



## **Chapter 6**

### **Phenomenology as research method**

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#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

A qualitative research method was chosen as research strategy for this study. Qualitative research methods include various methods of gathering and processing data, such as personal narration, biographies and non-verbal communication. The objective of this method is to describe social realities from the perspective of the subject and not that of the observer (Roos, 1992).

The guiding theme of phenomenology is going “back to the things themselves”. One interpretation of this expression involves focussing on the everyday world where people are experiencing various phenomena in actual situations. “*Phenomenology is the study of how things appear to the cognition*”. Human behaviour and experience form an intimate part of the individual’s everyday world and each and every experience of that person is part and parcel of his/her unique situation. The individual’s description of the phenomenon reflects his/her dialogue with the world/reality. Phenomenology as research method aims at recording this dialogue. Phenomenology also describes the phenomenon as it is revealed in all its facets and places no limitations on these descriptions. This method therefor describes the experience from the personal point of view of the individual in his/her “own” world (Roos, 1992).

According to Smit (1985, p 154) phenomenology involves two methods of gathering information, namely interviews and questionnaires. For the purpose of this study data is gathered by means of interviews. The data will then be analyzed phenomenologically in order to create an implementation model regarding *Opportunity Creation*.

## 6.2 HISTORY OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL THOUGHT

Edmund Husserl can be called the founder of phenomenology. It all started with the crisis in European science when it lost faith in itself and in its absolute meaningfulness. Originally, it was thought possible to clarify/solve the secrets of reality and to completely answer the questions pertaining to human nature (the soul) by means of strict scientific research. In this manner a culture of rationality was formed which – it was believed – would provide people with complete satisfaction in every way. This belief in the possibilities of science lost its strength early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Thevenaz and Edie, 1962; Theron, 1995).

Theron (1995) continues to say that in stead of increasing human understanding of reality, science made the world humans live in even more inconceivable. In spite of the increase in scientific knowledge regarding the world, the meaning and sense of human existence were retreating. Science unfortunately lost its ability to uncover the deepest questions that move human existence. It also lost its significance for human self-orientation with regard to the reality.

This crisis resulted from the impoverished conceptualization of 19<sup>th</sup> century European science. According to this impoverished concept, the status of “science” could only be maintained if the ultimate objective was to find empirical proof and verify facts. This positivistic view of science allowed no scope for scientific knowledge of ideal entities or common structures that was not gained through empirical induction, but by means of intuitive observation.

The general laws of positivistic science are laws according to which established facts are inferred by following a process of inductive reasoning. Only such laws have the validity of objective, scientific knowledge. All other general hypotheses are referred to as fantasy, speculation and/or subjective opinion. One of the problems created by positivistic science is that methodical requirements for natural sciences are mistakenly regarded as suitable for all sciences, including Philosophy and Psychology. Regarding the human soul and its subjective nature, the methods of inductive science are quite inadequate.

Only when Philosophy and Psychology are fully recognized, can:

- i. The fundamental concepts, assumptions and methodical pre-assumptions of positivistic science be illuminated and rectified;
- ii. The disintegration of these sciences be prevented by confirming their bond with the human soul that constantly seeks for knowledge; and
- iii. The original function of these sciences be restored, namely to contribute to the meaningfulness of people's lives.

Philosophy wants to uncover and indicate the absolute moments of human knowledge - those moments that are no longer relative to any other deep-founded moment. To be able to do this, philosophy must consolidate observations/experiences and mould them into a strict science. This method of obtaining results which are general, absolute, valid and exact, on which future generations can build without having to start all over again, was called Phenomenology by Husserl (Thevenaz and Edie, op cit).

### **6.3 BASIC CONCEPTS PERTAINING TO PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODS**

Theron (1995) defines the following basic concepts as characteristics of Phenomenology:

- ◆ The principle of evidence;
- ◆ The phenomenon concept;
- ◆ Reduction;
- ◆ Natural institution;
- ◆ Phenomenological reduction;
- ◆ The pure/clear cognition;
- ◆ Eidetic reduction;
- ◆ Acting intention;
- ◆ Noesis and Noema;
- ◆ Horizontality;
- ◆ The world as comprehensive horizon;
- ◆ Phenomenological ego as experience of life; and
- ◆ Real world.

### 6.3.1 The principle of evidence

Husserl finds the leading principle of the development of philosophy's own scientific method in the principle of evidence. Evidence (or compelling obviousness) concerns that experience through which a person's judgment of reality becomes meaningful knowledge. Evidence is the "source of law" or test of all human knowledge. The validity of experience as meaningful knowledge rests on the fact of evidence. Whenever philosophical findings are presented as meaningful knowledge, they must be the expression of compelling obviousness.

Evidence implies that an entity presents itself to the knowing cognition of man in such a way that it can be looked at in a direct and immediate manner and be regarded as meaningful. Evidence originates when a given, in its disclosure, is experienced as sense by the human soul, by means of an immediate intuition or observation. The correlation between intuition and the given in its disclosure, constitutes the experience called evidence, and is therefore a composite factor of evidence (Theron, 1995).

