

**THE IDENTIFICATION OF  
PEER-COUNSELLORS  
IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

by

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submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

(with Specialisation in Guidance and Counselling)

in the

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION**

at the

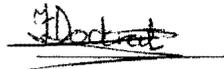
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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NOVEMBER 1999

## DECLARATION

"I declare that "THE IDENTIFICATION OF PEER-COUNSELLORS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL" is my own work and that all the sources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."

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**F. DOCKRAT**

## IN PRAISE AND GRATITUDE

“What Allah out of His Mercy

Doth bestow on mankind

None can withhold:

What he doth withhold,

None can grant,

Apart from Him:

And He is the Exalted

In Power, Full of Wisdom.”

Qur'an (S. 35, A. 2)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my deepest thanks and appreciation to the following people:

- Prof. E Wiechers, my supervisor, for her encouragement, patience, attention to detail and expert guidance that enabled the successful completion of this valuable study. I am grateful to her for easing what seemed to be an insurmountable task.
- Prof. Kamper, for his expert advice, diligence and assistance with chapter four as well as his assistance with the statistical data. I am grateful to him for his encouragement, kindness, consideration and his willingness to assist me during the course of my research.
- My husband Hashim for his typing skills, encouragement, advice, patience, care, concern and loving support during my period of study.
- My mother, whose silent prayer and words of comfort gave me the strength to complete this task.
- My mother-in-law, for gracefully offering her assistance as household chef which gave me the added time and energy to complete my research program.

Fazila Dockrat

Pretoria, November 1999.

## THE IDENTIFICATION OF PEER-COUNSELLORS IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

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### SUMMARY

In South Africa the idea of a peer helping service has gained impetus and is viewed as a viable option given the fact that there is a shortage of professional school-counsellors and complementary care-givers in the public school environment.

This research emanated from an awareness that there was a need to develop an objective assessment tool regarding the identification of peer-counsellors. This instigated an investigation of the essential criteria, predominant characteristics and requirements of effective peer-counsellors.

The primary focus of this research has been to develop a self-assessment instrument that will assist in the identification and selection of potential peer-counsellors.

The self-assessment instrument proved to be a valuable tool in discriminating between good, average and weak peer-counsellors. Findings indicate that the self-assessment instrument should be used in conjunction with other modes of assessment such as the self-report data, teacher ratings and peer ratings.

**Key Terms:** Peer-counselling, peer-educators, peer-helpers, peer-tutors, identification of peer-helpers, assessment of peer-counsellors, screening procedures for peer-counsellors, peer-group, training of peer-counsellors, school guidance and counselling.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Basic orientation and aim of the investigation**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Peer helping services has gained impetus as para-professionals and lay-helpers in various social settings. Various centres and institutes have initiated peer helping services with the idea of supplementing counselling services. In educational settings as students encounter insurmountable problems it becomes difficult for school counsellors and educators to address learner needs in the learning environment. Furthermore it is evidently clear that in South Africa there are insufficient care-givers in the schooling environment (Letsebe 1993:5 & Chuenyane 1990:29). There is therefore a need to seek for alternative helping structures as resources in the helping profession are limited. Hence peer counselling can be seen as a viable option to fill this gap.

Peer-counselling is viewed as a support based service in schools whereby peers render help to peers within the schooling environment. Peer-counsellors assist school counsellors in the schooling environment (Cowie & Sharp 1996:7). Students learn how to care for others and to put their caring into practice (Carr 1981:5). Peer-counsellors or peer-helpers as they are commonly known, are fundamentally viewed as support systems that provide a listening ear to other adolescents in secondary schools. They provide a comfort zone for students who may not want to consult the school counsellor either through inhibition, bashfulness or fear. Peer-counsellors are considered to be like lay-helpers who provide counselling aid to people in distress.

An overview of existing literature indicates that peer-counselling has an invaluable role to play in educational settings, as peer-counsellors can be used as conflict mediators and peer-tutors to other learners (Letsebe, 1993: 9). Literature also indicates that peer-counselling services serve a number of useful functions; these are inter alia:

- Development of inter personal skills
- Enhanced social skills
- Self-awareness and self sufficiency is facilitated
- It is a source of behavioural standards
- It provides an opportunity for modelling

Cowie & Sharp, (1996: 73-97) and Tindall & Salmon-White (1990: 1-27).

As a practising school-counsellor, based at a local public secondary school (1989-1996), the researcher became actively involved in initiating and implementing a peer-counselling program. The development and implementation of the peer counselling program became an integral feature of the existing counselling services at the school. This program was motivated by the unusually large student population at the school and a simultaneous and constant increase in the demand for counselling services among students. The researcher realised that in order to cater adequately to the needs of students the students themselves could be utilised to function as peer-counsellors.

An important function that developed out of the peer-counselling program was an increase in counselling referrals. With functioning peer-counsellors in the high school environment, more counselling cases were referred to the school counsellor by the peer-counsellors. Students who were in distressing situations but were unable to consult the school counsellor because of fear, shyness or teacher intransigence, were now able to consult the school counsellor when their particular cases were brought to the school counsellor's attention by the peer-counsellors.

Through personal observations of the initial, if somewhat infant peer-counselling program, the researcher discovered the vital role peer-counsellors could play in the high school environment. The presence of peer-counsellors in the school environment created a culture of care and nurturance. This resulted in a greater degree of attachment and endearment between peer-counsellors and the rest of the student body.

## **1.2 PROBLEM ANALYSIS**

With constant involvement and supervision of the peer-counselling program the researcher was forced to analyse and critically evaluate the following:

- The validity and effectiveness of the peer-counselling programs.
- The exploration of all the variables that were intrinsically involved in enabling the peer-counselling programs to be fully operational and functional.
- The distinction between the important and less important variables in evaluating the effectiveness of the peer-counselling programs.

From the foregoing it became evident to the researcher that an important variable that impacted on the effectiveness of the peer-counselling programs was the peer-counsellor. The presence of effective peer-counsellors invariably led to the effectiveness of the peer-counselling programs. It became evident to the researcher that some peer-counsellors were more effective than others and that many peer-counsellors also fell out of the peer-counselling program during the skills training sessions because they could not cope with the training. Furthermore there was a realisation that an important factor that impacted on peer-counsellor effectiveness was the correct selection of adequate peer-counsellors. Subsequently, an investigation into the abovementioned followed.

### **1.2.1 Screening and selection procedures.**

Teachers in conjunction with the researcher, who was the school counsellor, selected students as peer-counsellors on the basis of collective guidelines drawn from literature. These guidelines indicated essential requirements as to who would qualify as potential peer-counsellors. Class teachers were provided with this broad set of guidelines when selecting peer-counsellors, which included the following:

- Leadership skills
- Scholastic and academic profile
- Ability to introspect

- Maturity
- Social interactional skills
- Approachability
- Popularity

The general assessment of prospective peer counsellors was based on personal characteristics, scholastic adjustments and competence, emotional and moral character and levels of intelligence.

The process involved in identifying and selecting prospective peer-counsellors was done in the following manner:

- Initially, as part of the primary selection procedure teachers were asked to select and nominate student candidates as potential peer-counsellors.
- The students were also involved in the selection and nomination process. Each class was given the opportunity to select and nominate names of potential peer-counsellors
- Furthermore, students themselves were asked if they would like to be considered as peer-counsellors. Students who desired such a role function were then entered into the list of potential candidates.

Once the selection procedure was completed and the candidates chosen, the school counsellor conducted an observational screening interview to seal the final approval of peer-counsellor candidates.

### **1.2.2 Awareness of the problem**

The researcher became aware that this method remained ineffective since the underlying motives for selection were often flawed by virtue of its subjective and unscientific nature. This was due to the following:

As the school counsellor, and not being a subject teacher, the researcher did not have close interactions with students that would allow for a clear knowledge of the behavioural characteristics and temperament of the students themselves. This meant that the researcher

had to rely on the opinion and input of teachers who would propose names for potential peer-counsellors.

Furthermore it became evident that students were mutually selected by their peers on the basis of a shared affinity and not necessarily on the basis of considered criteria for effective peer-counsellors. Students who were selected merely in terms of their popularity were not always competent in terms of training and skills competency. This became evident when peer-counsellors often fell out from the training course. This method of selection had inherent biases as students were subjectively driven in their assessment of selecting effective peer-counsellors.

The researcher became aware that there was a need to have an additional objective assessment tool that could be used to screen and select effective peer-counsellors. The initial selection of peer-counsellors was subjectively driven and did not contain some form of objective measure for peer-counselling selection. Subsequently it became acutely apparent that a more formal criterion list will become increasingly important for the procedural selection of peer-counsellors. The efficacy of the peer counselling programs will be dependent on the adequacy of the peer counsellors themselves, particularly in terms of their role-function and value.

In the final assessment and evaluation of the peer-counselling program and of the peer-counsellors themselves, certain issues were recurrently ubiquitous, these were *inter-alia*:

- What are the actual requirements of a good peer-counsellor?
- Why are some peer-counsellors more effective than others?
- Are there distinct personal characteristics that certain peer-counsellors possess that make them more effective than others? What variables do we consider? Which variables are important for peer-counselling effectiveness?

This mitigated an investigation on the type of criteria that can and should be used to select peer-counsellors. This involved an analysis of how to gauge which students have the essential personal characteristics, emotional and cognitive attributes that will make for effective peer-counsellors.

In order to function as effective peer-counsellors learners have to undergo basic skills training in counselling. The various techniques in skills training for peer-counsellors have been explored in current literature, Cowie and Sharp (1996: 46-64) and Phillips and Sturkie (1993: 28-98). Earlier writers such as Myrick (1978: 57-164) and Vincent, D' Andrea and Salovey (1983: 25-80) have also provided extensive programs for the training of peer-counsellors. In order to complete the training sessions, peer-counsellors must demonstrate certain personal qualities and social and cognitive abilities. On a personal level they have to be keen listeners, they must be responsive and show care and concern for others. Socially they have to be able to function in groups and this requires social features such as social etiquette, sensitivity and co-operation. Cognitively it is required of them to have comprehension, analytical and discriminatory abilities. A pivotal function required from peer-counsellors is the ability to listen. When peers are trained as peer-counsellors they further develop skills such as listening and reflecting.

However in terms of selection procedures and in identifying peer-counsellors only a limited amount of guidelines have been presented (see 3.7.4), Letsebe (1993: 19) and Tindall and Salmon-White (1990: 17-18).

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The primary concern of this research is to identify a criterion list which can be used as a basis for the identification and selection of peer-counsellors in the secondary schools. This entails an analysis of the following:

1. Is it possible to draw up a criterion list from current literature to identify peer-counsellors in the high schools?

2. What identification criteria are essential in the selection of peer-counsellors?
3. How can peer-counsellors be identified?

## 1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Given the need to promote and establish a peer-counselling program in secondary schools, and given the shortcomings of the selection procedure for peer-counsellors in the secondary school, the principal aims of this study are:

### 1.4.1 General Aims

1. To provide a literature search on the nature of counselling and peer-counselling in the secondary schools. In this respect the role-function of peer-counsellors will have to be explored.
2. To identify adolescent developmental concerns and needs in the secondary school and thereby to establish how best peer-counsellors in conjunction with the school counsellor can assist adolescents within this context.
3. The characteristics of competent peer-counsellors will have to be explored with the following considerations in mind:
  - a) What type of peer-counsellors would appeal to adolescents?
  - b) What are the requirements for competent peer-counsellors?
  - c) What are the important criteria for the recognition of potential peer-counsellors?

### 1.4.2 Specific Aims

1. To identify important criteria and predominant characteristics of peer-counsellors.
2. On this basis to set out an identification instrument that will assist in the selection of peer-counsellors in secondary schools.
3. To develop and test a self assessment instrument that will assist in the identification of potential peer-counsellors.

## 1.5 METHOD OF RESEARCH

As this research is essentially contextual in nature an exploratory-descriptive method of investigation is used. The literature study provides a theoretical description and attempts to explore and fulfil the aims as stated in section 1.4.1. (The literature search is based on an exploratory method of investigation i.e. it is primarily involved in exploring and obtaining information on:

- a) School counselling and peer-counselling in secondary schools.
- b) Adolescent developmental concerns and needs in the secondary schools.
- c) A list of criteria will then be drawn from literature for the identification of peer-counsellors).

The principal feature of this empirical study is the development of an identification instrument and procedure that will assist in the identification of peer-counsellors in secondary schools. This entails the application of both qualitative and quantitative features of empirical research. In this respect the research will be concerned with the development, administration and evaluation of a self assessment instrument. Furthermore a qualitative analysis of the instrument will be done in order to assess the validity and the reliability of the instrument. Therefore both a qualitative and a quantitative method of investigation is used in this study.

## 1.6 RESEARCH PLAN

Chapter one provides the basic orientation and aim of the investigation as well as a description of what the study would involve. Chapter two examines literature with regard to adolescent developmental concerns and needs in the secondary schools. This chapter includes the various theoretical expositions dealing with adolescent development and concerns and discusses different adolescent needs in the secondary school environment. Chapter three focuses on counselling in the secondary schools and the relevance of peer-counselling within this context. In chapter four the design and results of the empirical

study is explained and evaluated. In conclusion chapter five deals with various educational implications and recommendations of this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Adolescent developmental concerns and needs in the secondary school.**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Counselling in the secondary school is primarily customised according to the needs and concerns of learners i.e. the adolescent. These needs and concerns direct the role of the counsellor and by extension the role of the peer-counsellor. In order to show how counsellors and peer-counsellors can adequately assist with adolescent needs and concerns, it is important to evaluate adolescent developmental characteristics and pre-occupations. This necessitates an analysis of adolescent developmental needs, based on sound theoretical foundations. These foundations provide a conceptual framework from which different perspectives on adolescent growth and characteristics can be ascertained.

In this chapter an analysis of adolescent development will be made to show the various needs and concerns of adolescents and how best peer-counsellors, being adolescents themselves, can be of help to other adolescents. In section 2.2 the concepts “adolescence” and “the secondary school learner” will be defined. A brief synopsis on the historical and theoretical perspectives on adolescence follows in section 2.3 and 2.4. In section 2.5 the various needs and problems facing adolescents in the secondary school are drawn from the different theoretical perspectives. This enables the researcher to establish the different needs of learners in the secondary schools as well as the different requirements needed from peer counsellors and the counselling services as such.

## 2.2 CONCEPTS "ADOLESCENCE" AND THE "SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNER"

There exists a plethora of definitions of the concept of adolescence. Adolescence is generally viewed as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. This process of “growing into adulthood” or “coming of age”, starts at puberty and with the onset of maturity (Jaffe 1998: 19). This general definition emphasises a period in the life-span of an individual which requires the acquisition of social, emotional and personal skills necessary to enter the world of adult society (Dusek 1987: 14).

A life-span perspective views adolescence as a transitional phase which occurs roughly around the ages of 13 to 19 years. This period follows childhood and precedes adulthood. Adolescence is sometimes also divided into early adolescence i.e. ages 11-14 years and middle or late adolescence i.e. ages 15-19 years (Rice 1996: 24). However, there are many researchers like Ferron (1990: 161) who categorise adolescence in three phases:

Early adolescence	± 12 to 15yrs.
Middle adolescence	± 15 to 18yrs.
Late adolescence	± 18 to 22yrs.

Since the age of most secondary school children varies from 12 to 19 years, the high school years can therefore be termed “adolescent years”. The secondary school learner is often also referred to as the “adolescent”. Both terms refer to stages or phases of human development. The concept of adolescence may be seen as having originated within the tradition of developmental psychology as it suggests that adolescents are at a particular stage of development. It also implies that a set of characteristics may be found at this stage. Secondary school learners can be identified as all children who enter high schools, who are not only similar in terms of age but are also to a certain extent similar in their emotive, cognitive, maturational and social development (Jaffe 1998: 21). These changes and developments are inextricably tied to changes that are typical of adolescents or teenagers. For purposes of this research the terms adolescents, teenagers and secondary school

learners will be interchangeably used as they have the same conceptual connotations, i.e. individuals who are at a particular stage of development and who attend secondary schools.

### **2.3 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ADOLESCENCE**

Adolescence as a concept is historically derived from a Western secular context and is therefore conceptually a relatively modern development (Nielsen 1996: 4-5). In many traditional societies the term adolescence was an unknown or unthought of concept, this phenomenon is especially true of primitively based societies where the transition from childhood to adulthood is fairly dramatic. In Western society the concept of adolescence emerged as a post-Renaissance concept (Heaven 1994: 8; Verhofstaddt-Deneve & Kienhorst *et al* 1996: 1-10).

In traditional societies when a child enters puberty and thereby sexual maturity, he is automatically admitted into adult society and hence into the world of adult responsibilities. Traditionally therefore the qualifying variable for the transition to adult status was a condition provided by nature, in this case puberty. Thus puberty which is signalled by physical maturation, determines the onset of adulthood in traditional society. Conversely, it can be said that the phenomenon of adolescence is a socio- psychological condition created by man-made demands on nature and not by nature *per se*. In this regard many psychologists view adolescence as a condition of both heredity and environmental determinants (Heaven 1994: 25). Adolescence is a period signalled by the onset of puberty which determines that the individual is no longer a child, but at the same time the individual has not gained enough skills to maintain him/herself in a sophisticated society.

There are various reasons for the emergence of the notion of adolescence in modern societies. Changes in the legal status of individuals, the onset of mass secular education and formal schooling, demands and changes in technology, dramatic shifts in cultural and traditional values, changes in economic, social and political structures, have all contributed to the emergence of the term adolescence (Jaffe 1998: 27-29).

## 2.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ADOLESCENCE

The concept of adolescence is best understood by surveying some of the important theoretical perspectives on adolescence. Only some of the relevant theories will be highlighted.

Biological theorists study adolescence from a biological viewpoint. In this respect human behaviour is linked to physiological factors such as hormone levels, inherited traits, or neurological disorders (Nielsen 1996: 7). Important physical and sexual changes and their concomitant consequences are of relevance when studying adolescents in the secondary schools.

Cognitive theorists stress the importance of thinking and reasoning when describing adolescence. According to Piaget the adolescent years coincide with the advent of formal operations (Rice 1996: 38). The cognitive reasoning of adolescents has enormous implications for the secondary school learner.

A behavioural perspective on adolescent development stresses the importance of learning and the influence of environmental factors (Nielsen 1996: 8). In this respect, when studying adolescent behaviour in the secondary schools it is important to recognise that the thoughts, feelings, likes and dislikes of adolescents are intimately tied up with behaviour. A major implication of this theory is that behaviour is constantly shaped and determined by the environment.

A psychosocial-time approach focuses on the changing roles of the adolescent within a specific time and social context. This perspective stresses the importance of social factors in development, especially the relationship with family members and friends (Jaffe 1998: 63). Socially, the adolescent phase can be seen as a transition period of dependency to a state of growing independence. Seen from this perspective then the adolescent has to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills so that he can cope with the demands of the adult world. The adolescent has to develop self-reliance and grow independently towards maturity and adulthood. There are



- Emotional development                      accept volatile emotions and mood swings
- Join peer groups                              important for psychosocial development
- Heterosexual relations                      opposite sex friendships become more important  
(also important for sexual identity)

In the latter part of the twentieth century, as more demands have been placed on adolescents, there are distinct behavioural pre-occupations in adolescent growth. Adolescents are:

- More achievement-money-and college oriented.
- Growing up earlier, experiencing things earlier, being pushed into life-stages sooner.
- More likely to be working at a job.
- More financially dependent on parents for a longer period of time.
- Using alcohol and are subject to substance abuse more frequently (Heaven 1994: 3- 4).

These tasks indicate the more common aspirations and preoccupations of adolescents. Most adolescents will spend a lot of time completing these tasks. They will therefore need relevant skills and appropriate advice in key areas in order to facilitate their ability to deal with these tasks objectively and rationally. Social skills, such as interpersonal and heterosexual relationships, are important for the successful completion of tasks - as is the ability to deal with adjustment problems relating to physical development.

The awakening of a critical consciousness in adolescence necessitates guidance in developing the adolescents' discriminatory abilities concerning value systems, morals, ethics and personal decision making. They will need to expand their deductive and inductive reasoning with formal operational thought. Increased stress levels influenced by the need to achieve and perform are more pronounced. Early experience of adult life-styles combined with adult expectations have created a more driven and ambitious generation of adolescents who grow up much faster and hence experience higher stress levels at an earlier age. The danger of substance abuse is present in such a demanding and highly stressful environment. The challenge for adolescents will be their ability to deal with periods of storm and stress. The challenge is also extended to counsellors and

peer counsellors as to how they can assist adolescents in dealing with their developmental tasks and with the related storm and stress.

## **2.5 THE ADOLESCENT IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

It is evident that the various perspectives on adolescent development have their own focus and emphasis. This research looks at the adolescent within an educational-schooling context. Areas of concern and relevant questions would *inter-alia* be the following:

- What are the characteristics of the secondary school child?
- What are the implications of the cognitive, emotional, social and physical changes concerning adolescents in the schooling context?
- What type of help, if any does the adolescent need and to what extent can peer counsellors, who are adolescents themselves, assist other adolescents who are in the process of individual change and growth?

### **2.5.1 Physical characteristics: puberty and physical growth**

One of the areas in which the adolescent unfolds quite dramatically and visibly is the area of physical development. The occurrence of puberty is a distinct feature of adolescent development. Puberty is not synonymous with adolescence as the former describes the inevitable physical and endocrine changes which take place when the child starts to grow and mature sexually. Puberty is the period of transition from reproductive immaturity i.e. nonfertility to reproductive maturity i.e. fertility (Jaffe 1998: 74). Petersen and Taylor (in Boxer & Tobin-Richards *et al* 1983: 84) state that puberty is not a single event, rather it is a critical phase. Puberty is not a point in time, rather it is a process whereby the body changes from that of a child to that of an adult.

Some of the important physical changes that girls undergo during puberty include the onset of menstruation, hair growth, more active sebaceous glands and the maturity of sexual organs (Rice 1996:115).

Pubertal signs amongst boys are characterised by the following: rapid physical growth, body hair growth, maturation of reproductive organs and the occurrence of seminal emissions (Louw 1991: 385).

Besides the distinct external physical changes like changes in bone structure, muscular growth, increase in height and weight there are also internal changes due to hormonal changes in the body.

#### ***2.5.1.1 Implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

The physical changes adolescents experience have far-reaching social and psychological consequences. The different physical changes that occur affect adolescents, not only in terms of how society and others view them, but also in terms of their inner self-evaluation. Research by Neugarten and Datan (in Boxer & Tobin-Richards et al 1983: 88) indicates that adolescents are able to perceive the changes occurring in their bodies in a meaningful way. By implication then, adolescents will view the physical changes within a social and cultural background.

Currently, as an example when adolescent girls evaluate themselves, “good looks” become important. This type of behaviour prevails due to the creation of a commercial norm created by media and television (Heaven 1994: 121). Teenage girls view themselves against a ‘social time clock’ i.e. what is dominant socially at a specific time. Adolescent girls are constantly preoccupied with their physical appearance and are sensitive to the comments of others. The adolescent girl who is plump can become obsessed by the way she looks, if she has learnt the social importance of slimness through media and social interactions. “Body-build” and “height” are often noted when boys assess themselves

Physical development allows the adolescent to reach peak performance in several motor activities. One can think of athletes who have become renowned internationally in their teens. This can lead to higher social and economic status for the adolescent. The opposite holds true for adolescents who have diminished physical strength and physical handicaps. This can affect them adversely. The prevalence for teenage boys to be called nicknames like “nerds” and

“weaklings” is not uncommon in the secondary school situation. The greater the physical agility the more confident and positive the adolescent becomes. Physical strength and athletic ability have considerable social significance among adolescent boys. Their social acceptability increases with greater physical prowess or attractiveness. Those who are physically more attractive receive more attention (Jaffe 1998: 102). Their approach to life will potentially be more positive and they will be more venturesome in their relationships with others.

Boys and girls do not experience their period of maximum growth at exactly the same age. Girls grow a little more rapidly from age ten onwards and boys from eleven onwards (Jaffe 1998: 103). In early adolescence, girls (due to accelerated height and earlier growth rate than boys) tend to be more precocious than early adolescent boys. According to Rice (1996: 138) early maturation for boys is an advantage as late maturing boys suffer socially induced inferiority, which may carry over into adulthood. Indications of early or late maturation processes are therefore extremely important when evaluating adolescent behaviour.

