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## Fusing Approaches in Educational Research: Data Collection and Data Analysis in Phenomenological Research

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### Abstract

One of the aims of human sciences seeks to understand the essences and meanings of human experiences by focusing on philosophical, epistemological, methodological, and linguistic principles through transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics, two philosophies and research methodologies central to qualitative research. Therefore, fusing approaches provides a space where both epistemology and methodology within both traditions can merge to yield meaning and understanding, and at the same time, offer a new approach to dealing with data collection and data analysis without neglecting or distorting original leading concepts. Fusing approaches comes into being as the merging of overlapping and deferring epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical assumptions that a researcher brings into play and actually puts into practice sustaining a purposeful and explicit sense of neutrality to assure methodological trustworthiness. Moved by my sensitivity to lived experience, in this paper, I explicate in a step-by-step fashion the combination of Moustakas' modification of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology in data collection and analysis. In fusing approaches, I encourage researchers to generate knowledge and show understanding emanated from both transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics sustaining a deep sense of neutrality, co-creation, thoughtfulness, and rigor.

### Keywords

fusion, tension, transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, intentionality, bracketing, pre-understandings, intuition, neutrality, thoughtfulness

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One of the aims of human sciences seeks to understand the essences and meanings of human experiences by focusing on philosophical, epistemological, methodological, and linguistic principles through transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics, two philosophies and research methodologies central to qualitative research. Therefore, fusing approaches provides a space where both epistemology and methodology within both traditions can merge to yield meaning and understanding, and at the same time, offer a new approach to dealing with data collection and data analysis without neglecting or distorting original leading concepts. Fusing approaches comes into being as the merging of overlapping and deferring epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical assumptions that a researcher brings into play and actually puts into practice sustaining a purposeful and explicit sense of neutrality to assure methodological trustworthiness. Moved by my sensitivity to lived experience, in this paper, I explicate in a step-by-step fashion the combination of Moustakas' modification of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology in data collection and analysis. In fusing approaches, I encourage researchers to generate knowledge and show understanding emanated from both transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics sustaining a deep sense of neutrality, co-creation, thoughtfulness, and rigor.

*Keywords:* fusion, tension, transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology, intentionality, bracketing, pre-understandings, intuition, neutrality, thoughtfulness

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As a researcher, I have always been sensitive to the lived experience, the primary focus of phenomenology. Although I have been committed to this qualitative research design for more than 10 years, I still continue to live in the tensions of knowing the world and being in the world (Heidegger, 1996; Husserl, 1970). In other words, I realized that I have to continue to delve into the experience of knowing and conducting phenomenological research. To that end, I decided to find a way to provide a space where both epistemology and methodology could fuse to yield meaning and understanding, while at the same time, offer a new approach to dealing with data collection and data analysis without neglecting or distorting original leading concepts such as, intentionality, bracketing, pre-understandings, thoughtfulness, and Seidman's (2006) model of phenomenological interviewing (Fleming et al., 2003; Freeman & Vagle, 2013; Vagle et al., 2020).

The idea of fusing approaches, that is, transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics, particularly for data collection and analysis emanated from my pervasive interest in qualitative research methodology and the words of one of the committee members for my dissertation research. I always remember her words, "I think you should really consider developing an article focused solely on the data collection and analysis technique you used . .

. It is unique and merits a publication” (S. Orshan, personal communication, April 8, 2013). Since then, I see data collection and analysis as the fusion of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Ms. Orshan’s words touched my phenomenological bones and moved “my own direct perceptions, observations and intuitions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41). Also, I felt invited to explicate “the meanings of human phenomena . . . and [understand] the lived structures of meanings (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4). In sum, I understood that showing how epistemological and methodological principles entangled would not only produce a different method for collecting and analyzing phenomenological data but also provide a personal and inner professional relief, a deep satisfaction, and a genuine commitment to the phenomenological traditions’ writers, such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Clark Moustakas, Max Van Manen, Paul Colaizzi, Adrian Van Kaam, and Amedeo Giorgi, to mention but a few.

Fusing approaches comes into being as the merging of overlapping and differing epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical assumptions that a researcher brings into play and actually puts into practice. In doing so, the researcher sustains a purposeful and explicit sense of neutrality in dealing with these premises to assure methodological trustworthiness. The core idea behind the fusion is that as you use it, you feel immersed in a dialectical conversation about how to bring into light two philosophies and two ways of doing phenomenological research—transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics. Fusing approaches also means becoming a knower and an interpreter who is aware of the core principles of both transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics while attending to and wrestling with two interdependent philosophies and methodologies.