### 6.3.2 The Phenomenon concept

Husserl calls the given in its immediate disclosure the "phenomenon", derived from the Greek verb "*phainomai*" which means: to show visibility or to become visible. Phenomenon therefore suggests that which is disclosed, is shown, which is evident. The term Phenomenology was derived from this concept. Philosophy must broach the given or variable in its reality by means of Phenomenology.

According to Theron (1995) philosophy ought to become Phenomenology – an indication of that which is given and enlightened descriptions of the given. Phenomena are not necessarily described only in sensory terms. In that case, Phenomenology would amount to nothing more than empiricism. In that which can be observed by the senses, there is no element of need, no absolute and unquestionable moment on which human knowledge can be founded. But philosophy as the primary science is bent on the absolute founding of knowledge.

That philosophy can only perform this task as Phenomenology would mean that philosophy, before describing a phenomenon, first of all has to discover the phenomenon in its absolute disclosure, in its primitive evince, in its most original appearance. Once the most original appearance is detected, no more questions can be asked with regard to exploring the phenomenon.

Husserl's call to go "back to the phenomenon" has dual significance:

- i. First of all, the common methodological demand is put to philosophy – the demand of the greatest possible impartiality in approaching the philosophical problem. The philosopher should not allow sense to be influenced by miscellaneous inherited metaphysical interpretations, naive assumptions, self-formed conceptual constructions or technical theories. The phenomenon should be observed in its immediate self-disclosure even before this self-disclosure can be spoilt by a magnitude of later constructions.
- ii. Philosophy must also retreat to the first or the original, most fundamental contact with the known entity as it appears to the viewing soul of man. The philosopher must methodically exercise visibility in the area of primitive evidence of absolute givens and of first intuitions.

Phenomenological description thus entails the descriptions of that which is regarded as the commonly valid primitive evidence of intuitive sense (Rossouw, as quoted by Theron, 1995; Thevenaz and Edie, *op cit*). Phenomenology therefore only describes the primitive evidential meanings, which can be seen in the first intuitions.

### 6.3.3 Reduction

Reduction allows the researcher to gain access to the roots of human experience and the sphere of primitive evidences. It is primarily a purifying method by which the given is loosened from all obvious but unfounded and therefore fundamentally questionable evidences, with which the given is surrounded in its natural environment. By using the method of reduction, the researcher gains access to the

area of pure phenomena in their original disclosure; in other words that area where the gaining of absolute and unquestionable knowledge is possible. The phenomenological method is the method of reduction.

Primitive evidence forms the foundation for the possibility that natural evidences can still be present in the natural experiences and thoughts of man, but without its becoming thematic. The theme of the natural institution is still concrete individual things as meaningful givens outside or against humans, but never in the sense of the given in its original apodictical evidence. By means of reduction, Husserl wanted to consciously categorize evidence in order to obtain visibility of the phenomenon in its original disclosure.

#### **6.3.4 The natural institution**

Reduction must be applied to the natural institution of the experiences and thoughts concerning that that has been categorized. The natural institution has the subject-object split as foundation. In the natural institution “I” am aware of a world opposite to “me”. This is the basic evidence of the natural institution. “I” still exist with an objective conscious-transcendental world outside of “me”, a world that includes not only material things, but also spiritual entities such as values. All natural institutions that can be accepted by humans rest on this basic evidence.

These basic evidences of the natural institution, and all other evidences based thereupon, offer no fixed and unquestionable viewpoint for philosophy as the universal basic science. The basic evidence of the natural institution seems questionable in principle. There are doubts regarding the existence of a world behind “me”, because the principle of “not being” is possibly excluded. What can be questioned is not absolute evident. It cannot provide absolute, certain knowledge and therefore it is useless for the philosophical founding of human knowledge. The fundamental axiom of the natural institution is an assumption, a naive obviousness requiring critical founding (Theron, 1995).

### 6.3.5 Phenomenological reduction

In order to realize the above-mentioned founding, philosophy has to go back to the fundamental axiom of the natural institution. This can only be done by eliminating this fundamental axiom. This is the first step in the process of reduction. Husserl named this first step phenomenological reduction (process of elimination or suspension of everything that does not allow absolute knowledge). The existence of the whole real world that exists apart from humans in the natural institution is eliminated. Man places the real existing world “in brackets” and the fundamental axiom of the natural institution “out of action” (Bakker, 1964). This simply means that the researcher does not base any further philosophical examinations on this fundamental axiom. It is not used but suspended. Elimination therefore presents the denial of the judgment passed on the fundamental axiom.

This elimination must be radical. Not only the general fundamental axiom of the natural institution, but also all judgments on the real world based on this fundamental axiom, has to be eliminated. This also means that all trade scientific judgments have to be suspended. They are neither denied nor contradicted, but their validity is simply not regarded as a factor.

