Recently, due to increasing interest in cross-cultural management, many organisational researchers are confronted with the issue of the adequacy of quantitative research methodology in cross-cultural research. Qualitative research has been advocated by many people in organisational research. The quantitative research method is seen as the conventional method in organisation studies and is considered to be "objective". The qualitative research method is seen as "subjective" and "descriptive" and its legitimacy often needs to be proven in organisation studies. This paper argues that such a dichotomy is oversimplified. Quantitative and qualitative research are two different approaches, based on different paradigms and different assumptions about ontology and epistemology: two human phenomena rather than two different sets of research techniques. What research discovers and how it is discovered depends on how the researcher engages in the phenomena studied. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches should be equally emphasised in organisational research.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a growing concern regarding the adequacy of research methods in the field of organisation studies, especially as a result of the increasing interest in cross-cultural management. We are experiencing a lot of ambiguities in interpreting and utilising the results of organisation research. Many organisational researchers are being accused of producing scientific research studies that explain nothing about the real world. This kind of research has often been criticised as "unreal", "useless" and "number-crunching".

Organisational phenomena are often far more complex than we realise. The variables we select as "independent" are themselves often highly intercorrelated and influenced by the variables we are attempting to explain. Many of us are aware that there is a gap between what we write in the scholarly journals and what we experience as members of organisations. However, when grants and articles are reviewed and when research is discussed in seminars, we are often trapped in the "dominant language", which is based on the positivist (Giddens, 1974) view that centres on the systematic test of explicit hypotheses.

The quantitative research methods derived from the natural sciences that emphasise objectivity, measurement, reliability and validity, have come to be seen as increasingly
inadequate especially in cross-cultural research. Attention has been devoted to a search for effective alternatives, and this leads to the revitalisation of the qualitative approach which emphasises the description of culture and meaning.

The distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods in organisation studies is generally perceived as being that while the quantitative approach is objective and relies heavily on statistics and figures, the qualitative approach is subjective and utilises language and description. Such a distinction is essentially correct but does not capture the full significance of the different paradigms (Khun, 1970).

This paper attempts to contrast the two different research approaches — quantitative and qualitative — in organisation studies. They both serve research purposes in different ways and have different effects. My intent is to show the underlying differences of the two modes of research approaches and to encourage the further development of the qualitative approach as a way of increasing the diversity and thus the sources of insights and discovery in the field of organisation studies.

2. TWO MODES OF RESEARCH APPROACH

Many books have been written on the methodology of both quantitative and qualitative research designs. However, they tend to focus mainly on the mechanical procedures of data collection and data analysis. There is a tendency to argue the case for quantitative and qualitative approaches almost as ends in themselves, abstracted from deeper, ontological and epistemological issues that need to be examined. The difference between the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach is not simply the difference between multivariate statistics and indepth interview, between Likert-scale questionnaire and open-ended questionnaire, or between survey and case study. They are two different approaches to organisation studies. Research is not just a question of methodology. The selection of method implies some view of the situation being studied. How it is being studied carries certain assumptions and answers to what is being studied. It is like selecting a tennis racquet to play tennis or a badminton racquet to play badminton because we have a preconception as to what the game involves.

All research methods embody a variety of epistemological assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and the methods through which that knowledge can be obtained, as well as a set of ontological assumptions about the nature of the phenomena to be investigated. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are based upon different ontological and epistemological assumptions which shape the aims of research inquiry, the roles of the researcher, and the researcher-respondent relationship. Table 1 shows the fundamental differences between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

**ONTOCGICAL ASSUMPTIONS: OBJECTIVITY VERSUS SUBJECTIVITY**

To discuss the paradigms of quantitative and qualitative research approaches we have to trace their intellectual origins. These go back at least to the philosophical debates of the seventeenth century concerning the nature of human knowledge and its relationship to the world. It has been suggested that assumptions about the nature of reality can be thought of in terms of the subjective-objective dimension (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).