivistic notion. As stated above, post-positivism’s underlying philosophy is critical realism, to say it specifically, as Groff (2004, p.21) contends, “relativism and anti-realism” are its characteristics. Given that epistemological relativism of post-positivism, it perceives knowledge as “fallible”; takes scientific investigation as an “active process” and “inherently social”; and assumes scientists’ explanations of the world are “theoretically informed” (ibid, pp. 19-20).

Ontology in the post-positivist paradigm is based on the philosophy of “critical realism” which refers to “real” reality but is only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 217). This means, it assumes that there exists reality, but it cannot be known perfectly as well as can be understood probabilistically (ibid).

The epistemology of post-positivists focuses on the “modified dualist/objectivist” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 217) notion that it aims to modify truth being closer and to reduce the researcher’s error and bias for reality through further investigation. So, post-positivists follow objectivity to identify the possible effect of bias or researcher’s contamination. Equally, they appreciate rationality for knowledge. However, rationality must always be at the “level of judgment”, because the researcher’s selection of competing for scientific theories themselves is a “rational one” (Groff, 2004, p. 21). Since it emerged as a critique and an amendment to positivism, it upheld “critical tradition” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 217) which suggests us to go beyond the knowledge by being critical to reaching the reality with firmness. It is because, having greater differences in

human knowledge than it is claimed by logical positivists, any limiting of valid knowledge to statements is further capable of empirical verification (Crotty, 1998).

On the other hand, the methodology of this paradigm believes in “modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplism notion; and may include qualitative methods” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 217). Given that methodology, post-positivists argue that all observations, theories, and knowledge are “fallible” (Groff, 2004, p. 21) which means, they have errors and contaminations therefore they are revisable. Quoting Karl Popper’s argument, Crotty (1998) states that scientific theories should be presented clearly and should let them lay enough open to their refutation so that one could arrive closer to reality.

In this connection, my research project is close to some of the ideas and the worldview of post-positivists such as knowledge about reality and truth which is relative and provisional (Crotty, 1998), and equally, my research project attempts to challenge the preconstructed ideas and reality with their alternation. But this is not my research paradigm since it does not deal with the worldview that knowledge and reality are socially/locally constructed, and they are distinct and transitional (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) in nature.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism is an umbrella term that involves many variations of the research approach (Grix, 2004). In social science, the interpretivist research paradigm emerged critiquing the positivistic paradigm that human limitation, experiences, values, and outlooks have been confined to the domain of objective knowledge about reality (Crotty, 1998) and failed to go beyond what is explicitly seen and observed. So, interpretivists emphasize and offer to understand the “double hermeneutic” as a way to understand “society, actors, and their perceptions of the role and position in society” (Grix, 2004, p. 84). Particularly users of this constructivist paradigm, therefore, are oriented towards making constructed understanding of the social world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

Interpretivists argue that human actions are not controlled or governed by “cause and effect”, rather the rules that individuals apply to interpret the world (William & May 1996, p. 64). In this sense, interpretivism is taken as a response to the over-domination of positivism; as a result, the paradigm of each is quite different and their emphasis place on the process of acquiring knowledge is opposite (Grix, 2004). Interpretive tradition in social science, therefore, is concerned with research embedded in “unconscious fore-structures of understanding” that is the “unsaid” and “unsayable,” (Usher 1996, p. 29) which requires systematic procedures for knowing. Interpretivists favor “subjectivity” “understandings” and “agency” reflect its dynamic and fluid nature, which means how people view and construct their social world (Grix, 2004, p. 83) is multiple, diverse, distinct, and typified in nature.

Concerning ontology, interpretivists adapt “relativist ontology” (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018, p. 217) that is relativism, which goes against the idea that positivists hold the notion of absolute reality. In this context, the ontological position of the interpretivist paradigm is based on an “anti-foundationalist notion” (Grix, 2004, p. 83). The ontological assumption upholds that knowledge is local and specific and believes in the constructed reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 217) therefore reality is multiple and diverse.

