

What Are the Key Issues to Consider Before Undertaking Research in a Work-Based Setting,
and What Are Some Strategies to Employ?

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I. INTRODUCTION

Research is defined as “a detailed study of a subject, especially in order to discover (new) information or reach a (new) understanding” (‘Research’, 2024). This detailed study gathers and interprets data to seek a deeper understanding of the subject, potentially uncovering ways to predict or control it (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

Pursuing a master’s degree in vocal pedagogy presents a unique challenge for conducting work-based research due to its interdisciplinary nature, spanning areas including music, life sciences, psychology, and physiology (Jiang *et al.*, 2024). My research on artificial intelligence (AI) in vocal education adds complexity by incorporating additional fields like data science, computer science, and machine learning (Russell *et al.*, 2023). As a novice researcher, navigating methodologies can feel overwhelming, leading me to ask: what are the key issues to consider before undertaking research in a work-based setting, and what are some strategies to employ?

This assignment will critically evaluate research fundamentals by examining overarching methodologies and how they combine to form paradigms. I will then discuss three paradigms—positivism, transformative paradigm, and critical realism—and their potential uses in voice-related, work-based research settings. Following this, I will give an overview of methodologies, designs, and methods. Finally, I will discuss ethical considerations and the positives and negatives of insider research. Although there is a wide range of knowledge to explore, given the scope of this assignment, each topic will receive a brief overview. Writing about and defining these elements of research will help me discover more about my perspective as a researcher, creating a stronger foundation for undertaking future work-based research projects.

II. QUALITIES OF THE PARADIGM

Before beginning a research study, the researcher must examine their beliefs and establish their theoretical framework, often referred to as a paradigm (Brown and Dueñas, 2020). A research paradigm is a set of shared beliefs or worldviews that guide research actions and data interpretation and is comprised of several philosophical components (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Brown and Dueñas, 2020).

The first component, axiology, is the study of values, addressing what is valuable to research and how to conduct research honestly and ethically (Biedenbach and Jacobsson, 2016; Brown and Dueñas, 2020). The second component, ontology, examines the nature of reality, questioning what exists, what defines reality, and whether objects exist independently or are dependent on individual perception, essentially asking if reality exists on its own or is created in our minds (Scotland, 2012; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Farghaly, 2018). The third component, epistemology, focuses on the nature of knowledge, exploring what defines knowledge, how we acquire it, and how we communicate it (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Brown and Dueñas, 2020; Sol and Heng, 2022).

Axiology (study of values), ontology (study of being), and epistemology (study of knowledge) are the foundation of research paradigms (Mertens, 2010, p. 470; Pretorius, 2024). For example, a researcher who sees reality as fluid, values practical solutions, and judges knowledge by its usefulness may align with pragmatism; one who views reality and value as subjective, shaped by cultural norms and interactions, and knowledge as socially constructed may align with constructivism (Pretorius, 2024).

Paradigms serve as frameworks for researchers to clarify their beliefs and guide all steps of a research project (Mertens, 2010, p. 469). While there are many paradigms, for this assignment, I will provide an overview of three paradigms—positivism, transformative paradigm, and critical realism—that I believe may align well with my worldview and research area.

A. Positivism

Positivism, introduced by 19th-century French philosopher August Comte, proposes that sociology is best understood through a framework of experimentation and observation (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Sol and Heng, 2022). It assumes reality exists independent of human perception, guided by unchanging principles, and uses experimentation to test hypotheses and generate numeric data (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006; Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Sol and Heng, 2022). Positivism embraces an objectivist epistemology and axiology, relying on evidence to seek answers, and a realist ontology, where the world and its knowledge are observable (Al-Saadi, 2014; Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017; Pretorius, 2024).

This form of quantitative research objectively measures observable phenomena to predict replicable outcomes across different contexts, guiding data analysis and interpretation while researchers remain detached from their subjects (O'Leary, 2004, p. 5; Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006; Al-Saadi, 2014; Tubey *et al.*, 2015; Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). However, positivism often oversimplifies complex social realities by focusing solely on observable phenomena, potentially overlooking the underlying structures (Bhaskar, 1998).

