Research Methodology
Introduction

Behind every successful research lies a carefully and meticulously crafted methodology. Selection of an appropriate and rigorous methodology is perhaps the most integral part of any management research (Sackett and Larson, 1990). Methodology varies from research to research depending on the nature of the study to be conducted. The literature is rife with opposing views regarding the selection of a suitable methodology for any research. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), there must be a philosophical issue present when pursuing particular research. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue that any research strategy is quite heavily driven by the researcher’s personal beliefs, experiences and knowledge.

Previously, researches were conducted using standard approaches such as primary and secondary research methods. However, today the spectrum of research methodology has broadened considerably. Approaches are now based primarily on the three theories of Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology. This paper explores the primary and secondary approach in addition to the epistemological perspectives that are used in the field of management research.

Primary and Secondary Approach

A primary research method involves direct and unmediated observation and investigation of the phenomenon to be studied. The data is personally collected by the researcher as opposed to the secondary research approach where the data used is extracted from the previously conducted researches.

Each of the aforementioned methodologies has its own advantages in addition to a few limitations. A primary research approach allows the generalization of trends for a larger population which is not possible in secondary research approach. However, primary research is rather time-consuming and often leads an over-reliance on the statistical analysis. On the other hand, secondary research is a cheaper and less time consuming but it may be difficult to filter out the biases and inaccuracies from the previous studies that are being used.
Selection between the two is a very important task hence, due diligence should be attached to it. It is better to adopt a primary approach if the research deals with a specific problem as the secondary data often presents conflicting perspectives. However, in situations where data collection is difficult (e.g. information regarding the public sector), it is more sensible and convenient to employ the secondary research approach to get a generalized impression of the prevalent trends.

**Social Constructivist Approach**

Social constructivism is based upon the belief that knowledge is socially constructed rather than created or discovered. Thus, social constructivism is not concerned with the nature of the knowledge and can be classified as an epistemological perspective (Andrews, 2012). It is often expressed as a sense of how observations are an exact image of the world (Murphy et al., 1998). This view emphasizes the importance of everyday communication between people and their usage of language to attach meaning to this interaction and construct their own reality. The constructivist approach helps a researcher to understand the underlying values, beliefs and perceptions that influence and shape people’s behaviour.

Social constructivism falls under the paradigm of qualitative research. This approach employs analyzation of the information that is conveyed through verbal and emotional behaviour (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This paradigm helps explore and understand the complexity of situations/problems that are not well-defined. It also helps create a more accurate picture regarding the study thus, adding depth to the surveys/questionnaires or the interviews that are conducted.

The researcher in this study is not merely an observer rather an active part of the data collection. However, truly understanding the perceptions of the population and translating it into meaningful research is quite difficult and complex. A researcher needs to ensure that his/her personal beliefs do not influence the interpretations of conducted interviews in any form to mitigate the risk of biases.

**Positivist Approach**

The positivism approach is steeped in the belief that knowledge is created through research. It emphasizes that the researcher is an objective observer and collects facts pertaining to the social
situation. He / She then arranges these facts in a “chain of causality” to present an explanation for the social interactions (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). Thus, positivism approach is closely intertwined with the quantitative research paradigm.

In a positivist approach, the emphasis is on the measurement of the situation rather than an understanding of the underlying beliefs driving the particular behaviour. Rigorous mathematical/scientific experiments are performed to test the validity of the hypothesis coined at the inception stage of the research. In this approach, the research design is “highly structured” and is often developed at the beginning before the study begins.

A positivist approach is very logical and documents the results in an objective manner as opposed to the social constructivist approach where business tends to bleed into the analysis as well as the documentation of the results. Hence, the researcher must ensure that while the study is objective it is not rigid.

**Methodology Used**

Previously, the positivist approach was the dominant research paradigm in the Information Systems field (Chen and Hirschheim, 2004) however, social constructivism is quickly emerging as the new norm in this field. While positivist researches test the designed hypotheses using objective evidence, the constructivist approach tries to understand the underlying meaning behind people’s interactions, behaviours and experiences.

A combination of the two aforementioned approaches will be used in this study to quantify the data in an objective manner while at the same time making sense of people’s experiences in a social context.

As enterprise cloud implementation is very much still in progress, it cannot be classified as a mature field. Hence, a qualitative approach is the most suitable for the course of this research. The aim is to conduct “open-ended rich and detailed” interviews/surveys to generate data that will help develop sound hypotheses (Edmondson and McManus, 2007), pertaining to enterprise cloud implementation.

In this scenario, in-depth interviews with the appropriate personnel such as IT managers, senior executives and enterprise architects who are directly involved in the planning and the
implementation process of the enterprise cloud will help collect data that is accurate as well as objective. It is hoped that this research will not only prove beneficial in understanding the process of enterprise cloud implementation but will also help establish relevant hypotheses in this field.
References