### 6.3.6 The pure/clear cognition

The clear cognition remains as a residue of the above-mentioned reduction – the clear cognition with its contents in its absolute and unquestionable own being. Husserl named this the “*ego cogito mea cogitata*”. The real world and everything it encompasses, as experienced in the natural institution, is eliminated in terms of its claim on existence-validity. As a given, the real world with everything it contains is indeed neither unquestionable nor irrefutable. However, the process of elimination revealed indicated givens that were irrefutable in their claim on existence-validity, namely the sphere of clear meanings or existence. The clear cognition and its contents finally remain meaningful to man.

The clear cognition with its experience of existence is the real area of examination that interests philosophy as phenomenologically founded science. The clear cognition contains an essential area that can be defined as absolute and that has therefore remained unfounded by an earlier reality, which makes it the ideal building ground for philosophical knowledge.

There are definite distinctions between the clear cognition with its “clear experience of sense” and the reality at which the natural institution is thematically aimed:

**First of all** there is a fundamental distinction in the way they are observed. The “clear experience of sense” is inherent and belongs to the same flow of experiences as the observation. Combined, the clear experience of sense and observation form an inseparable unit. The real aspect that the natural institution aims at, still transcends the observation thereof and does not belong to the same area of being as the observation.

**Secondly** there is a distinction in the way the observation of the different areas of sense is portrayed. The real aspect is portrayed as a series of consecutive profiles or silhouettes in which one intrinsic refers to the other and jointly build the observed image of the aspect. The “clear experience of sense”, on the contrary, involves observation in an absolute form. Identity immediately presents itself for observational purposes.

**Thirdly** the distinction is based on the fact that the observation of an experience is a reflexive action of the cognition, whilst this is not the case with the observation of aspects. The observation of the aspect is only possible if the aspect is physically present, while the observation of an experience can be freely concluded by the cognition, because the image at which the senses were aimed leaves a lasting impression on the cognition.

In considering the nature of the clear cognition and its experiences, Husserl comes to the conclusion that every lasting experience of sense necessarily guarantees the existence of the object or theme. In the conscious experience of sense, which is reflectively visible via phenomenological reduction, the given is absolute and its

fundamental being cannot be ignored. The non-existence of a conscious experience as a given is fundamentally inconceivable. Conscious experiences therefore entail information that is absolute and can thus be seen as phenomena. The cognition as the actual working area of phenomenological philosophy is the residue of phenomenological reduction (Theron, 1995).

### 6.3.7 Eidetic reduction

Phenomenological reduction opens up an area of absolute information, namely that of the clear cognition with its experiences of sense. To phenomenological philosophy, finding and indicating the working area does not yet amount to phenomenological knowledge. In order to convert the possibility of absolute knowledge, a second reduction is necessary – the eidetic reduction (Bakker, *op cit*).

Clear experiences entail concrete, individual information and form a continuing flow that can bring aspects to the cognition in a reflective manner. This is not yet a science, only a conscious experience of it. The term scientific knowledge only gives an idea of that which is independent of the concrete-individual and the coincidental. This knowledge is only gained as soon as a fixed structure, an element essential to the flow of coincidental information, is found.

This knowledge reaches man through eidetic reduction. Eidetic reduction involves eliminating each coincidental, particular moment from a conscious experience of sense in order to consider the general, valid and necessary existence thereof. This existence finds direct portrayal in the experience as a clear given and can be observed immediately. Eidetic reduction wants to view this existence. It wants to convert the reflexive observation or intuition regarding the coincidental individual experience into a philosophically unquestionable intuition of the essential general validity of its being. What is observed in this manner, must be spoken about.

Viewing this existence is only possible on the basis of a radical suspension of all theories, traditional points of view and interpretations as well as naive assumptions

based on the natural institution. Describing the existence of aspects, however, is endless and complex, as a result of the complex character of the conscious experience of sense (Theron, 1995).

### 6.3.8 Acting intention

The viewing of the existence of the clear cognition as such reveals its fundamental structure (“*ego cogito*”). Even though the existence of the real world (at which the natural institution is aimed) is eliminated, it cannot be wiped out without leaving traces in the clear cognition. The cognition of the real world with everything it implies, such as aspects and values, is an absolute given in the area of the clear cognition. And so, even though the cognition-transcendent reality is in fact eliminated, the clear cognition still retains its bond with the cognition-transcendent world.

The cognition-transcendent reality of natural knowledge returns to the unit of meaning and a particular structure of the cognition emerges. Cognition still entails “being conscious of...” and retains its intended focus on something other than the cognition, namely the cognition-transcendent. Cognition is never locked in itself, never the clear cognition from itself. Each shift from openness towards a cognition-transcendent given, belongs to the structure of the clear cognition and its enduring contents, and must therefore never be ignored in the analysis of the clear cognition (Theron, 1995).