B. Transformative Paradigm

While positivism embraces a single, measurable reality, the transformative paradigm posits multiple versions of socially constructed realities, examining why we accept one version of reality over another, particularly concerning inequalities and human rights (Mertens, 2010, p. 470). Initially proposed by Guba and Lincoln in 1988, the paradigm aims to investigate, challenge, and expose power structures, morality, and ethics in political, social, and economic realms to address social oppression, treating research as a way to discover and build knowledge to lead to liberation and emancipation (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

This qualitative paradigm, with its subjective epistemology, values improving social justice and advancing human rights while ontologically recognising that reality is shaped by social factors like culture, politics, ethnicity, gender, and religion, leading to multiple socially constructed realities (Mertens, 2010, p. 470; Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). A researcher's preconceptions and bias may inadvertently affect the research outcome, causing the researcher to examine how much they should relate to the study's participants while respecting cultural diversity (Mertens, 2010, p. 471).

C. Critical Realism

While working on my literature review for this assignment, I found identifying a paradigm that aligned with my worldview challenging. While I believe certain events are observable and replicable, the ultimate underlying explanations may be more profound than they initially appear. Saunders *et al.* (2009) provided a quiz for determining which paradigm(s) best align with an individual's philosophy (Appendix A: Heightening Your Awareness of Your Research Philosophy (HARP)). The quiz revealed my beliefs aligned closest to critical realism. Being interested in the

overlap of music and technology, I believe the complexities of work-based research in these interdisciplinary areas could be served by adopting a critical realist approach.

Developed by Roy Bhaskar in the 1970s and 1980s, critical realism (CR) provided an alternative viewpoint to positivism's focus on observable phenomena and interpretivism's emphasis on subjective social experiences (Bhaskar, 1998). For critical realists, research is used to identify relationships between facts to understand and explain how and why events occur (Shannon-Baker, 2016; Fletcher, 2017; Lawani, 2021).

Epistemologically, CR aims to describe the real world by analysing participants' experiences, clarifying the relationship between the observation of these experiences and their underlying events and mechanisms (Lawani, 2021). Axiologically, CR is subjective, acknowledging researcher bias and realising interpretations may be flawed due to their philosophical perspectives (McEvoy and Richards, 2003; Pretorius, 2024). Ontologically, CR asserts reality is not solely measurable or observable, but exists independent of our understanding and is interpreted through social conditioning (Blundel, 2007; Lawani, 2021; Pretorius, 2024). A qualitative paradigm, CR proposes reality is stratified into three layers: the real, underlying structures and mechanisms that are internally related yet exist independently; the actual, including both observable and unobservable events; and the empirical, observable events (Lawani, 2021).

While philosophically leaning towards critical realism, I see the merit of applying different paradigms to my work-based research. A positivist approach might examine spectrographic data response in an AI-based application, testing pitch accuracy in students before and after using an AI-based vocal education application. From a transformative perspective, a researcher could study the impact of AI-driven online vocal education, increasing accessibility and reducing socioeconomic barriers to education. A critical realist could study AI-based tools that provide real-time feedback to vocal students by investigating the algorithms used and how vocal instructors and students interact with these tools. I submit that similar research concepts can benefit from diverse approaches.

III. METHODOLOGIES

While paradigms serve as belief-clarifying frameworks for researchers, the methodology, aligning with the chosen paradigm, serves as the overall plan for acquiring knowledge (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). The selection of quantitative and/or qualitative methodology provides the researcher with guidelines for deciding what type of data should be gathered, and which data collection tools should be used by determining methods needed for the study (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016).

A. Quantitative

Quantitative research primarily deals with the measurement of observable data, beginning with a specific theory to understand a phenomenon and leading to hypotheses that are rigorously tested (Swanson and Holton, 2010, p. 30; Patel and Patel, 2019; Goundar, 2012, p. 18; Lim, 2024a). Emphasising objectivity and generalizability, this approach minimises bias by using structured and standardised data-collection instruments like experiments and surveys to test hypotheses and establish causal relationships among variables through statistical, mathematical, and computational models (Lim, 2024a). The quantitative research process is outlined in five steps: determining fundamental questions the study aims to answer, selecting participants, deciding on methods, choosing tools for data analysis, and interpreting results (Swanson and Holton, 2010, p. 31).