Disproportionate development of the body also occurs due to rapid physical growth. The arms and legs appear to grow more rapidly and often the early adolescent child appears lanky (Nielsen 1996: 29). This sudden growth spurt creates awkwardness for many adolescents. Adolescents experience adjustment problems due to the dramatic physical changes. The individual's perceptions and understanding of these anatomical changes are important. If the adolescent is happy with his physical self-image it can contribute to a positive self evaluation. If the physical self-image is negative, it can lead to a lowered sense of self esteem.

Adolescents often seek counselling help when they become confused regarding their physical changes. In this regard counsellors and peer-counsellors in schools can offer the following guidance to adolescents:

- Assist adolescents who experience undue nervous disturbance during the transition from puberty to adulthood .

- There is a need for information in order to deal with physical growth and changes. According to Jaffe (1998: 103) children who are prepared for their physical changes before the changes occur usually cope better.
- Support teenagers with lowered self esteem as the adolescents physical ability has an important bearing on his approach to life, his concept of himself and the role he plays in relation to others.
- Identify and help children with eating disorders. Some teenagers are self conscious about their weight and then they diet extensively to remain slim.
- The presence of acne and other skin problems can cause stress and undue worry for the teenager. Peer-counsellors can for instance assist counsellors in information-giving seminars.
- Many adolescents do not receive emotional support from their parents, family and friends. Counsellors and peer counsellors can offer this support.
- Offer parent guidance in dealing with adolescent problems related to physical changes.
- Offer help with issues like menstruation and mood swings due to hormonal changes.
- As youngsters at school often see themselves in terms of peer- group assessment, both group counselling and peer counselling are vital tools in assisting adolescents.
- Counsellors can also offer education regarding healthy nutrition in order to help adolescents alter bad eating habits.

### **2.5.2 Adolescent sexuality**

The development of a sexual identity is an important task for the adolescent. The development of primary and secondary sex characteristics and distinct hormonal changes determines and affects adolescent sexuality. Sexual awareness is seen to coincide with puberty (Heaven 1994 :121). Teenagers are involved in exploring their 'sexual self' in a cultural and social context. The adolescent achieves a masculine or feminine identity with the emergence of sexual development and awareness.

Teenagers experience their sexuality in various ways. Adolescents have their own beliefs about sex related matters which may differ from those of their parents. Teenage boys and girls differ in their experience of sexuality. Adolescent girls are interested in boys in a romantic way whereas

adolescent boys show more of an interest in girls in a physical way. Qualities such as sharing and affection are more important to girls in their relationships with boys (Dusek 1987:258).

Both early and recent researchers indicate that adolescents are becoming sexually active at an early age. Research (in Ferron 1990: 166) indicates that adolescents are more sexually active now than in previous generations. Studies by Zelnick and Kantner (in Dusek 1987: 264), also infer that adolescents have become more sexually active; i.e. promiscuity and sexual activities amongst adolescents have increased. This view is further endorsed by Lambert *et al* (Louw 1991:392 ) whose report indicates that presently pre-marital sexual intercourse occurs more frequently amongst adolescents in South Africa than in the past.

There are indications that adolescents cannot cope with early sexual involvement. According to Pestrak and Martin (1985: 981) although adolescents have become sexually more active at an earlier age, they have not reached a level of cognitive understanding to develop a genuine ability to comprehend the complex interpersonal aspects of a mature sexual relationship and to practise proper birth control. Chilman (in Pestrack & Martin 1985: 981) expands on this idea even further, by inferring that many adolescents are unable to deal with and formulate a stable mate relationship because they are at a stage of their development which is “too self- protective”. This view reflects that adolescents are unable to take on adult responsibilities because they are still immature and many of them experience a developmental delay.

#### ***2.5.2.1 Implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

From the foregoing, there are strong indications that adolescents may not be adequately prepared to deal with some problems associated with sexuality. Many adolescents grapple with the following issues :

- Formulating a sexual identity with which they are comfortable.
- Different sexual orientations other than heterosexual relationships such as homosexuality and lesbianism.

- When to date and how to establish healthy interpersonal relationships with the opposite sex.
- Pre- marital sex and sexual decision making.
- Sex and its ramifications; for example, sexually transmitted diseases and aids.
- Failure to make correct decisions regarding the use of contraception particularly when involved in risky sexual behaviour.
- Teenage pregnancy and dealing with early parenthood and abortions continues to be a major concern for adolescents.
- Dealing with abortions.

In the light of these dilemmas many adolescents lean heavily on their peers, teachers and parents for support and understanding. Many seek counselling aid for factual information and emotional support. Within a schooling context there is a need for sex-educational programs for adolescents. It becomes imperative that adolescents be educated about the risks of unprotected sex. Failure to reduce risky sexual behaviour among adolescents may dramatically increase the number of adolescents diagnosed as HIV positive (Heaven 1994:131). Currently, both in South-Africa and globally the aids crisis has reached endemic proportions. This necessitates urgent educational programs within the school curriculum, so that school learners are aware of the link between sexual behaviour and the transmission of aids. Regarding sexual behaviour, counselling services can focus on aids education, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, decision-making skills, value clarification, human reproduction and birth control, moral behaviour and ethical considerations.

Peers play an important role as they become the primary source of information to adolescents regarding sexuality and sex information. Adolescents feel more comfortable amongst their own peer -group as they can easily talk about similar pre-occupations and concerns. "Sex Talk" and sexual information is easily discussed with peer-friends rather than authority figures. The role of peer-counsellors operating within peer-groups, can play an important part in assisting adolescents overcome their dilemmas.

### 2.5.3 Cognitive characteristics

During adolescence dramatic changes in thought processes and cognitive structures occur. Piaget's theory on formal operational thought describes the changes in cognitive powers during adolescence. According to Rice (1996:149), this cognitive developmental stage involves the following: "introspection (thinking about thoughts), abstract thinking (going beyond the real world to what is possible), logical thinking (being able to consider all important facts and ideas and to form correct conclusions, such as the ability to determine cause and effect), and hypothetical reasoning (formulating hypotheses and examining the evidence for them by considering numerous variables)."

Formal operational thinking enables the adolescent to:

- think about issues currently in the here and now i.e. 'what is' and also think about what 'can or may be' in the future.
- reason on the basis of propositions.
- be involved in scientific thought whereby consideration can be given to all the factors in a situation and all the possible solutions to a problem.
- make hypothetical deductions.
- process information quicker and better.

Formal operational thinking begins at about 11 or 12 years of age and stabilises around 15 to 16 years of age (Dusek 1987: 93). However Nielsen (1996: 82) disagrees by stating that it is difficult to establish at which single age and at which exact moment formal reasoning is developed. There are individual variations in the ages due to many factors such as socio-economic status, maturation of the nervous system, genetics and cultural background. According to Rice (1996:160) not all adolescents reach formal operational thinking and not all same-aged adolescents are at the same stage of development.

#### 2.5.3.1 *Implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor*

Adolescent behaviour is characterised by intense curiosity and a burning search for knowledge. Adolescents often question the nature and condition of the world. They want to understand the

existing social and environmental processes around them and try to evaluate their own role functions. Rice (1996: 142) suggests that this quest for knowledge is a result of the fact that adolescents have acquired better problem-solving abilities and that they have a greater capacity to perceive and understand life-situations.

Adolescents thrive on idealistic thinking and construe ideal families, societies, ideologies and beliefs (Louw 1991:405). Adolescents question the policies and structures of the adult world. They want to replace existing social practices and resent the inability of adults to understand their passion for change. Teenagers therefore tend to distance themselves from authority figures and parents. They question parents on various issues and become confrontational when they assert themselves in terms of their own values, dress, beliefs and vision to life. This generates conflict with parents and can lead to alienation. Teenagers' drive for independence and their high need for individual decision-making is another factor that creates conflict with parents. Adolescents will rely heavily on peers who share similar sentiments. Hence the need for peer-counsellors.

The acquisition of higher thought processes enables teenagers to have greater critical powers. Consequently many concepts take on a deeper and more complex meaning for adolescents. Most adolescents want explanations on why things happen in contrast to what has happened. They are prone to question teachers during classroom discussions.

Levels of creativity are increased during adolescence. Adolescents who have high levels of creativity and who are gifted will need to be accommodated in the schools. Counselling the gifted and talented learner is important because many gifted learners experience stress and psychological problems (Nielsen 1996: 95).

The secondary school child's intellectual level of functioning has an important bearing on his school work. Adolescents who have inadequate cognitive skills often have study and academic problems. Counsellors should offer guidelines to learners on study-methods, how to deal with competition, motivation, time-management and how to improve their memory skills. This will

enable the learners to cope better with school-work. Peer-counsellors can serve as peer-tutors by providing academic support such as assistance with homework and study-skills. Research indicates that peer- counsellors who are trained as peer-tutors can effectively help other students who have learning problems (Carr 1988: 222).

#### **2.5.4 Personality development: Identity formation, self-concept and self-esteem**

According to Erikson (Jaffe 1998:174) the main psycho-social task facing adolescents is identity formation. Identity formation is the capacity to see oneself as having a “continuity and a sameness”. This means that personality coherence has to be established by having a connectedness between past, present and future (Jaffe 1998: 208). Identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence. It is a life long process, largely unconscious to the individual (Rice 1996: 34).

Implicit in identity formation is role experimentation and expectation (Heaven 1994: 29). The adolescent is able to analyse and evaluate various roles by experimenting with different roles. These different roles that adolescents experiment with, allow for the development of an identity (Rice 1996: 36). Identity is made up of many components such as: physical, sexual, social, vocational, moral, ideological and psychological characteristics. During early adolescence, with the onset of puberty, adolescents have to formulate a physical and sexual identity. The exploration of career identity becomes a concrete reality once teenagers leave secondary school. Religious and political identities are formulated during late adolescence as it becomes especially pronounced during college and university years.

In this respect the concepts self-esteem and self-concept are linked to the abovementioned identity formation. Both concepts refer to the evaluative component of the concept self-identity. According to Jaffe (1998: 189) self-concept refers to how we view ourselves and self-esteem refers to how we feel about who we think we are. A person’s level of self-esteem influences mental health, inter-personal competence and social-adjustment, progress in school and vocational aspirations (Rice 1996: 204). People with low self esteem are insecure in their

relationships and feel anxious about their future. Low self esteem during adolescence is associated with drug abuse, delinquency, depression and suicidal thoughts (Jaffe 1998: 194).

Adolescents are able to obtain healthy personalities if they can successfully avoid role diffusion (Dusek 1987: 380). Role diffusion occurs when individuals are uncertain and unsure of their identity, i.e. when they do not experience a “sense of continuity” and they are uncertain of their roles and place in the world. It is important that adolescents have:

- a sense of unity,
- a sense of psychological well-being,
- and a sense of knowing where they are going.

There are however many adolescents who experience problems with identity formation and this can have serious implications for the secondary school learner.

#### ***2.5.4.1 Implication for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

In an attempt to formulate an integrated picture of themselves adolescents grapple with questions such as: “Who am I?”, “What kind of a person do I want to become?” and “What do I want out of life?.” In order to establish an identity adolescents have to evaluate their personal weaknesses and strengths. It is also important to learn how to use this information to achieve a clearer concept of who one is and what one wants to become (Rice 1996: 34). Adolescents will need counselling help, so that they can recognise their individual talents, limitations and personal characteristics.

Self awareness and acceptance of the self are of crucial importance. Adolescents have to build a realistic self concept so that self acceptance can be achieved. Adolescents seek counselling aid when they have unrealistic self perceptions, lowered self esteem and self critical thoughts. Jaffe(1998: 209) states that self evaluation becomes more negative during adolescence because adolescents are inclined to be self conscious and self critical.

The adolescent is often prey to insecurities while he searches for an identity. He is never sure that the person he is becoming will prove to be successful. This condition is characterised by feelings

of anxiety, confusion, disorientation and frequently a deep sense of isolation. Many adolescents need emotional help and guidance in this respect.

Adolescents who are susceptible to role diffusion may experience self destructive behaviours. Muus (in Rice 1996: 36) infers that ego diffusion and personality confusion can be observed in chronic delinquents and in psychotic personalities. In order to avoid identity diffusion individuals must have a certain measure of guidance, maturity and self-confidence. Not all adolescents accomplish adequate identity formation. If it remains unresolved during adolescence it may be accomplished in early adulthood.

When teenagers experiment with different roles they become aware of a variety of role-behaviours, values and lifestyles. The range and quality of relationships within the family, friends, and sub-culture are all important in assisting adolescents with identity formation. Identification with significant role models assists with identity formation. Peer groups play an important role as they allow for identification and provide social feedback (Heaven 1994: 29). Peer groups also set the boundaries for behaviour amongst teenagers. Teenagers who identify with conduct that is different from family norms usually have conflicts with parents. Adolescents often become emotionally distanced from parents when they are involved with personal self exploration. Although adolescents gain independence they must maintain a healthy connection with parental figures for emotional warmth. Adolescents may enlist counselling help when they experience interpersonal conflicts with parents.

In their process to formulate an identity most adolescents have to develop a coherent set of principles that will assist them in their decision making and thereby enable them to formulate correct modes of behaviours and actions.

In the light of the above it is evident that many secondary school learners will need help with various problems related to identity formation, self-concept and self esteem. Secondary school learners will need counselling and peer-counselling assistance regarding the following:

- The development of a vocational identity.

- Self awareness and understanding the impact that others have on the self.
- How to deal with poor self image and lack of self esteem .
- How to develop positive identification with significant role models.
- How to develop personal skills and qualities such as good judgement, level-headedness self-assurance and a feeling of self-worth.
- How to deal with role confusion, uncertainty and decision-making.

### **2.5.5 Moral development: characteristics of moral thought**

Moral reasoning refers to the way we think about right and wrong. It reflects on how we judge situations and on what grounds we judge the rightness and wrongness of particular actions (Nielsen 1996: 106).

Social learning theorists emphasise the importance of social input in the learning and acquisition of moral thought. Moral behaviour is acquired through the process of direct tuition or through generalized imitation (Dusek 1987: 338). In this respect environmental conditions and social stimuli are important agents for moral development. Therefore moral growth cannot be isolated from other aspects of the adolescent's life. Important aspects such as parent-child relationships, peer influence and other social learning aspects like the influence of the media, TV and current social norms all have an impact on adolescent moral development (Rice 1996: 328).

The psycho-analytic theorists stress the importance of biological forces that motivate human behaviour. Morality is part of the individuals conscience, or superego (Dusek 1987: 332). Psycho-analytic theory relies heavily on the concept of identification. For example, a child will feel guilty when he violates a parental prohibition and in order to avoid guilt he will identify with parental figures who set moral standards (Dusek 1987: 334).

Theorists like Piaget and Kohlberg view the development of moral judgement as a gradual cognitive process stimulated by increasing social relationships (Rice 1996: 305). Emphasis is placed on the importance of inner forces i.e. levels of cognition, in determining the pattern of

moral growth. Moral thought is made possible with the acquisition of “cognitive tools” necessary for evaluation and critical thinking. Kohlberg developed three levels of moral reasoning: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. Each level contains two stages of development (Jaffe 1998: 153).

At a pre-conventional level ( which occurs roughly before the age of ten), an action is considered moral because it is considered good for an individual. In this level individuals do not internalise social standards and behaviour is motivated to satisfy needs and to avoid punishment.

At the conventional level (which occurs roughly at fourteen years), individuals adopt the standards of the community. Individuals in this level consider an action to be good because there are no rules against it. Children will conform to the opinions of the majority.

At a post conventional level (which occurs at ages 15 and above; i.e. during adolescence and adulthood) individuals conform to universal principles of conduct (Jaffe 1998: 156). Higher cognitive and social abilities allow the individual to move to the post-conventional level. Here the individual is motivated to live within a code that is determined by his or her own individual principles. Most adolescents who develop adequately within a sophisticated culture operate within this level of moral reasoning. They are guided by underlying personal principles that transcend social conventions.

Piaget’s idea of formal operational thought which occurs during the adolescent phase enables secondary school learners to evaluate and hypothesise. Formal operational thought allows adolescents to:

- assess the impact others have on their personal, social and moral development.
- separate their own point of view from that of others.
- develop a moral identity which forms part of their “identity formation”.

### **2.5.5.1      *Implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

An important implication of moral development for secondary school learners, is the development of a personal moral value system. In order to develop a personal moral value system adolescents have to question values and accept others so that they can build up their own value system. Adolescents should acquire maturity so that they can evaluate and question values. According to Louw (1991: 409), to achieve moral maturity adolescents have to overcome the following:

- Egocentrism
- Confusion of subjective and objective experiences. This involves recognising human motives and actions and the ability to analyse their own behaviour more objectively.
- Dependency on parents and achieve personal autonomy.

This implies that adolescents will have to be independent thinkers and appreciate another person's point of view. Logical thinking and a sense of justice are important factors for moral maturity.

Peers play an important role in adolescent moral development. When adolescents interact with their peers they become aware of different values and they are also able to assess the views of others. Conformity to the peer group reinforces adolescent value systems. Many teenagers are prone to take peers of their own age group into their confidence concerning their ambitions, interests and views on the meaning of life. Peer-groups therefore have an overwhelming influence on secondary school learners. Peer counsellors who operate within the peer group can offer assistance to peers with decision making and values-clarification.

Adolescents who have a strong conscience, experience guilt when they engage in wrongful acts or when their behaviours and values differ from the social norm. Adolescents often become confused by the discrepancies between their own moral codes and those of others. They either conform to standard social behaviour or deviate completely and establish their own code of ethics.

Home and schooling experiences are potent factors of influence for adolescent moral development. An individual's sense of right and wrong is influenced by parents, teachers and friends. Although adolescents have rational thought that guide their thinking they can be immature when they engage in self satisfying acts e.g sexual promiscuity, alcoholism, etc. This period is also marked by unrealistic idealism whereby the adolescent attempts to recreate a utopian value system and restructure issues of the world. Views embedded in unrealistic lofty ideals can create frustration, depression and inertia.

Schools have a significant role to play in the moral education of adolescents. Schools should stress moral values, character development, value clarification and encourage learning through community service (Rice 1996: 328). According to Jaffe (1998: 150) in order to develop moral thinking young people must be taught strategies such as questioning, critical thought, clarification of own values and reflective thinking.

In terms of moral training secondary school learners can benefit by the assistance of school counsellors and peer-counsellors. Steps in moral training can be included in school counselling programs (Jaffe 1998:165). These are the following:

- Enforce moral rules fairly.
- Ask empathy inducing questions.
- Understand how behaviours affect others.
- Role play moral arguments that foster moral reasoning.
- Decision making on moral dilemmas that are based on real and hypothetical situations.
- Promote pro-social behaviours which are based on warmth, empathy and positive modelling.
- Use group discussions and films to help learners to clarify their own values while actively considering others.

### **2. 5. 6 Social development**

Social behaviour in adolescence is inferred from everything the adolescent does in connection with the environment and other people. In order to develop healthy interpersonal skills and a thorough understanding of social norms, the adolescent should be an active participant in the social world of adults. A well-socialised adolescent is one who has developed appropriate behaviours and social competencies that will make him a useful member of a specific society. In this section, the three main areas of adolescent social interactions (i.e. relationships with friends, peers and parents) will be discussed. The various implications of the abovementioned areas of concern will also be highlighted.

#### ***2.5.6.1 Peer relationships and the implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

##### ***(a) Peer relationships***

Most teenagers interact mainly with parents, close friends, siblings and within a school context, with teachers and school peers. In the school environment adolescents are grouped according to their ages and grades, i.e. the specific standards that they are placed in. Within this context adolescents develop their own language or “slang”, fashion trends and styles as well as behavioural patterns that are typical to their life-world. According to Rice (1996: 265) adolescents operate within a distinct network of youth culture which is based on the way they think, behave and want to live. Most teenagers operate within the parameters of this peer-culture. A culture with its own body of norms, values, attitudes and practices that are recognised by the group.

There are various expressions of adolescent sub-cultures. Jaffe (1998: 274) identifies three peer-group structures; cliques, crowds and gangs. Cliques are smaller groups of two to nine members, where a feeling of closeness and intimacy is established. Crowds are identified as school and reputation-based groups. A standard nine learner can be identified as belonging to a specific age-grade crowd. Gangs are larger and more organised than cliques and are found in

working class urban areas (Jaffe 1998: 274). Adolescents who belong to gangs are usually physically aggressive and rely heavily on verbal and bullying tactics.

***(b) Implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

The peer-group act as a reference group which allows adolescents the opportunity to assess their own behaviour, problems, needs and goals. Jaffe (1998: 310) states that, “peer-groups usually function as a normative reference group for early and middle adolescents.” Heaven (1994: 95) also agrees on this view by stating that “the peer-group is becoming increasingly important as a vehicle of social comparison.” Dusek (1987: 210) expands on this idea even further by inferring that the adolescent peer-group settings provide opportunities for trying out various social roles, and set standards for adolescent behaviour. By implication then, adolescents rehearse their social roles that they will adopt as adults mainly in peer groups. From the above assertions, many positive influences can be attached to adolescent peer group interaction. According to Louw (1991: 422) the adolescent can acquire many skills in the peer group. Adolescents can:

- learn and experiment with new roles .
- communicate with the opposite sex, and form close friendships.
- feel emancipated from the family and home with more intense group identification.
- feel free to express their hopes and ideals, confusion etc. in the peer group.
- feel a sense of security, acceptance and understanding.
- become more adequately socialised within the group and develop a social and personal identity.
- develop age-related skills, interests and share similar problems.

Adolescent peers will have an invaluable role to play as peer counsellors because of all the above mentioned potential positive influences of peer-groups. In their capacity as “peer-counsellors” they will have keen insight into adolescent problems and have influence by virtue of their status as peers within the peer-group.

The adolescent's self-esteem is influenced by peer-group acceptance. Adolescents assume that they are developing normally if their peers accept and like them. This craving for acceptance and validation from their age mates has important repercussions in the school context. Teenagers who are accepted by their peers have higher self esteem and do better at school work. Teenagers who suffer peer rejection often feel anxious and fearful, particularly if they are rejected or mocked by peer group members. Many adolescents become social isolates, are withdrawn and have lowered self-esteem when they are rejected by their peers. Counsellors and peer-counsellors can provide support and aid learners in enhancing their feelings of self worth. Learners who are deficient in social skills can also be made aware of the aspects of their behaviour which are making it difficult for them to get along with others. They can also be counselled on how to deal with rejection.

Most teenagers have an overwhelming need to perceive themselves as being "normal" to peer patterns. This high need for "sameness" results in peer conformity (Jaffe 1998: 267). Too much conformity can result in diminished individuality. If incorrect behaviour patterns are prevalent in the group it can lead to anti-social behaviours. The adolescent who is trained as a peer counsellor can assist other adolescents within the peer group to be aware of negative influences operating within peer-groups.

Many teenagers also explore their personalities within the peer context. Peer-groups serve as support systems, especially during this phase when there is greater emancipation from parents and families. Hence the value of peer-group support should not be under-estimated in the learning environment.

#### **2.5.6.2      *Relationships with friends and the implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

##### ***(a) Friendships***

Friendships during puberty and early adolescence are based on shared activities. The quality and functions of friendships change during middle adolescence. Middle adolescent friendships

are characterised by emotional intensity, loyalty and reliability. During this phase adolescents develop friendships with peers of similar age groups. It is unusual for adolescents to be friends with people who are considerably older or younger than them (Nielsen 1996: 149). During late adolescence friendships include heterosexual relationships which enable the adolescent to develop a clearer sexual identity.

***(b) Implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

According to Nielsen (1996: 148) most of the activities that teenagers are involved in relate to studying, dating and leisure activities. Therefore most teenagers spend less time with family and more time with friends. For most adolescents, closeness to friends increases and closeness to parents decreases. Research by Smith (1985: 150) indicates that parental influence is substantially diminished during the adolescent phase particularly between the age of 14 and 16 years. Teenagers share loyalties and develop kinships with friends that diminish the role of family. The influence of friends in the schooling environment, therefore should not be underestimated. Peer-counsellors who operate within a friendship context can offer companionship, emotional support and practical information to other peers. It is therefore important that peer-counsellors manifest care and concern for others.

Friendships and peer relationships are important sources of learning. Friendships provide adolescents with opportunities to express, test, and verify alternative views (Jaffe 1998: 267). Hartup (in Jaffe 1998: 267) indicates that adolescents use their friendships as cognitive and social resources for developing moral judgements and values. Adolescents learn how to get along with people who are not family members in a friendship and peer-group context. Friendships allow the adolescent to learn the importance of reciprocity, self-disclosure, trust, care, and conflict resolution skills. Peer-counsellors who operate in a friendship context have a considerable influence on their peers concerning the above mentioned aspects. Peer-counsellors can also assist friends or other peers to recognise errors in their social reasoning as well as how to overcome rejection.