Husserl calls this structure of conscious life “acting intention”. Intention implies the existence of the cognition. The cognition is never a thing apart, but retains its intended focus on a cognition-transcendent reality. Cognition is never empty and without intent or meaning. Thus it is never without content or objects that are intended units of meaning. Acting intention is a dynamic activity in which the cognition is actively involved. The cognition is not only structured intentionally, but it also functions intentionally. Therefore it is called acting intention.

The meaningfulness of all the experiences regarding existing aspects rests upon the acting intention, which characterizes conscious living. The content of experiences is rendered meaningful through the intentional functioning of the cognition. Acting intention is a sense-giving activity.

The idea that experiences are “rendered meaningful” does not imply that meaningless existences are injected with sense by the intentionally acting cognition. As the acting intention, the cognition itself is no source of deductive meanings and therefore it is not aimed at the cognition-transcendent existence. In fact, the cognition is aimed at what is cognition-transcendent. Cognition is intentional and in this intentional existence, sense originates. Sense implies sense of a given in its disclosure, but without acting intention there is no given disclosing itself.

Acting intention lies at the root of experience; it involves the events within which the first contact between known and unknown is established. It can also be described as the events in which primitive evidence originates, and in which the given originally appears as a phenomenon after which it is immediately viewed in terms of a first intuition. The acting intention is the source of primitive evidence, and therefore it constitutes the actual area of a phenomenological examination.

Phenomenological knowledge, namely the knowledge of existence in its absolute disclosure, can therefore be defined as the knowledge of the viewing of existence constituted as sense-units in the acting intention.

### 6.3.9 Noesis and Noema

The phenomenological reduction reveals the acting intention as the original dimension of knowledge (a radical point of departure of philosophy as the founding science). When the acting intention is closely investigated, there are two clear distinctions:

- i. Firstly, the intended focus or alignment is seen as an act which Husserl calls the noetic aspect of conscious experience – shortly known as **noesis**;

- ii. Secondly there is the intended given – that onto which the intention is projected and which enters the cognition in the intention. Husserl calls this the noematic aspect of the conscious experience – shortly known as **noema**.

Noesis and noema are firmly linked. One pre-supposes the other. This correlation characterizes all conscious experiences, whatever their nature or content. The correlation constitutes sense and meaning. Therefore, in order to understand the existing sense of an aspect, both the noetic aspect (act of intent, spiritual institution, meaning) and the noematic aspect (intended, categorized, meaningful) must be analyzed.

In terms of phenomenological reduction, the noetic aspect is seen as the unveiling of the area of conscious experiences, of conscious acts of intent. Seen in terms of noema, phenomenological reduction provides access to the given in its absolute disclosure; access to the genuine phenomenon. Phenomenological reduction wants to find an answer to the question “What is the existing sense of...?”. In order to answer this question, the conscious experience in viewing existence, should be analyzed in terms of both its noetic as noematic aspects (Rossouw, as quoted by Theron, 1995).

#### **6.3.10 Horizontality**

Apart from noesis and noema, the phenomenological description is characterized by a further structure of the acting intention - the horizontal structure of conscious experience.

With reduction applied to the area of conscious experience, it is evident that a single given or phenomenon can never appear to observation or intuition as a separate, isolated entity. The given appears against a horizon or background filled with numerous other givens contributing to the conscious experience of the given involved – the theme of the specific experience. The experience concerns more than just an isolated given or issue. The issue remains entangled in a complex field of experience to which it is structurally bound. It also refers to other issues that

present themselves for contemplation. These referrals are important regarding the experience of the issue itself. They belong to the internal structure of the issue and are not conjured up through association and/or reasoning.

In terms of Noesis, this structure of experience implies that the intuition regarding a given, still moves within a comprehensive field of vision where more is experienced than that at which the contemplation is thematically aimed. This complexity concerning the field of experience as referral cohesion of multiple givens, corresponds to the complexity of the structure of the intuition (Theron, 1995).

Due to the horizon-structure of the experience of man, the sense or meaning originating from the original encounter between the given and the viewing soul can never be regarded as isolated. It remains entangled in a complex totality of close-by or further-off meanings to which it refers or which it implies.

The acting intention, involving the construction of sense, retains the structure of horizontality hinder. This means that every conscious, meaningful act forms the center of perspective around which a horizon or field of vision unfolds. This is where the theme or intentional object of the specific act of meaning is situated. Still, various objects are involved in the act of meaning, since it is within this context of totality that the object requires a specific sense.

The conscious experience of a meaningful given thus implies the conscious experience of those givens which fall within the specific given's horizon of experience. These implications or referrals are not necessarily categorized by the cognition, but may be actualized in principle (Theron, 1995).

Phenomenological research aims at uncovering the existence of a pure phenomenon and broaching it as the phenomenon clearly testifies. Therefore it is necessary to explore the horizon within which a similar phenomenon would present itself for observation.