Quantitative methodology's strengths lie in its ability to establish cause-and-effect relationships and produce generalisable results (Goundar, 2012, p. 26). However, as previously discussed with positivism, the quantitative approach can be limited in understanding contextual nuances when drawing conclusions and may oversimplify complex relationships between variables (Lim, 2024a). Additionally, a solely quantitative approach, by adhering to measuring only directly observable events, fails to account for a researcher's unique ability to interpret their experiences and construct their own meanings (Goundar, 2012, p. 26). Researchers can mitigate these limitations using advanced statistical models or a mixed-methods approach, allowing for open-ended questions or follow-up interviews (Lim, 2024a).

B. Qualitative

Conversely, qualitative research is non-numerical and examines forms of knowledge from a descriptive perspective to gain new insight (Goundar, 2012, p. 18). It explores behaviours, perspectives, and life experiences in depth, aiming to uncover the complexities of situations through a holistic framework by analysing words and reporting detailed views (Creswell, 2007, p. 15; Khan, 2014).

Qualitative methodology offers several strengths: contextual relevance, in-depth insights, and recognition of participant voices (Lim, 2024b). However, it has weaknesses such as limited generalizability, time-consuming data collection, and susceptibility to researcher bias (projecting personal beliefs onto study design or analysis) (Goundar, 2012, p. 22; Lim, 2024b).

While I see the merits of both methodologies individually, I posit that the mixed methods approach may be better suited for my research area due to its interdisciplinary elements and potential need for both statistical and descriptive data.

C. Mixed Methods

Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative elements, allowing researchers to address different facets of the same phenomenon by leveraging the strengths of each methodology and focusing on complementary rather than opposing theories between paradigms (Ercikan and Roth, 2006; Boeren, 2018). Often, mixed methods studies analyse quantitative and qualitative data independently using different techniques, then combine the results during data analysis (Creswell and Hanson, 2005). A common challenge in mixed methods research is divergent findings, often occurring between the two research phases due to variations in data collected anonymously versus in-person data or the quantitative component's insensitivity to complex human experiences (Creswell and Garrett, 2008). These divergent findings can be mitigated by triangulating the data, using multiple data sources, and reflecting on potential researcher bias to ensure data interpretations align with the participants' experiences (Lim, 2024b).

A 2023 mixed-methods study by Li and Wang explored the integration of AI into music education, focusing on piano learning over 18 weeks. Researchers developed an AI-driven

chatbot to provide personalised piano lessons and compared its effectiveness to traditional instruction. Data collection included practice logs, performance recordings, and questionnaires, with performance evaluated based on practice frequency, piece complexity, and musical proficiency. Statistical analysis was used to compare group scores to assess the impact of various learning factors. Results were presented in graphs and tables (see Figure 1), showing significant improvements in the AI group, with qualitative feedback in the form of descriptive analysis offering insights into student experiences (Li and Wang, 2023).

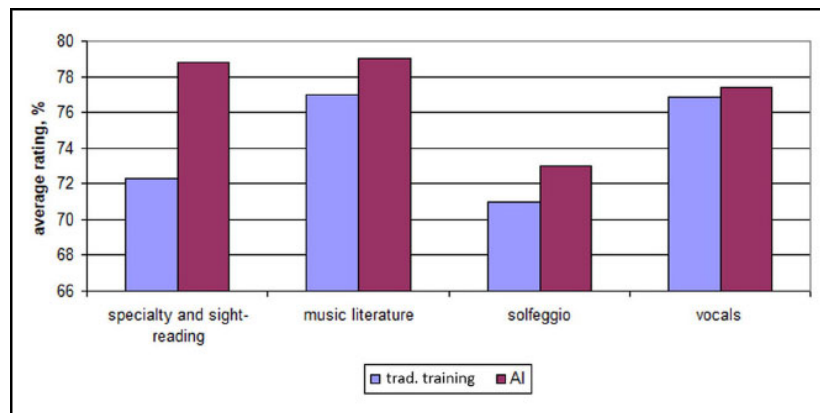


Figure 1: Scores by activity in traditional and AI-enabled classes (Li and Wang, 2023, p. 7)

In evaluating this study, it appears the multiple forms of data collection employed provided a comprehensive analysis of the use of this AI application; however, a broader perspective may have been achieved by analysing participants' comments and thoughts on the training they received, as well as their personal preferences for in-person versus AI-driven lessons.

Research methodologies offer unique advantages and challenges, often complementing one another in pursuing comprehensive and nuanced understanding (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Using various research methods can improve the study by examining the same topics using different practical approaches (Boeren, 2018).