Adolescents who do not have friends at school suffer emotional pain. According to Bullock (1992: 95) not having friends contributes to loneliness, low self-esteem and inability to develop social skills. Counselling programs in schools include aspects such as how to develop effective interpersonal skills, how to make friends and how to deal with loneliness. Counsellors should also provide emotional support to learners who are emotionally affected because they have no friends.

**2.5.6.3. *Relationships with parents and the implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

***(a) Relationships with parents***

During infancy and childhood individuals are dependent on their parents both physically and emotionally. This dependency is gradually overcome with the advent of adolescence. Many adolescents want to assume their own responsibilities and roles in adult society and hence move away from parents and family members. Teenagers have long-term contact with their parents and are exposed to parental behaviours and values. As a result of this parents have an overriding influence on how adolescents will develop. Research by Smith (1985: 131-151) indicates that parental influence remains prominent in teenagers regarding politics, the spending of money and personal problems. An important consideration here, is the nature and quality of the adolescent parent relationship.

***(b) Implications for the school learner, counselling and the peer-counsellor***

Many adolescents experience conflict and disagreement with their parents. Conflicts with parents often occur when they question the values, opinions, interests, attitudes and behaviours of parents. Disagreement between parents and teenagers is accentuated by:

- adolescents who think and behave differently from their parents.
- social forces governing adolescent and parental behaviour that is distinctly different.
- the fact that teenagers have become alienated from mainstream society by adopting and conforming to a “youth culture” of their own.

- the fact that teenagers have an insatiable quest for personal freedom and independence. They want autonomy from parents, in terms of their behaviour, moral values and emotional state.

Therefore they will need specific guidance in schools regarding the different problems that they may encounter with their parents. Often adolescents seek counselling help when parents impose stringent control over them. Excessive parental control can cause rebellion and anti-social behaviours. In this respect Nielsen (1996: 155) indicates that adolescents must be taught how to acquire more adaptive ways of relating to people. Adolescents often get into trouble with drinking, reckless driving, aggression, sexual activities and unwanted pregnancies. Counsellors have to identify anti-social, aggressive, reckless and irresponsible behaviours within the school context. They assist adolescents to be less pessimistic, less hostile and less self-defeating.

Parents often give teenagers adult responsibilities, but in the same breath they treat them like children. This can affect adolescents adversely. Many adolescents become confused and their behaviour swings from child-like to adult-like behaviour. Teenagers also experience difficulties in their social life because they experience uneven developments in their social and emotional competencies (Newman 1985: 636). They are unable to deal with the emotional aspects to their adult-like social roles. Parents often complain of their teenagers' obnoxious behaviour, without taking into consideration adolescent immaturity (Newman 1985: 639). The lack of a strong and effective adult role model leaves the adolescent vulnerable and exposed. Hence the need for counselling and peer counselling support in this regard.

Many teenagers often complain that parents do not understand them and that enormous parental expectations are placed on them. Therefore many rely heavily on peers for emotional comfort and support when they are lonely and depressed. According to Compas, Williams *et al* (in Nielsen 1996:180) some of the common symptoms of depression in adolescents are that they have no friends or they spend most of their time alone, watching television or they sleep excessively. Peer-counsellors can assist school counsellors to identify troubled adolescents.

They provide information to counsellors on how adolescents are spending their time whether they are moping around being bored and unhappy.

### **Appraisal**

From the foregoing it is evident that adolescents encounter different socially related problems and will require the assistance of school counsellors and peer-counsellors. There are various UK and USA based counselling and peer-counselling initiatives that have successfully addressed some of the socially related learner needs in the secondary schools. Behaviour problems such as bullying, violence, aggression, frequent lying and vandalism are some of the major areas of concern currently in schools. Tomlinson and Bender (1997: 244-249) have indicated how violence in schools can be reduced through counselling intervention programs. Shulman (1996: 170-180) has also shown how conflict resolution and peer-mediation helped to prevent violence in schools. Adolescents who are victims of bullying, teasing and other forms of intimidation in the school environment can also be helped with distinct counselling intervention strategies (Roberts & Coursol 1996: 204-212). Studer (1996: 201) used various strategies such as anger control, assertiveness training, negotiation, empathy, relaxation procedures, problem solving skills and conflict mediation in order to assist adolescents who have high levels of aggression.

In order to address the chronic use of alcohol amongst the youth Komro *et al* (1996: 328-333) introduced the use of peer involvement to prevent alcohol abuse in the school environment.

During group counselling adolescents can also be guided to interpret their experiences in new ways through cognitive restructuring with the use of peer-tutors and role-playing. Adolescents are given the chance to practise more mature social skills and learn more about social reasoning (Nielsen 1996:180-184). Activities in moral and social reasoning are designed to increase the adolescents' sense of fairness, justice, and concern for the feelings of others. Adolescents are guided step by step as to what they should say and do differently, in order to enhance their personal and social skills. Learners are also involved in group counselling so that they can acquire effective inter-personal skills and learn which aspects of their behaviours make it difficult for them to get along with other people and which facilitate communication.

The foregoing, are but a few of the different counselling initiatives that have been introduced in schools. Peer-counselling and counselling programmes in South Africa can draw valuable lessons from these initiatives in order to effectively address learner needs within a South African context.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

The primary focus of this chapter has been to highlight the different developmental concerns and needs of the secondary school learner. The theoretical perspectives on adolescents were discussed in order to establish the different characteristics, needs and concerns of the secondary school learner. Having established the needs, characteristics and problems of secondary school learners, attempts were made to show what was required from school counsellors and peer-counsellors. The purpose of this chapter has been to illustrate what would be required from peer-counsellors and school counselling services in order to assist learners at secondary schools. Chapter three which follows, will exemplify how school counselling and peer-counselling responds to learner needs in the secondary schools.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Counselling in the secondary schools and the relevance of peer-counselling within this context**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In order to establish how peer-counsellors function and operate within a peer-counselling context in the secondary schools, it is essential to have an understanding of school counselling. It is also important to understand that peer-counselling as a phenomenon has developed as an extension of the counselling services at secondary schools. Therefore knowledge of who the peer-counsellors are and how they operate and function, can be elucidated from the existing counselling services in the secondary schools. Hence the focus of this chapter will be on counselling per se and its link to peer-counselling.

In section 3.2 counselling as phenomenon is defined. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 explore school counselling and peer-counselling. In section 3.5 the field and domain of school counselling is described in order to illustrate how the different aspects of school counselling responds to learner needs. An exposition of counselling theories is given in section 3.6 in order to exemplify how peer-counselling specifically and school counselling in general are made operational and functional.

The practical application of the different theories of counselling articulates how school counsellors and peer-counsellors function and exemplifies what knowledge and skills they should possess. The essential characteristics of both counsellors and peer-counsellors are reflected in section 3.7 thereby enabling the researcher to gauge what the requirements of effective peer-counsellors ought to be and what characteristics they have to possess if they are to be identified and trained as peer-counsellors.

### 3.2 COUNSELLING AS PHENOMENON

Historically, counselling manifested itself and was perceived in society as an advice giving process (Byrne 1995: 5). People of stature within a particular social context normally assumed the function or role of the advisor. This help offered by non-formally prepared persons refers to traditional help or traditional counselling (Byrne 1995: 3). Individuals who were sought out as advisors possessed a combination of qualities such as social status, respectability, wisdom and maturity.

However as social systems and social patterns became more complex, new demands were placed on individuals both as advisors and on those seeking help. The human environment has become technically more demanding and competitive (Thompson & Rudolph 1992: 6). An increasingly sophisticated and competitive economic environment has ensured that the processes inherent in such an environment has impinged on traditional social processes. The needs of individuals in modern day society have become more demanding and complex. Education is constantly challenged by the ever changing conditions in society (Gysbers & Henderson 1988: vii). Hence the need for formally trained persons skilled as professional advisors.

Furthermore, the educational environment has become highly demanding and competitive. These factors create enormous pressures on learners, both in terms of adjustments and progression. Parents or other “respectable role models” in the community may not be adequately qualified to deal with childhood stress as a result of social and emotional pressures or learning difficulties that may be the consequence of a demanding educational environment.

In view of this there has been an increasing reliance on the involvement of school personnel. According to Thompson (1992: 9) schools have become the “vanguards”, which are viewed as a stabilising influence for the upliftment of the child. The need for counselling emerged in the educational arena because schools are assuming a more direct role in the teaching of

essential life skills that were once the domain of family or churches. Schools are considered as being the most structured and influential public, integrative system that fosters the transition to productive adult life (Thompson 1992: 9). Young people often find themselves on the threshold of abandonment and vulnerability. This view is held in greater relevance today because many children live in insecure and unstable homes and they are continually confronted by an unstable conflict-ridden society (Thompson & Rudolph 1992: 9). Within this frame of thought then, schools are seen as a logical base from which to provide a wide range of support services to students and their families.

### 3.3 SCHOOL COUNSELLING

School counselling has to be viewed against the backdrop of the conceptual definitions given to counselling. School counselling also has to be viewed within the context of school guidance because there is a close, almost symbiotic relationship between guidance and counselling.

#### 3.3.1 Defining the concept 'Counselling'

Counselling is a multi-dimensional concept and is reflected in different ways. There are elements of differences and similarities in all the varying definitions of counselling. One of the early definitions of counselling by Shertzer and Stone (1981: 18) reflects counselling as an "applied art that seeks deliberately to change constructively the behaviour of an individual". Implicit in this view of counselling is that counselling leads to behavioural changes. Patterson and Welfel (1994: 21) also see counselling as leading to behavioural change. They indicate that counselling is essentially a process of helping, characterised by a unique relationship between the counsellor and the client, which leads to changes in the client in the following areas; behaviour, beliefs, coping skills, decision making and level of emotional distress.

Carl Rogers' perspective on counselling emphasises personality development, whereby the personal self is allowed to explore possibilities within a safe relationship (Thompson 1992:

43). Rogers defined counselling as the process by which the self is relaxed in a safe relationship with the counsellor. The self is altered through meaningful interaction between the counsellor and the client. The goal for every human being is to become himself (Rogers 1984: 108).

Recent definitions have reflected a movement towards a balance between remediation and personal development. Remediation on various counter-productive behaviours and self-defeating feelings occurs during counselling. This view is lucidly captured by Burke and Steffire (in George & Cristiani 1995: 2) who state that counselling is designed to help clients to understand and clarify views of their life-space and to learn to reach their self determined goals through meaningful resolution of problems of an emotional or inter-personal nature.

McGuiness (1989: 101), perceives counselling as a skilled activity that is a lot more than a mere sympathetic chat. Counselling is viewed as an “applied art” because it is a form of systematic intervention and counsellors have to be trained professionally in the theory, practice and method of counselling. Counselling practitioners work within a theoretical framework that allows them the application of skills, techniques and procedures.

From the foregoing it is evident that a counselling approach would be more scientific unlike a conversation in a traditional counselling context. Professional counselling is a helping activity, which is more complex than the conventional use of the word “traditional counselling”. A professional counselling relationship has distinct features such as care, listening and problem solving. It also indicates relationship building, goal directedness and behavioural objectives. School counselling is therefore reflective of a professional counselling situation whereby a trained professional engages in a particular relationship with a person (in this case the learner) who is experiencing personal, scholastic and emotional difficulties (Cowie & Sharp 1996: 1).

### **3.3.2 Definition of school counselling**

School counselling as a service has emanated from guidance services at secondary schools. According to Shertzer and Stone (1981: 42) and Chuenyane (1990: 43-45), guidance services in secondary schools should theoretically cover the following components:

#### The Individual Pupil Inventory Service

This refers to the collation of learner details in schools. The school counsellor uses questionnaires, autobiographies, observations, interviews and various information gathering tools and techniques to collect psychological and social data about learners.

#### Informational and Distributive Service

This service is aimed at providing learners with knowledge on educational, social, personal and occupational matters. The counsellor provides relevant information to learners so that they will be able to make better decisions about their educational, vocational, personal and social life.

#### Planning and Placement Services

Planning is the process of assessing school and student needs. The placement service is designed to assist learners in selecting educational, occupational opportunities which would ensure career development.

#### Evaluation of Follow-up Service

Guidance personnel should be involved in evaluating the efficiency of the guidance programs. They will therefore focus on aspects such as possible problems, inadequacies, success and failure within the guidance curriculum that need revision and improvement.

#### The Counselling Service

The counselling service is often alluded to as the “heart of the guidance program”. It is designed to facilitate growth in the individual through the process of a person to person relationship. Counselling in schools refers to the interactive relationship between the

counsellor and the counsellee. The counsellor is usually viewed as the helper and the counsellee the adolescent, parents, teachers or any person requesting help (Thompson & Rudolph 1992: 19).

### **3.3.3 Guidance and counselling in South Africa**

Not all of the activities mentioned above in section 3.3.2 are operational within a South African context. According to the NEPI Report (1992: 23) guidance and counselling services in South Africa incorporate a number of activities aimed at vocational and general development of students. Activities in the guidance and counselling services include the following:

- group guidance which focuses on career, educational, social and personal development
- programs such as lifeskills
- psychometric testing and
- counselling.

In South Africa, separate education for different race groups under the old segregation policies, resulted in unequal service provision of guidance and counselling services across the different racial groups. Of all the racial groups, the African schools have been the most neglected. Guidance and counselling services were almost non-existent in these schools (NEPI Report 1992: 24). Currently despite sporadic changes, guidance and counselling services still remain marginalised (Berard et al 1997: 373). This can be attributed to the scarcity of financial resources and the general educational crisis that is presently facing South Africa.

Counselling services in most secondary schools have been accommodated by the Department of Education's auxiliary services at local district and school levels. The current status of guidance and counselling at most schools has been diminished. Teachers, to fill up their subject time-tables often use guidance periods at secondary school level as a "filler subject". The lack of commitment and professional approach to guidance and counselling and the lack of trained guidance personnel at most secondary schools has ensured that

guidance remains an undervalued and under-utilised subject. Furthermore the problem has been compounded by a lack of funds within the education department that has led to massive rationalisation of personnel in schools. According to Chuenyane (1990: 29), in view of the drastic shortage of school counsellors in South Africa, peer-counselling can be seen as a viable option because it is cost effective.

Despite these problems guidance and counselling is still viewed as a relatively important component of the school curriculum. The importance of guidance and counselling was noted in the early investigation by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC 1981) and by the more recent NEPI Report (1992). Hence the purpose and need for guidance and counselling will remain an important consideration in South African schools.

#### **3.3.4 The purpose of and need for counselling in the secondary schools**

The aim of counselling in the high school is based on the need to integrate the learning and caring process. According to Krumboltz (in Walz 1988: 1), the school counsellor is in a key position to help make learning a positive experience. This integrative approach will allow the adolescent to develop holistically. The students' learning develops out of the total school going experience, and not only from the lessons derived out of subject matter. Secondary school learners are at a stage of development that includes value consciousness and critical evaluation. They often need someone other than their parents or class-teachers to assist them with various problems. The general purpose of school counselling is to effect positive change in behaviour. Counselling therefore assist students to explore and understand themselves, especially within the context in which they find themselves. Therefore school counselling facilitates student learning and achievement.

The purpose of high school counselling is also aimed at addressing the needs of adolescents. In this respect, Capuzzi (in Walz 1988: 49) delineates nine areas of concern and environmental stresses that face adolescents. These areas are: self-esteem, eating-disorders, suicide, depression, teenage-pregnancy, substance-abuse, physical and sexual abuse, stress, divorce and dysfunctional families.

The need for counselling at high schools has its motivation both in conditions within the schooling situation and the environment outside of school. Most educators would agree that in the normal functioning of school duties, it is difficult for teachers to assist students who experience varying degrees of personal problems. The situation faced by teachers in both public and private schools, inhibits their function beyond that of subject teaching.

Teachers are faced with the demanding needs of curriculum, too many students per subject and per class as well as extra-curricular duties. Furthermore they are overburdened with administrative duties. The consequence of high work loads versus limited time periods makes it almost impossible for teachers to dedicate extra time and energy to assist students who may experience debilitating problems that are not directly related to the subject matter being taught. In fact many teachers prefer to ignore a problem situation or are unwilling to deal with it even when noticed. Subject teachers are also not adequately trained to deal with many of the personal and behavioural problems which students experience. The need for school counselling has also emerged due to this factor.

The need for counselling becomes more apparent within the context of rapidly declining social values and conditions. Deteriorating social conditions, such as poverty, unemployment and crime, which are features of most urban environments today, have created varying degrees of dysfunctional behaviour among individuals in society. Children and adolescents are most receptive to these stress factors.

Furthermore, the breakdown of the extended family unit and the entrenchment of the single parent household in most urban environments have meant that many children and even adolescents do not get sufficient parental care and nurturance. Working parents inevitably transfer their work related and financial stress to their children. These conditions lead to a degree of alienation of children from the household environment. This feeling of alienation is often transferred to the schooling environment as well. The absence of nurturance and care that is associated with the domestic environment is also found in the school environment.

Therefore, within the context described above it is evident that the young have to develop skills and qualities to enhance the quality of their lives. The guidance and counselling services are essentially aimed at providing this type of assistance to young learners.

### **3.4 PEER-COUNSELLING**

In this section peer-counselling as a service in the secondary schools is discussed. It articulates peer-counselling as a natural extension of school counselling. It is the writer's intention to show the link between school counselling and peer-counselling.

#### **3.4.1 Emergence of peer-counselling**

The need for helping programs in schools emerged as a result of insurmountable problems that adolescents face in a rapidly changing world. Both in the UK and the USA, various centres and institutes introduced peer helping services with the idea of supplementing counselling services. Vincent and Salovey (1983: 11) introduced a "bridge program" at a drug crisis centre in an attempt to curtail the use of drugs. A group of students were trained as peer-counsellors. They provided crisis-intervention, information and counselling help to drug addicts on campus.

In the late 1980's and 1990's peer helping programs were introduced in the schooling environment. Tindall and Salmon-White (1990: 6) introduced the "Spark Programme" in New York City as an attempt to help students in peer tutoring. Peer-counsellors were trained as peer tutors to assist other peers with academic related problems. In the 1980's peer helping programs in schools across Canada, escalated at an alarmingly fast rate (Carr 1988: 217-232).

The emergence of peer-counselling in South African secondary schools emanated directly from the existing school guidance and counselling services. School guidance teachers and school counsellors introduced peer-counselling programs as an extended part of the actual guidance and counselling services. Various secondary schools in the Lenasia region, south of

Johannesburg initiated peer-counselling programs in the mid 1980's. Some schools like, Laudium Secondary School in Centurion-Pretoria and Liverpool Secondary school in Benoni, initiated peer helping services in 1989. The author of this dissertation initiated the peer-counselling program in Laudium Secondary School in 1989.

### **3.4.2 Definition of peer-counselling**

Phillips and Sturkie (1993: 1), refer to peer-counselling as a process whereby young adults are trained to help their peers to identify and talk about their problems. Adolescents who are trained as "peer-counsellors" serve as peer-facilitators or peer helpers. They provide a listening ear to other adolescents who are in distress or who need help with various problems relating to school matters, domestic problems, problems of self-esteem, personal pain, learning difficulties and adjustment problems.

Carr (1981: 95) defines peer-counselling as a way for students to learn how to care for others and to put their caring into practice. This means that peer-counsellors are taught caring principles so that they can implement these principles in the peer-counselling relationship. This definition points to the fact that peer-counselling is based on method i.e. the ability to learn how to care. In order to establish a caring relationship certain conditions are necessary. A relationship based on trust between the counsellor and counsellee or between the peer-counsellor and the helpee (i.e. the adolescent, who needs help) has to be maintained.

Vincent and Salovey (1983: 1) also stress that peer-counselling is based on method. They state that peer-counselling entails the use of active listening, problem solving skills, along with knowledge about human growth and mental health to counsel people who are peers in age, status and knowledge. Peer-counsellors help their peers by clarifying their thoughts and feelings so that they can make adequate decisions and arrive at solutions to their problems. Peer-counsellors are therefore seen as trained and skilled lay-helpers. Therefore, they should have certain essential personal characteristics so that they can be adequately trained as skilled lay-helpers.

Within the school context, peer-counselling is viewed as a sub-component of the counselling services because peer-counsellors supplement the role of the school counsellors as explained in section 3.7.2. Peer-counselling takes place when peer-counsellors are fully functional and operational within the school counselling programs.

### **3.4.3 Peer-Counsellors: who are they?**

The term peer-counsellor refers to a person who assumes either by choice or conscription the role of the helping person with contemporaries (Gray & Tindall 1978: 7). Peer-counsellors are fundamentally viewed as providing a “listening ear” to fellow adolescents at school. They provide a comfort zone for other peers when they are in distress. Myrick (1978: 9) defines a peer-counsellor as someone who cares about peers, who talks and listens to them about their thoughts and feelings, so that personal growth and development is promoted.

### **3.4.4 The need for peer-counselling in secondary schools**

The lack of time and shortage of resources is one reason why peer helping services have been encouraged (Phillips & Sturkie 1993: 2). Counsellors are sometimes not available and are unable to assist learners when they request help. Furthermore, many schools do not have the facility of a full time counsellor. In South Africa there are insufficient care-givers in the school environment therefore there is a need to seek alternative helping structures (Letsebe 1993: 5). Peer-counselling can be seen as a viable option in this regard.

Adolescents have similar developmental needs and tasks that they have to accomplish. They will therefore identify with their peers more readily, both on an emotional and imaginative level. They are prone to receive each other positively due to the fact that they are from the same age group. According to Vincent and Salovey (1983: 47) adolescents have an “institutional grapevine” whereby information is passed around and shared amongst them. They notice things in the classroom situation and are able to recognise when class-room peers are in difficulty. This situation can be exploited positively by the use of peer-counsellors as they have an informal and flexible image.

Peer group pressure remains a natural influencing mechanism in the development and reinforcement of behaviour (Jaffe 1998: 278). The presence of peer group pressure will encourage adolescents to enlist the help of their peers. Tindall and Salmon-White (1990: 5) indicate that young people will talk with their peers before they talk to adults. Peer helping programs developed because it was thought that peers could relate more closely and honestly with other peers.

Peers offer moral support to each other in a natural befriending manner. They have the capacity to raise or to lower each other's morale. They share information with each other and they draw on each other's experiences when they discuss matters in a friendship context. Young people often listen to each other's ideas in an informal setting. However, a structured situation created in the school will empower peer-counsellors to give advice and support to peers in a controlled and ethical manner. School counsellors ensure that peer-counsellors operate in an accountable and ethical manner. When peer-counsellors are trained, they acquire skills and knowledge and are guided in terms of the parameters of their roles and functioning. They are able to reflect with greater insight on the nature of problems and this knowledge can be shared with peers in a friendship context.

#### **3.4.5 The value of peer-counselling in secondary schools**

Peer-counselling as part of the care-giving service in schools is valued for various reasons. At a macrocosmic level, schools and communities obtain significant gains with peer-counselling services. Research by Konet (1991: 15) concludes that the entire school is enriched with the work of peer helpers. According to Tindall and Salmon-White (1990: 7) peer helping programs can directly contribute to the strengthening of norms in the school. Peer-counselling services can benefit the school as it creates a positive ethos and a culture of care and concern.

Research by Cowie and Pecherek (1994: 95) also supports this view. They state that peer-counselling offers a "safe forum" where learners can talk freely about their difficulties

and explore possible solutions. This research provides evidence that peer support is both needed and valued by staff and learners alike. Amongst some of the benefits stated in this research are:

- Peer helping services proved to be cost-effective.
- A safety net is created within the school environment.

At a microcosmic level the advantage is that peer-counselling leads to personal growth as young people are able to obtain a better understanding of themselves and others. According to Letsebe (1993: 8) young people who are trained as peer-counsellors acquire greater social and inter-personal skills. Some of the benefits that young people acquire when following peer training programs are:

- Improved self-understanding
- Knowledge of skills training
- Insight into human behaviour
- Improved inter-personal skills
- Leadership competencies

Finally, Konet (1991: 15) refers to many advantages of peer-counselling. These include the following:

- Students help students.
- Individuals acquire skills and knowledge which empower them positively.
- Students learn to identify problems and how to resolve them.
- Awareness of adolescent issues is increased.
- Self-Esteem is enhanced in students.
- Students are able to demonstrate their responsibility.

