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A Critical Reflection upon the Postmodernist Philosophical Positions and Issues Relevant to Entrepreneurship Research

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Abstract

This paper questions the appropriateness of a postmodernist philosophy to underpin entrepreneurship research. One of the most commonly used and accepted measures of entrepreneurship at an organisational level – entrepreneurial orientation is underpinned by a positivist philosophy. However some would argue that the very nature of entrepreneurial behaviour lends itself to a postmodernist approach. Literature on both postmodernism philosophy and entrepreneurship is critically reviewed to draw out their common points and relationships. The main findings are, firstly, postmodernism is a valid philosophy for underpinning entrepreneurship research because both postmodernist and entrepreneurship scholars pay considerable attention to innovation, organizational change, hidden process and components of organizations, and long-term value. Secondly, given there is no consensus on a single definition of entrepreneurship, researchers seem accepting of the idea of multiple realities –a fundamental principle of postmodernism philosophy. The authors argue that postmodernism entrepreneurship research has not been sufficiently addressed.

Keywords: research philosophy, philosophical assumptions, postmodernism, entrepreneurship.

Word Count: 5320

Introduction

In social science there are a number of philosophies underpinning research to explain reality. This leads to the emergence of different types of realities. Therefore, social science researchers need to think seriously about the importance of understanding philosophical frameworks that underpin their research. In this context, McGregor and Murnane (2010) argue that both quantitative and qualitative methods should be harmonized with the philosophy of the research. Quinlan et al. (2015) go further by arguing that the researcher's philosophy can be observed in all phases of the research process. Therefore, the correct understanding of the philosophies dominating the social world results in an accurate understanding of methodologies that are followed in social science research. This, of course, helps in conducting valid research, and, thus contributing to the body of knowledge by creating novel knowledge. The latter may provide new interpretations about social science phenomena, and, thus find new solutions or develop new ways of dealing with issues that are facing a group of individuals, organizations or communities.

This shows the importance of having a comprehensive understanding of the philosophies, and assumptions associated with them, that underpin social science research. This applies to entrepreneurship research too. Due to the existence of a considerable number of philosophies that underpin social science research, and, because of difficulty of dealing with all of them through a single study, in this paper the authors consider only whether postmodernism principles are suitable to underpin entrepreneurship research. There are two main reasons for this choice, firstly, there has not been sufficient research that highlights the role played by postmodernism in developing entrepreneurship research; secondly, there is a group of strong justifications for considering postmodernism as a valid philosophy for underpinning entrepreneurship research.

The present paper is structured as follows. Firstly, the concept of entrepreneurship is presented. Secondly, research philosophy, with a focus on postmodernism, is considered. Thirdly, the theoretical relationship between entrepreneurship and postmodernism is discussed. Fourthly, the postmodernism ontological assumptions are clarified. Fifthly, the epistemological assumptions are presented. Sixthly, the postmodernism methodological assumptions are outlined. Then, the postmodernism axiological assumptions are presented. Finally, a conclusion is provided.

What is entrepreneurship?

Entrepreneurship is seen as a multidisciplinary field of research (Costa, 2015). It takes place in different contexts and environments as well as in various forms (Churchill and Muzyka, 1994). This leads to the entrepreneurship phenomenon becoming multifaceted complicated, large and equivocal, and, thus making it challenging to find consensus on a single definition for this phenomenon (Gartner, 1994; Moroz and Hindle, 2012). Day et al. (2006) argue after Kilby (1971) that this is not a problem provided that transparency exists over competing definitions, and, scholars are tolerant of the views of others. Therefore, entrepreneurship scholars as Gartner (1994) argued we should in each of our research studies - simplify, focus ('make smaller') and be unequivocal.

This paper does not seek to find a single definition for entrepreneurship but adopts the approach offered by Churchill and Muzyka (1994) who claimed that there was a consensus in that entrepreneurs sought to identify opportunities that could be converted into 'economic value'. This is in line with what has been argued by both Shane and Venkataraman (2000) and Chen and Yang (2009) that the field of entrepreneurship studies the sources of opportunities;

the process of opportunity recognition and exploitation; and the individuals who recognize and exploit these opportunities. Similarly Suddaby et al. (2015) claim that the entrepreneurship field is dominated by the idea that entrepreneurs seek to discover opportunities.