IV. DESIGNS AND METHODS

While methodology, linked to the researcher's chosen paradigm, serves as the overall approach to research, research design is the detailed plan for the project within the methodology, and method refers to the specific means used for data collection and analysis within the design (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). While there are a variety of research designs and methods, due

to the limitations of this paper and consideration of my areas of interest, I will provide a brief overview of three designs and three methods, focusing on approaches I anticipate using in my research.

A. Phenomenology

Phenomenology, a qualitative methodology, studies life experiences of a concept or phenomenon as experienced by individuals, focusing on what it is like to live through a particular experience rather than merely reacting to it (Lim, 2024b). The core of phenomenological research lies in its data collection methods, primarily consisting of interviews with individuals for an in-depth examination of how individuals perceive and make sense of a phenomenon (Armour *et al.*, 2009; Connelly, 2010). Phenomenology's strengths include understanding subtle nuances of human experiences that may be overlooked by other means, but its subjective nature may require mitigation strategies like triangulation and reflective journaling to enhance credibility (Lim, 2024b).

B. Case Study

A case study involves a detailed exploration of a subject, focusing on an individual, community, or organisation to gain insight into particular events or behaviours (Goundar, 2012, p. 47). The findings can provide insights into events and behaviours but are rarely generalisable (Brown, 2008). Case studies are not dependent on any specific data collection approach, but may utilise multiple data sources, such as interviews, surveys, or observations, to achieve a detailed understanding of the subject and generate new theories or insights by combining qualitative and quantitative analysis (Coombs, 2022).

Doğanyigit and Islim (2021) conducted a qualitative case study to explore how a virtual reality (VR) application might influence vocal use. The application featured an interactive 360-degree roller coaster simulation, varying speed and amplitude inversely to pitch, intending to make abstract concepts of vocal production more tangible. Data collection involved semi-structured 15-minute interviews with open-ended questions. As a secondary data source, vocal training specialists evaluated videos of the students using the VR application. The researchers developed a matrix of codes (organised and categorised data) and themes, presenting the final data using charts and textual interpretations. Results indicated the VR application led to positive

outcomes for students, including more comfortable production of higher pitches, decreased stress on the larynx, and greater ease in opening up resonance gaps at upper levels (Doganyigit and Islim, 2021). While this study focused on opinions and perspectives, I feel it could have strengthened the research by incorporating user-progress data collected from the AI application adding a quantifiable element, thereby applying a mixed methods approach.

C. Grounded Theory

Posited by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, grounded theory evolved as an alternative to theory-driven research (Lim, 2024b). Researchers using grounded theory start with data collection instead of a hypothesis, allowing new theories to emerge directly from the data, refined through an iterative loop of collection, coding, and comparison (Dunican, 2005). This qualitative analysis identifies patterns in the data to create categories that are compared and combined, generating theories about how social environments function (Burck, 2005). There are two approaches to grounded theory research: the Glaserian approach, where a literature review is not conducted until after data analysis and research begins without pre-set questions, and the Straussian approach, which supports a partial literature review to allow for a pre-determined research question (Howard-Payne, 2016). Grounded theory's rigorous analysis of empirical data lends credibility to theories discovered, but its reduced engagement with existing literature risks rediscovering known data, a weakness that may be mitigated by maintaining a balance between new insights and established knowledge (Lim, 2024b).

D. Likert Scales

The Likert scale, a quantitative method developed by sociologist Rensis Likert, is a rating scale used to measure variables that cannot be directly observed, combining multiple items to form a single composite score for data analysis (Tanujaya *et al.*, 2023). Likert scales use carefully constructed questions with a pre-determined number of response options, frequently using a five-point range from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree,' to quantify participant opinions and perspectives (South *et al.*, 2022; Tanujaya *et al.*, 2023). Likert scales produce interval data, using arithmetic operations for data analysis, and allowing researchers to quantify the opinions and perspectives of participants (Tanujaya *et al.*, 2023).

E. Focus Groups

Focus groups, a qualitative method, are centred on data collection through moderator-guided, small-group discussions, either in person or online (Morgan, 1996). Typically lasting about two hours, focus groups provide a way to collect data in a short time period from a variety of people, facilitating deep discussion among participants, but may risk dominance by one or more participants and involve time-consuming data analysis (Beyea and Nicoll, 2000).