Philosophical knowledge is not merely the immediate and direct gaining of knowledge by intuition. It is scientific knowledge –gained by means of a strict

methodical investigation involving primary intuitions regarding absolute givens, which form the foundation of man's knowledge. This process leading to the absolute disclosure of a phenomenon is a long and wearisome route to follow. While actualizing the further possibilities of contemplation, new horizons of experience can unfold. Amongst other things, phenomenological research involves a deeper infiltration of the complicated intertwined structure of the horizon-constituting acting intention. Phenomenological research aims at uncovering the complex structure of underlying horizons of experience in order to find the possibility of all human knowledge (Bakker, 1964).

### **6.3.11 The world as comprehensive horizon**

Every conscious experience is still, in noetic terms, the center of a horizon within which the intended noema only emerges in the sense of definite existence. Every intended noema within this horizon refers to other noemata that is co-intended. Every co-intended noema, in turn, refers to a specific, correlating act of meaning. This means that every co-intended noema refers to other horizons of experience, each constituting the sense of the noema involved. Here human experience reveals the complex structure of underlying intertwined fields of vision. When the researcher reflectively penetrates this intertwined totality he/she will discover the comprehensive total horizon of experience called "world", which is co-intended in every act of meaning.

A prerequisite for fulfilling the phenomenological task regarding specific phenomena entails enlightening the reality of all conscious experiences. The world is not an unrealizable, never-ending idea, but a structure of conscious experiences that allows the experience of an entity as a meaningful given. The world constitutes the comprehensive field of vision within which everything that can be referred to as "it is" reveals itself as a given, to be viewed by the intentional cognition. This means that man within the world as the universal horizon of experience has discovered the most original given within which all possible phenomena are founded.

### 6.3.12 Phenomenological ego as experience of life

The world is seen as the universal horizon of all experiences. The horizon-like structure of the world suggests its involvement in a perspective center of which it cannot be separated. As universal horizon, the world reveals visibility encompassing the *ego cogito* (clear cognition) as acting intention. The world as the comprehensive horizon and *ego cogito* as the transcendent unit of all possible experiences, are inseparable. The world in its original existence still belongs to “me”. This means that all worldly entities of which it can meaningfully be said, “it is”, still are entities-for-“me”. The worldly entities structurally refer to the potentials of the ego to understand them as entities in their sense of existence. “Me” and “world” are not two separate entities, but rather fundamentally and originally involved in one another in terms of experience. Knowledge does not find its ground in strangeness between “world” and “me”, but in the fundamental familiarity of the “world” to “me”. It is only on the basis of this familiarity that all methods of experience are possible.

The phenomenological reduction leaves as its residue, the clear cognition with its experiences – a dynamic, acting intention. This basic structure of the acting intention seems to be “world experiencing life” (Rossouw, as quoted by Theron, 1995).

### 6.3.13 Real world

The world in its original existence as “own” world is the world of the immediate, lived experiences. It is the world that proclaims visibility during daily contact with entities in their worldly, meaningful existence. This is the world of the integral, concrete experience of “here” and “now” in which the observation of “me” is willingly and actively found in the midst of a richly shaded and comprehensive field of meanings.

## 6.4 PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is the plan according to which information is gathered. The phenomenological method does not see individuals as organisms reacting to impulses, but as entities taking a stand with regard to experiences from their specific real world. It believes that every human being experiences his/her living world in his/her own and unrepeatable manner and is affected by it in a unique manner as well (Roos, 1992). The research process entails the following aspects (Theron, 1995):

- ◆ Problem statement;
- ◆ Forming of hypotheses;
- ◆ Choice of sample;
- ◆ Gathering of information (data); and
- ◆ Analysis of data.

### 6.4.1 Problem statement

The research itself starts off with a problem statement consisting of questions requiring answers. The problem statement therefore provides the motivation for the investigation and identification of reality. The method is already implied by the problem statement, which can lead to a thinking pattern and attitude without which research cannot claim scientific results. The characteristics of unscientific pursuit include general discussion, shallow curiosity, ambiguity, negativity, thought-shyness and naive judgment. These unscientific actions lead to unsound research activities and to coincidental and shallow comments accompanying each research step (Jacobs, in Landman, Bondesio, Coetzee and Jacobs, 1987, pp 94-156).

Scientific research requires that the researcher ask certain relevant questions regarding the research design. The following criteria ought to be applied to a problem statement study:

i. *“Come forward”-criteria*

Does the problem statement succeed in clearly revealing the true problem in terms of the research design?

ii. *Meaningful questions-criteria*

Are the questions searching and relevant?

iii. *Directive criteria*

Should any questions be added in order to give direction to the research project?

If the problem statement study should point out any questions which still have to be asked, or reveal questions of poor quality, the researcher has to make a gap analysis where involving the following two aspects:

- i. Identifying the limitations (gaps) of the current problem statement; and
- ii. Accentuating gap identification, which requires a table of essence describing the important, indispensable characteristics.