Thus far, both school counselling and peer-counselling have been explored in sections 3.3 and 3.4. These sections indicate that peer-counselling as a helping service in secondary schools has evolved out of counselling services. School counselling and peer-counselling activities are linked because the philosophical vision underpinning school counselling and

peer-counselling is similar. Both concepts are aimed at developing learners so that they acquire resources of their own which enable them to cope with life. The different counselling and peer-counselling activities are essentially aimed at learners in secondary schools. Learner needs can be visualised according to different areas of concerns. It is with this in mind that the following section 3.5 is described.

### **3.5 THE FIELD AND DOMAIN OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING**

The range of counselling services comprises of key composite areas. These areas are demarcated according to specified focuses contained within the guidance and counselling services. The specified focuses of counselling are essentially responsive to learner needs. Learner needs in the secondary school primarily fall in the following categories: vocational counselling, counselling learners with learning problems, counselling learners with personal and social problems.

#### **3.5.1 Vocational counselling**

Vocational counselling is aimed at assisting learners to develop skills and knowledge of the work environment so that they can later function effectively in the world of work. It is primarily aimed at preparing learners to cope with and adjust to a future vocational life.

Career planning gains in importance when adolescents are between the ages of 15 to 18 years. During this stage the need to choose a career becomes a matter of urgency. Learners should be able to evaluate factors that effect career choice and be actively involved in career decision making processes. A decision-making approach to career development stresses the ability to make appropriate decisions (George & Cristiani 1995: 231). As career choice involves action, the various processes leading to and impacting on this activity have to be meaningfully addressed. Counsellors have to mediate decision making and highlight the factors that influence decision making in the learner's career choice.

Teideman (in Zunker 1994: 40) conceptualised career development within a framework of time stages; whereby one's ego-identity and developmental tasks are continuously differentiated. Career development is therefore construed as an ongoing process whereby the "self" gets defined and this leads to a process of problem solving and decision making. In this respect, counsellors should enhance and strengthen the self-concept of learners.

A person's selection of an occupation is not merely a function of his self-evaluation and neither is it only reflective of being at a specific stage of development. According to Zunker (1994: 62) career choice is mediated by a series of factors. These are:

- Genetic endowments and special abilities.
- Environmental conditions and events.
- Learning experiences and task approach skills.
- The individual is viewed in totality against his environmental background. Thus the kind of social demands made on an individual such as demands in terms of social class, availability of opportunities and financial means are inter-alia important factors to be considered.

Career counselling therefore takes on a more holistic approach. It includes a range of factors that can influence career choice. Changes in the technological environment, the rapidly changing vocational trends, economic factors and changing government legislation are some of the information disseminated to learners. Career counselling is ultimately aimed at teaching learners to be self-aware and to be able to adapt to rapid changes. It would be inept to focus only on training learners to choose the "right career", it is necessary to teach skills to adapt to change (Brownell 1988: 66).

### **3.5.1.1      *Implications for counselling and peer-counselling***

Career counselling has an informative base because information is provided to learners regarding career matters. It also has a facilitative base because counsellors act as facilitators when they guide learners through various strategies for choosing a career. For example, counsellors through personal interventions and assessment procedures facilitate the learner's

self-knowledge. Personal characteristics such as interests, aptitudes, abilities and values are assessed through standardised and non-standardised questionnaires.

Other aspects that counsellors cover in career counselling are:

- Counsellors help learners to explore occupational fields, provide them with career information, job market trends, equip them with specific and general skills needed for job entry, assist in the process of career planning, job seeking and job holding skills, good work habits and a meaningful set of work values (Shertzer & Stone 1981: 374).
- Counsellors assist learners with choice of school subjects, and educational requirements needed for particular careers (Gous & Jacobs 1985: 67).
- Counsellors educate learners on the various changing trends in the world of work. (Thompson 1992: 216). As an example, current trends indicate the need for skills in entrepreneurship so that people can be equipped to deal with unemployment, there is also a demand for computer literacy and information technology.
- Counsellors assist adolescents to develop skills in decision-making.

Peer-counsellors are not involved in all of the above functions. They usually assist school counsellors with limited functions such as:

- They assist school counsellors in organising career projects, career workshops, exhibitions and seminars.
- They are used as “vital tools” in disseminating career information to other peers. A well informed and well trained peer-counsellor can educate other peers implicitly through a peer-networking system. Students often talk to each other about careers and job possibilities.
- Peer-counsellors can be involved in group counselling with students who are in need of career help. Research by Carr (1988: 224) indicates how peer-counsellors worked as peer career assistants to help other students consider and set career goals.

### **3.5.2 Counselling learners with learning problems**

Educational counselling is distinguished from other aspects of counselling in that it aims to help learners to make the most of their educational opportunities (Makinde 1983: 65). Educational counselling is primarily aimed at assisting learners with problems that they may encounter in the school environment or within an academic situation.

Educational information is seen as one of the basic activities in which counsellors engage (Gibson & Mitchell 1981: 29). Counsellors are constantly disseminating vital educational information to parents, learners and outside agencies. Parents are informed about school related matters either directly or at parent meetings. Counsellors also play a consultative role to teachers by providing them with information on creative ways to offer instruction, how to identify underachievers and different approaches in dealing with learning problems. Learners are given information during group guidance sessions or during individual counselling.

According to Baker (1992: 64), educational counselling services in schools fall into three main categories; those that have a skill enhancement focus, those that have a problem solving focus and those of a general nature. Counsellors in dealing with learners who manifest learning problems work within both a skill enhancement and a problem solving approach. Counsellors facilitate skills enhancement in areas such as motivational training programs, study method programs, skill development in reading and writing, vocabulary, test taking, note taking and time management. Counsellors approach learning problems within a problem solving focus in areas such as group counselling with under-achievers and remedial instruction in subjects such as mathematics and reading.

#### **3.5.2.1 *Implications for counselling and peer-counselling***

Teachers primarily provide assistance to learners in a group situation. The counsellor on the other hand gives educational help individually through personal counselling and collectively by means of group counselling. Learners who have learning difficulties have the need for security and undivided attention. Counsellors provide this, in a non-threatening environment.

Some of the areas with which counsellors assist learners are the following:

- Showing learners how to develop good work and study habits that will enable them to cope and achieve in their studies.
- Helping learners who have adjustment problems to adapt to secondary school life.
- Discussing study methods.
- Increasing motivation levels in learners who lack interest in their work.
- Providing remedial assistance for learners who have learning problems.

Peer-counsellors supplement the role of school counsellors. When school counsellors implement specific programs, peer-counsellors assist with these programs. They assume a subsidiary role to that of school counsellors because they work under the direct supervision of school counsellors. For example peer-counsellors offer peer tutoring in reading skills for slow readers, under the supervision of school counsellors. In this sense they serve as instructional aids in school learning projects that are implemented by school counsellors.

Peer-counsellors are called peer tutors when they offer scholastic assistance to learners. Peer-counsellors are trained by school counsellors in order to acquire skills to deal with the learning projects that school counsellors initiate. Peer tutoring can be given in various areas e.g:

- improving reading
- effective planning of homework and study methods
- project management in the learning environment
- how to access and collate information from research material for school projects.

Various researchers indicate how peer tutoring assists with learning problems. According to Ogden and Germinario (1988: 69) peer tutoring is an effective means to help other students succeed at school. The use of peer-counsellors as peer tutors has been reflected in research by Castagna and Codd (in Baker 1992: 66) where peer tutors, trained by school counsellors,

implemented a study skills program for all incoming freshmen. Various aspects on study skills such as budgeting time, note-taking, study-methods and test-taking were covered.

Research by James and Charlton, et al (1991: 165) also indicates how peer tutoring offers potential benefits to both the learners with learning problems and to peer tutors who are offering assistance. Peer-counsellors were used as peer tutors to teach spelling. This research indicates that if pupils are to be successful in spelling they must have a positive self image as “good spellers”. Therefore the affective needs of learners have a direct impact on their academic functioning. In this regard peer-counsellors were also used as agents to enhance the self-image of learners who had difficulties in spelling.

Finally, peer-counsellors unlike school counsellors, are not directly involved with learners who have learning problems. Counsellors are more intensely involved with the day to day referrals of learners with learning problems.

### **3.5.3 Counselling learners with personal and social problems**

Personal counselling is a two way communication between the learner who needs support and the counsellor who provides this support in a non-threatening environment. The immediate goal of personal counselling is ‘emotional first aid’ i.e. it offers symptomatic relief. The long term goal of personal counselling is aimed at improving the level of personal adequacy, self-knowledge and coping behaviours of learners so that they can acquire a sense of mastery in their learning, personal and social life.

Personal counselling covers various aspects of the adolescent’s emotional life. Problems relating to grief, trauma, anger and depression as well as the adolescent’s self esteem, self-concept, motivation and stress levels are all addressed within the parameters of personal counselling.

Thompson (1992: 60) cites various anti-social and conduct disorders such as disruptive behaviours, truancy, negative attitude to school, delinquency and drug abuse, that learners

display in the learning environment. Adolescents who manifest dysfunctional behaviour patterns either enlist for help directly to the counsellor, or they are referred to the school counsellor by parents or teachers. School counsellors refer serious cases of psychopathology to psychologists or psychiatrists. In order to do this, they should be able to make a provisional assessment i.e. they should at least become aware of the fact that there is a problem.

School based intervention efforts are also included in counselling efforts when dealing with social problems that confront adolescents (Capuzzi, in Walz 1988: 60). Therefore in dealing with drug and alcohol abuse the entire school staff can be involved. Teachers are involved when they discuss information like drug abuse with learners during classroom teaching.

### ***3.5.3.1 Implications for counselling and peer-counselling***

Counsellors offer help to learners with various types of personal and socially related problems (Baker 1992: 31-32), such as the following:

- Assistance is given to learners who manifest acting-out behaviours; acting-out children often suffer academically and are disruptive in the class. Counsellors have to discover how the behaviour started, determine its purpose and initiate ideas for managing it.
- Counsellors should be able to assist students who manifest signs of depression, who have suicidal ideation or who are overly aggressive. They should refer difficult cases to psychologists or a psychiatrists.
- Counsellors should be able to provide information to teachers on the different symptoms of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Counsellors should ensure that early interventions and appropriate referrals are made.
- Drug and alcohol abuse has become part of most school cultures. Both group counselling and individual counselling interventions can be applied when dealing with this problem..
- Some learners are social isolates and experience rejection. Helping these individuals to be more sociable and accepted requires subtle, well planned interventions. Counsellors

should be able identify such children, offer supportive counselling and develop strategies to bring about desired outcomes.

Peer-counsellors provide valuable assistance not only to the school counsellor but to learners as well. Peer-counsellors assist school counsellors with some of the following socially related problems: drug-abuse, aggression, bullying at schools and violence. Research by Fine (1996: 4-9) indicates how students, called “peace-makers”, were trained as conflict mediators. By using a series of formal questions and conflict resolution skills they intervened in conflict situations that occurred amongst peers. Sharp, Sellars and Cowie, (1994: 3-6) also indicate how peer-counsellors assisted with the problem of bullying in schools.

From the above it is evident that students will need skills in order to function as peer-counsellors. In order to assist school counsellors, peer-counsellors should be taught counselling skills and techniques so that they can be empowered to assist their peers. On this basis peer-counsellors, like school counsellors, will have to be knowledgeable on theoretical approaches used in school counselling so that they can apply this knowledge in the practical school situation.

### **3.6 THEORETICAL APPROACHES USED IN SCHOOL COUNSELLING**

Theories of counselling offer a framework or structure for counsellors and peer-counsellors. Theoretical approaches in counselling serve as a guide and basis for counselling and peer-counselling. They incorporate particular procedural characteristics that are applied in the counselling process. Counsellors consciously or unconsciously apply particular methods of a theory suited to particular counselling situations and client needs.

In order to be effective helpers, peer-counsellors have to undergo extensive training in the method and approach of peer-counselling (see section 3.7.4). It is for this reason that an

analysis of some of the major theoretical frameworks and approaches is given. Only some of the relevant theoretical approaches of school counselling are discussed.

### **3.6.1 Person-Centred Counselling: Main assumptions**

According to Rogers (1984: 109) it is important for human beings to become “fully functioning” and “self-actualised”. Individuals are seen as possessing self healing attributes and they are therefore able to gain autonomy and self-actualisation. Person-centred counselling is a facilitative process whereby clients are given the opportunity to discover their inherent capacities for problem solving. According to Corey (1991: 450) the main goal in person centred counselling is to provide a safe climate that is conducive to self exploration so that clients can experience aspects of the self that were formally denied or distorted. Clients gain self-awareness when they are given the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts. The main view in person-centred counselling is that individuals can guide, regulate and control themselves (George & Cristiani 1995: 58).

In order to establish “a safe climate” that is conducive to “self exploration” certain positive conditions are necessary such as: (Rogers 1984: 75, 184 and Corey 1991: 213-214)

Relationship building - the ability to listen accurately as well as to show respect and concern for the client.

Congruence or genuineness - congruence implies that counsellors should be real. This means that what they say should be consistent with their bodily projections. Counsellors do not hide behind masks and they should be able to express their feelings to their clients. In this way honest communication with the client can be maintained.

Unconditional positive regard - this implies total acceptance by showing a deep caring for the client. The caring is unconditional and no judgement is placed on the client’s feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

Empathic understanding - this means that the counsellor is acutely sensitive to the client’s feelings without getting personally involved.

### **3.6.1.1      *Application of techniques and skills***

Some of the techniques and skills that are used in school counselling are:

A non-directive approach. This ensures that counselees assume responsibility for their lives and they can direct their own pace to personal development.

Relationship building between the counsellor and counsellee is used as an important technique for client development. The emphasis lies on building trust, showing empathy, having unconditional positive regard and creating a genuine warm climate

The enhancement of the self and the self-concept is stressed during counselling.

Modes of intervention skills such as active listening, reflection of feeling, acceptance, restatement and clarification are extensively used.

The emotional content of client thoughts is stressed. This is done by focusing on the “here-and now” experiences (Rogers 1984: 112).

### **3.6.1.2      *Relevance to the peer-counsellor***

Peer-counselling training programs use many skills and techniques from the person-centred counselling approach. Peer-counsellors are taught the skills for relationship building, empathic concern, active listening and reflection of feeling. Key features such as genuineness, showing acceptance and having unconditional positive regard are stressed during training. Peer-counsellors should exhibit genuineness when they assist other peers. They should also bear in mind that they must accept peers who ask for help unconditionally and without prejudice.

James and Charlton, et al (1991: 166) used Roger’s recommendation in the training of peer-counsellors. Peer-counsellors were trained to do the following:

- Non judgemental listening
- Active listening
- To show interest in what clients have to say

Young people who do not function well with heavy authoritarian advice-giving from older figures, will feel comfortable with this approach. The counsellee will not feel that the peer-

counsellor is judgemental or authoritative because problems are discussed in a non-threatening manner.

### **3.6.2 Behavioural Counselling: Main assumptions.**

The main premise in behavioural counselling is that behaviour is the product of learning. The counselling process is aimed at changing clients' behaviour by helping them to unlearn maladaptive behaviours so that they are replaced by desirable ones (George & Cristiani 1995: 90).

Counsellors, applying this approach will therefore focus on factors that influence behaviour and will try to find out what can be done about maladaptive behaviour. A good working relationship must be maintained between the client and the counsellor. The counsellor is directive and teaches clients to learn more effective behaviours. Clients are also active. They learn healthier and more adaptive behaviour by adhering to certain procedures and applying these steps to inculcate effective behaviour.

Behavioural counsellors are goal orientated and success is measured by the extent to which a particular goal is achieved. The variables under scrutiny in this case remain observable behaviours, problem solving and positive behaviour change (Patterson & Welfel 1994: 249).

#### **3.6.2.1 *Application of techniques and skills***

Behavioural counsellors, inter alia use the following techniques and skills:

- Clarifying what the client's problems are by asking the person to describe the problems and patterns of behaviour.
- Establishing conditions such as trust and warmth to break down the client's defensiveness.
- Promoting changes in the client's attitude by selecting and applying principles of behavioural counselling that will lead to attitude change, e.g. conditioning and positive reinforcement.

- Stabilising the new attitudes by building supports such as positive reinforcers that will maintain them.

The principle of imitative learning is used in order to effect changes in the client's behaviour. This is based on the idea that a person will imitate the behaviour of others and modify his/her behaviour after observing correct behaviour. The process of systematic desensitisation is frequently used to reduce anxiety in client behaviour. According to Patterson and Welfel (1994: 252) this approach proved to be effective in relieving fears and phobias and in modifying behaviours of children who experience difficulty in adapting to classroom environments.

#### **3.6.2.2        *Relevance to the peer-counsellor***

Peer-counsellors should be effective role models where they can be seen as reinforcing agents. They reinforce normative behaviours through interactions with other peers and by their method of dealing with issues. Both learning and modifications of behaviour have their origins in interactions with other people. Peer-counsellors by interacting with peers can act as behaviour change-agents.

#### **3.6.3    Cognitive Counselling: Main assumptions**

The underlying philosophy in this approach is that humans have the potential for rational thought. However, humans can also fall victim to irrational beliefs. These irrational beliefs or illogical thinking lead to neurotic behaviours (Corey 1991: 327). The task of counselling is to identify and eliminate irrational thoughts and attitudes and to substitute them with rational ideas. The goal of counselling is to demonstrate to clients that the source of emotional disturbances that they experience is their perception of their situation and that hence irrational behaviour occurs. The role of the counsellor is therefore to make apparent to the client any form of illogical or irrational thoughts that impact on behaviour and then to assist the client to re-adjust thinking patterns in a logical and rational way.

### **3.6.3.1      *Application of techniques and skills***

This approach focuses on the logical and intellectual aspects during the counselling process. Cognitive aspects such as thinking, judging, deciding and analysing are stressed (Corey 1991: 326). Little primary emphasis is placed on feelings; the basic premise being that thoughts affect feelings and behaviours.

Attempts are made to teach clients how to rethink and to assist them in reverbalsing illogical sentences so that their internal thoughts are more logical and realistic. This process involves giving training to clients. Counsellors give training to clients by showing them how to change their self-defeating language patterns. The counsellor uses skills such as questioning, challenging, direct persuasion and promoting logical thoughts (George & Cristiani 1995: 84). The counsellor plays a didactic and direct role. They are directive when they overtly guide the client. Counsellors are didactic when they guide clients how to resist irrational thoughts by repeating rational thoughts.

### **3.6.3.2      *Relevance to the peer-counsellor***

Cognitive counselling has been successfully applied in the learning environment by various researchers. Kelly (1996: 235-237) used the principles of RET (Rational Emotive Therapy) to address the issue of fairness. Children were taught to recognise irrational ideas about school fairness and to replace them with rational thoughts regarding fairness. Children were encouraged to control their own behaviour and to replace maladaptive behaviour by more adequate adaptive behaviour patterns. Hobson (1996: 316-318) also used the R.E.T. approach to address the issue of test anxiety at an elementary school. By using drawings, children were able to evaluate their irrational beliefs during tests and the impact of these beliefs on their emotions. Cognitive counselling techniques have also been successfully used for improving academic achievement in school children. Trusty (1996: 105-117) used cognitive counselling to assist under-achievers.

Similarly, peer-counsellors can also be trained by school counsellors to deal with some of the problems that lend themselves to cognitive counselling. Peer-counsellors can be taught how to apply some principles of cognitive counselling to issues such as:

- How to manage personal anger constructively - Strategies for anger control can be taught to peers in a group context.
- How to develop effective communication skills.
- How to resolve conflicts and how to deal with conflict situations.

Peer-counsellors are encouraged to view problems in a rational manner. This approach will require peer counsellors to function at a high cognitive level.

### **3.7 THE SCHOOL COUNSELLOR AND THE PEER-COUNSELLOR.**

Having thus far established the nature of school counselling and peer-counselling, this section will primarily explore the functions and characteristics of school counsellors and peer-counsellors. There is a close relationship between the characteristics and functions of school counsellors and peer-counsellors. The functions determine the necessary personal attributes and professional competencies needed by both peer-counsellors and school counsellors. On the other hand, counsellors and peer-counsellors should develop relevant professional skills and essential personal characteristics so that they can cope with their respective functions. Hence sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 will focus on the functions of counsellors and peer-counsellors. Sections 3.7.3 and 3.7.4 will focus on the characteristics of counsellors and peer-counsellors.

#### **3.7.1 The functions of the school counsellor**

Counsellors are professional “helpers”, hence they fulfil the function of helpers within the helping process. They supplement and complement the role of educators within the organisational structure of the school. They have to possess knowledge of the educational

process and appreciate the dynamics of the schooling environment because it is within this context that they practise their field of expertise.

Schmidt (1991: 26-27), cites various functions that school counsellors are involved with in the USA. These are:

- **Individual Counselling**: School counsellors provide individual help to students by assisting them with educational and personal concerns.
- **Group Counselling**: Group counselling allows students to share ideas about specific issues such as problem solving, career choice, educational planning and peer relationships.
- **Group Guidance**: Group Guidance is instructional in nature and school counsellors assist with curriculum planning and program implementation. In South Africa guidance is essentially viewed as life-orientation and in terms of Outcomes Based Education, lifeskills strategies are designed to assist learners with personal, social, career and educational problems.
- **Student Appraisal**: Counsellors assist learners with career and personal decisions by gathering information on the learners' behaviour and abilities. School records and scholastic reports are used for these purposes.
- **Referral**: Counsellors serve as referral agents to help students and their families receive assistance from welfare services.
- **Consultation**: Counsellors consult with teachers and parents to plan appropriate services for learners. Various issues and topics are discussed during consultations with teachers or parents. The range of topics is very wide and includes how to detect child depression, dealing with discipline, motivation, study-methods etc.
- **Co-ordination**: The school counselling program includes a wide range of services and activities that require co-ordination for smooth administration. Peer-counselling is a component of the counselling programs and hence the school counsellor will co-ordinate the various activities in order to ensure program implementation and supervision.

According to Thompson (1992: 7) the functions of school counsellors have evolved into two dominant roles; i.e. an administrative role and a counselling role. Counsellors fulfil an administrative role by planning programs, making schedules, the administration of guidance, etc. They also play a counselling role by establishing a counselling relationship with counselees as they provide aid to them on various psycho-social and personal matters. In this respect counsellors have to fulfil the role as human development facilitators (Thompson 1992: 9). They are constantly involved in relationship building between and amongst people. They often have to fulfil a mediating function in crisis situations between teachers and students, teachers and parents and where there is tension between learners and their parents. In view of this, it therefore becomes necessary for counsellors to conduct various kinds of interventions on a continuous basis such as individual interviews, small group counselling and conducting a needs assessment regarding the relevant needs of clients within the learning environment.

Counsellors work both developmentally and preventatively (Baker 1992: 11). They enhance human development and at the same time focus on preventative measures. For example, a prevention program would include assertiveness skills training as a preventative measure to help learners resist substance abuse or to help learners cope better with typical developmental tasks such as making friends. Counsellors have to develop proactive strategies within a need based context. They anticipate problems and provide recipients with skills to promote social, emotional and interpersonal well-being (Thompson, 1992: 10).

In South Africa, as mentioned in section 3.3.3, the status of guidance and counselling services has been diminished. There are very few counsellors in secondary schools (Chuenyane 1990: 29). In many schools where there are no school counsellors the functions of school counsellors have been transferred to personnel at the support services of the Department of Education at district level, i.e. school psychologists or relevant personnel of the auxiliary unit that are qualified to do so. In schools where there are no school counsellors, the peer-counselling programs are co-ordinated by guidance teachers or any members of the school staff that are involved in lifeskills.

In most schools, guidance teachers fulfill a dual role; that of a subject teacher and a guidance teacher. Guidance teachers are involved in educational, vocational and personal guidance. Recently, with the introduction of the new educational dispensation guidance has become a component of life-orientation. Lifeskills programmes have become an integral feature of life-orientation in many secondary schools.

### **3.7.2 The functions of the peer-counsellor**

Peer-counsellors function within the domain of the schooling environment. They work under the supervision of school counsellors or school psychologists who are responsible for the training of peer-counsellors and monitoring of the peer-counselling programs. Special allotment periods are given to peer-counsellors so that they can function as peer-counsellors. It is usually advisable for peer-counsellors to operate during non-teaching periods and during life-skills or guidance and life-orientation periods.

Peer-counsellors are involved in various social, cultural and welfare activities. As part of the peer-counselling programs they have to initiate and organise many activities to enhance and promote social, cultural, educational and moral development. Peer-counsellors are actively involved in school related programs such as: anti-drug campaigns, and programs dealing with AIDS, child-abuse, anti-violence and crime. Therefore they should have organisational abilities, they must be enthusiastic and have high levels of energy. They should have an acute sensitivity to the prevailing needs of their fellow peers.