Online focus groups offer a location-convenient, cost-effective way to gather data by overcoming location challenges and maintaining interpersonal dynamics similar to face-to-face interactions, effectively engaging participants with convenience, flexibility, and perceived anonymity (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2017).

Focus groups may be combined with other research methods, such as surveys or interviews, often with one method serving as the primary input and the other as secondary, either qualitatively or via mixed methods (Morgan, 1996).

F. Surveys

Survey research is a versatile method for collecting data from individuals through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches aimed at describing and exploring variables and constructs while employing strategies to minimise errors (Ponto, 2015).

Surveys, a tool used in survey research, collect data about a group's characteristics, actions, or opinions through closed-ended questions with options such as multiple-choice answers or Likert scale options for quantifiable results, or through open-ended questions where participants answer in their own words, allowing qualitative surveys to glean in-depth accounts of participant experiences (Glasow, 2005; Braun *et al.*, 2021). Effective survey research requires developing a clear question, carefully selecting the target population, planning the survey mode, ensuring a user-friendly layout, and considering response bias (Safdar *et al.*, 2016).

Surveys may be administered by mail, phone, online, or in person, depending on the researchers' needs and participants' availability (Safdar *et al.*, 2016). Online surveys offer flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and access to diverse populations across multiple locations including marginalised groups (Safdar *et al.*, 2016; Braun *et al.*, 2021).

For example, Woodruff *et al.* (2023) conducted a study investigating the perceptions, personal experiences, and resource access of AI among K-12 educators across the USA and Puerto Rico. The survey, distributed via social media, received responses from 4,528 educators. Results were presented in a series of charts (see Figure 2) and textual interpretations of the data, indicating a generally positive opinion of AI and an openness to explore its use in curriculums (Woodruff *et al.*, 2023). While the research paper stated the use of a mixed-methods approach, closer examination showed the study was purely quantitative, using a close-ended questionnaire with multiple-choice questions and a Likert scale. With such a large, diverse dataset, I feel that adding a qualitative element could have strengthened the research by discovering potential issues not considered by the researchers during the questionnaire design.

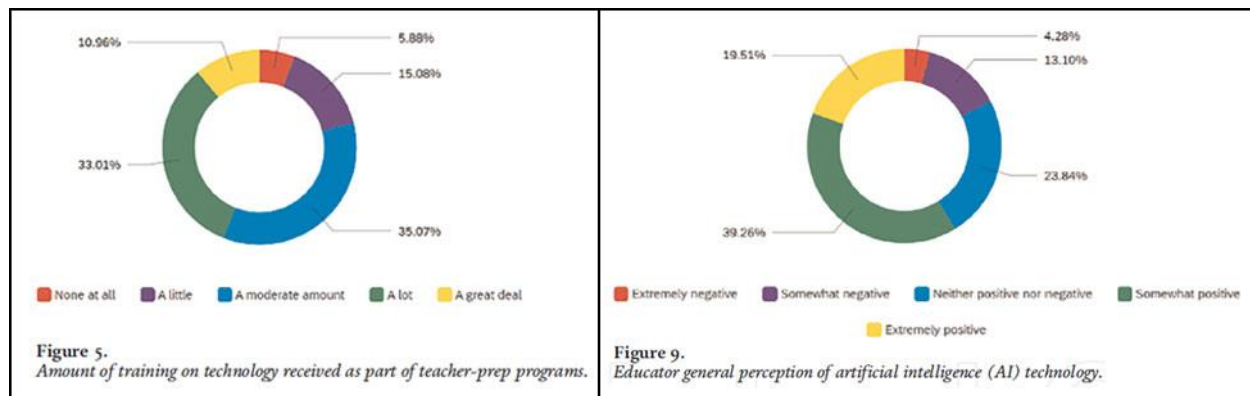


Figure 2: AI in Education Study Results (Woodruff *et al.*, 2022, pp. 13-16)

V. ETHICS

Ethics in research are defined as the rules of conduct guiding acceptable behaviour and promoting values essential for trust, fairness, and accountability with participants and the research being conducted (Resnik, 2015). According to Neuman (2011), ethics are the researcher's responsibility regardless of the participant's awareness or concern for ethical considerations (Neuman, 2011, p. 46). Ethical protocols require researchers to disclose possible participation risks, advantages, expectations, privacy policies, and instructions on how participants may withdraw from the study, all to protect participants' rights and well-being and uphold the credibility and integrity of a study (Gabriele, 2003; Kleinert, 2010; Resnik and Shamoo, 2011; Asiedu *et al.*, 2021).