In fusing approaches, I avowedly embrace key concepts of the phenomenological historical past (i.e., lifeworld, being-in-the-world, description, and interpretation). Nevertheless, I materialize my own experienced understanding and phenomenological empowerment of two research processes. What makes the fusion important is that it maintains the phenomenological and hermeneutic debate alive by opening up a space for new methodological possibilities, mainly at the data collection and data analysis levels. In addition, it allows for differentiation between two current philosophies and research methodologies, and development of a deeper understanding and articulation of essential concepts in research practice. My purpose is to provide the reader with practice-based concepts as tools for collecting and analyzing phenomenological data. Articulating these concepts implies using intuition as a source of knowledge and insights of human experience, participant-based feedback, description, interpretation, language, and context within a rigorous sense of neutrality (Dowling, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990).

My fusion of approaches may be of major significance for both novice and experienced researchers interested in exploring human-science-related issues using phenomenology and hermeneutics as the primary research tools. What I have learned about the fusion of approaches so far is that epistemological neutrality can ensure credibility of qualitative research. In this regard, qualitative researchers in general and phenomenological investigators in particular, can benefit from this perspective because of the value of the dialectical entanglement as an infinite source of knowledge and methodological alternatives in different fields. In education, for example, the fusion can lead to a comprehensive knowledge of central stakeholders, particularly those connected with foreign language curriculum implementation at the various educational levels. Thus, the fusion contributes knowledge that is practically relevant to and useful for foreign language education. The uniqueness I have added is the firm appropriation of the tradition, not as a retelling but as the fresh sum and understanding of common epistemological and methodological ingredients. Thus, the employment of a specific method for data collection and the use of first-cycle coding methods and selective coding as a necessary part of the reduction process in my approach to analyzing phenomenological data.

This article explicates in a step-by-step fashion my combination of Moustakas' modification of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology. It is my hope that the fusion of approaches will translate into a practical research alternative for novice and experienced researchers, and undergraduate and graduate students. To help them toward that end, I have provided examples from my doctoral research that will introduce them to the technicalities of the proposed approach and will help in exploring a new terrain.

### **The Fusion Perspective**

This section presents an approach to organizing and analyzing phenomenological data that emanated from my fusion of methods of analysis, which combines Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology. Generally speaking, I put the connectedness between the two approaches into action by

- Linking description to interpretation through a continual reflection process mediated by a reflective diary,
- Using intuition as the basis for the understanding of the nature or essence of the research participants' lived experience,
- Making interpretation meaningful by incorporating the researcher's preunderstandings and co-creations, but maintaining a sense of epistemological neutrality, and
- Validating description and interpretation by using participant feedback.

### **Linking Description to Interpretation**

In my fusion of approaches, description and interpretation are simultaneous processes. This means that, as a dialectical continuum, the two processes entangle to bring to light both the knowledge of the phenomenon under study and the meaning of this knowledge for the researcher and the research participants (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). To this end, I use the researcher's diary as a tool for deep and continual reflection, review, and monitoring of the progression of the research process during data collection and data analysis (Aguas, 2020; Wall et al., 2004). This technical exercise makes the phenomenological transcendental and hermeneutic at the same time. Indeed, collecting and analyzing phenomenological data goes beyond my understanding of the participants' lived experiences (essences) –it provides access to my forestructure of understanding and that of the study participants (the phenomenon lived in context).

### **Using Intuition as the Primary Source of knowledge**

The concept of intuition also applies to my fusion of approaches. As the primary source of generating knowledge of human experiences, intuition serves to activate the wholeness of the participants' lived experiences, including their particular perceptions evoked in consciousness and reflected as diverse emotional states (Moustakas, 1994). In this approach to phenomenological data collection and analysis, I intend to develop essential insights from the participants' descriptions of whatever they perceive, sense, and know in their experience an awareness of a particular phenomenon. The key argument here is that the fusion of approaches advocates for the prevalence of the phenomenological precept "To the things themselves" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26).

## **Making Interpretation Meaningful**

Interpretation in the fusion of approaches is meaningful because I incorporate my preunderstandings and co-creations into the interpretation of the phenomenon under study. Pre-understandings are the diverse individuals' meanings and organizational structures, which permit them to function in the world. Co-creations refer to the researcher's insights derived from his or her interaction with the research participants during the data collection process and analysis. Despite the researcher's contribution to the meaningfulness of interpretation, I sustain a sense of epistemological neutrality to ensure the validity, reliability, and authenticity of the data collection process and the research findings. In essence, my stance is that of an interested and disinterested researcher, that is, I am able to know and understand from my own perspective and, at the same time, I can obtain the perspectives of the study participants devoid of contextual values and particular biases. Epistemological neutrality is the researcher's ability to acknowledge, maintain, and preserve the research participants' original perceptions (i.e., narratives) of the phenomenon under study. In this regard, as a phenomenological researcher, I make sure my theoretical orientation is free from "a biasing effect on the narratives of the participants" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 730). In addition, I strive to ensure neutrality preventing bias from creeping in through data collection and data analysis. Thus, I believe that rich description and meaningful interpretation requires honesty, depth, and objectivity to minimize my own bias and that of the research participants.

