Faculty of Education
Philosophical Foundations of Your Dissertation and Thesis

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Faculty of Education Auditorium
CONTEXT

1. The **MEANING** of your existence in the world

2. **RECIPROCAL INFLUENCE**: You and the Universe

3. **YOUR RESEARCH**: Quo Vadis?
WHAT IS

THE MEANING

OF MEANING?
Reflection

What is the origin of the Universe?

What is the origin of the originator of the Universe?

What is the purpose of the Universe?

What is your purpose in the Universe?
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF YOUR RESEARCH?
Ancestral Voices Traditions 365

‘Give advice; if people don’t listen let adversity teach them.’

Ethiopian Proverb

Dassanech elder, Omorate Ethiopia - Photographer Eric Lafforgue

www.pinterest.com

v1.sahistory.org.za
Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy by George G. M. James

• Three persons in the drama of Greek philosophy:

  (a) Alexander the Great;

  (b) Aristotle's School;

  (c) The Ancient Roman Government who are responsible for a false tradition about Africa and the social plight of its peoples.

Alexander the Great

Alexander III of Macedon, commonly known as Alexander the Great, was a King of the Ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon and a member of the Argead dynasty.
Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy by George G. M. James

• The ancient Egyptians had developed a very complex religious system, called the **Mysteries**.

• **The Egyptian Mystery System** was also a **Secret Order**, and membership was gained by **initiation and a pledge to secrecy**. The teaching was graded and delivered orally to the Neophyte; and under these circumstances of secrecy, the **Egyptians developed secret systems of writing and teaching**, and forbade their Initiates from writing what they had learnt.

Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy by George G. M. James

• After nearly five thousand years of prohibition against the Greeks, they were permitted to enter Egypt for the purpose of their education.

• From the sixth century B.C. therefore to the death of Aristotle (322 B.C.) the Greeks made the best of their chance to learn all they could about Egyptian culture; most students received instructions directly from the Egyptian Priests, but after the invasion by Alexander the Great, the Royal temples and libraries were plundered and pillaged, and Aristotle's school converted the library at Alexandria into a research centre.
Thessaloniki (Greek: Θεσσαλονίκη)
The cults of deities from Egypt and the East spread through Macedonia, mainly from the 4th c. B.C. onward, and remained popular until late antiquity. They usually had something of a mystery cult about them, meaning that their followers needed to be initiated through a formal ritual.

Initiation was optional and personal. By being initiated into a cult group and through the personal communication with a deity, the faithful sought security in life.
SEARCHING FOR MEANING!
VISIT TO THE TOMB OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.
African Philosophy/ies
Reference


https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/6412596-the-big-questions
Meaning of Philosophy

The etymology: Greek –

“Philia” meaning “to love” or “to befriend”,

“Sophia”, meaning “wisdom”.

Thus, “philosophy” means “THE LOVE OF WISDOM”.

What is wisdom?

*Wisdom* or sapience is the ability to think and act using knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense, and insight.
Botlhale jwa phala bo tswa phalaneng!
An anthropologist proposed a game to children of an African Tribe. He put a basket of fruit near a tree and told the kids that the first one to reach the fruit would win them all. When he told them to run they all took each others hands and ran together, then sat together enjoying the fruits. When asked why they ran like that, as one could have taken all the fruit for oneself, they said, “Ubuntu, how can one of us be happy if all the others are sad?” ’UBUNTU’ is a philosophy of African tribes that can be summed up as “I am because we are.”
Philosophy as a world view

- A personal matter/view

- A more collective phenomenon

- ‘Embedded world view’
The goal or purpose of philosophy

- “Telos” – teleology: the study of the aims or purposes of things.

- Telos of philosophy is to illuminate meaning-making about phenomena.

- Promoting clarity, precision and open-mindedness.

- Answers intellectually perplexing questions about life.
Philosophy **goes where hard science can't, or won't.** Philosophers have a license to speculate about everything from metaphysics to morality, and this means they can shed light on some of the basic questions of existence. The bad news? These are questions that may always lay just beyond the limits of our comprehension.

http://io9.gizmodo.com/5945801/8-philosophical-questions-that-well-never-solve
THE MAJOR SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT
Philosophers ask questions and attempt to answer them!
Profound state of existential awareness

1. Why is there something rather than nothing?

2. Is there life after death?

3. Can you really experience anything objectively?

4. What is the best moral system?

5. What are numbers?
What is a number?

A number is: an *arithmetical value*, expressed by a word, symbol, or figure, representing a particular quantity and used in counting and making calculations.

A number is: a *mathematical object* used to count, measure, and label.
Difference between mathematics and arithmetic

(1) the study of the relationships among numbers, shapes, and quantities, (2) it uses signs, symbols, and proofs and includes **arithmetic**, algebra, calculus, geometry, and trigonometry. The most obvious **difference** is that **arithmetic** is all about **NUMBERS** and **mathematics** is all about **THEORY**.

www.mathmedia.com/whatisdifbet.html
Philosophy with research

- Philosophy is the fundamental and critical ingredient that permeates research.

- Philosophy is central to the business of research.