In any research study, obtaining informed consent from participants is an ethical requirement to respect their autonomy and right to make informed decisions about participation (Lim, 2024b). It is important to note that signed consent, a written record of an agreement to participate, does not imply informed consent, which involves making participants fully aware of their rights and the study's objectives (Collins and McNulty, 2020; Lim, 2024b). Proper handling of confidential information and participant data is also crucial to protect the participants' privacy, requiring researchers to plan for and explain any privacy policies and procedures, including the duration of data retention and protocols for data destruction (Resnik, 2015).

As a researcher, it is important ethically to avoid bias—any influence that may alter the results of a study, intentionally or unintentionally—in all aspects of research including research design, data collection, data analysis, and publications (Resnik, 2015).

VI. INSIDER RESEARCH

While avoiding bias is crucial in all research, insider research—which involves studying a group or community with which the researcher shares relevant characteristics—presents unique challenges and is an important ethical consideration (Yin, 2015, p. 46). This dual role requires careful examination of objectivity and subjectivity (Greene, 2014; Yvonne Bulk and Collins, 2024). Familiarity with the research environment can facilitate access and provide cultural insights, potentially leading to more insightful questions and candid responses (Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2008; Darwin Holmes, 2020; Greene, 2014).

However, challenges like bias or excessive/inadequate empathy can limit perspective (Darwin Holmes, 2020; Taylor, 2011). Insider research is sometimes criticised for being too intertwined with the culture being studied potentially leading to insider blindness, leaving obvious questions unasked and respondents hesitant to share sensitive information (Darwin Holmes, 2020; Merriam *et al.*, 2001).

Strategies to mitigate bias and establish credibility include prolonged engagement, triangulation (using multiple methods, data sources, or researchers), peer debriefing, field journals, and audit trails (Greene, 2014). Projects with both insider and outsider roles can help mitigate risks (Humphrey, 2013). Leveraging insider experience to access complex groups or incorporating personal experience with equal weight to other participants is also effective (Wilkinson and

Kitzinger, 2013). The aim is to be cognizant of the risks rather than avoid them, as insider research can uncover valuable data (Humphrey, 2013).

As a vocal educator conducting work-based research, I will be an insider researcher. Involving my students and colleagues requires due diligence in mitigating bias in project design, data collection, and analysis. A mixed-methods approach can assist in creating a more accurate research outcome by triangulating data and uncovering discrepancies. For students under 18, I will need to obtain signed consent from their legal guardian. Considered a vulnerable population, this group requires additional privacy protections and is particularly susceptible to psychological stress (Lim, 2024b). I plan to obtain informed consent from all participants regardless of age, ensuring they understand the project's scope and can leave the study at any time, and include a debriefing process to alleviate anxieties.

VII. CONCLUSION

Research is not just a process of gathering information, as is sometimes suggested; instead, it addresses unanswered questions and discovers new information to expand the limits of what we do and do not understand (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

If researchers do not acknowledge (or know) the philosophical assumptions that underlie their works, this does not mean that they have no philosophical assumptions. It merely means that they are operating with unexamined assumptions (Mertens, 2010, p. 9).

As a new researcher, it is imperative I give thought to my philosophical leanings to provide a solid research framework to guide how meaning is constructed from data (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). As an insider researcher, I need to mitigate potential bias by using techniques such as field journals and triangulation to ensure accuracy in the data collected. Additionally, integrating reflexivity by assessing previous decisions will help me to learn from my experiences and improve future research while mitigating bias (Basit, 2013). My research area spans multiple disciplines, both sociological and technological, and this paper has provided me with an overview of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and assisted me in understanding the rigour required to conduct a successful research project.

As a proponent of AI, I asked ChatGate.AI (2025) what paradigm aligns with my philosophical views (see Figure 3).