Strain (1981: 19, 117) suggests that adolescents function as behaviour and social change agents as this occurs naturally in the classroom situation.

Peer-counsellors help modify adolescent behaviour towards positive instead of negative behaviours. They disseminate vital information to peer groups regarding methods of decision-making, coping-skills, how to have and maintain good interpersonal relationships, how to manage crisis-situations etc. Peer-counsellors must therefore manifest positive

behaviour patterns in order to reinforce positive behaviour patterns amongst peers. To fulfil this function they have to be socially visible, have fairly strong personalities and acquire leadership qualities.

Peer-counsellors serve the function of role models. According to Strain (1981: 20), the use of peer modelling has been noted to have positive effects on the affective and cognitive skills of other peers. Peer-counsellors have to be effective role-models and through peer-counselling interventions and interactions they stimulate thought and behaviour patterns in peers in a positive manner. To be effective role-models peer-counsellors must have balanced personalities. Peer helpers must appear as normal students who do not have major imbalances such as chronic lying, delinquency, excessive aggression etc. Peer helpers who demonstrate high moral codes and ethics are usually perceived as good role-models.

Peer-counsellors can also function as peer-tutors. As peer tutors they act as instructional agents for peers who have learning problems (Gray & Tindall 1988: 183 and Carr 1988: 222). Peer-counsellors assist learners with some of the learning difficulties and scholastic problems as mentioned in sections 3.5.2.1 and 3.6.3.2. They are involved in "big-buddy" programs whereby they are assigned specific students who need instructional aid in academic related problems. Peer-counsellors assist counsellors with peer tutoring programs that are initiated by school counsellors. The counsellor and relevant educators manage peer-counsellors who operate as peer tutors. This will ensure maximum support for them as tutors. Additional orientation and training is required for peer-counsellors who also function as peer tutors.

Peer-counsellors also fulfil the function of effective communicators. Peer-counsellors can be used as discussion leaders in schools (Carr 1988: 223). Discussion leaders function as facilitators when working with a wide variety of topics such as problem-solving skills, group leadership programs, etc. This enables peer-counsellors to relate to many topics. Peer interactions are regulated by the application of peer social rules. Peer-counsellors can shape these interactions within the confines of a peer-counselling context. Peer-counsellors fulfil

both a communicative and a social role function within a structured context. Research by Furman, Rahe and Hartup (in Strain 1981: 35) indicated the improvement of withdrawn children by utilising peer facilitators.

Peer-counsellors are involved in peer mediated interventions (Strain 1981: 79 and Fine 1996: 4-9). Peers serve as intervention agents. During peer-counselling they are involved in various peer mediated interventions such as providing a listening ear and providing a comfort zone so that peers can talk to them freely without feeling intimidated. Peer-counsellors are also involved in group orientated interventions. Research by Close and Lechman (1997: 11-16) has shown how peer-counsellors function as trainers for peers in group interventions regarding conflict resolution skills. Peer-counsellors can be used effectively in group interventions to address the problems of AIDS and alcohol abuse. Research by O' Hara and Messick, et al (1996: 176-182) and Komro and Perry, et al (1996: 328-324 ) has demonstrated how peer-planned activities were used to prevent aids and alcohol abuse amongst students. In these groups, peer-counsellors function as group leaders.

Corey and Corey (1997: 340) state that it is critical that peer-counsellors learn how to function as "liaison officers" so those students who need professional assistance can get it. Peer- counsellors serve as a link between the school counsellor and the rest of the student body. They assist in identifying students who have personal or socially related problems. Not only are they useful in identifying learners in distress they also serve as a resource in filtering information to peers in the school context. They provide information to peers on issues like drug-abuse and where to get help and additional information. This is all done under the supervision of the school counsellor.

Peer-counsellors do not replace the role of school counsellors. In this respect they have to be taught the parameters of their roles and functions (Corey & Corey 1997: 340). They play a supportive role and this role is subsidiary to that of school counsellors. They are not trained as school psychologists and therefore they do not render psychotherapy (Corey & Corey 1997: 340). Peer-counsellors are trained as lay helpers (Gray & Tindall 1978: 7). The

relationship between the counselees and peer-counsellors is bound by a strict code of conduct. This relationship is also governed by ethical principles such as honesty, trust and ethics (Myrick 1978:15).

As noted above peer helpers assist school counsellors in many of their functions. They serve as a source of assistance when adults are not available. The primary function of school counsellors is to facilitate human growth among learners. In similar vein school counsellors as professionals take on the responsibility of training peer-counsellors in this primary function - as human development facilitators. In order for peer-counsellors to function effectively they will have to develop good human relationship skills. This means that they will need to share and acquire those characteristics common to counsellors in the counselling environment.

### **3.7.3 Characteristics of the school counsellor**

As mentioned in sections 3.3.1. and 3.3.4. an important goal of counselling is to effect positive changes in the counsellee's behaviour. The quality of the counselling relationship, between counsellor and counsellee, is dependent on the effectiveness with which counsellors master salient characteristics and skills needed by them. These characteristics provide favourable conditions within the counselling relationship. Corey (1991: 12-14) and George and Christiani (1995: 30), identified key personal characteristics of effective counsellors:

1) They should be able to accept personal responsibility for their own behaviours.

Counsellors should be accountable to counselees so that they are able to acknowledge professional failures.

2) They should develop realistic levels of aspiration. Counsellors must have a balanced perception regarding their functions. It is not always possible for counsellors to provide "quick-fix" solutions to all the problems with which they are confronted.

3) They should be genuine. Counsellors must be honest and genuine in their behaviour and dealings with others. It is important for counsellors not to project a “faked persona” in front of counselees. There should be congruence between their verbal and non verbal behaviour i.e. their bodily behaviour must be consistent with their verbal expressions.

4) They should develop warm and deep relationships with others. The school counsellor should be an effective role model of positive human relations. The counsellor should have warmth, project a humane positive attitude and show high tolerance when dealing with people. The counsellor has to communicate deep levels of understanding, care and acceptance.

5) They should be self-aware. Counsellors must recognise their own strengths and weaknesses. The basic tool which counsellors have at their disposal, is themselves. They have to be introspective and in touch with their own personal feelings and thoughts. Counsellors must be aware of their cultural roots, biases, beliefs and world views when involved in counselling interventions. They must not be biased towards clients during the counselling process. Impartiality and objectivity are both important attributes of counsellors (Makinde 1983: 185).

6) They should be open-minded. Counsellors need to be open minded and have a flexible approach. This means that they must appreciate human differences.

7) They should be risk-takers. Counsellors must be willing to take on interpersonal risk. They must feel free to challenge clients when appropriate.

8) They should have a sense of humour and have intuition. The intensity and seriousness of the counselling process demands from counsellors that they share with their clients the humour of the human condition. Counsellors must know at an intuitive level when to lighten the conversation with humour.

9) They should show enthusiasm and an interest in their clients when interacting with them. Cormier and Cormier (1985: 12), state that dynamic energetic counsellors inspire the trust and confidence of clients unlike passive non-energetic counsellors. Peterson and Nizenholz (1995: 12) state that “counsellors who are physically robust and who have high levels of energy are potential sources of inspiration”.

10) They should be intellectually curious. They must have a desire to learn and be knowledgeable on human behaviour and current affairs. They should have good discriminatory abilities because solutions require knowledge of facts (Baxter 1988: 90). This is necessary because during the counselling process the counsellor has to become aware of important underlying feelings, thought processes and various issues emanating from the counselling context before solutions can be offered.

The counsellor must also be knowledgeable about certain practices, procedures and skills needed during the counselling process. These include:

- 1) Attending skills such as listening, empathy and evaluation of non-verbal behaviour patterns like eye-contact and body language. The ability to listen and understand is of crucial importance.
- 2) Responding skills such as communicative abilities that enable the counsellor to clarify and reflect feelings accurately.
- 3) Initiating skills such as the ability to probe, confront, direct and guide the communication process.

From the foregoing it becomes evident that there are certain inherent personal characteristics needed from counsellors such as care, concern, having intuition etc. However there are certain characteristics that counsellors can acquire through training such as attending skills, problem solving skills etc. The former is reflective of personal attributes required from

counsellors and the latter are professional characteristics required from counsellors in terms of training and skills development.

Earlier views on the characteristics of counsellors are similar to current views. Among the earlier views is that of Makinde (1983: 186), who lists the attributes of effective counsellors as follows:

- Integrity, honesty and discipline.
- Devotion to duty.
- Intellectual and conceptual ability.
- Psychological, social, and cultural skills put into practice.
- Knowledge of social norms, values and traditions of people.
- Accepting, listening, responding, judging and valuing skills.
- Directing, planning, co-ordinating and implementing abilities.
- Emotional stability and maturity.
- Sympathy and empathy.

Current literature indicates that the characteristics of counsellors have been defined by the changing trends and needs of society (Brotherton 1996: 13-14). The functions of counsellors and the counselling needs of clients will indicate what characteristics and skills are needed from counsellors. In this respect, Thompson (1992: 11) states that counsellors should:

- be dedicated, resourceful and innovative
- possess high levels of cognition and affective skills
- organise and manage programs
- act as consultants and co-ordinators
- be flexible
- have integrity and maintain trust
- be protective and supportive
- be role-models and team players.

These are established characteristics of counsellors in the counselling environment. It is important for counsellors to harness and manifest these characteristics in order to function effectively. The quality of counselling services will be dependent on the input and characteristics of the counsellor. The primary function of school counsellors is to facilitate human growth therefore it is required of them to have personal characteristics that will enhance and promote this primary function.

Given the critical shortage of counsellors and counselling services in South African secondary schools the need for the development of care-givers such as peer-counsellors becomes a necessity. In this respect potential peer-counsellors will need to acquire characteristics common to professional counsellors.

#### **3.7.4 Characteristics of the peer-counsellor**

In order to function effectively as peer-counsellors aspirant peer-counsellors should also manifest and harness distinct behavioural patterns towards people. This demands from them personal characteristics that will enhance the quality of their work. According to Tindall and Salmon-White (1990: 14), peer helpers should exhibit the following essential characteristics:

- Caring and sharing: this is the ability to exhibit behaviour that involves reaching out and showing kindness to others.
- Listening: this is the ability to listen carefully and attentively which will lead to profound comprehension.
- Genuineness: students who are potential peer-helpers must come across as honest human beings. They should not put on a façade.
- Liked and respected by others: Aspirant peer-helpers should be well liked by peers. Learners look towards peer-helpers as role models and seek help and guidance from them.
- Ability to solve conflicts: potential peer helpers must have the ability and skill to solve problems in such a manner as to maintain relationships without undue conflict. They

have to be seen by their peers as people who are prepared to listen and assist in conflict situations.

Myrick (1978: 15) states that, if peer-counsellors want to assist others they have to establish “a caring relationship” with counselees. Therefore essential ingredients that will heighten peer-counsellor effectiveness are attentive listening, understanding, accepting, caring and showing commitment and genuineness.

These requirements as stipulated by Tindall and Salmon-White and by Myrick embrace key features of Carl Rogers’ approach to counselling. Carl Rogers’ approach to counselling also influenced the choice of peer-counsellors in the research by James and Charlton, et al (1991: 166).

Selection of peer-counsellors was done on the basis of the following criteria:

- Genuineness.
- Self-knowledge.
- Communication skills.
- Showing care and concern to others in a non-judgemental way.
- Possessing empathic understanding.

Other theoretical approaches that are applicable to peer-counselling, as mentioned in section 3.6 stress a few different characteristics that peer-counsellors should possess. When peer-counsellors are trained according to the cognitive approach to counselling it is essential for them to have adequate cognitive abilities. The behavioural approach to counselling will require peer-counsellors to be effective role-models so that they can function as behaviour change agents. In view of this it is noted that peer-counsellors should not only have relationship building skills such as care, concern, attentive listening etc. Peer-counsellors should also have cognitive skills such as problem solving and discriminatory abilities and behavioural characteristics such as approachability, leadership, kindness, honesty etc. Subsequently a composite set of characteristics will have to be considered for the enlistment of future peer-counsellors.

The following salient features are regarded by Strain (1981: 117) as primary requirements for the enlistment of potential peer-counsellors:

- They should attend school regularly so that ongoing participation can be ensured.
- They should display positive social behaviour patterns.
- They should possess adequate social and cognitive abilities.
- Peer-counsellors should have an approachable and helpful nature.
- They should have the ability to learn effectively.
- They should have the ability to cope with training and master relevant training skills.

Letsebe (1993: 19) offers a somewhat different perspective for the selection of peer-counsellors:

- Peer-counsellors are pupils who are recommended by their peers to serve in this capacity.
- They should be self motivated and show an interest in this task.
- They have to be committed to training and should implement the skills acquired after the training.
- Age and educational levels should be considered. The recommended educational level is grade nine.

If peer-counsellors want to be effective helpers they should also have an appreciation for and an understanding of human behaviour. It has been mentioned in section 3.7.2, that peer-counsellors are viewed as lay helpers as they help counsellors in some of their functions. Therefore peer-counsellors like school counsellors, have to be trained through various strategies so that they can fulfill many of their functions. They gain theoretical knowledge on human behaviour and on counselling skills and the application thereof in the schooling environment. They undergo extensive training in the following areas:

- listening skills
- attending skills
- problem solving skills

- questioning skills
- conflict resolving skills
- decision making skills
- various modes of enquiring skills
- reflecting and paraphrasing skills
- theoretical knowledge on the counselling process
- personal awareness skills and the impact thereof on the counselees during peer-counselling

(Letsebe 1993: 25-113 and Cowie & Sharp 1996: 46-63).

From the above it is evident that peer-counsellors should inherently have certain attributes that will assist them to function as peer-counsellors. On the other hand peer-counsellors also acquire skills when they are trained as peer-counsellors. The acquisition of these skills and abilities enables peer-counsellors to function in the schooling environment as peer-counsellors.

On the basis of the above factors and through personal involvement in peer-counselling at secondary school level, a list of characteristics was compiled by the researcher. This list of characteristics has been broadly categorised as follows:

#### **1. Caring and sharing - The ability to show concern and to share with others.**

**Care & Concern** :Peer-counsellors' demeanour should indicate care and concern for others. They should display an active interest in the welfare of their peers.

**Comforting** :Offer support and compassion to counselees.

**Sympathetic** :To share in others' emotions and feelings.

**Considerate** :The ability to be thoughtful towards others.

**Patience** :The ability to persevere with the counselees' problems.

**Tolerance** :To show forbearance when dealing with crisis situations.

- Courteous** :Peer-counsellors should be polite and kind to their peers.
- Obliging** :Peer-counsellors must be ready to do a service of kindness.

**2. Listening and responding skills - The ability to listen attentively and truly to hear and comprehend what is being said.**

**Listening** :Peer-counsellors should have good listening abilities. Counselees should be allowed and encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings without being interrupted.

**Responding skills** :Good communication abilities are necessary so that effective dialogue can be maintained with the counselees. It is important to verbalise, clarify and reflect feelings accurately.

**Alertness** :Peer-counsellors should be observant of changes in the tone and behaviour of the counselees. They should be aware of eye contact and body language.

**Sensitivity** :To be acutely aware of people's feelings; this entails being observant of verbal and non-verbal signs and the ability to be intuitive.

**3. Genuineness - To be genuine and communicate feelings honestly.**

**Honesty** :Peer-counsellors must be sincere and conduct the counselling case truthfully.

**Authentic** :Peer-counsellors should not live by pretences, but attempt to be what they actually are. They should not hide behind masks and defences.

**Confidentiality** :It is important to maintain a code of silence and confidentiality regarding case work and counselees' particulars.

**4. Positive social behaviour patterns - The ability to be helpful and to be approachable.**

- Friendly** :It is important for peer-counsellors to be amicable and sociable so that their peers feel comfortable in their presence.
- Approachable** :Prospective counselees will only request the help of peer-counsellors if they are approachable.
- Respect** :Peer-counsellors should respect their peers' privacy and they should not operate beyond the boundaries of respect and familiarity.
- Humour** :The atmosphere can be lightened by witty remarks and by joking without becoming familiar or vulgar. A sense of humour enables peer-counsellors to put problems and imperfections in perspective.
- Optimistic** :The ability to view the merits of the case positively.
- Responsible** :Show responsibility towards work and counselees.
- Reliability** :Be consistently timeous with appointments and tasks.
- Dedicated** :Peer-counsellors should be eager and willing to carry out functions that are delegated to them.
- Commitment** :Peer-counsellors should be committed to the idea of helping peers.
- Willingness** :Eagerness should be displayed in work activities.
- Assertiveness** :It is important for peer-counsellors to be assertive so that they can help others without becoming aggressive. A balanced temperament is needed when dealing with people.
- Adaptable** :Flexibility is needed with regard to changing situations that peer-counsellors may be exposed to. They should be open to change and have a willingness to be adaptable.
- Broad minded** :A constricted view and narrow-mindedness delimits peer-counsellors in their assessment of issues.

## **5. Moral ethics - To abide by ethical principles.**

**Impartiality** :Peer-counsellors should at all times be unbiased and neutral. It is imperative to treat all sides in a dispute in a fair and judicious manner.

**Unprejudiced** :Peer-counsellors should be able to deal with people from different cultural and different class backgrounds.

**Judicious** :Peer-counsellors need to have a clear pattern of thought and should not be judgmental or allow judgements to cloud their perception.

**Ethical** :Peer- counsellors should practise good ethics when assisting or attempting to help counselees. Peer-counsellors must acquire skills and knowledge to function as peer-counsellors. They have to operate within the parameters of their role-functions.

**Accountability** :Peer-counsellors are accountable for their actions. The ability to take on personal responsibility is extremely important.

**High morals** :Peer-counsellors should conduct themselves as principled human beings.

**Role model** :Peer-counsellors should be effective role models so that they can encourage peers positively. Stability of character is needed so that effective role modelling can take place.

## **6. Cognitive Abilities - The ability to solve problems and conflicts.**

**Understanding** :To have insight into others' views and feelings.

**Maturity** :Mature thinking is required in the presence of a counsellee.

**Intelligent** :The peer-counsellor has to be intelligent in order to cope with the skills training course and when dealing with the counsellee's problems.

- Astute** :It is important to be astute so that correct strategies of intervention and decisions can be made.
- Rational** :It is important to be level headed in thinking and in judgement. The peer-counselling work necessitates logical thinking.
- Analytical** :Peer-counsellors constantly have to analyse discussions critically and evaluate outcomes of various situations.
- Discernment** :Counsellors must be in a position to distinguish the whole from its components when analysing a case. Furthermore they must be in a position to distinguish the true picture so as to form an opinion.
- Leadership** :It is important to have leadership skills so that adequate guidance and direction can be given to counselees. Peer- counsellors should be able to recognise and accept their own powers. They should use this power in a healthy way to assist others positively.

#### 7. Self knowledge - The ability to be self-aware.

- Awareness of own-values and beliefs** :Peer- counsellors should be aware of their own personal values and beliefs.
- Identity Formation** :Peer-counsellors should be aware of who they are and what they are capable of becoming. They should be aware of their personal preferences, interests, and character traits so that they are able to set achievable goals for themselves.
- Introspection** :Effective peer-counsellors should be able to introspect on a personal level so that they can understand how they come across to others. They should demonstrate a willingness to learn from mistakes.

### **3.8. CONCLUSION**

The need to extend care giving services within schools has led to the emergence of peer-counselling as a natural extension of school counselling. Peer-counselling programs have in large part been necessitated by demands made on professional school counsellors for their services. Furthermore a comprehensive peer-counselling program gains viability in the South African context because of a desperate shortage of professional counsellors and the non-existence of counselling in most secondary public schools.

The characteristics and functions of both counsellors and peer-counsellors in conjunction with theoretical frameworks of counselling in the secondary schools have laid the foundation for the inclusion of peer-counselling in the helping process. It also lays the ground rules for the establishment of a criterion list for the selection of peer-counsellors. The different characteristics and requirements needed from peer-counsellors have been drawn from established research. This will enable the researcher to develop an identification instrument that will assist with the selection of peer-counsellors. A description of the empirical design will be given in chapter four.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Design and results of the empirical study**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the literature study (chapters 2 and 3) the counselling needs of secondary school learners were highlighted and a description was given of how school counselling and peer counselling responded to these needs. This was done with reference to existing counselling and peer counselling initiatives in the UK, Canada, USA and South Africa. The researcher was therefore able to establish the different criteria and requirements needed for the identification of effective peer counsellors. The researcher's formative experience and involvement in peer counselling at secondary schools over a number of years, combined with literature study and research, enabled the establishment of a list of characteristics and criteria for the identification of peer counsellors.

This chapter will describe the empirical design used in this study, i.e. the procedures involved in the construction and refinement of an instrument for the identification of peer-counsellors, as well as the methods used in field testing the instrument. The results and interpretations will also be presented.

#### **4.2 AIM OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

The aim of the empirical study was to develop an identification instrument that is empirically validated and that could assist in the selection of peer counsellors in secondary schools.

##### **4.2.1 Rationale**

In the researcher's experience, peer counselling programmes in South Africa do not contain objective assessment procedures that could be used to select peer counsellors. Literature study also indicated the lack of structured standardised assessment in the selection of peer

counsellors. A need was subsequently identified for a structured, objective instrument that could assist in the identification and selection of peer-counsellors at secondary schools in South Africa.

### **4.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

This research study was based on an exploratory-descriptive approach. According to Babbie (1998: 90) exploratory studies are done for three purposes:

- a) To satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding.
- b) To test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study.
- c) To develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.

Descriptive research studies are primarily designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena (Ary 1990:381). Babbie (1998: 112-113) defines exploration as "an attempt to develop an understanding of some phenomenon". He also defines description as "the precise measurement and reporting of the characteristics of the phenomenon under study". An exploratory-descriptive study was carried out to gain insights into the themes under research as mentioned in section 4.2 and in chapter one section 1.4.1.

Information in exploratory research can be collected through observation, questionnaires and interviews. For purposes of this research information was obtained both through qualitative and quantitative measures. Husen (1997: 16-17) states that the two major paradigms that have gained eminence in educational research are the following:

- a) Quantitative analysis - based on the natural sciences, with emphasis on empirically quantifiable observations, which lend themselves to analysis by means of mathematical tools.
- b) Qualitative analysis - This paradigm is derived from the humanities with an emphasis on holistic and qualitative information and interpretative approaches.

Both a qualitative and quantitative method of research were used in this study because of the nature of the enquiry. Keeves (1997:6) states that the "method employed in educational

enquiry is influenced by the nature of the problems being considered". The procedures involved in the construction and the design of the instrument for this study necessitated both a qualitative and a quantitative approach.

According to de Landsheere (1997: 8) "educational inquiry is a disciplined inquiry". This implies that educational inquiry is a systematic process that is structured and ordered. The research procedures followed in this study attempt to follow systematic steps in order to develop an instrument that would identify potential peer counsellors. The following research and development procedures or steps were followed:

- Step One :Compilation of items. (see section 4.4.1)
- Step Two :Categorisation of items. (see section 4.4.2)
- Step Three :Development of the draft instrument. (see section 4.4.3)
- Step Four :Qualitative evaluation of the draft instrument. (see section 4.4.4)
- Step Five :Testing the instrument in the practical school situation. (see section 4.4.5)
- Step Six :Qualitative evaluation: self-report data (see section 4.4.6)
- Step Seven :Sociometric investigation (see section 4.4.7)
- Step Eight :Teacher ratings (see section 4.4.8)
- Step Nine : Scoring procedure. (see section 4.4.9)
- Step ten :Data analysis and interpretations. (see section 4.4.10)

#### **4.4 PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF THE INSTRUMENT**

In this section, the method of investigation is explained and the procedures that were followed in the development of the draft instrument are discussed.

#### **4.4.1 Step one - Compilation of items**

From research based on the literature study and the researcher's personal involvement in peer-counselling programmes an inventory of items that indicated peer-counsellor characteristics and requirements was compiled.

#### **4.4.2 Step two - Categorisation of items**

All the suggested requirements and criteria drawn from the literature study and from the researcher's formative experience, were categorised. The cumulative characteristics and criteria were grouped into the following broad areas of key attributes that peer-counsellors should have:

- Caring and sharing - The ability to show concern and to share with others.
- Listening - The ability to listen attentively and truly to hear and comprehend what is being said.
- Genuineness - The ability to be genuine and communicate honest feelings.
- Positive social behaviour patterns - The ability to be helpful and to be approachable.
- Moral ethics - To abide by ethical principles.
- Cognitive ability - The ability to solve problems and conflicts.
- Self-knowledge - The ability to be self-aware.