Churchill and Muzyka (1994) argue that five factors are considered as the most justifiable factors for entrepreneurship to emerge. These factors are: an action, creation of an organization, innovation and opportunity, an individual and risk. After taking these factors into consideration, they define entrepreneurship as "a process that takes place in different environments and settings that causes changes in the economic system through innovations brought about by individuals who generate or respond to economic opportunities that create value for both these individuals and society" (1994, p.16). Entrepreneurship has to take place within an organisation which can be existing or newly formed; commercial or social, large or small, formal or informal. (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Coase, 1937). The search for an appropriate understanding of the entrepreneurship phenomenon is still continuing and this endeavour will bring forth new understandings. This paper suggests that one fruitful line of enquiry would be a deeper understanding of the contribution to be made through adopting a postmodernism perspective (Neergaard and Ulhøi, 2007, Todorovic, 2007).

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is described as "a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" (Saunders et al., 2016, p.124). Table 1 shows that positivism, post positivism, constructivism, postmodernism and pragmatism are the frameworks most discussed by methodology researchers (they have been discussed by at least five of the researchers whose classifications of philosophical frameworks are considered in the table). Therefore, postmodernism, is compared with the other four most discussed frameworks in order to make the postmodernism position clearer (Table 2). Four philosophical assumptions are considered: ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological. These assumptions providing the bases for the comparison between the philosophical frameworks (Creswell, 2013).

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Postmodernism and Entrepreneurship

The word 'postmodernism' can refer to either a theoretical perspective or an historical periodization (Hassard, 1999). In this context, Parker (1992) distinguishes between post-modernism (with a hyphen) and postmodernism (without a hyphen); the former refers to the historical periodization and the latter refers to the philosophical perspective. In the same way, Bauman (1988) discusses two phenomena; the first one is sociology of postmodernism, which considers postmodernism as a paradigm. The second concept is postmodernism sociology which considers postmodernism as an epoch (Hassard, 1999). In this paper the focus is on postmodernism as a philosophical perspective and on how such a perspective can contribute to the entrepreneurship body of knowledge. However, we believe, according to the literature reviewed, that the epoch of postmodernity has contributed to the formulation of the principles of postmodernism philosophy.

In this connection, it is important to highlight that postmodernism represents the period after modernity. In the modernity period, scholars sought to explore the world through 'empirical objective rational' ways. However, postmodernists have challenged and rejected the naivety of these ways (Quinlan et al., 2015). Therefore, postmodernists (who believe in postmodernism philosophy) believe that the advancement of science is not constant and linear, but rather, it is contested and discontinuous (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). They reject the idea of having only one possible meaning for the relation between ways of representation (image, word, etc.) and an object (Hassard, 1999). In this connection, Bryman (2016, p.694) defines postmodernism as "a position that displays a distaste for master-narratives and for a realist orientation". This definition does not negate the fact that there is no consensus among the scholars as to single definition for postmodernism philosophy (Appignanesi et al., 2007, Bryman and Bell, 2011, Heartney, 2001). This is because scholars and philosophers define this philosophy in many different ways (Boje, 2006). This paper adopts the above view of Hassard (1999) that there is no one reality that can explain the relationship between the forms of representation and the external world.

Postmodernism philosophy was first used in architecture to promote new ways of thinking about the space (St. Pierre, 2011). We believe that the first idea of postmodernism could still be valid for social science research, and for organization science research in particular. This is because that managing today's organization may require new ways of dealing with the variables of the surrounding environment, which is changing continually and rapidly. Therefore, from a postmodernism perspective, innovation can be considered as one of the most significant dimensions for successful organizations.

In fact, the first idea of postmodernism is also a valid philosophy for entrepreneurship research. This is because of the interrelationship between entrepreneurship and innovation. For example, Zhou (2010) argues that high levels of entrepreneurship markedly contribute to turning knowledge into innovations. At the same time, innovation, according to Drucker (1985), is considered as a tool by which changes can be turned into business / services. In addition, creativity, which leads to innovations (Amabile, 1988), is considered as one of the significant factors that help in recognizing entrepreneurial opportunities (Nicolaou et al., 2009, García-Cabrera and García-Soto, 2009, Webb et al., 2011, Hulbert et al., 2015, de Jong and Marsili, 2015, Barringer and Ireland, 2016).