## **Validating Description and Interpretation**

To make sure that the findings are valid, reliable, and authentic, I return to the research participants in single or multiple interview sessions about the findings. Also, I incorporate emergent data from these interactions into the final results of the project. In this regard, I try to be consistent with the dialectical, linguistic, and continual connectedness of description and interpretation processes.

## **A Rationale for the Fusion**

From the reading of specialized literature on both phenomenology and hermeneutics, I have particularly learned three core research principles. First, seminal philosophical, epistemological, methodological, and rhetorical assumptions should be sustained due to their validity and recognition within the research community. Therefore, in my approach, I intend to expand the limits of the phenomenological research design instead of deviating phenomenology from its origins and primary foci. This fusion suggests that knowledge and understanding (i.e., the meaning and essence of the experience, and understanding the lived experience) emerges from the blend of positivist and interpretivist epistemological assumptions, objective and subjective perspectives, and etic and emic methodological perspectives. In theory, this blend can be associated with Gadamer's (1994) fusion of horizons, "the background of various assumptions, ideas, meanings, and experiences" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 730). Nevertheless, I see horizons as an epistemological and phenomenological perspective that includes specific essentials from two phenomenological traditions—transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics. My contention is that trying to separate the two traditions and overlooking their interdependency may lead to the distortion or unawareness of the true meaning or essence of the lived experience (Fleming et al., 2003; Freeman & Vagle, 2013).

According to my second principle, two specific aspects of phenomenological research design (i.e., data collection and data analysis) have not been sufficiently considered in the

various approaches to phenomenological data collection and data analysis concerning their particular epistemological roots, which ensures true deep knowledge (let alone in a fused fashion). Regardless of the pervasiveness of modifications, extensions, and flexibility in use in trying to analyze phenomenological data (Colaizzi, 1978; Edward & Welch, 2011; Moustakas, 1994), there is a need to undertake very specific activities associated with the nature of both descriptive and interpretive process to understand and conduct true phenomenological inquiry.

The other principle that guides my approach is that new ways to craft epistemological assumptions, theoretical perspectives, and methodological underpinnings may lead to innovation in qualitative research (Vagle et al., 2020). It is the experience of navigating phenomenological research, teaching phenomenology, doing phenomenology, and relying on innovation as the key to professional growth and empowerment that constitutes the essence of my approach. Indeed, I feel the emotional and educational need to change and innovate because these two forces move my memory, my body, my being, and my identity as an educator.

### **The Intersection Segment across Moustakas and Van Manen (Epistemological and Methodological Assumptions)**

The basis of phenomenological research is knowing and understanding human experience (Heidegger, 1996; Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). In order to understand the fusion of approaches at the epistemological and methodological levels, I should describe how the intersection segment across Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (1990) occurs through seven core components: (a) emphasis; (b) researcher and object of the study; (c) intentionality, consciousness, and intentionality; (d) radical autonomy and situated meaning; (e) constitutionality and co-constitutionality, (f) cognitive and non-cognitive meaning, and (g) rigor of research (Dowling, 2004, 2007; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Pringle et al. 2011; Vagle, 2018; Van Manen, 1990; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). What caused me to come up with these seven key elements was an exhaustive and comprehensible review of the literature in the field without being definitive. I also intended to translate diverse perspectives, ideas, and methodologies into a practical procedure for conducting and analyzing data in the phenomenological realm. In this way, I spell out which parts of my fusion come from Moustakas' (1994) approach and which parts come from Van Manen's (1990) research activities.

Emphasis has to do with the main focus of the investigation, either knowledge or understanding. Researcher and object of the study refers to the nature of the relationship (unbiased or biased) that the researcher has with the phenomenon under study. Intentionality, consciousness, and intuition serve to indicate that knowledge and understanding require a clear purpose achieved by intuition as the primary source of knowledge, and mediated by two forms of discourse functions—description and interpretation. Radical autonomy and situated meaning suggest my attitude toward the possibility of generating knowledge and new meaning based on the research participants' relationship with culture and the environment. Constitutionality and co-constitutionality refer to the dialogical relationship between the researcher and the research participants in which both make a contribution using adequate methodological principles or strategies to address individual realities. Cognitive and non-cognitive meaning are about the type of language the researcher uses to describe and interpret. Finally, rigor of research has to do with the type of data collection and analysis employed by the researcher to ensure validity, reliability, and authenticity (trustworthiness) of the findings of a phenomenological study. In Table 1, I depict the outcomes of the fusion as it would look at a Venn Diagram.