#### **4.4.3 Step three - Development of the draft instrument.**

The draft instrument was developed from the inventory of items that was categorised as mentioned above. It was decided that the draft instrument would take the form of a self-report instrument using the Likert scale design. The motivation for using a self-report measure was because it allows for confidentiality. More candid responses can be obtained when using a self-report measure as opposed to a personal interview (Ary 1992: 421). This type of questionnaire was also regarded as the most appropriate for scoring purposes.

The Likert technique uses a range of items or statements to which subjects are required to respond. Respondents are also asked to respond by indicating their degree of agreement or affect along a continuum ranging from very favourable to very unfavourable. The question

format of Likert is useful to determine the relative intensity of different items (Babbie 1998:183).

#### **4.4.3.1 Formulation of items**

As the main aim was to develop a self-report instrument, it was imperative that the items be reformatted into a series of short statements.

One of the disadvantages of self-report measures is the possibility of misinterpretation of the questions by the respondents (Ary 1990: 421). In this respect Thorndike (in Anderson 1997: 888) and Babbie (1998: 148-152) have set guidelines for writing clear items. These are listed as follows:

- Items must be simple, clear and direct.
- Each statement should contain only one complete thought.
- Avoid double barrelled questions.
- Avoid the use of statements that involve double negatives.
- Questions should be relevant.
- Items must be short.
- Avoid items that are “vague modifiers” i.e. words that may not be understood by those who are asked to respond to the scale.
- Respondents must be competent and willing to answer.

Furthermore, Anderson (1997:888) states that “self-report measures require at a minimum that those responding should find the items included in a scale meaningful and interesting.”

The guidelines mentioned above were considered when formulating the items. The process involved in the formulation of items into questionnaire format entailed the following:

Based on the “pool of items” that was compiled and categorised into the seven main areas as identified in step two (section 4.4.2) a series of statements were drawn up under the different categories. These statements (or items) was then used to design the draft instrument (see Appendix 1).

#### **4.4.3.2      *Validity of the items***

An important consideration when formulating the items was item validity. Validity implies the degree to which the scale measures what it purports to measure (Anderson 1997: 889). According to Ary (1990: 434) content validity refers to whether the items are adequate for measuring what they are supposed to measure and whether they constitute a representative sample of the behaviour domain under investigation. In the case of this study, in order to ensure content validity, a qualitative assessment was done so that the items could be examined and judged by experts in the field of peer-counselling (see section 4.4.4 below).

#### **4.4.4    Step four - Qualitative evaluation of the draft instrument.**

A qualitative assessment was done in which the instrument was scrutinised and analysed by experts in the field. It was considered important that the respondents be carefully selected so that the test instrument could be assessed in a meaningful, relevant and professionally accountable manner.

The following factors were considered in the selection of respondents:

- Expert knowledge and appropriate experience in education and counselling.
- Adequate exposure to the subject of peer-counselling.

According to the factors mentioned above, the following qualified as respondents:

- Psychologists
- School counsellors
- Educational researchers.
- Guidance teachers who were involved in counselling at secondary schools.
- Individuals who were already trained as peer counsellors.

For purposes of this research each of the above-mentioned groups was represented in the panel of respondents. The following respondents were used:

- Two psychologists
- One educational researcher

- One school counsellor
- One guidance teacher
- One peer-counsellor who was already trained in peer-counselling.

Copies of the self-assessment instrument for prospective peer-counsellors were given to the abovementioned six respondents. The respondents were requested to scrutinise each item in terms of validity, clarity, relevance and to add on items that they considered important for the selection of peer-counsellors. Respondents' comments had to be written on the instrument.

The qualitative assessment proved to be worthwhile as pertinent inputs and information were given. The input given by the educational researcher focused on terminology used, i.e. the use of the word cognitive as opposed to the word intellectual was questioned. Many items under the heading of self-knowledge and cognitive skills were questioned. The content validity of some items under these sections was questioned as they were not really measuring what they were supposed to measure. For example, in the section for cognitive skills some items indicated interest levels rather than cognitive skills.

Feedback from the school counsellor and guidance teacher proved to be extremely useful. Several items that were vague and unclear were highlighted. Many additional items were suggested, particularly under the heading of genuineness. Several items were suggested for consideration e.g. items on honesty, trust, leadership and being amenable to authority or authority figures.

The information obtained from the respondent who was trained as a peer-counsellor was also useful. The respondent having had hands-on experience in peer-counselling, was able to indicate many items which appeared vague and were phrased in a confusing manner. The respondent was able to identify vocabulary that would be appropriate to use for the particular target group in this research (i.e. secondary school learners).

Input given by the two psychologists was restricted to item ambiguity, item validity and the rephrasing of certain items.

The critique given by all the respondents proved to be useful and enabled the researcher to refine the items in the self-assessment instrument

#### **4.4.5 Step five -Testing the instrument in the practical school situation**

##### **4.4.5.1 *Selection of school***

The instrument was applied in a natural school environment in one secondary public school in the Centurion area in Gauteng. This public school was selected because it was deemed to be representative of a multicultural learning environment. It was possible for the researcher to involve respondents that were from different population groups (i.e. African, Indian and White learners). The school also reflected a supportive learning environment that could be conducive to this type of investigation.

This study was limited to one school in the Centurion area because of logistical and practical reasons and in view of the limited scope of the research. The researcher was based in this area and had access to this school and it was envisaged that peer counselling programmes would be implemented at this school in the foreseeable future.

It was also considered essential that guidance and lifeskills should feature as fully functional aspects of the curriculum at the selected school. This was important because peer-counsellor training normally takes place during lifeskills periods. This would ensure that learners who were identified as peer-counsellors would not miss out on their subject teaching when involved in training.

##### **4.4.5.2 *Selection of participants***

The following procedure was followed in order to identify aspiring peer-counsellors as participants in testing the instrument.

- The principal, members of the staff and learners were informed about the peer-counselling programme.
- The purpose of the empirical study was explained to the principal and staff members.
- The school assigned a co-ordinator to facilitate the project and to be responsible for informing learners about the purpose of the peer-counselling programme and the role function of peer-counsellors.
- Subject teachers were given an orientation lecture by the researcher regarding the selection of aspiring peer-counsellors. They were given general guidelines on some of the important attributes needed by prospective peer-counsellors.
- The above mentioned orientation was only given to subject teachers in charge of grades nine, ten, eleven and twelve. Prospective peer-counsellors were selected from these grades because of their level of maturity.
- Subject teachers then nominated names of learners from grade nine to grade twelve.
- Learners also nominated names from their respective classes and grade levels.
- All learners who wanted to be trained as peer counsellors submitted their names to the co-ordinator.
- The lists of names that were submitted by both teachers and learners were then correlated and a composite list of names was drawn up.

This procedure was followed because it ensured that all the relevant school-based stakeholders were involved in the selection procedure for the identification of potential peer-counsellors.

#### **4.4.5.3      *Application of the self-assessment instrument***

The co-ordinator who was the school based facilitator for this project arranged for the group of learners (i.e. those that were identified or those who nominated themselves as potential peer-counsellors) to meet in the guidance room at eight o'clock in the morning so that the test instrument could be administered. Prior arrangements regarding this were made with the researcher.

It was important to obtain honest and reliable responses, therefore the researcher was personally involved in the administration of the instrument. The learners were made to feel at ease and they were assured that their responses would be confidential. The self-assessment instrument was handed to each learner individually. Information was given on the purpose of the instrument and how to answer the instrument (refer to Appendix 1). The instructions were read out and explained. All the learners completed the test instrument within forty minutes.

#### **4.4.6 Step six - Qualitative evaluation: Self-report data**

In addition to the self assessment instrument, respondents had to answer five additional open-ended questions. These were the following (see Appendix 2):

1. What are your strengths?
2. How do your strengths serve you?
3. What are your weaknesses?
4. How do your weaknesses hinder you?
5. Why would you like to be a peer-counsellor?

The purpose for doing this was to allow respondents to give personal feed-back on how they viewed themselves, what their strengths and weaknesses were and to obtain personal insights on why they wanted to become peer-counsellors. This was done so that a qualitative assessment could be done for the purpose of verifying the quantitative data.

#### **4.4.7 Step seven - Sociometric investigation**

Sociometry is a technique used for assessing personal attractions and rejections among members of a group and the interpersonal relationships within groups (Unisa 1994:84). A sociometric investigation is usually used for diagnostic reasons whereby information on group processes can be obtained. It can also identify individuals that are popular or who are natural leaders in a class or group context. According to Saha (1997:691) sociometric methods can also provide information and knowledge about how people in groups choose one another for friendships, work and other activities.

For the purpose of this research, a sociometric investigation was done in order to assess peer-ratings in the selection of peer-counsellors. Peer-ratings can be used to discover which children are perceived by others as being popular, and which are seen as class-leaders in general (Henerson & Morris et al 1978:125). It reveals the social status within a group and within a given context (for example leadership is usually context-bound). Peer-ratings are therefore valuable and essential to identify potential peer-counsellors.

Another important aim in doing the sociometric investigation was to do an additional qualitative and quantitative analysis regarding peer input on the selection of peer-counsellors. By doing the sociometric investigation, valuable social measurement could be obtained.

#### **4.4.7.1      *Sample selection***

After examining the list of names of all the respondents who were nominated according to the procedure as set out in section 4.4.5.2 it was noted that many respondents' names emerged from two specific classes, namely grade 10A and 11A. A sociometric investigation was therefore done in these two classes.

#### **4.4.7.2      *Procedure***

The researcher was involved in administering the sociometric investigation in the grade 11A class. The school-based facilitator who was involved in co-ordinating the selection procedure, administered the sociometric investigation in the grade 10A class. Instructions were given orally. All the learners in the class-room were involved in this activity. Responses had to be given in writing and learners had to indicate the full names and surnames of their selected choice. Learners were assured that their responses would be confidential.

Each learner was handed a slip of blank paper. A brief preamble was given on the functions of peer-counsellors and the requirements and characteristics of effective peer-counsellors. The learners were then requested to consider the instructions and the explanations given and

on this basis to choose one person in the class that they would consider to be a good peer-counsellor. The learners wrote their selected name on the blank piece of paper that was provided. The nominations were counted and graphically grouped (see figures 1 and 3 sections 4.7.2 and 4.7.3)

#### **4.4.8 Step eight - Teacher Ratings**

The class teachers of grades 10A and 11A also submitted six names of learners that they considered would be good peer-counsellors. This was done so that the results from the findings of the teacher ratings could be compared with the results of the sociometric investigation as well as the self-assessment instrument.

#### **4.4.9 Step nine - Scoring Procedures**

The questions that were set for the self-assessment instrument were based on a four item sub-scale. The scale represented the following:

- **A** = most like me
- **B** = like me
- **C** = unlike me
- **D** = most unlike me.

An assigned score of 4, 2, -2, and -4 was used for the four item subscale. The responses were scored according to whether the statement reflected a negative or positive inclination. The most positive response was coded "4" and the least positive response was coded "-4" (see Appendix 3: scoring sheet). A score was computed for each respondent, per item category.

There were 140 questions. The questions were divided into seven different categories, namely:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Category A (items 1-16)  | = caring and sharing (total score: 64). |
| Category B (items 17-35) | = listening (total score: 76).          |
| Category C (items 36-57) | = genuineness (total score: 88).        |

- Category D (items 58-91) = positive social behaviour patterns (total score: 136).  
 Category E (items ( 92-105) = moral ethics ( total score: 56).  
 Category F (items 106-124) = cognitive skills ( total score: 76).  
 Category G (items 125-140) = self-knowledge skills (total score: 64).

These divisions were not indicated on the self-assessment instrument, however they were indicated on the scoring sheet (see Appendix 3). This was done because it will assist teachers who are involved in the marking of the self-assessment instrument. Teachers are also given specific instructions to follow when administering the self-assessment instrument (see Appendix 4)

An important consideration in establishing the scoring procedure was that the scoring and interpretation procedures had to be straightforward, i.e. enabling teachers to do it themselves.

#### **4.4.10 Step ten - Data analysis and interpretation**

The findings and interpretations of the empirical research were categorised as follows:

- a) Findings and interpretations regarding the self-assessment instrument and the self-report data (see section 4.5 and 4.6).
- b) Findings and interpretations of the sociometric investigation (see section 4.7).
- c) Findings and interpretations regarding teacher evaluation (see section 4.8).

### **4.5 INTERPRETATION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA**

Table 4.1 on the following page indicates the results pertaining to the self-assessment instrument. The target group in the sample consisted of 22 respondents. The self-assessment instrument consisted of 140 questions (see Appendix 1).

**TABLE: 4.1 Results self-assessment instrument****Key:** A= Caring and sharing

E = Moral ethics

B = Listening and responding skills

F = Cognitive abilities

C = Genuineness

G = Self-knowledge

D = Positive social behaviour patterns

Categories	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total	
Max. Score	64	76	88	136	56	76	64	560	
<b>Respondents</b>									
1	Score	38	46	50	122	38	64	52	410
	%	59	60	57	90	68	84	81	73
2		48	70	50	100	20	62	50	400
		75	92	57	74	36	82	78	71
3		46	70	58	100	14	64	48	400
		72	92	66	74	25	84	75	71
4		48	54	40	94	48	50	48	382
		75	71	45	69	86	66	75	68
5		30	68	38	90	40	52	50	368
		47	89	43	66	71	68	78	66
6		28	58	54	92	14	52	56	354
		44	76	61	68	25	68	88	63
7		36	38	6	112	36	58	50	336
		56	50	7	82	64	76	78	60
8		44	46	62	86	36	44	16	334
		69	61	70	63	64	58	25	60
9		44	60	36	86	30	46	28	330
		69	79	41	63	54	61	44	59
10		48	58	16	80	26	38	18	284
		75	76	18	59	46	50	28	51

11	<b>Scores</b>	36	56	2	72	26	60	20	272
	<b>%</b>	56	73	2	53	46	79	31	49
12		40	40	20	70	24	36	40	270
		63	53	23	51	43	47	63	48
13		36	50	22	38	24	58	40	268
		56	66	25	28	43	76	63	48
14		30	46	30	70	20	38	28	262
		47	61	34	51	36	50	44	47
15		38	50	10	76	16	44	28	262
		69	66	11	56	29	58	44	47
16		40	36	18	58	36	44	28	260
		63	47	20	43	64	58	44	46
17		20	24	14	86	28	32	34	238
		31	32	16	63	50	42	53	43
18		16	26	36	60	28	52	18	236
		25	34	41	44	50	68	28	42
19		14	36	40	46	22	34	42	234
		22	47	45	34	39	45	66	42
20		48	20	16	76	32	34	0	226
		75	26	18	56	57	45	0	40
21		34	36	10	64	22	30	12	208
		53	43	11	47	39	39	19	37
22		22	26	24	46	30	22	20	190
		34	34	27	34	54	29	31	34
	<b>Total Score</b>	<b>1235</b>	<b>1328</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>1268</b>	<b>1089</b>	<b>1333</b>	<b>1136</b>	<b>1165</b>
	<b>Average in %</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>

It is noted that the candidates' total scores ranged from 73% to 34%. This range (73%-34%) indicates that the instrument is apparently capable of distinguishing between strong, average and weak candidates.

Respondents scored highly for:

Category B - Listening skills	average score obtained = 60%
Category F - Cognitive skills	average score obtained = 61%
Category D - Positive social behaviour patterns	average score obtained = 58%
Category A - Caring and sharing skills	average score obtained = 56%

Respondents obtained average scores for:

Category G - Self knowledge	average score obtained = 52%
Category E - Moral ethics	average score obtained = 50%

Respondents obtained low scores for:

Category C - Genuineness	average score obtained = 34%
--------------------------	------------------------------

The fact that respondents scored highly for cognitive skills indicates that respondents that were selected in the sample were seemingly above average students who fared well academically in school and who were intellectually competent. Results also indicate high scores for listening skills, positive social behaviour skills and caring skills. These categories are important criteria in the selection of aspirant peer counsellors. It is important that peer-counsellors obtain high scores in these categories as these categories indicate essential pre-requisites for effective peer-counsellors. Effective peer-counsellors have to manifest good listening skills, show the ability to be caring, have good positive social behaviour patterns and cognitive skills.

Respondents obtained average scores under moral ethics (50%) and self-knowledge (52%). Most adolescents have a unique way of viewing things and have developed their own value systems which could be different from those of adults. Respondents' ethical values are

influenced by their up-bringing and family background, amongst other factors. A possible reason why respondents obtained an average score for self-knowledge is that respondents' (all being adolescents) are at a stage of identity formation. Adolescents who are in a state of identity confusion may fluctuate in terms of their self-knowledge.

Respondents obtained low scores for the category of genuineness (34%). This can be attributed to the fact that many of them may have felt compelled to respond in a certain manner. Respondents may have wanted to put on a favourable façade. It is possible that they wanted to come across as being socially favourable. Wolf (1997: 422) points to the fact that one of the constraints of a self-report instrument is that respondents may answer in what they believe to be socially desirable responses.

From the foregoing it is apparent that the instrument is able to give a relative indication of how respondents score in the key areas which have been identified as important criteria in the selection of effective peer-counsellors. All the different categories are considered as being important. However, certain categories such as cognitive skills, positive social behaviours, caring and sharing skills and listening skills seem to carry relatively more weight in view of the self-assessments of the peer-counsellors. These skills are indeed necessary for peer-counsellors to have, so that they can cope with the training skills in peer-counselling and the tasks designated to them.

An analysis of three respondents was made in order to further analyse the quantitative data and to show the relationship between the quantitative data and the qualitative self-report data. Respondents number 1, 12 and 22 (see table 4.2) obtained the following scores:

**TABLE: 4.2 Comparative evaluation: quantitative data**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Resp. 1 Score</b>	<b>Resp. 12 score</b>	<b>Resp. 22 score</b>
A - caring & sharing	59%	63%	34%
B - listening skills	60%	53%	32%
C - genuineness	57%	23%	27%
D - positive social behaviour	90%	51%	34%
E - moral ethics	68%	43%	50%
F - cognitive skills	84%	47%	29%
G - self-knowledge	81%	63%	31%
<b>Average</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>34%</b>

Respondent number 1 obtained very high scores for positive social behaviour patterns (90%), self-knowledge (81%) and cognitive skills (84%). The respondent also obtained above average scores for caring and sharing, listening and genuineness. The comments made in the self-report data are the following:

“I have a strong personality so people listen to me and respect me.”

“I am confident in what I do.”

“People value what I say.”

“I tend to do well in what I do.”

“I try to be the best in everything I do”.

These comments indicate that there is convincing measure of consonance between the quantitative data and the information in the self-report data. High scores were obtained for positive behaviour patterns and self-knowledge. This is in consonant with the comments reflected in the self-report data. The respondent considers herself to be a friendly person, she has the ability to be self-aware and she sees herself as being well liked, “people listen to me and respect me”. She obtained a high score in cognitive skills (84%) and her comments indicate that she performs well academically: “I tend to do well in what I do”. However the

respondent's comment "I try to be the best in everything I do" indicates a competitive nature and this may not necessarily be a positive trait.

Respondent 12 obtained relatively high scores for caring and sharing skills (63%) and for self-knowledge skills (63%). Comments in the self-report data were the following:

"I am considerate and enjoy close personal relationships"

"I understand people"

"I am sometimes naive"

"I want to believe people are honest"

These comments indicate that the respondent has good social personal skills. The respondent is also self-aware and acknowledges personal naïveté. Low scores were obtained for genuineness (23%), moral ethics (43%) and cognitive skills (47%). Many of the respondent's other comments lack focus and points of reference in terms of personality and goals. For example, in response to why the respondent would like to be a peer-counsellor, the response was: "to better mine and other's lives". However, the following comment was direct and to the point: "My strengths help me understand people and know how to help them and indirectly myself".

Respondent 22 obtained relatively low scores in all the categories; A (34%), B (32%), C (27%), D (34%), F (29%) and G(31%). An average score of 50% was obtained for category E - moral ethics. Information on the self-report data indicates that the respondent is unsure and has a low self image. The following comments indicate this:

"I am sensitive to criticism"

"I am overly aware of others' opinion"

"I question my weaknesses and it reduces my self-worth"

The foregoing analysis illustrates that there appears to be a meaningful measure of overlap between the quantitative and qualitative results. The quantitative data obtained proved to be meaningful and the instrument seems to be a viable aid in identifying peer-counselling potential.

## 4.6 INTERPRETATION OF QUALITATIVE SELF-REPORT DATA

From the respondents' comments, the following information was obtained:

- The researcher was able to gauge the levels of maturity and introspection of the respondents.
- It was possible to assess the self perception of the respondents.
- Various areas of concern were made apparent. Many negative self-appraisals were expressed and some responses highlighted personal problem areas. Some areas of concern that were expressed were a lack of confidence, a lack of assertiveness, shyness and uncertainty about dealing with conflicts.

Information gained from the qualitative assessment proved to be useful to the researcher because it appears that the various areas of concern that respondents expressed could be addressed during pre-training interviews with individual respondents. Furthermore, some areas of concern could be adequately covered in the training programmes for peer-counsellors such as assertiveness and conflict resolution.

The researcher made a comparison between the quantitative results of the self-assessment instrument and the findings of the qualitative self-assessment.

The self-assessment instrument results indicated candidates' profiles in terms of the various categories. When used in conjunction with the self-report data, a more complete picture of the respondent becomes evident. Information that is perhaps missed out in the self-assessment instrument can be obtained from the self-report data. The self-report data shed additional light on the respondents (in general, written self-reports are important sources of information). When respondents write about themselves they are able to reflect on their own behaviour and thinking.

There appears to be a positive relationship between the information obtained in the qualitative assessment and the quantitative results of the self-assessment instrument.

Respondents who scored high on self knowledge were able to give insightful personal comments in the self-report data. In general the respondents who obtained high scores on the self-assessment instrument demonstrated the ability to write elaborately about themselves and they were able to give insightful information about themselves. Examples of personal reflections include:

- I know what I want and how to achieve my goals.
- I believe in what I do and I don't do something I don't want to.
- I am a bit bossy.
- I am inclined to avoid those who I feel threatened by.
- Being a teenager myself I can understand many situations that teenagers are placed in.

It can confidently be concluded that teachers who use the self-assessment instrument for purposes of identifying peer-counsellors will find the self-report data a useful additional guide in evaluating respondents who are potential peer-counsellors.

## **4.7 INTERPRETATION OF SOCIOGRAM DATA**

In order to assess peer-ratings in the selection of peer-counsellors a sociometric investigation was done (see 4.4.7) in two classes namely; grade 11A and grade 10A. The results were tallied and then reflected in a target sociogram.

### **4.7.1 The target sociogram**

A target sociogram is a graphic representation made up of concentric circles (or ellipses). Individuals are placed within the concentric circles according to the number of choices or nominations they received. The most frequently chosen person is placed in the innermost circle and the least chosen in the outermost circle. In this way it is easy to identify at a glance who the most popular nominee is and vice versa.

For the purposes of this study, respondents who were chosen as potential peer-counsellors by their class-mates are represented in the different circles. The respondents are coded with

specific numbers (corresponding with those used for respondents in the self-assessment instrument see section 4.5 table 4.1). Each respondent is indicated by an assigned number, as well as by the number of votes he/she received. Hence respondents can be easily identified on the results of both the self-assessment instrument and the target sociogram.

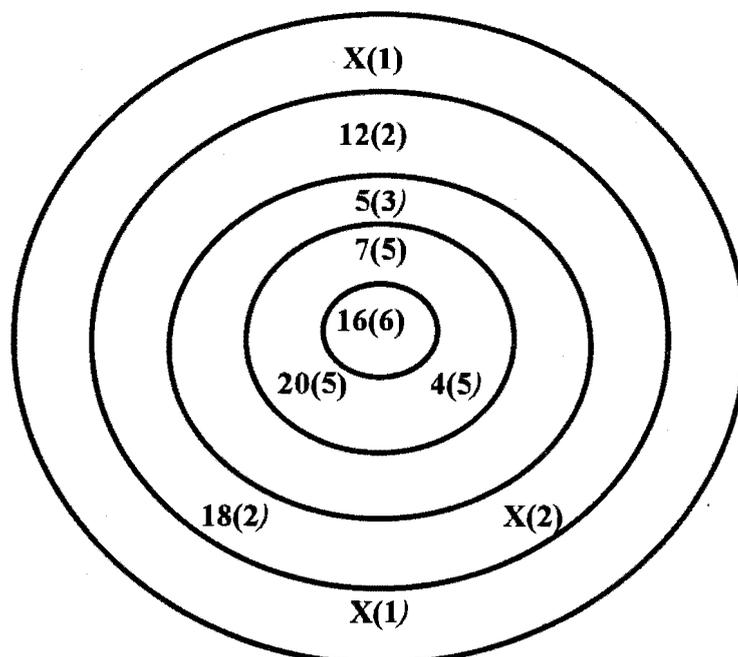
The results of the target sociogram for the grade 11A class are given in Figure 1.