The above shows that innovation can be considered as one of the pillars of postmodernism philosophy, therefore, underpinning entrepreneurship research by this philosophy can contribute significantly to the entrepreneurship body of knowledge. In addition to innovation, Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) identify three implications of postmodernism for management research: organizational change, hidden process and components of organizations and long-term value. These can have a considerable role in entrepreneurship research too.

1. Organizational Change

Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) show that postmodernism is an appropriate philosophy for studying topics related to organizational change because the postmodernists look at organizations as unstable and flexible entities (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997, Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). From the above argument, it can be claimed that postmodernism is an appropriate philosophy for entrepreneurship research because organizational change phenomenon can play a considerable role in understanding many aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour.

Firstly, and more importantly, if organizations wish to continue to be entrepreneurial, they need to consider organizational change as their essential goal (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997). In fact, corporate entrepreneurship is considered as one of the prominent ways by which organizations can be changed and transformed (DeTienne, 2004). Corporate entrepreneurship, according to Guth and Ginsberg (1990) covers two domains: (1) establishing a new venture

within existing organizations; (2) transforming organizations through renewing ideas on which these organizations are established (strategic renewal). Both domains are based on the organizational change concept. This may indicate that one of the most significant requirements for entrepreneurship is a willingness to change.

Secondly, corporate entrepreneurship can be easily viewed outside of the 'traditional' 'for profit' context, for example, entrepreneurial universities pay great attention to organizational change. Transformation towards becoming an entrepreneurial universities cannot happen without change and often fundamental change. (Clark, 1998).

Thirdly, considering organizations as flexible and dynamic entities is also important for the entrepreneurial process because responding to environmental changes can be considered as one of the significant factors impacting on opportunity recognition (McMullen and Shepherd, 2006, Buenstorf, 2007, García-Cabrera and García-Soto, 2009, Tang, 2010, Sinclair and D'Souza, 2011, Wang et al., 2013, Mary George et al., 2014, Hulbert et al., 2015, Kohlbacher et al., 2015, Barringer and Ireland, 2016). The above phenomenon is considered as the fundamental step in the entrepreneurial process (Hisrich et al., 2013, Ozgen and Baron, 2007).

2. Tacit knowledge

Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) argue that postmodernists pay considerable attention to the hidden processes and components of organizations, for example, tacit knowledge. This can be considered as one of the substantial topics in entrepreneurship field given that one of the main dimensions of tacit knowledge is the cognitive perspective (Nonaka and Konno, 1998, Lubit, 2001). The significant embedding of the cognitive perspective into recent entrepreneurship research (Bonney and Williams, 2009), can greatly benefit entrepreneurship research (Baron, 2004). It helps in answering three questions: What leads some individuals, but not everyone, to decide to become entrepreneurs? Why do some individuals, but not everyone, recognize lucrative opportunities? Why do not all entrepreneurs have the same level of success?

Understanding the role of tacit knowledge not only helps in the consideration of those three questions but also can help in a fuller understanding of the opportunity recognition process. Arentz et al. (2013) and Felin and Zenger (2009) emphasise that knowledge is one of the most significant factors in determining entrepreneurial opportunity recognition.

3. Long-term value

Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.32) argue that "postmodernism retains a critical edge and is sceptical about the role and motivation of large organizations, and ….. whether of lasting value to society". The above suggesting that postmodernism could be one of the most appropriate philosophies for underpinning entrepreneurship research concerned with large organizations. Again, illustrating from the debate on entrepreneurial universities since they certainly pay great attention to contributing to socio-economic development (Etzkowitz, 1983, Etzkowitz and Zhou, 2008). Thus questioning whether entrepreneurial universities deliver lasting value to society can be a challenging and interesting question for entrepreneurship scholars due to the uniqueness of both the mission of universities in general, and entrepreneurial universities in particular. For entrepreneurial universities, their third mission pushes them to contribute to socio-economic development (Etzkowitz and Viale, 2010) so serving the surrounding society as well as developing the wider economy. (Etzkowitz, 2013, Zhou and Peng, 2008).