**Table 1**

*The intersection Segment across Moustakas and Van Manen (Epistemological and Methodological Assumptions)*

Core Components	Intersection of Moustakas & Van Manen		
	Moustakas (1994)		Van Manen (1990)
Emphasis	Universal structures or essences of the phenomenon	The merging of universal truths and the forestructure of understandings (fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception) is central to true and deep knowledge	Interpretation of human experiences in context
Researcher and object of study	A perspective void of values and biases	The duality between the object of study and the researcher is paramount as the inquirer's perspective is devoid of personal values and biases, and at the same time, he or she sustains the participants' interpretations of the phenomenon being studied	Conversational relationship between the researcher and the object under study
Intentionality, consciousness, and intuition	Intentionality as the groundwork for the description of the internal experience of being transcendently conscious of the phenomenon under scrutiny in which intuition becomes the primary source of deriving knowledge	A balance between description and interpretation is sought to sustain a sense of epistemological and methodological neutrality while acknowledging the researcher's and research participants' contribution to	Intentionality as the researcher's and the research participants' interpretation of the experience in which intuition is a part of the process of knowledge construction.



knowledge  
generation

<p>Radical autonomy and situated meaning</p>	<p>Approach of the phenomenon in a radical fashion regarding its openness and potential for new and richer knowledge with respect to the influence of the environment and culture in the generation of knowledge and meaning</p>	<p>There is a negotiated attitude toward the approach to addressing the phenomenon under scrutiny as autonomy and openness to change entangle to produce true and deeper knowledge</p>	<p>Meaning and experiences of the phenomenon as a smooth and open process</p>
<p>Constitutionality and co- constitutionality</p>	<p>The researcher as an impartial instrument (i.e., researcher and the phenomenon as independent entities)</p>	<p>There is a blend between the researcher's use of bracketing and the participants' forestructure understandings to build knowledge based on co- creations; however, the researcher avoids a biasing effect on the participants' views implicit in their narratives</p>	<p>The researcher and participants as generators of multiple individual realities</p>
<p>Cognitive and non- cognitive meaning</p>	<p>Description of universal essences or eidetic structures through a representational role of language</p>	<p>An entanglement of the natural reality and the transcendental attitude occurs in describing and interpreting the phenomenon under study using representational and subjective language (evocative,</p>	<p>Interpretation of the preunderstandings of the researcher and the research participants through a molding role of language (i.e., the use of language and thoughtfulness to show the various aspects of lived experience)</p>

		expressive, and transcendental)	
Rigor of research	The employment of adequate methods for collecting and analyzing data that seeks meaning rather than understanding	A clear definition of scientific rigor and contextual criteria ensure the description of universal essences and the trustworthiness of co-created interpretations	The use of data collection methods and data analysis techniques seeks a balance between perception and reflection

### Fusion in Practice

#### Data Collection: Interviews, Focus Groups, and the Researcher's Diary

In the fusion of methods, I used phenomenological interviewing, focus groups, and the researcher's diary. The phenomenological interview allowed for both knowing the universal essences and understanding those eidetic structures from the researcher's and research participants' perspectives (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). In practice, during the interviewing process, I invited the participants to describe their lived experiences, and at the same time, bring to light the hidden meanings of those experiences through their interpretations and my own insights as the researcher. To make the conversational interaction dynamic and successful, I tried to maintain the interview process within a safe, trustful, and fluid environment. Also, I intended to have the research participants share their experiences following the research questions and avoiding leading comments or questions.

Using Seidman's (2006) structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing, I interviewed each participant individually to address the research topic and the research problem in depth. This model consists of a series of three separate interview moments with each study participant. Interview one was about the participants' context of experience and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Interview two focused on the reconstruction of the participants' experiences in the present and lasted 60 minutes. The focus of interview three was meaning and lasted 60 minutes as well. In order for the participants to think about the preceding interview and not to lose connection between the two others, I spaced each interview three days apart. This passage of time prevented the participants from being distracted, and thereby affecting the quality of the interview sessions.

To maintain a trusting atmosphere throughout the data collection process, I incorporated emergent nondirective sub-questions. Nondirective sub-questions encouraged research participants to tackle the central phenomenon under examination spontaneously (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2013). These questions stemmed from the interview sessions and allowed the research participants to answer autonomously, using their own words, knowledge, experience, and perspectives. I started each interview with a broad question encompassing the central question and the sub questions for the study. Through these questions, I tried to have the research participants stay as close to their lived experiences as possible, and address specific aspects of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

Another data collection method that I employed in my approach was a group interview format to obtain a collective view about the central phenomenon under consideration while

participating in the core process of knowledge and understanding, which was a foreign language curriculum phenomenon. Group interviews facilitated understanding of the human social dynamic among the research participants, and promoted discussion of diverse perspectives with the researcher as an active and neutral participant. I met with the participants for a 2-hour focus group discussion and considered the possibility of bringing them back together for additional sessions if necessary. I divided the focus group into two sessions: Round One (1 hour) and Round Two (1 hour). These two encounters complement each other in the sense that it translated into two interaction opportunities for clarification, enrichment, and consolidation of data related to both knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In the focus groups sessions with the teachers of English as in the main interviews, I used interview tactics (i.e., probes and prompts) with teachers of English as well.