#### **6.4.1.1 Problem statement drawn up for this study**

The problem statement for this study concerns the implementation of the career planning system called *Opportunity Creation* (see Chapter 4) within a delayed structure. Such an implementation entails a huge cultural change as well as a change in the thought processes of employees – from the traditional career ladder approach to a career vision, involving an unexpected amount of self-development. The success of the implementation plan is crucial to the functionality of the model.

#### **6.4.2 Formulating a hypothesis**

Formulating a hypothesis involves formulating meaningful potential answers to the problem. This entails rewriting the problem statement in the format of a hypothesis. This implies that the variables and the possible links between the problem statement and the hypothesis should be clear. A hypothesis must be presented in an operational format. Phenomenological thought processes (see Analysis of data –

point 6.6) could be used when forming a relevant hypothesis (Landman, as quoted by Theron, 1995).

#### **6.4.2.1 Hypothesis for the purpose of this study**

The hypothesis for the purpose of this study boils down to the following:

***A phenomenological analysis of a career planning system within a delayed organizational structure will result in the facilitation of an implementation strategy designed specifically for the Opportunity Creation program, which will ensure commitment of those eventually involved in the program.***

#### **6.4.3 Choice of sample**

Five criteria are applicable to the choice of a sample (Stones, in Kruger, 1988, pp 141-156):

- i. The sample must have experience of the phenomenon being researched;
- ii. The sample has to be able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions fluently and express them verbally;
- iii. The sample must share the researcher's home language in order to ensure that no finer nuances are lost;
- iv. They must be prepared to be open and to put their information on record; and
- v. They have to be naive as far as psychological theories are concerned.

#### **6.4.3.1 The sample for the purpose of this study**

The choice of the sample for this study was done on the basis of the following criteria:

- i. The sample has to be exposed to the delayed structure of the organization and therefore also to the problems it creates concerning career planning within the organization;
- ii. The sample has to be exposed to the model of *Opportunity Creation* in order to understand its principles and processes;
- iii. The sample has to be able to communicate fluently in English, seeing that the research is done in English (It is to be noted that not all the people taken up in the sample are English speaking, some of them could not express themselves in English and their input was translated from Afrikaans);
- iv. The sample has to be representative of both the staff and line functions within the organization; and
- v. The sample must not hesitate to share their opinions and observations.

#### **6.4.4 Gathering of information (data)**

Landman and Jacobs (in Landman et al., 1987, pp 159-194) identify six methods that can be used to gather the necessary information or data:

- ◆ Autobiographic text;
- ◆ Critical Incident technique;
- ◆ Case studies;
- ◆ Content analyses;
- ◆ *Ex post facto* research; and
- ◆ Research interviews.

#### 6.4.4.1 *Autobiographic text*

Autobiographies are seen as a form of situational analysis; in other words, biographical moments recorded by a specific (unique) individual. The personal history of the specific person (individual) is researched in order to understand the acts (situations) in terms of the significance they have for the individual. This requires a clear and precise description of the relevant experience accompanied by meaningful interpretation and evaluation, as a result of an in-depth meeting between the researcher and the individual. The following three-step method can be used:

*i. Story telling*

The individual is asked to write about a specific aspect of his/her experience. This essay must contain the story of his/her most significant experience with regard to a certain aspect of reality. This results in an autobiographic text.

*ii. Analysis of existence*

The individual's impression of reality/existence is gathered from underlying key words in the autobiographical text. Where no key words can be identified, thoughts must be reduced to one word or a combination of words, and this is written down together with a short description or definition.

*iii. Critical reminder instructions*

The autobiographic text is subsequently subjected to a critical reminder analysis. The objective of the critical reminder instructions is to sharpen the cognitive and affective insights of the chosen individual and to unveil that which is essential.

i. The individual is required to explain why he/she emphasized certain aspects of an experience and concealed others;

ii. The individual must take possible distortions into consideration;

- iii. The individual must give an indication of possible contradictions between detail and generalization in the text;
- iv. The individual must compare all his/her stories with a view to finding parallels; and
- v. Utilizing the steps pertaining to phenomenological thinking (see Data analysis, point 6.6) can refine the critical reminders.

#### **6.4.4.2 Critical incident technique**

The critical incident technique is a method for studying behaviour and entails the observation of natural or predominantly natural situations. Conclusions regarding individuals or populations are made. The information gathered (through observations) is subjected to a procedure called monadic analysis. Monadic analysis focuses on people and entails the close observation of people in order to identify critical factors that influence their lives. Landman and Jacobs (*op cit*) are of the opinion that the independence of observers and reviewers enhances objectivity.

#### **6.4.4.3 Case studies as research method**

Landman and Jacobs, as quoted by Theron (1995), see case studies as the interpretation and discussion of a case based on the report on the case. The researcher normally compiles the report. Furthermore, it is customary that he suggests that only people directly involved in a research project may use these case reports to write case studies. Case studies are defined as “.....an *in-depth study (usually longitudinal) of one case (or a few cases) in contrast to a more superficial cross-sectional study of a larger sample; usually, but not always, an observational study*”.

