

# Chapter 17

## Conclusion

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### Introduction

We set out in this book to present a comprehensive volume on the social sciences in Ghana from two broad perspectives, namely (i) a historical perspective; and (ii) specific issues (evolution, theories, methods, substance and policy-relevance). The 15 chapters have focused on various disciplines of the social sciences largely through these two perspectives. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the contribution of the chapters to the theoretical, comparative and empirical literature and make a prognosis of the future of the social sciences.

The analytical framework of most of the chapters, namely, evolution, growth, theories, methods, substance and policy relevance is in itself an effort to deal broadly with the theoretical issues in the debate over the social sciences. It is a methodological venture that seeks to provide a framework that suggests that social science research can generate and produce positive benefits and if vigorously and proactively pursued can oil the so-called “dry wells of policy-oriented social science research” (Smith 1998, p. 1). In the end, in principle, most of the chapters reinforce the view that research in the social sciences is no different than research in the physical or natural sciences in that it provides new knowledge that alters the status quo and improve state and society for the betterment of mankind (Hunt and Colander 2004).

In addition, the chapters have sought to emphasize the two approaches to the problem of identifying the benefits of social science research. One is to develop

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“grocery lists” of different types of benefits (Norton and Schuh 1981) and second is to induce institutional change (Ruttan 1982, 1984). Indeed, taken together the chapters have suggested indirectly that the first step in measuring the benefits of social science research should be to specify the sources of demand for that knowledge. This buttresses the viewpoint of Ruttan 1984, p. 551 that:

The demand for knowledge in economics and in the other social sciences—as well as in related professions such as law, business and social service—is derived primarily from the demand for institutional change and improvements in institutional performance.

From a comparative perspective, the analytical framework shows that the social sciences can be gauged from a set of criteria notwithstanding different outcomes and their methodological orientation. In addition, a volume of 15 chapters on the social sciences is in itself a Herculean comparative task that has the ambition of promoting common generalizations and new insights in spite of differences, nuances and perspectives.

From an empirical perspective, the chapters have shown two things. First is the vibrancy and fluidity of the social sciences. Second is that the social sciences are not watertight disciplines. They are interrelated in spite of their diversity and complexity. In the words of a Nobel prize-winning physicist “understanding physics is child’s play, but understanding child’s play is a nightmare” (quoted in Marar 2012, p. 1).

The optimism which we have is that in spite of efforts by governments to reduce spending on funding students and research in the social sciences all over the world, the future of the social sciences is not bleak but still bright. They will continue to shape academic discourse and the population of universities. Above all, history does tell us that where some sections of society are not receiving their fair share of wealth and income, then the seeds of unrest and revolution are sown. This is where the legacy of the social sciences will continue to glow rather than fade!

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