The other data collection method I used in my fusion of approaches was the researcher's diary. This diary gave me the research opportunities to describe and interpret individuals' lived experience and behaviors over time (Nicholl, 2010). It also provided both objective and subjective instances for focusing on the phenomenon under examination with a fresh and epistemological lens (Wall et al., 2004). Keeping a reflective diary permitted me to be aware of the dynamic of the research process and reflect about it in a meaningful manner. In this regard, I used the reflective diary to accomplish bracketing during data collection and analysis. Bracketing is as a methodological principle in transcendental phenomenology, which allowed me to hold my preconceptions aside, while sustaining a neutral attitude to avoid shaping the data collection or imposing my understanding upon the study participants (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). I undertook bracketing through Wall et al.'s (2004) framework during the interviewing process. This structure consisted of four steps: "pre-reflective preparation, reflection, learning, and action for learning" (p. 22). Through these steps, I was able to (a) prepare for the interviews in advance, (b) consider and reflect about the three interviews in relation to the research participants and the course of the interview questions, (c) identify the learning that resulted from the interviews and bracketing process, and (d) use the new knowledge to make the interviewing process more productive and participative.

My reflection process centered on three central aspects. First, I considered that my prior experiences relate to a specific research situation, including my own actions (i.e., what I did in the research context and why). Second, the diary bore in mind how I tried and finally achieved bracketing during the data collection and analysis process (Wall et al., 2004). Finally, I tried to answer three specific questions related to epistemological aspects of the research questions, such as definition and limitation, type of results obtained from the research process, and different ways to investigate the same or similar questions.

In summary, as suggested above, I employed methodological triangulation to conduct phenomenological research—the use of various data collection procedures (Carter et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2011; Neuman, 2011). My purpose in using triangulation was two-fold. First, it allowed me to use common qualitative data collection methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and diaries to examine the phenomenon under scrutiny. Second, the diversity of data collection procedures led to gaining diverse insights into the phenomenon and trustworthiness of the findings (Carter et al., 2014).

### **Data Analysis Steps**

Following are the steps in the appropriate order of analysis. The analytical operations in phenomenological data analysis include grouping the information through a progressive refinement of codes. "The connections and interconnections between and among the various [steps] illustrate how the refinement of codes progresses from first-impression data condensation to more intensive data analysis, leading to the consolidation of thematic aspects

of the analysis” (Aguas, 2020, p. 3466). The following procedure allows the researcher to obtain a full description and interpretation of the experience of a phenomenon. I have selected portions of my dissertation that illustrate the progressive refinement of codes, step by step (i.e., from codes to themes), for the theme “*Aligned curriculum and political aims.*” This excerpt addresses Research Question 1, as explored by one participant in Interviews 1, 2, and 3. In 2018, I participated in a workshop offered to University of Phoenix’s doctoral program graduates to develop a publishable manuscript based on a dissertation. In that workshop, I received ethical permission to use verbatim quotes from my doctoral dissertation in a publication.

I created depth of meaning by going back and forth over the interview transcripts (unstructured interviews and focus groups) and my diary trying to sustain a sense of fusion of phenomenological and hermeneutic horizons. In steps one through five, I fused (a) universal structures or essences of the phenomenon with interpretation of human experiences in context; (b) a perspective void of values and biases with a conversational relationship between the researcher and the object under study; (c) intentionality, consciousness, and intuition with intentionality as the researcher’s and the research participants’ interpretation of the experience in which intuition is a part of the process of knowledge construction; (d) an approach of the phenomenon in a radical fashion regarding its openness and potential for new and richer knowledge with respect to the influence of the environment and culture in the generation of knowledge and meaning with meaning and experiences of the phenomenon as a smooth and open process; (e) the researcher as an impartial instrument (i.e., researcher and the phenomenon as independent entities with the researcher and participants as generators of multiple individual realities); (f) description of universal essences or eidetic structures through a representational role of language with interpretation of the preunderstandings of the researcher and the research participants through a molding role of language; and finally, (g) the employment of adequate methods for collecting and analyzing data that seek meaning rather than understanding with the use of data collection methods and data analysis techniques to seek a balance between perception and reflection (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). A summary of the connectedness among the two methods appears in Table 1 above.

### **Step 1. Transcripts and Initial Coding**

To follow this first step, I achieved a sense of understanding of the data collected from one or various data collection methods. This activity helped in beginning to acquire a feeling for the data. As a non-linear process, the phenomenological analysis began after both the face-to-face and focus groups interviews, as well as the process of going back and forth over the interview transcripts.

