

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES AND PLAN OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Self-evaluation has a subjective character. We evaluate ourselves according to our own frame of reference which includes our own norms, beliefs and values. Adolescents seem to evaluate themselves unrealistically. Self-evaluation amongst black adolescent learners is even more unrealistic because they often lack the necessary personal guidance. Except when parents are educated, adolescents receive no guidance from parents or guardians. Schools are trying to give guidance to adolescents but this is insufficient. Lack of guidance is evident in the fact that many black adolescents want to become doctors, engineers and chartered accountants mainly because they (adolescents) do not know what the courses or the degrees entail. Venda adolescents are not studying the subjects needed for these courses, for example, Mathematics, Physical Science or Accounting. These adolescents do not know what their own abilities are - moreover, they also do not know what their inabilities are. They seem to think that choosing a profession is just like betting on horses. The self-knowledge of adolescents leaves much to be desired. Adolescents seem to evaluate themselves far above their ability.

We all need to evaluate ourselves, our opinions, our abilities, our work from time to time (Beck 1986:270). This statement, made more than a decade ago, seems to hold water even today. It is easy to evaluate running speed with a stopwatch, but dancing or gymnastics requires a social comparison, judging performance against other individuals. In such instances, we tend to compare ourselves with people who are similar to ourselves in age, background, culture, interests, and experience.

Since adolescents are just about to enter adulthood, the achievement of a stable sense of self is necessary. The achievement of a stable sense of self in a changing society like the one in South Africa can be difficult. Nonetheless, this is precisely what adolescents should achieve in order to function

effectively in the world. Therefore it seems necessary to launch an investigation into a project such as self-evaluation by the Venda adolescent.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Becoming aware of the problem

Venda adolescents do not seem to be in a hurry to complete their schooling. Moreover, they seem not to care about their education in general. They seem to have no direction in life. However, they tend to be serious about practices such as elopement and early motherhood or fatherhood. It is common amongst Venda adolescents to elope whilst still attending school.

In a research conducted amongst Venda adolescent girls, it was found that in one secondary school, 35 girls in Grade 12 were mothers (Ramalebana 1995:59). It is a reasonable assumption therefore to state that there is no secondary school in rural Venda where all learners are non-parents. In one school in 1997, two girls out of 26 girls in Grade 12 were highly pregnant during their final- year examination period. According to the new departmental regulations, they may not be expelled or suspended. They are to remain at school and continue with the school's normal programme. The question remains: Do such girls evaluate themselves as ordinary girls or do they see themselves as mothers-to-be?

From research findings, it was clear that Venda adolescents became mothers as early as in Grade 8 and, to crown it all, some even got married that young (Ramalebana 1995:59). This situation definitely needs attention. Venda adolescents should be helped to form and apply a realistic self-concept.

Among the Venda adolescents, there are many Grade 12 learners who have to repeat their school year. The Department of Education in the Northern Province (Limpopo Province) has now decided to have finishing schools for such repeaters. Finishing schools are attended by those repeaters who have failed Grade 12 twice or more. In one such school in 1996, one learner was almost 40 years old whilst one of the educators was only 24 years old. At some finishing schools, Venda adolescents are repeating Grade 12 for the eighth time. They have such a low esteem of themselves that they do not

seem to have hope in life. They are pessimistic. In fact, it seems as if they do not care whether they will pass or fail. In November 1996, a specific school in Venda had a 100% failure rate in its Grade 12 class. This worried the Department of Education, but the candidates themselves were apparently not perturbed at all.

Venda adolescents usually display the following characteristics:

- They are not eager to complete schooling.
- They are not motivated to pass their grades without repeating.
- They are not bothered when failing a grade.
- Many of those who pass do so because of condonation or conditional transfer.
- They have a high regard for parenting learners and consider them as “high class”.
- Their age groups do not match their grades.
- They choose non-challenging subjects.
- They are irresponsible with their lives.
- They display signs of laziness.
- They seem to depend heavily on educators and to dislike working independently.