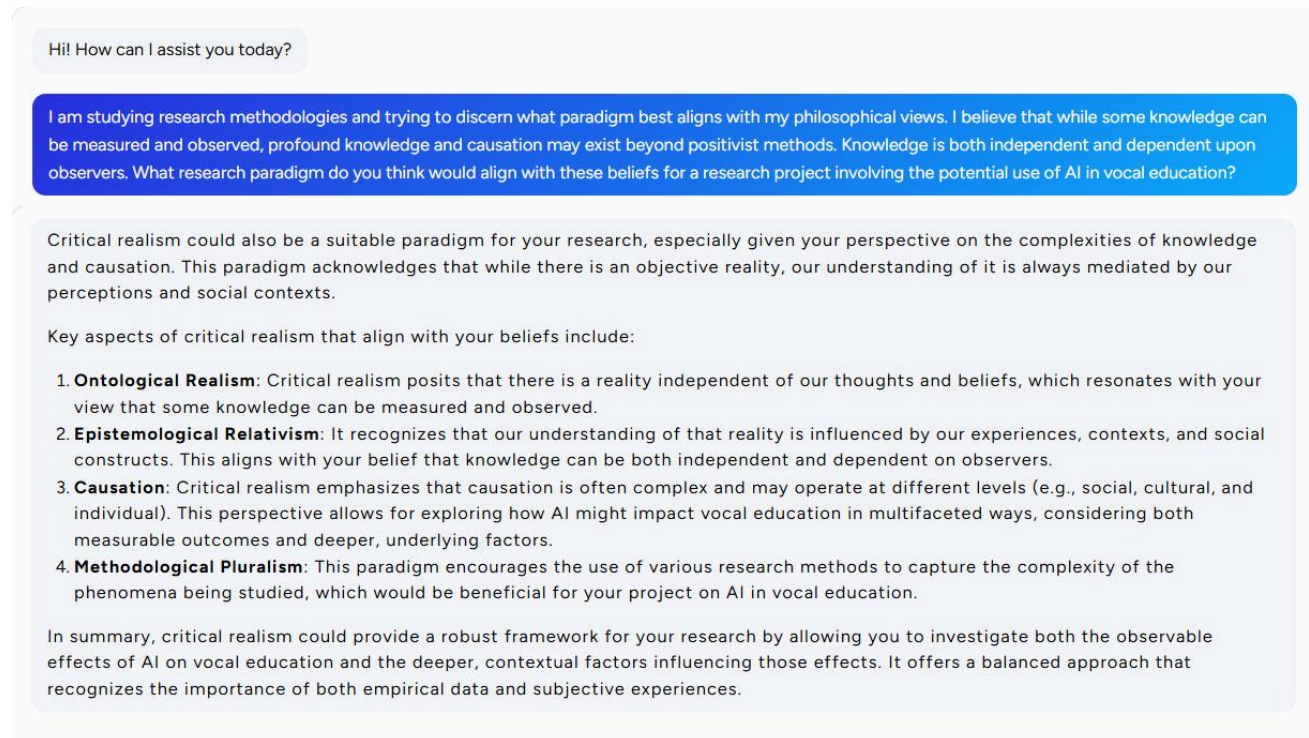


Figure 3: ChatGate.AI Response (ChatGate.AI, 2025)

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Appendix A: Heightening Your Awareness of Your Research Philosophy (HARP)



Progressing your research project

Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy (HARP)*

HARP is a reflexive tool that has been designed by Bristow and Saunders to help you explore your research philosophy. It is just a starting point for enabling you to ask yourself more refined questions about how you see research. It will not provide you with a definitive answer to the question 'What is my research philosophy?' Rather it will give you an indication as to where your views are similar to and different from those of five major philosophical traditions discussed in this chapter. Do not be surprised

if your views are similar to more than one tradition. Such potential tensions are an ideal opportunity to inquire into and examine your beliefs further.

HARP consists of six sections each comprising five statements (a total of 30 statements). Each section considers one aspect of philosophical beliefs (ontology, epistemology, axiology, purpose of research, meaningfulness of data and structure/agency). Each statement epitomises a particular research philosophy's position in relation to that particular aspect. By indicating your agreement or disagreement with each statement you can discover your similarities and differences with different aspects of each research philosophy. Following the completion of HARP, refer to the scoring key to calculate your score and interpret your answer.