- a. I assumed a phenomenological attitude using bracketing. In assuming a phenomenological attitude through bracketing, the researcher reflects on the participants’ natural attitude (i.e., the real world –things, situations, facts, and objects) to gain inherent meaning.
- b. I allowed access to the research participants’ forestructure of understanding as well as that of the researcher.
- c. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, and then read (and reread) the data collected.

## Step 2. Significant Statements

In this step, I identified significant statements leading to the development of categories and themes guided by the principle of horizontalization. This principle suggested considering the equal relevance and value of every statement and reading numerous times.

- a. I used color codes to subsequently link participant verbatim transcripts related to description of the phenomenon under study.
- b. I tried to maintain a smooth flow between me as the researcher and the research participant to inspire knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the experience.
- c. I listed all preliminary non-repetitive or non-overlapping significant statements to develop initial categories.
- d. I discarded the statements that did not contribute to the construction and understanding of meaning when developing categories and subcategories.

**Table 2**

*Examples of Significant Statements*

Verbatim Transcripts (In-vivo codes)	Significant Statements
Defining an aligned curriculum implies basing on the current curriculum because an aligned curriculum means following a sequence –standards, competences, indicators, content, grammar—all the processes that students need to go through in a classroom...You can align with literature, math, and other subjects.	<p>Aligned curriculum refers to various aspects of an educational system and curriculum design.</p> <p>Teachers can align the English curriculum with the entire school curriculum.</p>
What I really know is that in the past, before the implementation of the bilingual national program was that the class was very traditional in some cases, but the National bilingual program gives teachers the opportunity to have a different view and different strategies that teachers could implement in class.	<p>The new curriculum is different from the traditional one.</p> <p>The new curriculum provides more approaches to foreign language teaching and methodologies.</p>
We've considered [it] very much; we've made sure our school curriculum design is taking into account bilingualism. We have enriched our contents and competences because it is not only about communication but also interpretation, analysis, and all of those aspects really related to a curriculum that fills the bilingualism expectations as such to see the expected results.	<p>The curriculum includes various aspects of bilingualism.</p> <p>The curriculum is about interpretation and student expectations.</p>

### Step 3. Initial Categories and Subcategories from Various Coding Methods

In Step 3, I developed initial categories and subcategories from various coding.

- a. I analyzed data according to research questions to facilitate identification, description, and interpretation of shared experiences, delineate significant statements, develop categories, construct themes, and deal with data overload.
- b. I used coding to reduce data into themes.
- c. I employed first-cycle methods—initial coding, magnitude coding, subcoding, holistic coding, structural coding, process coding, descriptive coding, and in-vivo coding to initiate coding of data. First-cycle coding methods are the initial processes that occur at the beginning of a coding attempt (Saldaña, 2013). “These methods assist in initiating the data coding process by breaking them into specific parts for later examination” (Aguas, 2020, p. 3465). Initial coding allowed me to break down the data into specific parts for examination and comparison. Magnitude coding encompassed the progressive refinement of the entire coding process, including key aspects such as frequency, direction, and presence. Subcoding referred to a second-order marker that details and enriches the primary code. Holistic coding helped me to capture the meaning of an entire portion from an interview transcript. Structural coding assigned content to the data related to research questions. Process coding indicated specific actions related to research participants’ lived experiences. Descriptive coding summarized the basic content of a text in simple words or phrases. In vivo coding, finally, represented the words used by the research participants in the interview transcripts.

**Table 3**

*Examples of Significant Statements and Initial Categories*

<b>Central Research Question:</b> What is the lived experience of key stakeholders involved in implementing an aligned curriculum at an urban public school in a Northern city in Colombia, South America?	
<b>Research Question 1:</b> What factors influence the implementation of a new curriculum?	
<b>Significant Statements</b>	<b>Initial Categories</b>
Aligned curriculum refers to various aspects of an educational system and curriculum design.	Aligned curriculum and educational system
Teachers can align the English curriculum with the entire school curriculum.	Aligned curriculum and current school curriculum
The new curriculum is different from the traditional one.	Different curriculum approaches

The new curriculum provides more approaches to foreign language teaching and methodologies.	New approaches and methods in language teaching
The curriculum includes various aspects of bilingualism.	Aligned curriculum and bilingualism
The curriculum is about interpretation and student expectations.	Aligned curriculum and student understanding and expectations

I conducted the same analysis for the rest of the research questions, for all participants, using the transcripts from the three-interview series to complete the process. The various types of codes aided in capturing the phenomenon in one’s data. The development of subcategories helped me to clarify specific aspects of the phenomenon under study.

#### Step 4. Refined Categories from Selective Coding

To follow this step, I developed refined categories from selective coding (Saldaña, 2013). Selective coding involved all codes, broad and specific categories, and initial categories (Neuman, 2011; Saldaña, 2013). The integration of all these codes and categories was the preparation for identifying initial and final themes. The step included refining categories by research questions and determining tentative categories. From this step onwards, I will provide the complete outcomes of the data analysis process so that the reader can gain a comprehensive understanding of the eight steps proposed.