It is assumed that learners with such characteristics will have a fairly moderate or low esteem of themselves. One can expect these learners to demonstrate low self-concepts on any self-concept instrument.

In 1996, the then deputy president, Mr Thabo Mbeki, declared education in the Limpopo Province a disaster area. The Venda adolescent is very much part of that disaster. The answer to this problem does not lie with parents, educators or even the Department of Education. The answer lies in learners themselves.

Although there is a tendency all over the world to move towards non-sexism, gender seems to be an issue in the rural areas of the Limpopo Province, Venda-speaking communities included.

It seems that Venda adolescent boys and girls do not evaluate themselves in the same way. On average, Venda girls are academically weaker than Venda boys. This weak performance will possibly have a bearing on their (Venda girls') self-evaluation.

Banks & Banks (1997:141) state that although women achieve better grades than men they are less likely to believe they can do college work. Females exhibit lower self-esteem than males during secondary and higher education. In traditional Venda culture, women and girls are not considered equal to men. Women and girls are regarded as inferior to men concerning decision-making. Men may decide for women, but not vice versa.

Chandler (1980:58) is of the opinion that, if girls have no male partners, the doors of paradise will be closed to them. Higgs, Vakalisa, Mda & Assie-Lumumba (2000:9) believe that democratisation of education as a political project to build up a democratic society very much depends on the degree of participation of the members of society in the decision-making process. Because Venda boys generally look down on Venda girls, this may have an effect on the girls' self-evaluation. Venda girls may also look down on themselves.

1.2.2 Statement of the problem

The Venda-speaking adolescent, as is evident from research findings alluded to in previous paragraphs, seemingly experiences problems relating to self-evaluation. Observed behaviour is not congruent with expected future achievements. Regardless of their conduct they still express the desire to access careerpaths such as those in engineering and medicine. One can comfortably assume that such adolescents do not evaluate themselves realistically.

This investigation was set up to determine the way in which the Venda-speaking adolescents evaluate themselves (self-evaluation). This is to be compared with the evaluation of the same adolescents by their parents and educators/teachers. For the purpose of this study such adolescents will be drawn from secondary schools.

That there is a high correlation between self-evaluation and achievement is seemingly undisputed. Further, communities are interested in ensuring that adolescents develop into responsible adults. All of the above warrant that, in the context of a Venda-speaking adolescent, an empirical investigation be conducted to answer the following questions:

- How do Venda-speaking adolescents evaluate themselves academically, socially, psychologically and as members of their families?
- In what ways and to which extent does the Venda-speaking adolescent's self-evaluation differ from the evaluation by parents and teachers?
- What programmes can be designed to help Venda-speaking adolescents to evaluate themselves realistically and improve their sense of self-worth?
- What are the factors influencing the Venda-speaking adolescent's self-evaluation?

1.2.3 Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a statement that describes a particular relation or absence of relation between constructs or variables. It is a postulated relation among constructs/variables that is targeted for testing a particular research project. In this research, our hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Venda-speaking adolescents evaluate themselves in the same way that their parents and teachers evaluate them.

Based on the above hypothesis, the following are the alternative hypotheses for this research study:

- Venda-speaking adolescents evaluate themselves more favourably than they are evaluated by parents and teachers.
- Venda-speaking adolescents evaluate themselves subjectively.
- Teachers and parents evaluate Venda-speaking adolescents objectively.

1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are as follows:

- To examine theoretically and fundamentally, by way of a literature study, self-evaluation by the adolescent with specific reference to the black adolescent.
- To conduct an empirical investigation so as to establish self-evaluation by the Venda adolescent.
- To determine how Venda parents evaluate the Venda-speaking adolescents.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

Concepts directly related to the topic of this thesis will now be defined briefly.

1.4.1 Venda

There are three ways of defining Venda: as a language, as a region and as a people. According to the new constitution of the RSA, there are 11 official languages, and one of them is Venda. Venda as a Republic stopped to exist after the first multiracial elections in 1994. Before that time, Venda was one of the Bantu homelands (segregated areas for the South African Bantu populations), with a population figure of 265 129 (in 1970). The capital was the tiny village of Makwarela (*The new encyclopaedia Britannica* 1979:383). Venda became independent in 1979, and the capital was moved to Thohoyandou.