The following five characteristics of case studies can be emphasized:

- ◆ A case study is a realistic representation of a situation or event;
- ◆ It corresponds to inter-human events and a broader social context;
- ◆ It rests upon an acknowledgement of the significance of the special and unique;
- ◆ It presents a high level of validity and reliability; and
- ◆ It emphasizes growth and changes, which take place with time.

The significance of case studies is dependent on verification and cumulation. Verification entails a mutual, critical discussion of proof in order to realize the objective of critical inter-subjectivity. Cumulation, on the other hand, rests upon retrospective generalizations as rearranged experiences. The gathering of information takes place by means of documents such as:

- ◆ Annual reports,
- ◆ Statements on points;
- ◆ Edlab charts;
- ◆ Circulars;
- ◆ Year books;
- ◆ Brochures;
- ◆ Interviews; and
- ◆ Observations.

#### **6.4.4.4 Content analysis**

This refers to the analysis of documents in terms of the frequency with which certain terms, ideas, feelings and personal references are used. Content analysis can be defined as “...a method of analyzing documents by using a quantitative coding-scheme; the method attempts to be objective and systematic”. It entails a research technique involving the objective, systematic, quantitative description of the disclosed content of communication in order to undertake a systematic, macroscopic analysis of recorded information. The content of speeches, letters, essays, journals, documents, slogans, propaganda, films, music, interviews and questionnaires can be used in content analysis. Landman and Jacobs (op cit)

suggest the following procedure with regard to phenomenological content analysis:

- i. Explanation of objectives – the objective of the analysis suggests relevant categories;
- ii. Development of hypotheses;
- iii. Choosing of sample – which examples (concerning content) must be obtained and how? For example: which publications are to be used - The Sunday Times, every third Sunday? The content that is going to be analyzed should also be specified: for example, the editorials;
- iv. Category analysis – the components of the selected categories are determined, for example direction, standard, characteristics, value-judgments, methods and role players; and
- v. Quantifying – determining the frequency of certain units, for example words, themes, items, characters, measures regarding time and space, sentences and paragraphs.

#### **6.4.4.5 *Ex post facto* research**

*Ex post facto* research can be used as an indirect way of studying the cause-and-effect relation in order to determine the extent to which the effect of phenomena sheds light on the causing factors. Since the phenomenon under observation has already occurred, only the progress and effects of the phenomenon can be examined.

*Ex post facto* research can be defined as "...research in which the independent variable(s) has (have) already occurred and in which the research starts with the observation of a dependent variable or variables. The researcher then studies the independent variable(s) in retrospect for their possible relations to, and effects

on the dependent variable” (Kerlinger, 1973). Two or more groups are compared regarding the independent variable.

According to Landman and Jacobs (*op cit*), the following components of an *ex post facto* research can be considered:

- i. Hypotheses are put forward;
- ii. Two groups are formed on the basis of differences regarding an independent variable (specific existing condition);
- iii. Groups are defined in operational terms, by describing which characteristics and conditions indicate a specific variable; and
- iv. Independent variables that may influence the dependent variable are identified.

The independent variable is a characteristic or specific condition that already exists and cannot be manipulated. The two paired-off groups, however, are equalized regarding this variable in order to determine the relation between the opposite characteristic and the dependent variable.

#### **6.4.4.6 The research interview**

During the interview (a method of gathering data) it is important to ensure rapport between the researcher and the person taken from the sample. The researcher ought to create an atmosphere in which the person can feel relaxed and in which confidentiality and trustworthiness are guaranteed.

During this session, the person taken from the sample may complete a “Personal Data Form” so that his/her personal information is on record. If no personal identification is asked for, it may lead to the person’s communicating more freely about his/her real feelings.

*i. Designing the interview*

Stones (in Kruger, 1988, pp 141-156) recommends that the research interview consists of open-ended questions and that the interview will be conducted in an informal, non-directive manner. The researcher should use an interview schedule in order to obtain standardized, comparable information from everyone in the sample. The researcher should try not to influence the people in the sample and leading questions should be avoided. The people in the sample may afterwards be asked to complete an evaluation.

*ii. Recording the interview*

The researcher can either write down the interview, or record it on tape. Writing it down will slow down the interview and may cause stress with the sample. The procedures pertaining to the interview, as well as the analysis, may be tested on a preliminary group. After having recorded the interview, it can be analyzed phenomenologically (see Analysis of data – point 6.5).

**6.4.4.7 Data-gathering technique used for the purpose of this study**

A standardized interview schedule (see Appendix B) is used in order to gather the data. The interview is recorded on tape, transcribed and then analyzed phenomenologically. Each member of the sample also completes a "Personal Data Form" (see Appendix C).

**6.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The phenomenological analysis of data aims at understanding which connotations the individual, in his/her real world, attaches to the researched phenomenon. Various steps in the process of analyzing data can be identified.