- a. I created broad and specific categories to cover and account for all the initial categories formulated in Step 3.
- b. I organized the various categories developed in the previous step according to research questions to refine them and provide a broad perspective of the phenomenon.
- c. I repeated the previous activity to determine subcategories/tentative categories leading to final ones.

**Table 4**

*Refined Categories from Selective coding for Questions 1-4–Broad Perspective*

<b>Research Question One</b>	<b>Research Question Two</b>	<b>Research Question Three</b>	<b>Research Question Four</b>
What factors influence the implementation of a new curriculum?	What processes influence the implementation of a new curriculum?	How is curriculum innovation reflected in the school and classrooms as perceived by the three groups of stakeholders participating in the study?	How do key stakeholders perceive curriculum innovation?
Curriculum policy implementation	Foreign language curriculum development processes in public schools	Model for curriculum development in action	Demands on modern society

Leadership	Core School processes	A model for curriculum development in practice	General Impact
Uncertainty	Communication in organizations	Commitment to the Institution	Student achievement

Using this broad perspective, I classified subcategories or merging tentative categories, classifying them by research questions which in turn resulted in final categories.

**Table 5**

*Refined Categories: Merging Tentative Categories for Questions 1-4–Narrow Perspective*

Research Question One	Research Question Two	Research Question Three	Research Question Four	Final categories
What factors influence the implementation of a new curriculum?	What processes influence the implementation of a new curriculum?	How is curriculum innovation reflected in the school and classrooms as perceived by the three groups of stakeholders participating in the study?	How do key stakeholders perceive curriculum innovation?	
Curriculum policy implementation	Foreign language curriculum development processes in public schools Core School Processes	Model for curriculum development in action	Demands on modern society	Foreign language curriculum policies in action in public schools

### Step 5. Initial and Final Themes from Final Categories

This step allowed me to create initial and final themes from final categories. Up to now, I have provided a descriptive and interpretive analysis in the form of data categories. In this step, the purpose was to theme the data at the latent level because at this level, themes endorsed phenomenology, which is the description of the world as it is experienced and interpreted by the research participants and the researcher rather than the mere conceptualization or categorization of it. The process implied identifying concepts or entities at a descriptive, interpretive, and condensed level, and indicated what data meant. Of the 21 invariant constituents that emerged from the analysis in my study (i.e., all the statements related to the research topic and the research questions), Table 5 shows the construction process of Theme 1.

- a. I listed all categories relevant to the experience of the phenomenon, which become the invariant constituents of the experience.
- b. I developed initial themes from these categories or invariant constituents.
- c. I organized all of these invariant constituents into themes.



**Table 6**  
*Final Categories, Initial Themes, Final Themes, and Invariant Constituents for Theme 1.*

Final Categories	Initial Themes	Final Themes and their Invariant Constituents
Foreign language curriculum policies in action in public schools	Implementing an aligned curriculum means adopting new theoretical perspectives on foreign language education	<p><i>Aligned curriculum and political aims</i></p> <p>Implementing an aligned curriculum is planting educational seeds in fertile ground</p> <p>Implementing an aligned curriculum means a struggle for compliance with social, economic, and political trends</p> <p>Implementing an aligned curriculum is the adherence to prescribed curriculum models for foreign language teaching and learning</p> <p>Implementing an aligned curriculum is understanding the impact of time on curricula</p>

In steps six and seven, I used the language of thoughtfulness to entangle the natural reality and the transcendental attitude in describing and interpreting the phenomenon under study. Thoughtfulness refers to the act of wondering about our personal and professional projects, what it means to live these projects in our everyday lives (Van Manen, 1999). In the writing exercise of the phenomenological project, I tried to express what the study participants and I as a researcher knew, understood, and felt, as well as what we reflected on, drew from, and made observations of a specific lived experience (the implementation of a foreign language curriculum). Finally, step eight, I intertwined the feedback from the study participants with the suspension of personal biases, and the originality of my insights to ensure validity, reliability, and authenticity of the study.

**Step 6. Textural and Structural Description and Interpretation of the Phenomenon**

In step six, I presented the findings in the form of narratives for the textural and structural description, and interpretation of the phenomenon under study. This textural account included what the research participants experienced, how they experienced it, and what they interpreted. Box 1 presents the specific verbatim transcripts used to identify significant statements and an additional excerpt to complete the example that illustrate the participants’ responses.

- a. I generated textural and structural descriptions as well as interpretation for each theme.
- b. I included in-vivo/verbatim examples to represent the participants' experiences of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

### **Box 1**

#### *Textural and Structural Description, and Interpretation of the Phenomenon for Theme 1*

Defining an aligned curriculum implies basing on the current curriculum because an aligned curriculum means following a sequence—standards, competences, indicators, content, grammar—all the processes that students need to go through in a classroom ... You can align with literature, math, and other subjects.