#### 4.7.2 Results and interpretation of target sociogram 1 (Grade 11A).

**FIGURE 1: Target sociogram 1 (Grade 11A)**

**Key:**

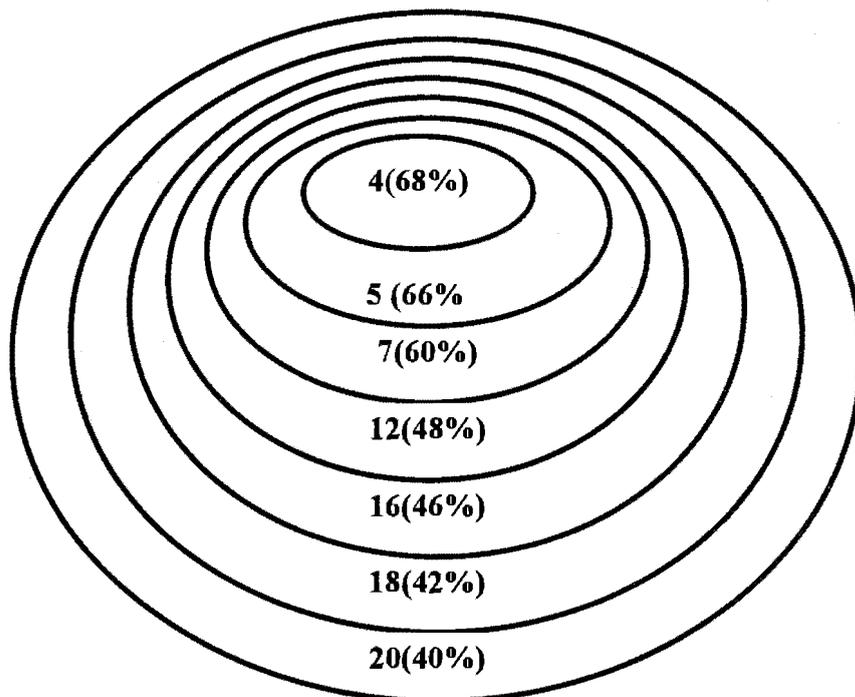
- Respondents are indicated by numbers (as explained above) as well as the number of votes they received ( represented in brackets).
- X - indicates that the respondent's name did not appear on the selection list (see 4.4.5.2) and hence was not included in the target group when administering the self-assessment instrument.



In order to show the relationship between the results of the peer-ratings as reflected on the target sociogram and the results of the self-assessment instrument, a graphic representation indicating the respondents scores is given in Figure 2.

Figure 2 is a graphic representation consisting of circles that indicate respondents' scores on the self-assessment instrument. Each respondent is represented in a circle. Candidate who obtained high scores are placed in the innermost circle. The candidate with the lowest score appears on the outermost circle. Respondents are indicated according to specific numbers as reflected in table 4.1 and in the target sociogram (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 2: Results: self- assessment scores (target sociogram 1)**



The results of the target sociogram data as reflected in Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicate the following:

- Seven respondents that were on the nominated list are represented on the target sociogram. These are respondents 16, 7, 20, 4, 5, 12 and 18.

- Peers rated respondents 16, 7, 20, and 4 highly. Most of these respondents obtained high and average scores on the self-assessment instrument.
- Two respondents obtained high peer ratings, as well as high scores on the self-assessment instrument (i.e. respondent 7 obtained five votes and 60% on the self-assessment instrument and respondent 4 obtained five votes and 68% on the self-assessment instrument).
- Two respondents obtained average scores on the self-assessment instrument and high peer ratings (i.e. respondent 16 obtained six votes and 46% on the self-assessment instrument and respondent 20 obtained five votes and 40% on the self-assessment instrument).
- Respondent 5 obtained an average vote of three and a high score of 66% on the self-assessment instrument.
- Respondents whose names were not included on the nominated list obtained low peer ratings. Three respondents coded X obtained two, one and one vote respectively.

It appears that there is a positive relationship between the results on the target sociogram and the results of the self-assessment instrument. Respondents who obtained high and average scores on the self-assessment instrument were all represented in the target sociogram. This indicates that peer-counsellors who are identified by their peers will probably also be identified on the self-assessment instrument.

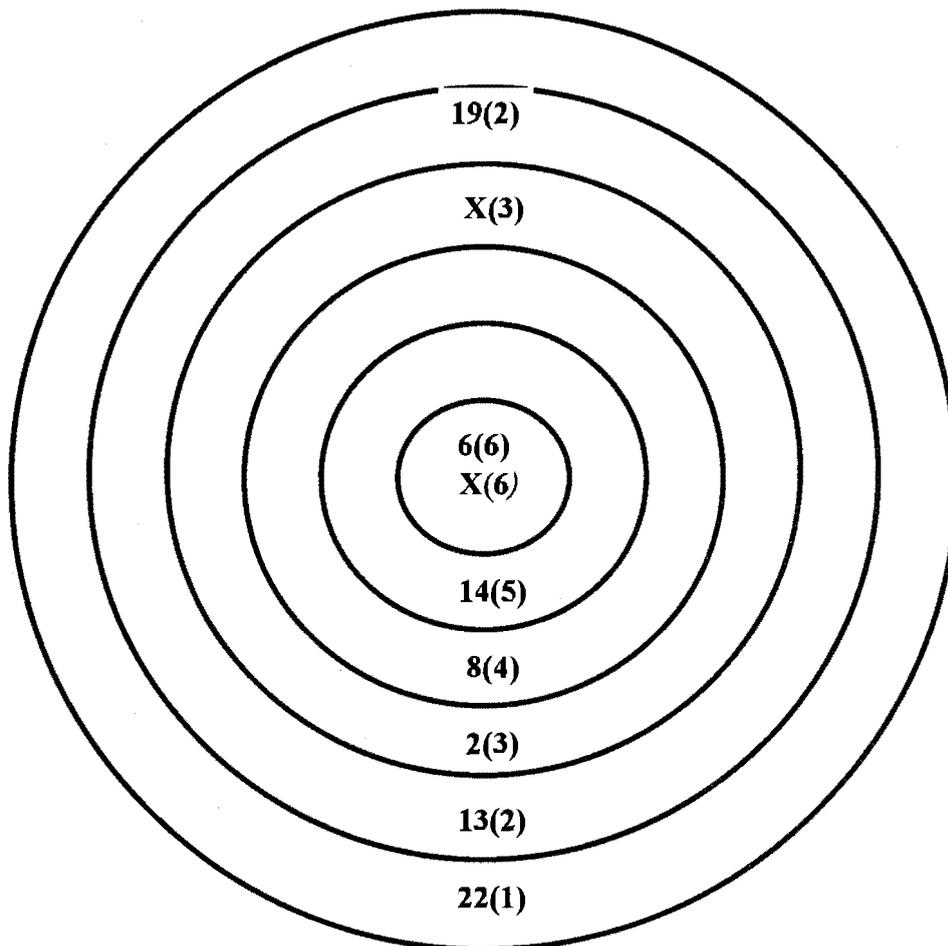
However it appears that there was not a significant relationship between the peer-ratings that identified “strong” candidates and the “strong candidates” as identified on the self-assessment instrument. The relative weight of the instrument vis-à-vis peer ratings will have to be verified in the school-based use of both.

#### **4.7.3 Results and interpretation of target sociogram 2 (Grade 10A)**

A sociometric investigation was also carried out in the grade 10A class, see (4.4.7). A graphic representation of the target sociogram is depicted in Figure 3.

**FIGURE 3: Results: target sociogram 2 (Grade 10A)****Key:**

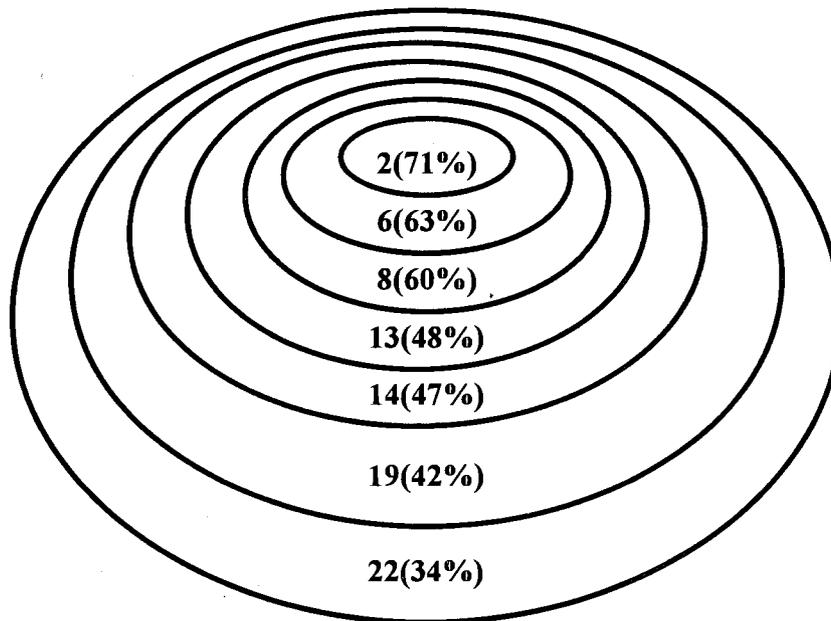
- Respondents are coded according to an assigned number as used in table 4.1.
- The number of votes that each respondent received appears in brackets.
- X indicates that the respondents' names did not appear on the selection list (see 4.4.5.2).



In order to show the relationship between peer-ratings (or peer votes) as reflected on the target sociogram (Figure 3) and the results of the self-assessment instrument, a graphic representation indicating the respondents' scores is given in Figure 4.

Each respondent is represented in a circle (ellipses). Respondents are indicated according to specific numbers as reflected in table 4.1 and in the target sociogram (Figure 3). Candidates who obtained high scores are placed in the innermost circle. The candidate with the lowest score appears in the outermost circle

**FIGURE 4: Results: Self-assessment scores (target sociogram 2)**



The results of the target sociogram data, as reflected in Figure 3 and Figure 4, indicate the following:

- Three respondents obtained high scores on the self-assessment instrument (i.e. 71%, 63% and 60%) and obtained high to average peer ratings on the target sociogram (i.e. three, six, and four votes respectively).
- Two respondents obtained average scores and low peer-ratings (i.e. 48% and two votes, 42% and two votes respectively).
- One respondent obtained an average score of 47% on the self-assessment instrument and a high peer-rating of five votes.
- One respondent obtained a low score (i.e. 34%) and a low peer-rating of one vote.

From the above analysis it is evident that most of the respondents who appeared on the target sociogram were also represented on the self-assessment instrument. It appears that there is a positive relationship between the peer-ratings and the results of the self-assessment instrument. As indicated above, respondents who had high scores also had high peer-ratings and some respondents who obtained average scores obtained average and lower peer-ratings.

There is also an apparent overlap between low scores on the self-assessment instrument and low peer ratings on the target sociogram as indicated with respondent 22 who obtained 34% on the self-assessment instrument and a low peer-rating of one vote on the target sociogram. Similarly respondent 19 obtained 42% and two votes on the target sociogram.

The results also indicate that two nominees (i.e. X(3) and X(6)) on the target sociogram were selected by learners but were not on the selected list of candidates (see step 5 section 4.4.5.2). One nominee (i.e. X(6)) obtained a peer- rating of six votes and was also selected by the teacher (see table 4.3 below). This indicates that this nominee was not initially selected during the screening process when candidates were nominated. This could imply the following:

- The nominee was probably not interested in being a peer-counsellor
- Screening and nomination procedures may not have been adequately followed when candidates were nominated.

## **4.8 INTERPRETATION OF TEACHER RATINGS**

### **4.8.1 An evaluation of teacher ratings - target sociogram 1 (grade 11A)**

The class teacher of the grade 11A class submitted six names of potential peer-counsellors (see section 4.4.8). The following tabular representation attempts to show the relationship between peer ratings, teacher ratings and the results of the test instrument.

**TABLE: 4.3 Comparative evaluation: (target sociogram 1)**

<b>Respondent number</b>	<b>Teacher Selection</b>	<b>Votes received in peer ratings</b>	<b>Self-assessment scores</b>
16	selected	6	46%
7	selected	5	60%
20		5	40%
4	selected	5	68%
5	selected	3	66%
12	selected	2	48%
18		2	42%
X		2	*
X		1	*
X		1	*

**X** These respondents' names were not on the nominated list of candidates (see 4.4.5.2).

**#** The class teacher identified six potential peer-counsellors. One of these does not appear on the above mentioned list ( i.e. this nominee was not on the original list and was also not nominated by peers).

The teachers identified five prospective peer-counsellors in this class. These respondents also received high peer-ratings, as well as average to high scores on the self-assessment instrument. The results therefore indicate a significant relationship between the teacher's input, peer inputs and the results obtained on the test instrument.

#### 4.8.2 An evaluation of teacher ratings - target sociogram 2 (grade 10A)

The class teacher of the grade 10A class also submitted six names of potential peer-counsellors (see section 4.4.8 ). Table 4.4 illustrates the relationship between peer-ratings, teacher ratings and the results of the self-assessment instrument.

**TABLE: 4.4 Comparative evaluation: (target sociogram 2)**

Respondent number	Teacher selection	Votes received in peer ratings	Self-assessment scores
6	selected	6	63%
X	selected	6	*
14		5	47%
8	selected	4	60%
X		3	*
2	selected	3	71%
19		2	42%
13		2	48%
22		1	34%

**X** = respondents not on selection list of candidates

**#** two of the nominees are not represented in the table

It appears that two candidates that were selected by the teacher were not on the list of nominees (i.e. these candidates were not included in the selection procedure see 4.4.5.2). This could possibly indicate that the screening procedures (i.e. the selection procedures) might not have been adequately followed. However, it is important to note that the three candidates selected by the teacher obtained high results on the test instrument. These three respondents also obtained fairly high peer-ratings as reflected in the sociogram.

### 4.8.3 Appraisal

The test instrument was field tested so that its feasibility could be evaluated. The results indicate the practical value of the test instrument in the secondary school situation in terms of the following:

- 1) It is a discriminatory tool that can be used to identify good, average and weak potential peer-counsellors
- 2) Counsellors, guidance teachers or other educators who are involved in peer-counselling can apply the test instrument in the secondary school situation because:
  - It is easy to administer
  - It is not time-consuming
  - Scoring procedure is not complicated

However, this research indicates that it is advisable to use the test instrument in conjunction with:

- Adequate selection procedures in identifying aspiring peer-counsellors (see section 4.4.5.2).
- Self report data of potential peer-counsellors (see section 4.4.6).

The main aim of this research was to develop an instrument that will assist in the identification of peer-counsellors in secondary schools. The instrument in itself is in a developmental stage and further developmental work might be needed. For example rigorous item analysis is needed in order to refine the instrument. In addition, guidelines for the application of the instrument can also be developed for future use on a broader scale. The training of peer-counsellors as well as the actual performance of peer-counsellors can shed valuable light regarding further refinement of the instrument. This requires ongoing research and can be time consuming. Finally as Wolf (1997: 426) states “well-made questionnaires cannot be developed in a short time, they require hard and sustained effort over a long period of time.”

## **4.9 CONCLUSION**

The focus of this chapter has been to highlight the approach and methods used in the empirical study. Attempts have also been made to show how data were obtained. In addition, the evaluation and findings pertaining to the test instrument and triangulation measures (i.e the self-report data, the sociometric investigation and the teacher ratings) were explained and described. Conclusions, recommendations and themes for further research emanating from this study will be presented in chapter five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Summary, conclusions and recommendations**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study emanated from an awareness that peer-counselling programs in South Africa did not contain objective assessments in the identification and selection of potential peer-counsellors. A literature study also indicated an absence of objective assessments in the selection of peer-counsellors. The researcher's formative experience led to an observation that there was a need for an objective screening tool that could be utilised as an instrument in the identification and selection of peer-counsellors in secondary schools. In view of this, a literature study was carried out to investigate the essential characteristics of effective peer-counsellors, thereby enabling the establishment of fundamental identification criteria. The findings from the literature study follow.

#### **5.2 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY**

##### **5.2.1 Learner needs in secondary schools and the implications for peer-counsellors and school counsellors**

A literature search was carried out on developmental needs and concerns of adolescents in secondary schools. This was done because learner needs and concerns direct the role of school counsellors and by extension the role of peer-counsellors in secondary schools. Furthermore, by exploring learner needs and problems in the secondary school, it was possible to show the different requirements needed from peer-counsellors and school counsellors. The literature study focused on the various areas of adolescent development such as: physical characteristics, adolescent sexuality, cognitive development, personality, social development and moral development. The findings indicate the following:

In the area of physical development learners have to deal with distinct sporadic physical growth and the concomitant emotional and social changes attached to it. The unusual growth spurt in

teenagers causes alarm and distress amongst many learners if they are not adequately prepared for these changes. The various ways in which school counsellors and peer-counsellors become responsive to these needs have been indicated as well as the different requirements needed from peer-counsellors and school counsellors (see section 2.5.1.1).

With regard to adolescent psycho-sexual development learners have to achieve a masculine or feminine sex role. Failure to achieve this can have far reaching consequences. Within the schooling context peer-counsellors and school counsellors will have to provide factual information on sexuality education as well as offer help to peers on the formation of an adequate sex role identity within their particular culture.

In the area of cognitive development (see section 2.5.3) there is a need to expand deductive and inductive reasoning with formal operational thought. Critical consciousness in adolescents necessitates guidance in developing the adolescents' discriminatory abilities concerning value systems, moral ethics and personal decision making.

The main psycho-social task facing adolescents with regard to personality development is identity formation. Adolescents are able to obtain healthy personalities if they can successfully avoid role diffusion. Role diffusion occurs when adolescents are unsure and uncertain of their role and place in the world. Adolescents often seek counselling aid when they have unrealistic self-perceptions, lowered self-esteem and negative self-critical thoughts. In this respect they have to acquire a certain measure of maturity and confidence. Many adolescents may seek guidance and counselling regarding personality problems (see section 2.5.4.1).

In terms of moral development, moral education in the secondary school is considered important (see section 2.5.5). In order to develop moral thinking learners have to be guided in their moral thinking, clarification of values and reflective thinking.

Key relationships have been identified as being important in adolescent social development (see section 2.5.6). These are parental relationships, friendships and peer-group relationships. It is

evident that teenagers have become alienated from mainstream society by adopting a youth culture. Therefore peer influence in the schooling environment should not be underestimated. In this regard the influence of the peer-group has been described in section 2.5.6.1. An important feature of adolescent peer-group development is that many adolescents rehearse their social roles mainly in peer-groups. Therefore peer-counsellors can have an enormous influence by virtue of their status as peers within the peer-group. Within a friendship context peer-counsellors also have a vital role to play. Peer-counsellors can facilitate growth and provide assistance to peers who have a strong need for emotional security. Research confirms that parental influence is substantially diminished between the ages of 14 years and 16 years (see section 2.5.6.3). For most adolescents closeness to peers increases and closeness to parents decreases.

The challenge is extended to counsellors and peer-counsellors to assist adolescents to deal with the different developmental tasks facing them. An analysis of adolescent needs and development points to the following:

- Problems facing adolescents are manifold and interrelated. It is evident that teenagers share similar problems and preoccupations that are typical to their age group.
- Adolescents in their movement towards maturity and adulthood experience personal dilemmas in coming to grips with themselves and the world around them. In their attempt to make meaning of the world and of themselves they need guided support and help.
- Many adolescents spend  $\pm$  six years in a secondary school environment, hence school life becomes an integral part of the adolescent's life-world. Problems facing adolescents have become increasingly obvious in the school context. The influence of pivotal figures like school peers, teachers and parents cannot be negated. Teenagers lean heavily on their friends and peer groups for support and guidance. It is common knowledge that they discuss their problems with others that are similar to them in age and social background.
- Peer-groups have a magical presence for most teenagers as they aspire for peer acceptance and approval. Peers have a powerful networking system that is alien to the adult world. Peer-counsellors from peer groups can be used as an important positive social agent and social support system for many adolescents.

- Research indicates that the influence of parents is waning and peer influences have become stronger. However, the role of parents cannot be underestimated as teenagers are still sensitive to parental input.
- Teenagers are often in conflict with parents and they may feel that their parents do not understand them. Conflicts between parents and adolescents arise out of misunderstanding, lack of knowledge regarding adolescent needs and failure on the part of adults to meet these needs. Teenagers who are trained as peer counsellors and who are placed within the mainstream of teenage networking will possibly be more sensitive to issues that adolescents face.
- Assistance by teenagers who operate as peer-counsellors can be envisioned as being very informal and can be conducted in a non threatening manner. This “we” element of commonality can have an important impact when counselling other adolescents. Teenagers will question authority figures more readily and are more accessible to their own teenage “compatriots”.

### **5.2.2 School counselling and peer-counselling**

Peer-counselling as a helping service has evolved out of counselling services in the secondary schools. It is essentially viewed as a component of school counselling programs. The philosophical vision underpinning school counselling and peer-counselling is similar. Both are concerned with the personal growth and development of learners. School counselling and peer-counselling are essentially concerned with building the confidence, competence and coping strategies of learners so that they can function optimally in the schooling environment and in the broader context of society.

### **5.2.3 The field and domain of school counselling.**

The challenge presented to counsellors and peer-counsellors regarding learner needs in the different areas of counselling is the following:

- In terms of vocational counselling (see section 3.5.1) it is essential that career information be disseminated to learners. Peer-counsellors and school counsellors must be able to facilitate

learner growth in career matters. In this respect peer-counsellors have to be well informed in order to function as peer-career assistants to school counsellors.

- With regard to counselling learners with learning problems (see section 3.5.2) peer-counsellors supplement the role of school counsellors by functioning as peer tutors in some areas of learning e.g. study skills, reading and remedial assistance. Peer-counsellors therefore should be academically competent and should be willing to help others.
- Counsellors and peer-counsellors also have to address various personal and socially related problems that learners experience in the schooling environment (see section 3.5.3). Problems such as drug abuse, alcohol addiction, violence and bullying are but a few of the problem areas that need urgent attention in many school environments.

It is evident that peer-counsellors, like school counsellors have to be knowledgeable and competent in different skills so that they can be responsive to learner needs within the different areas of school counselling. Certain attributes and skills such as the ability to work in groups, assertiveness, sensitivity and the development of care and concern are all required from them.

#### **5.2.4 Theoretical approaches used in school counselling**

Counsellors address learner needs by using established theoretical frameworks and approaches to be found in the Psychology and Educational Psychology disciplines (see section 3.6). This allows the counsellor to implement and transfer techniques and skills from theory into the practical counselling process. Similarly, if peer-counsellors are to assist counsellees in secondary schools, they would need to possess some knowledge of techniques and skills in counselling.

In terms of a person-centred approach, peer-counsellors should possess relationship building skills. Key features required in this approach are: the ability to listen accurately, the ability to reflect feelings, as well as the ability to show respect and concern. It is also imperative that peer-counsellors should be genuine. This means that peer-counsellors must come across as honest human beings and they should communicate feelings honestly. With regard to cognitive

counselling (see section 3.6.3) peer-counsellors should have adequate cognitive skills. Peer-counsellors who are trained according to this approach should have superior comprehension, analytical and discriminatory abilities. Behavioural counselling demands that peer-counsellors be effective behaviour change agents. Peer-counsellors should have the ability to constructively change the behaviour of others. Peer-counsellors therefore serve the function of effective role models and have to acquire essential positive behaviour patterns such as friendliness, approachability, respect, responsibility, optimism, humour, commitment and adaptability.

#### **5.2.5 Functions and characteristics of school counsellors and peer-counsellors.**

The roles of school counsellors and peer-counsellors are linked. Both school counsellors and peer-counsellors are essentially viewed as human development facilitators. They therefore have to develop good human relationships with others and facilitate human growth. Counsellors and peer-counsellors must manifest certain characteristics so that they are in a position to facilitate growth and change in others.

