

# Positivism and phenomenological research - dissertation example

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## **Positivism & Phenomenological Research**

Positivist Quantitative research approach: A positivist or quantitative researcher perceives the world as external and objective and that science as value less. Therefore, the researcher is independent in observing things/situations and values are eliminated in order to understand. The researcher uses secondary data, survey techniques and other experiments in the process of collecting data and focuses on fieldwork to support the knowledge gained. Last but not least the researcher seeks to deduce cause & affect relationships to predict patterns of behavior. Steven Eric Krauss (2005, p. 760) states that, " In its broadest sense, positivism is a rejection of metaphysics. It is a position that holds that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe the phenomena that we experience. The purpose of science is simply to stick to what we can observe and measure." Phenomenological research approach refers to in-depth analysis of interviews and seeks to conclude about causal factors. It neither hypothesizes on the basis of natural kinds, constancy or determinism nor do the two situations are same. It comprises both Non-empirical and Empirical approaches. The research outcomes are descriptive or subjective in nature which is narrated mainly in qualitative terms. It uses the deductive approach and therefore the research purpose is likely to be exploratory rather than causal or predictive. Mainly qualitative methods are used and a case study is conducted as the primary source for developing a research strategy. It seeks to use a pictorial approach to the case setting. Moreover, a combination of data sampling, data collection and analysis methods are used to explore findings. Thomas Groenewald (2004, p. 2) states that " I wanted to do research regarding an

aspect of teaching and learning practice, namely cooperative education, which, based on my experience and literature review, I found to be often misunderstood or poorly practised. Needing a suitable explorative research design that would prevent or restrict my own biases, after some investigation I chose phenomenology.”

Table 1: Selection of research paradigms and research methods

Research paradigms	Research approach	Research methods	Examples
Positivism	Quantitative	Surveys: longitudinal, cross-sectional, correlational; experimental, and quasi-experimental and ex-post facto research	- Attitude of distance learners towards online based education - Relationship between students’ motivation and their academic achievement. - Effect of intelligence on the academic performances of primary school learners
Anti-positivism	Qualitative	Biographical; Phenomenological; Ethnographical; case study	- A study of autobiography of a great statesman. - A study of dropout among the female students - A case study of a open distance learning Institution in a country.

References

Dash, N. 2005, ‘ Online Research Methods Resource for Teachers and Trainers: Selection of the Research Paradigm and Methodology’ [Online] Available at: [http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/researchmethods/Modules/Selection\\_of\\_methodology/index.php](http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/researchmethods/Modules/Selection_of_methodology/index.php)

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Groenewald, T. 2004, ‘ A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated’, International Journal of Qualitative Methods, vol. 3, no. 1 [Online] Available at: [http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3\\_1/pdf/groenewald.pdf](http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/pdf/groenewald.pdf)