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Editorial

Abeyasinghe, AAC

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Editorial

Researching is now flourishing in Sri Lankan universities. Bourgeoning number of annual conferences and faculty journals evidence this. The provision of research funding must have influenced this development.

Our brief survey of these journals, however, indicates that 95% of the papers fall in one dominant paradigm - positivism. In contrast, well-ranked international journals publish both positivist and post/anti positivist papers almost equally. This suggests that we need to think of a methodological diversity.

The diversity debate is not new. Even in Aristotle's days, a paradigm shift occurred by separating theology from rationalism and by 16th Century the debate went up to empiricism, which was admired by British Philosophers such as John Locke and David Hulme. However, in the 18th century, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that empiricism or experience is subjective, hence scientific reasonings are needed to avoid theoretical illusions. French Philosopher Auguste Comte blended empiricism and rationalism and coined it 'positivism'. The German idealism later influenced the developments in interpretive methods such as phenomenology and critical theory which emphasised the need of qualitative research methods such as unstructured interviews and participant observation - social actions must be studied based upon an understanding of the meaning and purpose the individuals attached to their personal actions. While this was so, positivism continued providing a rationality for taking quantitative methodologies.

Thus, social science research has engaged in a debate on methodological diversity and shown that an appropriate methodology can produce a body of knowledge. This engagement has proved that positivist, post-positivist or anti-positivist stances are outcomes of the philosophical assumptions held by the researcher. These assumptions come with the researcher's ontological (the way of understanding about the world's reality) and epistemological (the way of knowing what constitutes knowledge) positions. If one takes the view that the knowledge can be obtained by experiencing and interpreting the research object theoretically, he/she may adopt qualitative methodologies. The papers containing in this issue of the NSBM Journal of Management illustrate this rationale.

As is reported in these papers, qualitative data plays a role in the interpretation of social actions, processes and the dynamics between them which quantitative data has limitations in doing so. Qualitative case studies in this issue thus show how human behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and perceptions are captured for a deeper understanding of the research object at hand. While we appreciate that both quantitative and qualitative approaches have their own merits, in this issue, we admire the authors' attempts at using their case studies along with theoretical insights drawn from sociological and political perspectives. They all make an attempt to make a contribution to an ongoing theoretical debate.

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Our earnest hope is that emerging scholars in Sri Lanka benefit from the methodological experiences of the authors of these papers and prepare themselves for doing internationally accepted studies in their respective disciplines – the primary role of a university academic.

Dr. A.A.C Abeyasinghe

Dr. Dulekha Kasturiratne

Editors