In this research, the focus will be on Venda as a people. According to Vail (1989:91), Venda-speaking people were found in the Northern Transvaal mainly north of the Levubu River. Northern Transvaal is now known as the Limpopo Province. The Venda people are now found mainly around the Soutpansberg Mountains, in the following magisterial districts: Dzanani, Louis Trichardt (Makhado), Mutale, Tshitale, Thohoyandou and Vuwani. The Venda language is called Tshivenda.

1.4.2 The adolescent/adolescence

It is commonly accepted that there are three stages of development in adolescence, namely early adolescence, mid-adolescence and late adolescence with ages varying from 12 to 14 years, 15 to 16 and 17 to 21 respectively. We should note that this is a general pattern which will not necessarily apply to all adolescents. It only helps to give us a general impression of each stage. Each stage is marked by its own psychological tasks, physical characteristics, intellectual and moral traits and appropriate behaviour (Ohlson 1987:20-25).

Adolescence starts when an individual attains sexual maturity. Botvin, Schinke & Orlandi (1995:14) put the period of adolescence between 11 and 20 years of age. This period is characterised by quantitative and qualitative changes. To say that adolescence ends with the attainment of adulthood is academically correct, but has little practical significance. Therefore it is not easy to define or even determine the end of adolescence.

In this study, adolescents will mean learners who are in Grades 8 to 12 in secondary school. Only learners in secondary school will be involved in this research. The concept of teenager will be used as an equivalent of adolescent.

1.4.3 Self-evaluation

According to Carr (2002:195) when adolescents self-evaluate themselves, they gain important insight eg. in their learning. They will begin to monitor their progress and even set goals for the future. When adolescents self-evaluate themselves, they ask themselves questions such as:

“how am I doing, ” “am I improving in this area, ” “what are my strengths” and “where am I overall?”

Self-evaluation and self-reaction are in a way forms of self-judgement, and the two are processes incorporated into the model that occur during the self-reflection stage (Hewitt 2002:216).

External reinforcement is not the only determinant of our behaviour. We also measure our performance according to our own internal standards. We constantly monitor and evaluate our behaviour to see how well we are coping with situations in life according to our standards (Hewitt:2002:215).

Vrey (1990:47) defines self-evaluation as a basic component of self-perception. To a person himself or herself, it is a naked reality. This is how he/she sees himself/herself. Vrey (1990:47) further states that self-perception forms the basis of self-esteem, which to the majority of people is the most crucial question of all. The primary source of self-esteem is the esteem of others. Mendelson, Mendelson & White (2001:91) conclude that the issue of others' opinions seems especially relevant to adolescents.

Brisett (Hurlock 1976:101), on the other hand, defines self-evaluation as a process of making a conscious judgement of the social importance or significance of the self. He also maintains that, because self-evaluation is directly related to performance of a role in a given situation, it can and does vary from situation to situation. An adolescent's feeling of self-worth may be high in general, but in a given situation his/her evaluation of himself/herself in that situation could well be (realistically) low.

However, an adolescent with feelings of low self-worth may well display a high level of self-evaluation in a situation where past experiences has taught him/her he/she is doing well, and in such instances achievement is possible. Self-evaluation asks the student to compare his/her behaviour to some criteria and make a judgement on the quality of the behaviour being exhibited. This comparison is also done in relation to others and not in isolation (Kirk, Gallagher & Anastasiow 1993:437). During adolescence the standards of friends and of the peer group become a particularly important yardstick for self-evaluation. The adolescent needs others to compare himself/ herself with (Gerdes, Moore, Ochse & Van Ede 1989:82).

