**Research philosophies :**

Research is not ‘neutral’, but reflects a range of the researcher’s personal interests, values, abilities, assumptions, aims and ambitions.

In the case of your own proposed research, your own mixtures of these elements will not only determine the subject of the research, but will influence your approach to it. It is important to consider in advance what approach you have to adopt in your research , and why.

There are two main research philosophies which have an **impact on the methodology** adopted for the research project:

**Positivistic :**

Positivistic approaches to research are based on research methodologies commonly ussed in science. They are characterized by a detached approach to research that seeks out the facts or causes of any social phenomena in a systematic way. Positivistic approaches are founded on the belief that the study of human behavior should be conducted in the same way as studies conducted in the natural sciences.

**Phenomenological :**

Phenomenological approaches however, aaproach research from the perspective that human behaviour is not as easily measured as phenomena in the natural sceinces. Human motivation is shaped by factors that are not always observable, eg ; inner thought processes. This perspective assumes that people will often influence events and act in unpredictable ways .

Phenomenological approaches are particularly concerned with understanding behaviour from the participants’ own perspectives. Research methods are chosen therefore, to describe, translate, explain and interpret events from the perspectives of the people who are the subject of the research.

**Characteristics of the philosophical approaches :**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Positivistic | Phenomenological |
| Quantitative  Objectivist  Scientific( accurate and precise)  Experimentalist | Qualitative  Subjectivist  Humanistic  Interpretative |

Practice:

Task: read the following scenarios/ abstracts, then answer the questions bellow.

Decide whether the philosophical approach is positivist or phenomenological.

**a) Scenario 1:**

A German education researcher studied the relationship between discussing the content of storybooks with children and developing their critical thinking. He chose a sample of 230 children in first year primary school. Half of them belonged to and experimental group, and the other half belonged to a control group. The teachers were given picture books and were asked to read them regularly to children in the experimental group. Children discussed the content of the storybooks together during the reading sessions. The experiment lasted for four months. The children’s critical thinking abilities were assessed before the experiment and after it. In the tests, children were given multiple-choices questions testing problem-solving, analysing, synthesising, and evaluating. The answers were marked to obtain scores. Statistical techniques were used to verify whether there is a causal relationship between the two investigated variables.

**b) Scenario 2:**

An Italian doctoral researcher is working on the thinking skills used by children when given opportunities to discuss the content of storybooks. The researcher chose a sample of seven teachers to conduct an interview. The questions of the interview explored the thinking processes reflected in discussions accompanying storybooks reading. More particularly, the interview explored how children use problem-solving, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and other thinking skills. The teachers were invited to give details about how children interpret the different event of stories, how they judge the decisions made by the characters of the stories, and how they view the perfect endings of the stories. The teachers were also inquired about the role that a reader of the story could play in encouraging children to discuss critically the content of the book.

• Which study is testing a hypothesis?

• Which one is using numerical data for measurement?

• Compare both studies in terms of objectivity/ the detachment of the researcher from the research?

• Which study is attempting to understand the ways different people interpret the world?

• Which one is attempting to understand a causal relationship?

• Which of the two studies is more scientifically rigorous (meticulous, methodical, precise, careful)?

• Which one is a positivist study? Which one is an interpretive one?