By considering these implications discussed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) as well as the arguments related to the importance of innovation for postmodernism, it can be claimed that underpinning entrepreneurship research by this philosophy can help the researchers in understanding more about the entrepreneurship phenomenon. This would be primarily through

obtaining different perspectives and so adding to the body of knowledge and theory development. Further justifications for underpinning entrepreneurship research by a postmodernism philosophy are provided in the next four sections.

Ontological assumptions

In social science, ontological assumptions are related to the nature and characteristics of reality (Creswell, 2013). Saunders et al. (2016, p.722) describe ontology as a "branch of philosophy concerned with assumptions about the nature of reality or being". Despite having some agreement on the ontology notion, there is no one way to interpret the social world. This is because each group of scholars have different ontological perspective (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Such a difference is due to the perception of how things vary from one individual to another and from one context to another. Therefore, to decide the ontological position of a research, it is important to think of the nature of the phenomenon, entity or social reality under examination (Mason, 2002).

Ritchie et al. (2013) argue that social science research is formed by two ontological positions: realism and idealism. Realism, one the one hand, asserts that reality in the social world is independent from the social actors who take part. Realism proponents believe that reality is recognized through senses (Matthews and Ross, 2010). On the other hand, idealism confirms that reality, in principle, is 'mind-dependent'. Therefore, it can be recognized through social constructions and human reasoning (Ritchie et al., 2013).

A review of postmodernism literature indicates, in a way that is not entirely clear, that the idealism ontology is more suited for explaining the nature of reality according to postmodernism. That is why postmodernists believe that ontology is symbolic and they also believe that there is no one reality, but rather, there are multiple realities or interpretations for a certain phenomenon (Kroeze, 2012).

The above explains why some scholars, ontologically, describe postmodernism as anti-reality philosophy (Hicks, 2004). Despite such a description, some other scholars, ontologically, look at postmodernism as participative reality philosophy (Lincoln et al., 2011, Creswell, 2013). The latter perspective can be considered as a subjective-objective reality, which emerged as a result of the collaborations between scholars and communities under examination (Creswell, 2013, Lincoln et al., 2011). Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that postmodernism does not promote the possibility of having a decisive version of reality. This is because postmodernists do not believe in an 'objective reality', which can be discovered by social scientists; but rather, they see that reality is always realized through the narratives that are offered by research reports.

In terms of entrepreneurship research, it is important to highlight the fact that there is no consensus on the entrepreneurship concept (Kirby et al., 2011). This leads entrepreneurship researchers to accept the notion of multiple realities which can help in developing new concepts as well as being an applicable concept in different contexts. This is valuable for the entrepreneurship field because what is considered entrepreneurship in developing countries may not obtain the same consideration in developed countries (Lingelbach et al., 2005). Not only this, but, the entrepreneurship concept in public sector organizations is not treated in the same way as private organizations; and the same applies in large organizations which look at entrepreneurship differently from small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Differences in dealing with the notion of entrepreneurship by organizations with different context, nature and size has led entrepreneurship scholars to develop various terminologies relating to the entrepreneurship phenomenon, such as corporate entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship and social entrepreneurship.

Epistemological assumptions

Epistemology is described as "the theory of knowledge and how we know things" (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.23). Ritchie et al. (2013) argue that, in social science research, the best way for obtaining knowledge is considered one of the main epistemological issues. Predominantly, paying attention to the relationship between knowers (respondents) and the one who will be knower (the researcher) (Ponterotto, 2005). In general, it can be argued that epistemology is associated with the ways of creating new knowledge, and thus contributing to the body of knowledge. In this connection, it is important to point out that researchers need to provide good justifications for the arguments raised in their research, especially those related to the development of new ideas. Reasonable justifications are also required for the methods used for conducting the research which contributes to creating new knowledge. Doing so will provide an opportunity to criticise, judge and accept or reject the knowledge created (Quinlan et al., 2015).