Hewitt (2002:216) is of the opinion that self-evaluation is usually arrived at by one's own previous experiences and by aligning or comparing oneself with peers or admired others. Self-evaluation as referred to in this research has to do with self-concept as well as self-assessment. The two concepts of "self-evaluation" and "self-concept" are only identified for study purposes but they can never be separated. Stallings & Tascione (1996:548) as well as Hart (1999:343) point out that adolescent self-

assessment offers a local view of an adolescent's learning, whereas adolescent self-evaluation provides a global view.

1.4.4 Self-esteem

Research conducted by Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral & Pedro (2002:52) revealed that there are significant differences between the self-esteem enjoyed by successful and unsuccessful adolescents. It was also found that adolescents with low levels of academic achievement attribute less importance to school-related areas and reveal less favourable attitudes towards school.

Self-esteem refers to the opinion we hold of ourselves. It relates to our abilities and aptitudes, and the collection of behaviours which we personally consider relevant to any task. Lloyd (1985:116) defines self-esteem as the value we place on our self-concept which is usually synonymous with feelings of self-worth. Horrocks (1976:101), on the other hand, believes that self-esteem encompasses two different socio-psychological processes, namely self-worth and self-evaluation. Self-esteem may be defined as the value placed on oneself or what one feels about oneself (Ramalebana 1995:20). According to Vrey (1990:76), acceptance by parents, family and playmates leads to self-acceptance, and self-acceptance leads to self-esteem. Hobfoll (1988:227) explains that persons who possess a high/positive self-esteem will resist the impulse to interpret outside events as reflecting negatively on themselves, even when they feel anxious or are functioning below their optimal level.

Hewitt (1994:122) contends that self-esteem is a more general and global feeling, and not only a situated feeling. Human beings feel bad or good about themselves as a result of how they are performing in particular situations. But they also tend to like or dislike themselves in general and not in relation to a particular performance. Self-esteem refers to the evaluative aspect of the self-concept. Hamacheck (1990:52) is of the opinion that self-esteem refers quite literally to the extent to which we admire or value the self. Hewitt (1994:126) concludes that self-esteem refers to the positive or negative sentiments that people attach to themselves as a result of their experiences in social life. It is also clear that the concepts of self-esteem and self-concept cannot be separated; they can, however, be identified.

1.4.5 Self-worth

Self-worth represents a “feeling of self”. It has to do with an individual’s sense of security and personal worth as a person. This has to do with the value a person will attach to himself/herself (Horrocks 1976:101). Self-worth is interrelated to self-evaluation and self-esteem.

To say that a person has a low *sense of* self-worth makes sense, though it may be inelegant. People commonly use a truncated version of the phrase, saying instead, "He has low self-worth". This would literally mean that he isn't worth much, rather than that he has a low *opinion* of himself. "Self-esteem" sounds much more literate.

Self-worth may refer to some overall evaluation of one's self (typically including moral standing) as well as to evaluations of particular aspects of one's self such as desires, beliefs, abilities, moral character, and the like. These may be judged in terms of various standards such as the comparative worth of other persons, humanity, God, the moral law, the biosphere, and so on. In each case, self-worth requires proper recognition of the worth of one's self in some respect according to some standard. Various forms of self-worth may be expected to be a preeminent virtue, implicitly or explicitly, in many but not all moral traditions, religious and secular, Western and non-Western (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen 1994:345-346).

1.4.6 Self-concept

The concept of “self-concept” has originally been proposed by Lecky in 1945 and was later adopted by Rogen in 1951 (Mouly 1973:85). Vrey (1990:47) defines self-concept as a configuration of convictions concerning oneself and attitudes towards oneself. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:84) define self-concept (or self-image) as including three mutually dependent components, namely identity, action and self-esteem.

Self-concept is a composite image of what we think we are, what we think we can achieve or attain, what we think others think of us and what we would like to be ourselves. The self-concept, also

referred to as the self-image, may thus be defined as a person's view of his/her own attributes which may be categorised in terms of certain aspects such as physical self, psychological self, intellectual self, social self and moral self (Gerdes et al 1989:77). No adolescent can truly become an adult without a definite, clear self-concept (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:84).