Georgio (1983, pp 10-19) and Theron (1995) mention four essential steps, namely:

*Step 1: Sense of the whole/Phenomenological reduction*

A researcher is to read the entire description in order to get a general sense of the whole statement. It involves nothing more than simply reading the text, and the ability to understand the language of the describer. The general sense attained by the researcher is not interrogated or made explicit in any way. Primarily, it serves as a basis for the next step.

*Step 2: Discrimination of "meaning units"*

Once sense of the whole has been grasped, the researcher goes back to the beginning and reads through the text once more with the specific aim of identifying "meaning units" from a psychological perspective, the researched phenomenon in mind. Since the whole text cannot be analyzed at once, it has to be broken down into manageable units (with psychological criteria kept in mind). Thus, the "meaning units" that emerge as a consequence of the analysis is spontaneously perceived discriminations made with regard to the subject's descriptions. This results in phenomenological reduction – a purifying process where the given is disentangled from all obvious, unfounded, ambiguous, naive formed prejudice and therefore principally questionable evidence.

*Step 3: Transformation of Expression into Psychological language/Eidetic reduction*

Once "meaning units" have been delineated, the researcher considers all the "meaning units" and expresses the psychological insight they embody more directly. This particularly concerns those "meaning units" most revelatory of the phenomenon under consideration. The phenomenological reduction that discloses reflective experiences of meaning/sense provides access to an area of absolute information, namely the clear cognition with its meaningful experiences. Eidetic reduction wants to change the reflective observation or intuition concerned with the co-incident, individual experience into a philosophical intuition concerned with the necessary, predominantly valid essence thereof. It involves the following three steps:

- a) Determining where it appears;
- b) Determining similarities and differences by using a table of essence; and
- c) Verifying the essence by means of an integrated table of essence.

*Step 4: Synthesis of transformed “meaning units”/Transcendent reduction*

Finally, the researcher synthesizes all the transformed “meaning units” into a consistent statement regarding the subject’s experience. This is usually referred to as the structure of the experience. The researcher has to integrate the insights contained in the transformed “meaning units”. The criterion would be that the general description should encompass all the connotations embodied in the transformed “meaning units”. The structure is then communicated to other researchers for the purposes of confirmation or criticism. Every conscious experience is still on its noetic side the perspective center point of a horizon, within which the attended noema becomes visible in its meaning. The world is a structure of man’s conscious experiences that makes the experience of meaning possible. The world is thus given as a universal horizon of all man’s experiences.

In conclusion, the phenomenological steps can be said to boil down to the following: the researcher must reflect the protocol in order to identify natural “meaning units”. These units are transformed into formal psychological language. The different steps in the process of analysis form “partly a set of ordered abstractions describing the complicated mental process that the phenomenological scientists experience as a natural totality” (Van Kaam, as quoted by Theron, 1995).

## 6.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions are viewed by Coetzee (in Landman *et al*, 1987, pp 61-92) as activities of the mind aimed at concluding an effect from a known circumstance or fact. Familiarity with circumstances reflects knowledge gained by the use of research procedures. When drawing conclusions, the researcher has to ensure that his/her hypotheses have been confirmed and consider the implications of confirming them or not.

By using a research procedure specific results are obtained – from which the researcher can draw certain conclusions. Recommendations imply that a specific manner of behaviour should unquestionably be preferable. This is advice that is given on the basis of a specific experience. Regarding conclusions and recommendations, the researcher can

draw up a table of essence in order to ensure that his argument is logically sound and scientifically founded. An example of the steps involved in such a table of essence is found in table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Table of essence: Argument analysis.**

Step	Description
1	Are reasons given for a specific allegation (is the allegation logically sound and true to reality?)
2	Emphasize the reasons and conclusions in order to highlight the structure of the argument.
3	If necessary, re-formulate the argument in neutral, understandable terms.
4	If necessary, re-formulate the argument in more straightforward, non-contradictive terms – be careful to avoid ambiguity.
5	Decide on the type of argument: Inductive - go to step 6 Deductive - go to step 9
6	Is there an adequate amount of data available, which has been carefully verified? If yes - go to step 7 If no - try to re-formulate
7	Determine validity of argument by using a form-diagram: If diagram is valid - go to step 9 If diagram is invalid - try to re-formulate
8	Have all relevant facts, including alternatives, been fully considered? If no - consider the facts If yes - go to step 9
9	Are all the premises sound? (The different premises of the argument must be thoroughly controlled) If yes - a good argument

(Source: Theron, 1995)

## 6.7 SUMMARY

The protocol has created an awareness of the uniqueness of the phenomenological research. The researcher must be aware of the demands of phenomenological research and must have the knowledge and skills to implement the method. Phenomenological requirements render experiences meaningful by acts which verify phenomena. These verifying acts can be utilized in each step of the research program.

The research design used for the purposes of this study, is a qualitative research design, namely Phenomenology. It was chosen as research method because of the influence exerted on people by the researched phenomenon, namely the implementation of a model on career planning within a delayed organizational structure – also known as *Opportunity Creation*.