In this connection, Creswell (2013) argues that the creation of new knowledge must be based on the current situations and the various viewpoints of the members of communities under examination. This may indicate that developments and changes can be one of the best sources for obtaining new knowledge, and, it also indicates that obtaining the knowledge may require us to think of new ways and consider different perspectives, all of which can change over time. This supports the discussion by Grix (2010) that knowledge and the methods that are used for exploring it are changing. Such changes push researchers to keep up with the developments in research methods.

To ensure that the best methods are used for obtaining the target knowledge, the questions asked and designs used need to be formed through considering the ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher (Leitch et al., 2010, Cameron and Price, 2009). That is why there should be an integration between the answers from epistemological questions and the answers from ontological questions (Mason, 2002). This strong relationship between epistemological and ontological assumptions is depicted in Figure 1. Relative views on a certain social phenomenon can be different because each group of researchers can have different ontological and epistemological positions (Grix, 2010)

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Insert Figure 1 here

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From the postmodernism perspective, epistemology is based on "paradox, irony, eclecticism and pluralism" (Kilduff and Mehra, 1997, p.461) by which multiple knowledge / reality can be realised through facing different circumstances as well as using multiple ways of knowing. Here, the inter-subjectivity notion plays a considerable role in reaching co-created findings that require various ways of knowing. This is because inter-subjectivity promotes finding various possible relations between differing views (Gillespie and Cornish, 2010). This, of course, is valuable for entrepreneurship research because as mentioned earlier entrepreneurship is considered as a multidisciplinary field of research (Costa, 2015). Therefore contributing to the entrepreneurship body of knowledge requires underpinning entrepreneurship research by perspectives that promote pluralism, comprehensivity and diversity (Leitch et al., 2010). Postmoderinsm can be considered as a perspective that can provide such features.

Methodological assumptions

The previous section shows that there is a strong relationship between epistemology and ontology. However, reviewing the work of Hay (2002) and Easterby-Smith et al. (2012)

shows that considering methodological assumptions is important to make the above relationship stronger because methodology follows from the ontological and epistemological assumptions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). In this connection, Hay (2002) argues that research ontology precedes research epistemology, which in turn precedes research methodology. In the same context, Fleetwood (2005) stressed the importance of having a strong relationship between the above philosophical assumptions, namely, how researchers believe reality to be (ontology) influences what knowledge can be produced about this reality (epistemology), and that such knowledge can be investigated by using different methods (methodology). The latter is described by Quinlan et al. (2015, p.397) as "the overall approach to the research project; the way in which the research is carried out; a means of supporting the philosophical assumptions that underpin the research project".

Hence methodology deals with all research considerations from developing a research question to presenting the research findings. Therefore, methodology books include many aspects of research, such as research logical reasoning, approach, strategy and methods. In the present paper, to obtain some idea about postmodernism methodology, three methodological considerations are briefly discussed: research approach, strategy and methods.

For the first consideration, it can be argued that as a result of the adoption of a multiple realities notion by postmodernists, a qualitative approach can be one of the most appropriate choices. This is because that conducting qualitative research promotes the idea of accepting of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013). In this context, Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that postmodernists tend to adopt qualitative research for answering their research questions. The above argument is important for the present paper because having a lack of agreement on a concept, as with entrepreneurship phenomenon, requires it to be accurately understood through in-depth investigations. Such investigations can be provided by conducting qualitative research (Flick, 2014).

As for research strategy, some scholars associate postmodernism with ethnography (Curtis and Curtis, 2011, Bryman and Bell, 2011). This may due to the fact that postmodernism reality, as it is shown in Table 2, is created by mind and surrounding cosmos; this can be provided by ethnography research since "ethnography represents ways of studying culture through methods that involve the researcher becoming a part of that culture" (Quinlan et al., 2015, p.396). However, we believe that other research strategies, such as case study, can be adopted for conducting postmodernism research. This is because this philosophy promotes using most of the research methods for collecting the data (as it is shown in Table 2).