What I really know is that in the past, before the implementation of the bilingual national program was that the class was very traditional in some cases, but the National bilingual program gives teachers the opportunity to have a different view and different strategies that teachers could implement in class.

We've considered [it] very much, we've made sure our school curriculum design is taking into account bilingualism. We have enriched our contents and competences because it is not only about communication but also interpretation, analysis, and all of those aspects really related to a curriculum that fills the bilingualism expectations as such to see the expected results.

Dealing with time is another concern for stakeholders as well. TOE6, for instance, stated, "I think this curriculum has especially affected our schedule; because now students need to be here from 6:20 AM to 2:10 in the afternoon -8 hours - every day" ... "It doesn't affect the school, but it has affected the schedule." ST1 clarified that "... It's not the same having a traditional 3- hour schedule as having an 8 or- 10-hour schedule for English. This breaks the traditional paradigms, which were the rules for establishing the intensity of hours in the past ..."

The structures implicit in school administrators' teachers', and parents' aligned curriculum implementation are expressed in her view of academic processes, namely curriculum design and curriculum development. With respect to core aspects of curriculum development, participants are attuned to the implementation of political objectives for foreign language education. Curriculum implementation is experienced as an operational function within official purposes.

Foreign language curriculum innovation evokes previous experiences and awakens interest in foreign language teaching. Curriculum innovation occurs at a professional and practical level and fluctuates from an awareness of the need to change to current implementation. Aligned curriculum in relation to curriculum in general and common professional practices is defined as specialist-designed syllabus. This syllabus is a competency-based syllabus, which includes course content, development of communication skills, expected results as a national bilingualism strategy. The new curriculum evokes teachers' previous teaching experience and makes them redefine their professional, curricular, and classroom practices, including the use of time.

### **Step 7. Composite Description and Interpretation of the Essences of the Phenomenon**

To follow this step, I provided a composite description of the target phenomenon and adjusting the activities in the previous steps through iterative analysis.

**Box 2***Composite Description and Interpretation of the Essences of the Phenomenon for Theme 1*

The lived experiences of key stakeholders while implementing an aligned foreign language curriculum suggests distinctive features in each of the three major stages of curriculum development – planning, implementation, and evaluation. Of particular importance is the consideration of both academic and political processes and requirements. Stakeholders take on the responsibility of planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum on the basis of national policies.

**Step 8. Validation from the Participants' Feedback**

In this final step, I validated the data analysis, and the description and interpretation process using feedback from participants, suspending personal biases, and ensuring the originality of my insights as the researcher.

- a. I sent the findings to the research participants to make sure that the themes truly reflect the participants' lived experiences
- b. I asked the participants about how my descriptive and interpretive results related to their experiences or if they thought I omitted any aspects of those experiences.
- c. I acknowledged that the research participants may or may not respond to your validation request.

**Conclusion**

In this paper I described the fusion of two qualitative approaches—transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutics—across data collection and analysis of phenomenological data. Semi-structured in-depth interviews guided by Seidman's (2006) model focus groups, and the researcher's reflective diary epitomized the data collection procedures for conducting true phenomenological inquiry. Drawn upon Moustakas' modification of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological analysis and Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, the fusion of approaches shares features of the two methods preserving key philosophical, methodological, and linguistic principles of transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology advocated by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger (Moran, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). Description leads to interpretation, and interpretation in turn, uncovers the essence of those factors and processes in terms of what fundamental aspects of the phenomenon under examination. The use of a combined approach to data analysis and methodological triangulation as a validation technique provides credibility and trustworthiness to the proposed fusion of approaches.

The value behind the fusion of approaches is the revelation of comprehensive knowledge, thus, to reach the comprehensiveness of knowledge involved being able to analyze phenomenological data with two purposes. First, I intended to "return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). It is clear then that the research interest lies in the originality of the contexts in which the participants lived their experiences. Second, I understood that "to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (Van Manen, 1990 p. 5). In this sense, the research activity suggests the researcher's attachment to

the participants' experiences as a dialectic between description and interpretation and a deep sensitivity to lived experience.

Although it is possible to employ either Moustakas' or Van Manen's approaches in isolation, the epistemological convergence allows for deep knowledge development and full understanding regardless of the researcher's phenomenological orientation (i.e., empirical or hermeneutic) and the complex processes of unveiling meaning. "The choice should reflect more than mere whim, preference, taste, or fashion" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 2). This decision then depends a great deal on the researcher's interest in and commitment to his or her profession. It is also contingent on the researcher's view about how phenomenology should be addressed at different educational levels. At the undergraduate level (i.e., students and novice researchers), for example, empirical phenomenology should precede hermeneutic phenomenology to adhere to a cognitive hierarchical approach to comprehensive knowledge and a real practice of conscious thoughtfulness.

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