Regarding epistemology Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2018, p. 217) assert that interpretivists adapt “transactional and subjectivist notion, and knowledge is gained in the form of co-created findings. This means knowledge is socially and locally constructed through interactions of individuals, and

it hardly believes to depend on observation for understanding social phenomena (Grix, 2004), therefore it avoids the possibility of objective and value-free analysis as positivists argue.

Similarly, interpretivists offer “hermeneutic, and dialectical methodology” (2018, p. 217) as basic ways of gaining and reaching knowledge. They place stress on “meaning” in the study of social life and argue that language plays a significant role in constructing reality (Grix, 2004, p. 84). Interpretivists suggest utilizing qualitative research methodology as per the context and needs of the researcher.

Now, I would claim that my research paradigm falls under the interpretivist paradigm. However, among its families, which paradigm is very close to my research project will be discussed in the following title precisely.

My Research Paradigm and Underlying Belief: A Concluding Remark

By meticulously reviewing philosophical texts and literature, I came to know that there are several research paradigms in social science (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Risjord, 2014; Grix, 2004; Crotty, 1996). Among them, my research paradigm falls in one of the branches of the interpretivist research paradigm, in which my research paradigm involves a constructivist paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) as a guiding philosophical outlook to see and understand the purposed phenomenon in my project. In this sense, I can now claim that my research paradigm is an “interpretive-constructivist paradigm”.

Constructivist research paradigm under the umbrella of interpretivist paradigm (Grix, 2004) advises us to understand and make sense of the social world, and we need to understand “the meanings that construct and are constructed by interactive human behavior” (Usher, 2014, p.18). My research project concerns ontological questions such as “what is nature of knowledge; epistemological question, “what is the relationship between the inquirer and the known”; and methodological question, “how we know the world or gain knowledge” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 56)?

Ontologically my research is based on relativism, that is “relativist ontology”, since I believe “multiple connected realities”, that knowledge is socially and locally constructed; and realities is specifically constructed and co-constructed (ibid). Qualitative research, which embraces a naturalistic inquiry, as Guba and Lincoln (2013, p.) argue, focuses on “multiple realities-like layers of an onion nest within complement one another”. My ontological belief bases that “there are no central values that can be rationally and universally grounded” and argues that “social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Grix, 2004, p. 61). As Krauss (2005, p. 760) highlights, “Qualitative researchers generally operate under different ontological premises about the world, they do not assume that there is no unitary reality apart from our perceptions”. In this sense, this equally applies to my study that reality is multiple and socially different, specific, unique, fragmental, and socially relevant. In this regard, my research gives due value to research participants who interpret their worldviews, perceptions, experiences, and realities embedded in their own life, culture, and local context.

Epistemologically, my research project upholds “interpretative epistemology” that suggests how the interaction between me, and my research participants occurs and shapes one another (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 56). So, knowledge is created in a transactional way and such knowledge is subjective in nature. At this juncture, my research values how research participants understand and view the research phenomena being explored, and how they construct and give meaning to them will be my core concern. As Usher (2014, p. 18) remarks both the researcher and the participants of the study will have the “similar characteristics of being interpreters or sense seekers”. In this

connection, my focus is on the research participants as to how they share their experiences and give meaning to them and how they create them according to their belief system over time.

Methodologically, I use “interpretative, naturalistic methods”, that is hermeneutical and dialectical (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 56). From my ontological and epistemological positions, it is confirmed that my research employs methods in a natural setting. In qualitative research, phenomena are studied in a natural setting; phenomena, as Wiersma (2000) contends, need to be viewed from a holistic perspective, and they cannot be reduced to a few independent factors. With this philosophical understanding, my research project employs relevant methods, such as mutual relationships, dialogic interviewing, observation, archival study. By taking all these philosophical understandings discussed above into consideration, I aim to accomplish the research project I am undertaking.

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