In terms of the methods used by postmodernists (Table 2) there is no single best method for obtaining knowledge in postmodernism research. Therefore, all available methods used for conducting social science research can be used for postmodernism research. However, Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that postmodernists focus on the so-called 'method talk'; this, in turn, highlights the importance of constructing social reality. In this respect, Curtis and Curtis (2011) argue that in-depth interviews are one of the most effective methods for presenting social reality. The latter indicates that interviewees have their own perspectives beliefs and perceptions, which can be subjective but they are real to those interviewees. Researchers, through interviewing those people, try to realize their perspectives, beliefs and perceptions in a way that can be turned to a social reality within a given context.

Axiological assumptions

Saunders et al. (2016, p.711) define axiology as "a branch of philosophy concerned with the role of values and ethics within the research process". This raises questions about how researchers deal with their own values and those of the research participants (Saunders et al., 2016). Considering these values is very important because they have a considerable effect for

a number of aspects of the research process: developing the research question, choosing the research paradigm, developing the theoretical framework, deciding the main methods of both data collection and data analysis, choosing the research context, dealing with values already established within the research context, and choosing the way for presenting findings (Lincoln et al., 2011).

This shows that values permeate almost every aspect of the research process; therefore it can be claimed that there is strong link between axiological assumptions and the other three philosophical assumptions, thus the argument raised in the previous section relating to the relationship between ontology, epistemology and methodology can be extended by claiming that this relationship is completed only when axiological considerations are considered as depicted in Figure 2. Then, finding a coherent connection between these assumptions leads to conducting a valid research, which in turn contributes to the body of knowledge.

In terms of entrepreneurship research, Canedo et al. (2014) argue that values play a great role in conducting entrepreneurship studies. This increases the importance of postmodernism philosophy for underpinning entrepreneurship research because this philosophy pays substantial attention to values (Saunders et al., 2016), and, it promotes reflexivity (Hassard, 1999). This is defined by Bryman and Bell (2011, p.700) as the "connotation that business researchers reflect on the implications of their methods, values, biases and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate and try to be aware of how personal idiosyncrasies and implicit assumptions affect their approach to study". The above shows that postmodernism philosophy considers the values of society / the organization and those of the researcher. This, of course, can contribute markedly to those aspects of entrepreneurship that are impacted by the individual, organizational or social values.

Creswell (2013) argues that values, from the postmodernism perspective, need to be treated as problems and then deep questions raised that can be used effectively to deal with these problems (values). Doing so leads to dealing with values as one of the themes involved in the research under consideration. This makes values one of the essential elements of postmodernism research. Creswell (2013) argues that respect for indigenous values is one of the main axiological principle of postmodernism philosophies. In fact, indigenous values can also be an important aspect for entrepreneurship research. Gallagher and Lawrence (2012) find that many aspects of economic development, including entrepreneurship, can be performed in an indigenous way which encompasses indigenous values and culture. The above three arguments show that qualitative entrpreneurship researchers, who have postmodern tendencies, need to seriously think of considering indigenous values when they conduct their research.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that conducting a valid research requires a correct understanding of the main assumptions and principles of the philosophy in which a researcher believes. This is because that research philosophy permeates all steps of conducting a research from developing a research question to presenting the findings. Therefore, every step included in the research process ought to fit the philosophy that underpins the research. Accordingly, research philosophy can be considered as the base of a research endeavour. Therefore, social science researchers need to deeply understand the philosophical framework they adopt to underpin their research in order to establish a strong base for their research, and, thus conduct valid research.

This paper shows that there is a considerable number of philosophical frameworks that underpin social science research. This leads to different views on reality emerging whereby some scholars believe that there is only single reality whilst others believe in multiple realities. How researchers look at reality impacts on how they obtain knowledge about this reality which in turn impact on what methods can be used to obtain that knowledge. In this respect, the role of values should not be ignored because research biases can affect the results, especially in qualitative research. Therefore, qualitative research must be based on the interaction between the four elements of the philosophical framework: ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology.

For entrepreneurship research, the lack of agreement on the entrepreneurship concept should lead to an acceptance of the notion of multiple realities. Entrepreneurship is applicable to different types of organizations who will operate in different contexts. This then implies the need to find different ways of knowing, and, at the same time, different methods for obtaining that target knowledge. Moreover, the values of both knower and the one who will be knower must be considered.