Peer-counsellors, like school counsellors, serve numerous functions (see section 3.7.2). They are involved in social and cultural activities and therefore they have to be motivated, enthusiastic and have high energy levels. Peer-counsellors also help modify adolescent behaviour towards positive instead of negative behaviours and hence they are seen as behaviour change agents. It is imperative that peer-counsellors acquire essential positive social-behaviour patterns. Peer-counsellors also fulfil the role of effective communicators. They are used as discussion leaders in many school related projects. Peer-counsellors also function in groups and this requires that they manifest social etiquette, sensitivity and co-operation. A pivotal requirement of peer-counsellors and school counsellors is the ability to be effective listeners. Peer-counsellors must be responsive to other peers and they should show care and concern for others.

In terms of roles and functions it is evident that peer-counsellors play a subsidiary role to that of school counsellors. It is critical that peer-counsellors be taught the parameters of their roles and functions (see section 3.7.2). Peer-counsellors do not replace the role of school counsellors, they merely complement and support school counsellors in many school related projects.

The characteristics and skills needed by school counsellors and peer-counsellors have been determined to a large extent by their respective roles and functions. There seems to be a corresponding overlap between the roles of school counsellors and peer-counsellors. Hence by implication, peer-counsellors will have to acquire characteristics similar to those of school counsellors.

Key personal characteristics of school counsellors have been identified in section 3.7.3. Besides these personal characteristics, counsellors should also acquire skills in counselling, some of which are: attending skills, responding skills and initiating skills. Peer-counsellors like the school counsellors should also harness distinct personal characteristics and also acquire skills in counselling so that they can enhance the quality of their work. The different characteristics needed from peer-counsellors were drawn from established research (see section 3.7.4). On the basis of research and the researcher's experience in peer-counselling programs a list of peer-counsellor characteristics was compiled under the following broad categories:

- Caring and sharing - The ability to show concern and to share with others.
- Listening and responding skills - The ability to listen attentively and truly to hear and comprehend what is being said.
- Genuineness - To be genuine and to communicate feelings honestly.
- Positive social behaviour patterns - The ability to be helpful and to be approachable.
- Moral ethics - To abide by ethical principles.
- Cognitive abilities - The ability to solve problems and conflicts.
- Self knowledge - The ability to be self-aware.

### **5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

A self-assessment instrument was developed and tested to identify aspirant peer-counsellors. The instrument was administered in a public secondary school. As a triangulation measure a further qualitative assessment was done (i.e. the self-report data, see section 4.4.6). As a further method

of validation a sociometric investigation was also carried out to obtain peer-ratings (see section 4.4.7) as well as teacher evaluation (see section 4.4.8).

### **5.3.1 Self- assessment instrument : quantitative data**

Findings from the quantitative data revealed the following:

The instrument was able to give a relative indication of how respondents scored in key areas which have been identified as important criteria in the selection of effective peer-counsellors. Respondents scored highly for: listening skills - 60%, cognitive skills 61%, positive social patterns - 58%, caring and sharing skills - 56%. Average scores were obtained for the following: self knowledge - 52% and moral ethics - 50%. Low scores were obtained for: genuineness - 34%.

The response profile is discussed and interpreted in section 4.5. The findings indicated that there was a convincing measure of consonance between the qualitative self-report data and the quantitative self-assessment data. The quantitative data obtained, proved to be meaningful and the results indicate that the self-assessment instrument seems to be a viable aid in identifying peer-counselling potential (see section 4.5). The instrument was able to identify strong average and weak candidates. Therefore the self-assessment instrument can indeed be utilised as a discriminatory tool in identifying potential peer-counsellors.

### **5.3.2 Self-report data: qualitative assessment**

The results obtained from the qualitative self-report data provided for a more holistic assessment of potential peer-counsellors. The self-report data were able to shed additional light on the various peer-counsellor candidates. Generally, the results obtained from the self-assessment instrument corroborated the results from the self-report data (see section 4.6). The value of the self-report data should not be underestimated because it enables one to assess respondents' self-perceptions, levels of maturity and introspection. The self-report data can therefore be seen as a useful additional guide in evaluating peer-counsellors.

### **5.3.3 Target sociogram data: peer-ratings**

A sociometric investigation (see section 4.4.7) was carried out in order to evaluate peer ratings in the identification of peer-counsellors. The target sociogram (see section 4.7.1) was used as a means to discover which learners will be selected as peer-counsellors by their peers.

A positive relationship was indicated between the results of the target sociogram and the results of the self-assessment instrument. This was made apparent by the following:

- Respondents who obtained high and average scores on the self-assessment instrument were all represented in the target sociogram.
- There was an overlap between low scores on the self-assessment instrument and low scores on the target sociogram.

The following discrepancies were revealed:

- In some cases, there was not a significant relationship between the peer ratings which identified 'strong' candidates and the 'strong' candidates that were identified on the self-assessment instrument.
- Furthermore, some nominees that were reflected on the target sociogram were not included on the selected list of peer-counsellor candidates (see section 4.4.5.2).

In general the similarities between the peer-ratings and the results on the self-assessment instrument outweighed the discrepancies found in a few cases.

### **5.3.4 Teacher evaluation**

The findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between the teacher ratings and the results obtained in the self-assessment instrument. The only discrepancy noted was that some candidates that were selected by the teachers were not reflected on the list of peer-counsellor candidates (i.e. these candidates were not included in the selection procedure, see section 4.4.5.2).

## **5.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY**

The literature study provided key information regarding the different criteria needed in the identification of peer-counsellors. A list of criteria indicating the requirements for the identification of peer-counsellors was drawn from the literature study. Information gauged from the literature study was also used to develop an item inventory that assisted in the compilation of the self-assessment instrument. Finally the information found in the literature study was used to develop the self-assessment instrument for use in the empirical study.

With regard to the empirical study, the researcher is confident that the developed instrument is useful in identifying potential peer-counsellors. The self-assessment instrument proved to be an effective tool in discriminating between good, average and weak peer-counsellor candidates. However, the findings from the empirical study also indicate that it is advisable to use the instrument in conjunction with other modes of assessment such as teacher evaluation, peer ratings and self-report data of prospective peer-counsellors.

The instrument in itself can be of practical value as indicated in section 4.8.3. It appears to be user-friendly, which means that educators who are involved in peer-counselling initiatives in secondary schools will be able to administer the instrument with relative ease.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The instrument is still in a developmental stage and further statistical refinement will have to be conducted.

## **5.7 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The self-assessment instrument is still in a developmental stage and therefore it provides a tentative assessment of peer-counsellors. In view of this, the self-assessment instrument should be used in conjunction with teacher ratings and peer ratings in the school environment. It is envisioned that the teacher ratings and the peer ratings will further objectify peer-counsellor selection.

Further refinement of the self-assessment instrument should be conducted on the basis of feedback gained from peer-counsellor training and performance. For example, the relative weight of the different categories used in the instrument can be validated by an assessment of how candidates actually perform in these categories during training sessions and later on as peer-counsellors.

Furthermore, the status of peer-counselling in South Africa, at a provincial and national level indicates that more direction and conformity is needed with regard to the selection of peer-counsellors. Currently, no consistent procedures are followed in the selection of peer-counsellors. Therefore an overarching policy should be developed regarding the selection of peer-counsellors in secondary schools.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT FOR**

**PROSPECTIVE PEER-COUNSELLORS**

**Instructions to candidates:**

- This is not a test but a self-inventory check-list.
- There are no right or wrong answers. You indicate to what extent each statement is applicable to you.
- Read each item carefully
- Place a cross in the column that truthfully describes you best.

<b>SCALE:</b>		<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>					
1.	I often do volunteer work.				
2.	I can sense when someone is upset.				
3.	I can communicate the needs of other students to a third person.				
4.	When someone is in distress, I tend to react to it by getting involved.				
5.	When I do something wrong I apologise immediately.				
6.	When others fight I usually intervene to resolve the problem.				
7.	I feel uncomfortable when others talk about their problems to me.				
8.	I like to live in peace with those around me.				
9.	Most of the time I am patient with people.				
10.	I often intervene in the classroom when someone is teased.				
11.	If my friend has a problem, I am able to share his/ her distress.				
12.	I am often asked by my friends to help them with their homework.				
13.	I get irritated when others talk a lot.				
14.	I often help class teachers with class-room chores.				
15.	I only help people who help me.				

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
16. I am sensitive to the feelings of others.				
17. I am good at expressing myself.				
18. I am regarded as a good listener by my friends.				
19. I show patience when someone explains something to me.				
20. If someone talks, I often, interrupt unintentionally.				
21. I am inclined to jump to conclusions.				
22. I am attentive when someone speaks.				
23. I sometimes find it difficult to concentrate during discussions.				
24. I usually follow the gist of people's conversations.				
25. I am able to encourage people to speak about themselves.				
26. I often speak out of turn.				
27. My mind sometimes wanders when people talk to me.				
28. I often miss the point of discussion during conversations.				
29. I believe that I am good at "reading between the lines" when people talk to me.				
30. I tend to watch my words when I speak.				
31. I try to concentrate on what people are saying to me even if it is not interesting.				
32. During group work, I can sense the mood of the group.				
33. I often avoid eye-contact when I'm speaking to someone.				
34. I am able to listen to what other people have to say and respond positively to their ideas.				
35. I get bored easily when listening to the problems of others.				
36. I am inclined to judge people without listening to all the facts.				
37. I remain silent when the truth may hurt.				
38. I am ashamed of my background.				
39. When I am sad others can easily detect it.				
40. I am concerned about the way I come across to others.				

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>				
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
41. I think it is important to please others and not to give offence.				
42. I seldom show my true feelings to others.				
43. My friends often confide in me.				
44. I tend to agree with what others say.				
45. I feel honesty is not always the best policy.				
46. I usually worry about what others say about me.				
47. I feel it is more important to be popular than to be fair towards others				
48. I like to make a favourable impression.				
49. I often tell 'white lies'.				
50. I seldom express my emotions.				
51. When I am happy others can notice it easily.				
52. I am usually considered to be dependable.				
53. I believe that others usually speak the truth.				
54. I usually try to be myself.				
55. I go out of my way to keep a promise.				
56. I am considered to be straight forward by other people.				
57. I usually hide my true feelings.				
58. I can make friends easily.				
59. I don't laugh much because there is not much to laugh about.				
60. I respect most of my teachers.				
61. I am regarded as being friendly by many people.				
62. I get jealous easily.				
63. I seldom join my friends when they fool around.				
64. Usually my first impressions of people turn out to be an accurate assessment of their character.				
65. I am able to take a joke that is aimed at me.				

SCALE: A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me	A	B	C	D
66. Sometimes little hassles upset me.				
67. Punctuality is important to me.				
68. I usually take offence easily.				
69. My parents do not really trust me.				
70. My parents can rely on me.				
71. I always complete tasks that are assigned to me.				
72. I am discouraged easily.				
73. I am able to relate to people.				
74. I never act without carefully considering every aspect of a situation.				
75. I like to participate in team events.				
76. I can disagree with people without seeking a confrontation with them.				
77. I often give advice to friends.				
78. I am inclined to complete things at the last minute.				
79. I am withdrawn and shy away from people.				
80. I work best when I am part of a team.				
81. I usually sulk when I don't get my way.				
82. I can mix with old and young people alike.				
83. I can accept another person's point of view.				
84. I can express an opinion even if it differs from that of others.				
85. I am able to confront someone who has wronged me.				
86. If someone is wronged I stand up for them.				
87. When I talk, people usually take me seriously.				
88. I will confront bullies when necessary.				
89. I ask teachers for help when I need it.				
90. If someone misbehaves in class I will tell him or her to stop.				

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
91. I tend to remain calm in a crisis situation.				
92. I am considered to be a fair and just person by most people.				
93. To take care of school property is important to me.				
94. I prefer loyalty to fairness.				
95. I feel obliged to return favours.				
96. I never take sides in a conflict situation.				
97. I am at ease when I meet new people.				
98. When the opportunity arises I am occasionally inclined to cheat in tests.				
99. I often join an opposing team when it suits me.				
100. If my friends behave badly I tend to go along with them.				
101. I take my time to return things I borrowed, from someone else.				
102. When I do wrong I feel guilty.				
103. If my friend has a problem with someone I side with my friend.				
104. Religion is important to me.				
105. I can tolerate dishonest people.				
106. I am considered to be knowledgeable.				
107. I am able to follow instructions accurately.				
108. I usually offer solutions to problems.				
109. If my peers have problems I usually know the reasons.				
110. I often get selected to represent my school at events or competitions.				
111. When I start a task I complete it.				
112. I often take charge of situations or projects at school.				
113. I usually find it difficult to make decisions.				
114. I have good, sound judgement.				
115. I often get elected into positions of leadership.				

<b>SCALE:</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>				
116. I often forget what I have learnt when writing a test.				
117. My school report reflects good results.				
118. I am good at solving mathematical problems.				
119. I can study on my own.				
120. My friends usually select me to lead discussions.				
121. I am usually confident in my ability to make a decision				
122. Many people rely on me to put things into perspective when discussing a problem.				
123. I am able to produce interesting ideas when working in groups.				
124. I am usually proven right on important issues.				
125. I would benefit from self-knowledge exercises.				
126. I am usually unsure of my beliefs.				
127. I like myself the way I am.				
128. I know my weaknesses.				
129. Sometimes I feel worthless.				
130. I often feel inferior when I compare myself to others.				
131. I think I am a worthwhile person.				
132. I wish I could be someone else.				
133. I tend to have unrealistic goals for myself.				
134. I would like to change many things about myself to like myself more.				
135. I know what my values are.				
136. I often change my views on things that are important to me.				
137. I know my strengths.				
138. I am often unsure of myself.				
139. I often don't understand my own behaviour.				
140. I have been able to achieve goals that I have set for myself.				

## APPENDIX 2

### SELF-REPORT DATA

**1. What are your strengths?**

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**2. How do your strengths serve you?**

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**3. What are your weaknesses?**

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**4. How do your weaknesses hinder you?**

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**5. Why would you like to be a peer counsellor?**

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## APPENDIX 3

### SCORING SHEET

#### SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT FOR PROSPECTIVE PEER-COUNSELLORS

SCALE: A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me	A	B	C	D
<b>A. Caring and Sharing:</b>				
1. I often do volunteer work.	4	2	-2	-4
2. I can sense when someone is upset.	4	2	-2	-4
3. I can communicate the needs of other students to a third person.	4	2	-2	-4
4. When someone is in distress, I tend to react to it by getting involved.	4	2	-2	-4
5. When I do something wrong I apologise immediately.	4	2	-2	-4
6. When others fight I usually intervene to resolve the problem.	4	2	-2	-4
7. I feel uncomfortable when others talk about their problems to me.	-4	-2	2	4
8. I like to live in peace with those around me.	4	2	-2	-4
9. Most of the time I am patient with people.	4	2	-2	-4
10. I often intervene in the classroom when someone is teased.	4	2	-2	-4
11. If my friend has a problem, I am able to share his/ her distress.	4	2	-2	-4
12. I am often asked by my friends to help them with their homework.	4	2	-2	-4
13. I get irritated when others talk a lot.	-4	-2	2	4
14. I often help class teachers with class-room chores.	4	2	-2	-4
15. I only help people who help me.	-4	-2	2	4
16. I am sensitive to the feelings of others.	4	2	-2	-4
<b>B. Listening and Responding Skills:</b>				
17. I am good at expressing myself.	4	2	-2	-4

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>				
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
18. I am regarded as a good listener by my friends.	4	2	-2	-4
19. I show patience when someone explains something to me.	4	2	-2	-4
20. If someone talks, I often, interrupt unintentionally.	-4	-2	2	4
21. I am inclined to jump to conclusions.	-4	-2	2	4
22. I am attentive when someone speaks.	4	2	-2	-4
23. I sometimes find it difficult to concentrate during a discussion.	-4	-2	2	4
24. I usually follow the gist of people's conversations.	4	2	-2	-4
25. I am able to encourage people to speak about themselves.	4	2	-2	-4
26. I often speak out of turn.	-4	-2	2	4
27. My mind sometimes wanders when people talk to me.	-4	-2	2	4
28. I often miss the point of discussion during conversations.	-4	-2	2	4
29. I believe that I am good at "reading between the lines" when people talk to me.	4	2	-2	-4
30. I tend to watch my words when I speak.	4	2	-2	-4
31. I try to concentrate on what people are saying to me even if it is not interesting.	4	2	-2	-4
32. During group work, I can sense the mood of the group.	4	2	-2	-4
33. I often avoid eye-contact when I'm speaking to someone.	-4	-2	2	4
34. I am able to listen to what other people have to say and respond positively to their ideas.	4	2	-2	-4
35. I get easily bored when listening to the problems of others.	-4	-2	2	4
<b>C. Genuineness:</b>				
36. I am inclined to judge people without listening to all the facts.	-4	-2	2	4
37. I remain silent when the truth may hurt.	-4	-2	2	4
38. I am ashamed of my background.	-4	-2	2	4
39. When I am sad others can easily detect it.	4	2	-2	-4
40. I am concerned about the way I come across to others.	-4	-2	2	4

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>				
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
41. I think it is important to please others and not to give offence.	-4	-2	2	4
42. I seldom show my true feelings to others.	-4	-2	2	4
43. My friends often confide in me.	4	2	-2	-4
44. I tend to agree with what others say.	-4	-2	2	4
45. I feel honesty is not always the best policy.	-4	-2	2	4
46. I usually worry about what others say of me.	-4	-2	2	4
47. I feel it is more important to be popular than to be fair towards others	-4	-2	2	4
48. I like to make a favourable impression.	-4	-2	2	4
49. I often tell 'white lies'.	-4	-2	2	4
50. I seldom express my emotions.	-4	-2	2	4
51. When I am happy others can notice it easily.	4	2	-2	-4
52. I am usually considered to be dependable.	4	2	-2	-4
53. I believe that others usually speak the truth.	4	2	-2	-4
54. I usually try to be myself.	4	2	-2	-4
55. I go out of my way to keep a promise.	4	2	-2	-4
56. I am considered to be straight forward by other people.	4	2	-2	-4
57. I usually hide my true feelings.	-4	-2	2	4
<b>D. Positive Social Behaviour Patterns:</b>				
58. I can make friends easily.	4	2	-2	-4
59. I don't laugh much because there is not much to laugh about.	-4	-2	2	4
60. I respect most of my teachers.	4	2	-2	-4
61. I am regarded as being friendly by many people.	4	2	-2	-4
62. I get jealous easily.	-4	-2	2	4
63. I seldom join my friends when they fool around.	-4	-2	2	4

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>				
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
64. Usually my first impressions of people turn out to be an accurate assessment of their character.	4	2	-2	-4
65. I am able to take a joke that is aimed at me.	4	2	-2	-4
66. Sometimes little hassles upset me.	-4	-2	2	4
67. Punctuality is important to me.	4	2	-2	-4
68. I usually take offence easily.	-4	-2	2	4
69. My parents do not really trust me.	-4	-2	2	4
70. My parents can rely on me.	4	2	-2	-4
71. I always complete tasks that are assigned to me.	4	2	-2	-4
72. I am discouraged easily.	-4	-2	2	4
73. I am able to relate to people.	4	2	-2	-4
74. I never act without carefully considering every aspect of a situation.	4	2	-2	-4
75. I like to participate in team events.	4	2	-2	-4
76. I can disagree with people without seeking a confrontation with them.	4	2	-2	-4
77. I often give advice to friends.	4	2	-2	-4
78. I am inclined to complete things at the last minute.	-4	-2	2	4
79. I am withdrawn and shy away from people.	-4	-2	2	4
80. I work best when I am part of a team.	4	2	-2	-4
81. I usually sulk when I don't get my way.	-4	-2	2	4
82. I can mix with old and young people alike.	4	2	-2	-4
83. I can accept another person's point of view.	4	2	-2	-4
84. I can express an opinion even if it differs from that of others.	4	2	-2	-4
85. I am able to confront someone who has wronged me.	4	2	-2	-4
86. If someone is wronged I stand up for them	4	2	-2	-4
87. When I talk, people usually take me seriously.	4	2	-2	-4

<b>SCALE:</b>				
A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me				
	A	B	C	D
88. I will confront bullies when necessary.	4	2	-2	-4
89. I ask teachers for help when I need it.	4	2	-2	-4
90. If someone misbehaves in class I will tell him or her to stop.	4	2	-2	-4
91. I tend to remain calm in a crisis situation.	4	2	-2	-4
<b>E. Moral Ethics:</b>				
92. I am considered to be a fair and just person by most people.	4	2	-2	-4
93. To take care of school property is important to me.	4	2	-2	-4
94. I prefer loyalty to fairness.	-4	-2	2	4
95. I feel obliged to return favours.	4	2	-2	-4
96. I never take sides in a conflict situation.	4	2	-2	-4
97. I am at ease when I meet new people.	4	2	-2	-4
98. When the opportunity arises I am inclined to occasionally cheat in tests.	-4	-2	2	4
99. I often join an opposing team when it suits me.	-4	-2	2	4
100. If my friends behave badly I tend to go along with them.	-4	-2	2	4
<b>F) Cognitive Abilities:</b>				
101. I take my time to return things I borrowed, from someone else.	-4	-2	2	4
102. When I do wrong I feel guilty.	4	2	-2	-4
103. If my friend has a problem with someone I side with my friend.	-4	-2	2	4
104. Religion is important to me.	4	2	-2	-4
105. I can tolerate dishonest people.	-4	-2	2	4
106. I am considered to be knowledgeable.	4	2	-2	-4
107. I am able to follow instructions accurately.	4	2	-2	-4
108. I usually offer solutions to problems.	4	2	-2	-4

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
109. If my peers have problems I usually know the reasons.	4	2	-2	-4
110. I often get selected to represent my school at events or competitions.	4	2	-2	-4
111. When I start a task I complete it.	4	2	-2	-4
112. I often take charge of situations or projects at school.	4	2	-2	-4
113. I usually find it difficult to make decisions.	-4	-2	2	4
114. I have good sound judgement.	4	2	-2	-4
115. I often get elected into positions of leadership.	4	2	-2	-4
116. I often forget what I have learnt when writing a test.	-4	-2	2	4
117. My school report reflects good results.	4	2	-2	-4
118. I am good at solving mathematical problems.	4	2	-2	-4
119. I can study on my own.	4	2	-2	-4
120. My friends usually select me to lead discussions.	4	2	-2	-4
<b>G) Self- Knowledge:</b>				
121. I am usually confident in my ability to make a decision	4	2	-2	-4
122. Many people rely on me to put things into perspective when discussing a problem.	4	2	-2	-4
123. I am able to produce interesting ideas when working in groups.	4	2	-2	-4
124. I am usually proven right on important issues.	4	2	-2	-4
125. I would benefit from self-knowledge exercises.	-4	-2	2	4
126. I am usually unsure of my beliefs.	-4	-2	2	4
127. I like myself the way I am.	4	2	-2	-4
128. I know my weaknesses.	4	2	-2	-4
129. Sometimes I feel worthless.	-4	-2	2	4
130. I often feel inferior when I compare myself to others.	-4	-2	2	4
131. I think I am a worthwhile person.	4	2	-2	-4

<b>SCALE:</b>				
<b>A = Most Like me, B = Like me, C = Unlike me, D = Most Unlike me</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
132. I wish I could be someone else.	-4	-2	2	4
133. I tend to have unrealistic goals for myself.	-4	-2	2	4
134. I would like to change many things about myself to like myself more.	-4	-2	2	4
135. I know what my values are.	4	2	-2	-4
136. I often change my views on things that are important to me.	-4	-2	2	4
137. I know my strengths.	4	2	-2	-4
138. I am often unsure of myself.	-4	-2	2	4
139. I often don't understand my own behaviour.	-4	-2	2	4
140. I have been able to achieve goals that I have set for myself.	4	2	-2	-4

## APPENDIX 4

### TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

**Instructions to teachers and counsellors who will be involved in the administration of the self-assessment instrument:**

- Instructions on how to complete the self-assessment instrument and self-report data should be clearly read out to the candidates.
- Ensure that candidates write their names and surnames, as well as the grades to which they belong to on the self-assessment instrument.
- Students must first complete the self-assessment instrument (Appendix 1).
- Students must then complete the self-report data (Appendix 2).
- Compute and tally the overall total score and the total scores for the different categories (Appendix 3). See scoring procedure in section 4.4.9.
- Collate scores of all candidates on a Composite Score Sheet. See sample page 152 and in section 4.5, Table 4.1.
- The Composite Score Sheet reflects at a glance the following:
  - a) The strengths and weaknesses of each respondent in the different categories.
  - b) It may indicate to counsellors involved in training peer-counsellors as to which areas the respondents might need improvement.
  - c) The information as reflected in the different categories can also be compared to peer-counsellors' performance during training.