HARP Statements							
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below. There are no wrong answers.		Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Your views on the nature of reality (ontology)							
1	Organisations are real, just like physical objects.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Events in organisations are caused by deeper, underlying mechanisms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	The social world we inhabit is a world of multiple meanings, interpretations and realities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	'Organisation' is not a solid and static thing but a flux of collective processes and practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	'Real' aspects of organisations are those that impact on organisational practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on knowledge and what constitutes acceptable knowledge (epistemology)							
6	Organisational research should provide scientific, objective, accurate and valid explanations of how the organisational world really works.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Theories and concepts never offer completely certain knowledge, but researchers can use rational thought to decide which theories and concepts are better than others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Concepts and theories are too simplistic to capture the full richness of the world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Appendix A: Heightening Your Awareness of Your Research Philosophy (HARP)



Progressing your research project (*continued*)

Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy (HARP)

HARP Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below. There are no wrong answers.							
9	What generally counts as 'real', 'true' and 'valid' is determined by politically dominant points of view.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Acceptable knowledge is that which enables things to be done successfully.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on the role of values in research (axiology)							
11	Researchers' values and beliefs must be excluded from the research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Researchers must try to be as objective and realistic as they can.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Researchers' values and beliefs are key to their interpretations of the social world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Researchers should openly and critically discuss their own values and beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Research shapes and is shaped by what the researcher believes and doubts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on the purpose of research							
16	The purpose of research is to discover facts and regularities, and predict future events.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	The purpose of organisational research is to offer an explanation of how and why organisations and societies are structured.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	The purpose of research is to create new understandings that allow people to see the world in new ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	The purpose of research is to examine and question the power relations that sustain conventional thinking and practices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	The purpose of research is to solve problems and improve future practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on what constitutes meaningful data							
21	Things that cannot be measured have no meaning for the purposes of research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	Organisational theories and findings should be evaluated in terms of their explanatory power of the causes of organisational behaviour.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Appendix A: Heightening Your Awareness of Your Research Philosophy (HARP)

HARP Statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the statements below. There are no wrong answers.							
23	To be meaningful, research must include participants' own interpretations of their experiences, as well as researchers' interpretations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	Absences and silences in the world around us are at least as important as what is prominent and obvious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	Meaning emerges out of our practical, experimental and critical engagement with the world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your views on the nature of structure and agency							
26	Human behaviour is determined by natural forces.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	People's choices and actions are always limited by the social norms, rules and traditions in which they are located.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	Individuals' meaning-making is always specific to their experiences, culture and history.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	Structure, order and form are human constructions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	People can use routines and customs creatively to instigate innovation and change.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Now please complete the scoring key below.

Your answer scores

Give yourself the points as indicated above for each answer within each philosophical tradition. The different philosophies are represented by specific questions in the HARP as indicated below. Fill each philosophy table with your answer scores, then total up the numbers for each philosophy. (For your reference, in the tables below the letters in brackets indicate whether the question tests your agreement with the ontological, epistemological, axiological, purpose of research, meaningfulness of data and structure and agency aspects of research philosophy.)

Each answer you gave is given a number of points as shown in the table below:

Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	2	1	-1	-2	-3



Appendix A: Heightening Your Awareness of Your Research Philosophy (HARP)



Progressing your research project (*continued*)

Heightening your Awareness of your Research Philosophy (HARP)

Positivism: Questions 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26

Question	1 (ontology)	6 (epistemology)	11 (axiology)	16 (purpose)	21 (data)	26 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Critical Realism: Questions 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27

Question	2 (ontology)	7 (epistemology)	12 (axiology)	17 (purpose)	22 (data)	27 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Interpretivism: Questions 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28

Question	3 (ontology)	8 (epistemology)	13 (axiology)	18 (purpose)	23 (data)	28 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Poststructuralism/postmodernism:

Questions 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29

Question	4 (ontology)	9 (epistemology)	14 (axiology)	19 (purpose)	24 (data)	29 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Pragmatism: Questions 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30

Question	5 (ontology)	10 (epistemology)	15 (axiology)	20 (purpose)	25 (data)	30 (structure/agency)	Total
Answer score							

Reflection

Now, for the first of what will almost certainly be many philosophical reflections, consider the following questions regarding how you scored yourself.

- 1 Do you have an outright philosophical winner? Or do you have a close contention between two or more philosophies?
- 2 Why do you think this is?
- 3 Which philosophy do you disagree with the most?
- 4 Why do you think this is?