Given the above, postmodernism can be considered as one of the appropriate philosophies for conducting entrepreneurship research and so can contribute to the entrepreneurship body of knowledge.

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Table 1: The philosophical frameworks of social sciences

	The philosophical frameworks																				
	Positivism	Postpositivism	Feminism	Constructivism	Ethnic	Marxist	Cultural studies	Queer Theory	Interpretivist	Hermeneutics	structuralism	Critical theory	Poststructuralism	Postmodernism	Symbolic Interactionism	Functionalism	Transformative framework	Pragmatism	Disability theories	Participatory	Realism	Critical realism
Denzin and Lincoln (2011)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓														
Lincoln et al. (2011)	✓	✓		✓								✓		✓						✓		
Wahyuni (2012)	✓	✓		✓					✓									✓			✓	✓
Easterby-Smith et al. (2012)	✓		✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		✓				✓				✓
Creswell (2013)		✓	✓	✓				✓				✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			
Mertens (2014)		✓		✓													✓	✓				
Quinlan et al. (2015)	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Saunders et al. (2016)	✓								✓					✓				✓			✓	
Percentage	0.75	0.63	0.5	0.88	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.25	0.38	0.25	0.25	0.5	0.13	0.63	0.13	0.13	0.25	0.63	0.13	0.13	0.25	0.25

Source: the authors

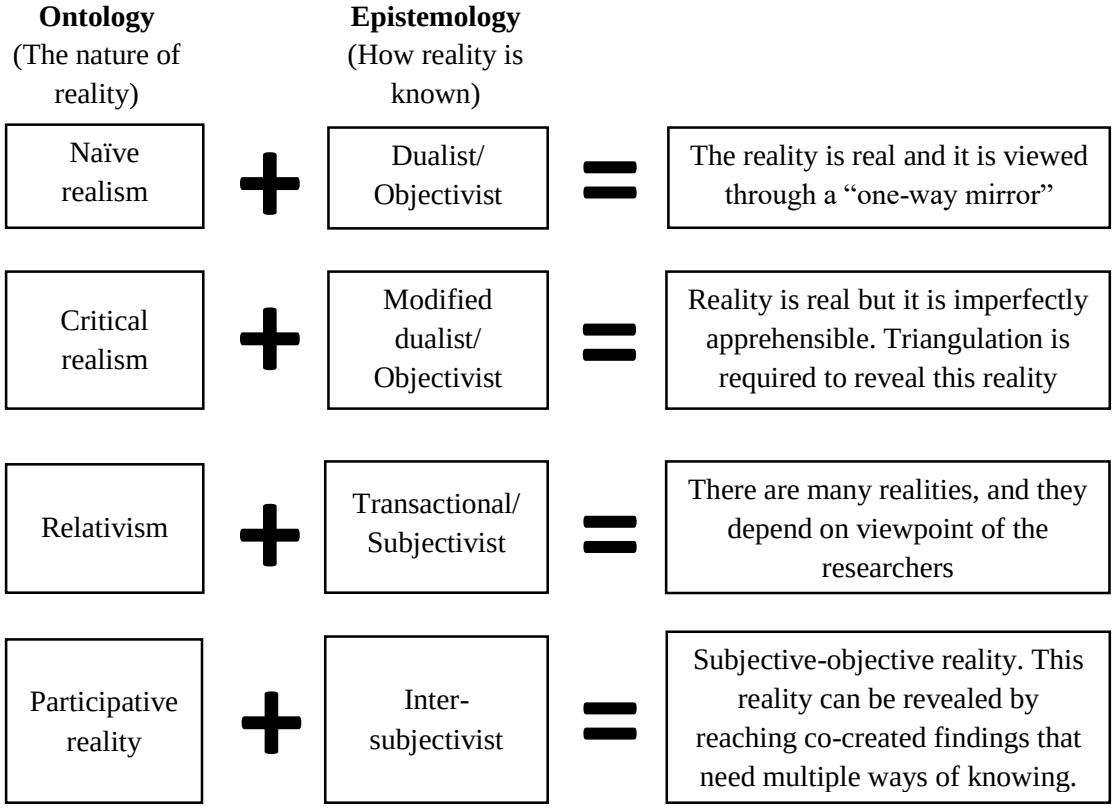
Table 2: The comparison between five philosophical frameworks