- Research methodology is underpinned and informed by philosophy.
What is research?

- Research is a **disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems** through the collection and analysis of primary data for the PURPOSE of **description, explanation, generalization** and **prediction** (Anderson 1998, p 6).

- The **nature of the subject matter** determines **what kind of research is valid or relevant** (Pring 2000, p 6).

- **Subjective belief** must be checked against objective reality, research is self-correcting.
Educational Research as Intellectually Stimulating

- Educational research uses THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD to study best practices in teaching.

- The purpose of educational research is to develop new knowledge about the teaching-learning situation to improve educational practice.

Korb, 2013
The relationship between philosophy and science

Philosophy frames the questions and sets the rules of debate. It does this by exploring the landscape of what might be TRUE and figuring out how different approaches to TRUTH interrelate. The dialog of philosophy focuses on logic, rules of argumentation, and the definition of abstract concepts. The approach and practice of science, including the "SCIENTIFIC METHOD" arose out of philosophy.

Science is a strategy for arriving at consensus answers to questions about the natural world. It focuses on discovering "facts", "laws", and "mechanisms". Often what are discovered are new objects that were previously unseen and unknown to exist.

Philosophy of Science and Research

PHILOSOPHY of science can be viewed as a way of describing how RESEARCH is conducted, and a way of deciding how it should be carried out.

The relationship between truth and theory is at the very heart of science, determining when, and if, a theory becomes accepted as REALITY.

Philosophy is the main driver of research, a guide to scientific research and philosophy begets a paradigm; which is a frame that guides the process of research (Sefotho, 2016).
‘...all research takes place within a paradigm, whether it is explicitly stated or not’ (Grix, 2004. p. 171).
The relationship of philosophy, paradigm and meta-theory (PPM)

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According to Guba (1990), paradigms can be characterised through their:

✓ **Ontology** (*What is reality?*),

✓ **Epistemology** (*How do you know something?*)

✓ **Methodology** (*How do go about finding out?*).

✓ **Axiology** (*The role of values in research = Ethics*)

✓ Our view of the knowledge and the world affects how we plan and carry out research.
Solving the researcher’s dilemma: rationale for research methodology.

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem.

It is a science of studying how research is done scientifically, involving various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher.
Methodology and Design (confusion point)

The methodology is the general research strategy that outlines the way in which research is to be undertaken and, among other things, identifies the methods to be used in it.

*The methods*, described in the methodology, define the means or *modes of data collection*. 

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodology
Methodology and Design (confusion point)

*Methodology* and *method* are not interchangeable!

It is thus important to avoid using *methodology* as a synonym for *method* or *body of methods*.

Using *methodology* as a synonym for *method* or *set of methods* leads to confusion and misinterpretation.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodology
RESEARCH DESIGNS

“A research design is the framework or guide used for the planning, implementation, and analysis of a study (1-2). It is the plan for answering the research question or hypothesis. Different types of questions or hypotheses demand different types of research designs, so it is important to have a broad preparation and understanding of the different types of research designs available. Research designs are most often classified as either quantitative or qualitative. However, it is becoming more common for investigators to combine, or mix, multiple quantitative and/or qualitative designs in the same study”. (Sousa, Driessnack & Mendes, 2007, p. 503).
RESEARCH DESIGNS

“The selection of a research design is based on the research question or hypothesis and the phenomena being studied”. (Sousa, Driessnack & Mendes, 2007, p. 506).
Design classified as either qualitative or quantitative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITATIVE</th>
<th>QUANTITATIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Phenomenological design.</td>
<td>➢ Descriptive design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Ethnographic design.</td>
<td>➢ Correlational design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Grounded theory design.</td>
<td>➢ Causal-Comparative design.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Case study design.</td>
<td>➢ Quasi-Experimental design.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ Experimental design.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARADIGMS</td>
<td>Application according to: ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODS</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Positivism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ontology:</strong> Realism. There is a &quot;real,&quot; objective reality that is knowable <strong>Epistemology:</strong> Objectivist. The researcher can, and should, avoid any bias or influence on the outcome. Results, if done well, are true. <strong>Methods:</strong> Tends toward quantification and controlled experiments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-positivism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ontology:</strong> Critical Realism. There is a &quot;real,&quot; objective reality, but humans cannot know it for sure. <strong>Epistemology:</strong> Modified Objectivist. The goal is objectivity, but pure objectivity is impossible. Results are &quot;probably&quot; true. <strong>Methods:</strong> Includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. Seeks reduction of bias through qualitative validity techniques (e.g. triangulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Theory</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ontology:</strong> Historical Realism. Reality can be understood, but only as constructed historically and connected to power. <strong>Epistemology:</strong> Knowledge is mediated reflectively through the perspective of the researcher. <strong>Methods:</strong> Focused on investigator/participant dialogue, uncovering subjegated knowledge and linking it to social critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructivism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ontology:</strong> Relativist. All truth is &quot;constructed&quot; by humans and situated within a historical moment and social context. Multiple meanings exist of perhaps the same data. <strong>Epistemology:</strong> Researcher and participants are linked, constructing knowledge together. <strong>Methods:</strong> Generally qualitative, research through dialogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advocacy/Participatory</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ontology:</strong> Varied <strong>Epistemology:</strong> The distinction between researcher and researched breaks down. Insider knowledge highly valued. <strong>Methods:</strong> Works with individuals on empowerment and issues that matter to them. Tends toward social, cultural or political change, using any appropriate method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pragmatism</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ontology:</strong> Varied. Pragmatists may be less interested in what &quot;truth&quot; is and more interested in &quot;what works&quot;. <strong>Epistemology:</strong> Accepts many different viewpoints and works to reconcile those perspectives through pluralistic means. <strong>Methods:</strong> Focuses on a real world problems, by whatever methods are most appropriate, and tends toward changes in practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Paradigms in Educational Research (Clustered)