According to Fuhrmann (1986:258) self-concept includes all of an individual's self-perceptions, whether they be physical, sexual, cognitive, moral, occupational or have to do with skills, roles, competencies, appearances, motivation, goals or emotions. Much of the adolescent's self-concept come through the eyes of others. The self-concept is an evaluation of all that a person perceives himself/herself to be. In her study of the self, McDonald (2002:416) emphasised self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept is never neutral. It may be defined as an individual's perception of his/her qualities and competencies. As in the case of self-esteem, self-concept cannot be separated from self-esteem, but can be identified for study purposes.

1.4.7 Self-consciousness/self-awareness

Self-consciousness is an awareness of the self (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988: 206). Self-awareness is a degree of consciousness about oneself: body, mind, attitudes and values. The value of self-awareness lies in the help it gives an individual in order to understand and accept himself/herself and to distinguish those aspects of himself/herself that he/she can change and those he/she cannot. It helps an individual to choose between alternative possibilities with some measure of confidence. It is very difficult to choose if one does not know the "self" that is choosing. How one views oneself, often determines how others will see one. Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg (1988:206) conclude that the self-consciousness of the early adolescent is largely a result of imaginary reactions from an invisible audience.

There is a close link between self-awareness and self-analysis which is a process whereby the individual looks at himself/herself. Self-analysis leads to self-evaluation (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:205). Self-evaluation leads to a positive or a negative self-concept (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1988:206). According to Vrey (1990:13) an individual's self is the "gestalt" of what a

person will call his/her own. It includes a person's system of ideas, attitudes, values and whatever he/she commits himself/herself to. Vrey (1990:13) also contends that the self is an individual's total subjective environment, the centre of experience and of meaning.

Note: From the above discussions, it has become clear that the concepts of self-evaluation, self-esteem, self-concept, self-regard and self-identity, can only be distinguished from each other in theory. In practice, we cannot separate them. Through the evaluation of the self an individual develops a concept of the self, that is self-evaluation/self-concept. We cannot measure self-evaluation without involving self-concept. For the purpose of this investigation, self-concept and self-evaluation will be used interchangeably.

1.5 METHOD OF RESEARCH

A scientific method incorporates all procedures that scientists have used, are currently using, or may use in the future to pursue knowledge (Burns & Grove 1993:26). This definition eliminates the idea that there is "a specific" scientific method or that there is only one way to conduct research. Research methods can generally be regarded as the techniques used by scientists/ researchers to collect and order data, to use statistical manipulation and to arrive at a logical conclusion .

Guy, Edgley, Arafat & Allen (1987:64) state that theory is to research what a roadmap is to driving. Without a roadmap, all roads will look the same. The driver will waste a lot of time making wrong turns and getting lost. As in driving, the research process is plagued by problems. The answer is almost as it is in driving: theory is the researcher's roadmap, and theory is indispensable to the research process.

In this research, the following procedure will be followed:

- A literature study will be done as well as an empirical study. The literature study will focus on books, newsletters, dissertations, periodicals, theses, newspapers, documents, magazines and reports. Areas to be covered will be evaluation as component of personality with specific reference to black adolescents.

- The empirical research will mainly be in the form of a nomothetic study, using a questionnaire as instrument to determine self-evaluation by the Venda adolescent. In chapter 4, the empirical research project will be discussed in more detail.

1.6 PLAN OF THE STUDY

In general, planning can best be described as the function of selecting objectives and establishing programmes, policies and procedures necessary for achieving these objectives. Planning involves choosing among alternatives.

The actual plan of the study, namely what the researcher will do, when, where and how, is listed below:

Chapter 1 deals mainly with an analysis of the problem, the aim of the study, definitions of main and related concepts and the method of study.

Chapter 2 will concentrate on self-evaluation as a component of personality.

Chapter 3 will examine self-evaluation by the adolescent, with special reference to the black adolescent.

Chapter 4 will deal with the empirical research.

Chapter 5 will concentrate on the results of the empirical research (results of the investigation).

Chapter 6 will focus on an overview, findings, conclusion and recommendations.