		Philosophical framework				
		Positivism	**Postpositivism**	**Constructivism**	**Pragmatism**	**Postmodernism**
Philosophical Assumption	**Ontology:** What is reality?	Naïve realism: reality is real; facts exist and can be revealed.	Critical realism: reality is real, however, it is imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible	Relativism: multiple realities are constructed through the lives experiences and interactions	Reality is what is useful, is practical and works.	Participative reality: subjective-objective reality; it is created by mind and surrounding cosmos. There is no single reality, but rather, there are multiple and/ or interpretations
	Epistemology: How reality is known?	Dualist/ Objectivist: findings true; the reality is seen through a "one-way mirror"	Modified dualist/ Objectivist; findings probably true: triangulation is required.	Transactional/ subjectivist; created findings: The knowledge is based on social construction assumptions.	Either or both objective and subjective meanings can produce accepted knowledge.	Inter- subjectivist[1]; co-created findings with multiple ways of knowing.
	Methodology: What is the model behind the research process	Main attention is paid for testing of theories. Therefore the research methods used, in principal, are quantitative, such as: questionnaire, verification of hypotheses and experiments.	critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; mainly quantitative methods but it may include qualitative methods	Main attention is paid for generating of theory. Therefore the research methods used, in principal, are qualitative, such as: In-depth unstructured interviews, grounded theory research and participant observation	Quantitative and qualitative (mixed or multi-methods design)	There is no single best method for obtaining knowledge. Range of data types, typically qualitative methods of analysis.
	Axiology: Role of values in research	Value-free and etic: Research must (and presumably can) be conducted in a way that is value free. the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance	Value-laden and etic: Research is value laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing	Value-bond and emic: Research is value bond, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective	Value-bond and etic-emic: Values play a large role in interpreting the results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view	Value-constituted research: researcher and research embedded in power relations. Some research narratives are repressed and silenced at the expenses of others. Researcher radically reflexive.

Adapted from Bryman (2016), Creswell (2013), Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012), Lincoln, et al. (2011), Sobh and Perry (2006), Wahyuni (2012), and Saunders et al. (2016).

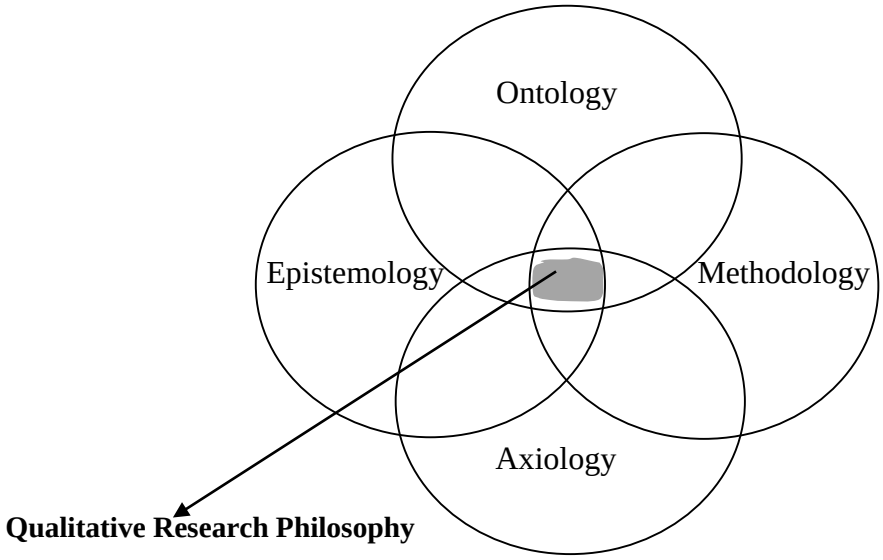
[1] Inter- subjectivisty indicates "the variety of possible relations between people's perspectives" (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010, p.19).

Figure 1: the relationship between ontology and epistemology



Source: The authors

Figure 2: The relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology.



Source: the authors