- **Paradigm cluster 1**
  - Positivist/post-positivist, analytic/Empirical = Quantitative paradigms.

  - Holds a belief in mechanistic and deterministic reality.
  
  - **Goals/purpose of inquiry:** prediction, control and explanation of natural phenomena.

  - Seeks the ultimate truth and perfectibility of mankind. Mathematical analysis and statistical inference held in high regard.
Paradigms in Educational Research (Clustered)

- **Paradigm cluster 2**
  - Constructivist – hermeneutic – phenomenological
  - interpretivist = Qualitative paradigms

  - Holds a belief that human beings individually or collectively construct reality. There sharply divergent views of what reality is, and research mainly depends on human participants. Truth is a matter of consensus emerging from multiple perspectives.
Paradigms in Educational Research (Clustered)

- **Paradigm cluster 3**
  - Critical theory – Neo-Marxist – Postmodern – Praxis = Qualitative paradigms
    - Researchers believe themselves as social activists who are the forces of liberation.
    - Revealing the hidden curriculum and deconstructing the hidden meaning paramount.
    - Scepticism and questions are fundamental tenets of this paradigm.
Paradigms in Educational Research (Clustered)

- **Paradigm cluster 4**
  - Pragmatic - Eclectic - mixed method - transformative = Quan + Qual paradigms
    
    - Multiple perspectives are important.

    - Traingulation for effective problem-solving.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positivism</td>
<td>There is a single reality or truth (more realist).</td>
<td>Reality can be measured and hence the focus is on reliable and valid tools to obtain that.</td>
<td>Positivism Post-positivism</td>
<td>Experimental research Survey research</td>
<td>Usually quantitative, could include: Sampling Measurement and scaling Statistical analysis Questionnaire Focus group Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Constructivist / Interpretive | There is no single reality or truth. Reality is created by individuals in groups (less realist). | Therefore, reality needs to be interpreted. It is used to discover the underlying meaning of events and activities. | Interpretivism (reality needs to be interpreted)  
- Phenomenology  
- Symbolic interactionism  
- Hermeneutics  
- Critical Inquiry  
- Feminism | Ethnography Grounded Theory Phenomenological research Heuristic inquiry Action Research Discourse Analysis Feminist Standpoint research etc | Usually qualitative, could include: Qualitative interview Observation Participant Non participant Case study Life history Narrative Theme identification etc |
| Pragmatism       | Reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted in light of its usefulness in new unpredictable situations. | The best method is one that solves problems. Finding out is the means, change is the underlying aim. | Deweyan pragmatism Research through design | Mixed methods Design-based research Action research | Combination of any of the above and more, such as data mining expert review, usability testing, physical prototype |
| Subjectivism     | Reality is what we perceive to be real | All knowledge is purely a matter of perspective. | Postmodernism Structuralism Post-structuralism | Discourse theory Archaeology Genealogy Deconstruction etc | Autoethnography Semiotics Literary analysis Pastiche Intertextuality etc |
| Critical         | Realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence. | Reality and knowledge is both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society | Marxism Queer theory Feminism | critical discourse analysis, critical ethnography action research ideology critique | Ideological review Civil actions open-ended interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, open-ended observations, and journals |

adapted from various sources, including Crotty (1998).
Metatheory

A metatheory or meta-theory is a theory whose subject matter is some theory.

Metatheory can be seen as the philosophy behind the theory, the fundamental set of ideas about how phenomena of interest in a particular field should be thought about and researched.

Meta-theory offers a systematic means of understanding and evaluating the theory that drives and arises from research.
Metatheory vs paradigm

Paradigm would have a broader meaning than metatheory because it encompasses not only theories, but also methods.

At the same time, metatheory is absolutely core to any paradigm.

In a proposal, a metatheory could be related to literature review section as it studies theories.
Use metatheory to focus on theoretical frameworks and conceptual frameworks.
Your Research: Quo Vadis?

• What is the **PHILOSOPHY** that informs your research?

• What is the **PARADIGM** that underpins your study?
  – Ontology
  – Epistemology
  – Methodology
  – Axiology
Conclusion

Reflecting on philosophy you should be able to:

- Understand who you are
- What you think of yourself
- The purpose of your existence in the world
- The purpose of why you want to undertake the research you are embarking on
- Using philosophy to clearly articulate your research and make it scientific and accessible