

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

From the literature discussion, the following findings have emerged: It has been found that adolescents generally regard themselves as a unique breed. They imagine they are a special class apart. Adolescents have a high regard of themselves. It has also emerged that peers are playing a significant role in the self-evaluation of the adolescent.

Concerning black adolescents, it has become clear that, averagely speaking, the performance of black adolescents is comparable with that of Western adolescents, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The comparison between black and white adolescents reveals that black adolescents regard physical appearance as an important component of their total view of themselves, but their white counterparts regard their physical abilities and emotional stability as important components of their lives.

So far nothing is known about self-evaluation by the Venda adolescent. There is lack of literature available on this topic, and this prompted the researcher to conduct an empirical investigation. More light needs to be shed on self-evaluation by the Venda adolescent and therefore an empirical research is necessary to assess the situation.

This chapter will deal with the research design used for investigating self-evaluation by the Venda adolescent. In order to measure the Venda adolescent's self-evaluation, a questionnaire had to be used.

4.2 PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

In order to execute the empirical investigation, the researcher has decided on the following steps:

- Obtaining permission from the area offices to execute the investigation in their public secondary schools.
- Obtaining permission from the school governing bodies (SGB), through the school principal.
- Deciding on the sample procedures.
- Compiling a measuring instrument, based on the theoretical investigation.
- Execution of research.
- Applying the questionnaire to the adolescents, parents and teachers.
- Gathering and marking the different questionnaires.
- Assimilation and discussion of results.
- Applying the statistical programme to analyse the data.
- Writing the final report.

4.2.1 Obtaining permission from the area offices to execute the investigation in their public secondary schools

The Limpopo Department of Education has been divided into six districts with effect from 1996. From those six districts, the ex-Republic of Venda now falls in the third district called the Northern District or Vhembe. Vhembe district has six inspection areas four of which are found in what has been the Republic of Venda.. The areas are :

- Malamulele, previously (Gazankulu)
- Mutale, previously (Venda)
- Sekgosese, previously (Lebowa)
- Thohoyandou, previously (Venda)
- Vuwani, previously (Venda)
- Zoutpansberg, previously (Venda, DET, TED, HOD, HOR)

Permission was requested from the area offices through the schools to allow the researcher to distribute questionnaires to public secondary school adolescents during school hours. Aspects covered in the

application letter included proof that the researcher is registered with Unisa for a DEd Degree in Psychology of Education and will also indicate the title of the thesis.

4.2.2 Obtaining permission from the school governing body (SGB)

According to Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata & Squelch (1997:11), a governing body is responsible for governing the school. This does not mean, however, that a governing body must run the school on a day-to-day basis, but the general purpose of a governing body is to perform efficiently its functions in terms of the South African Schools Act on behalf of the school and to the benefit of the school community. All school governors must know what their duties and functions are and how these fit in with the duties of the principal (Potgieter et al 1997:23).

From the explanation above, it is evident that the researcher first had to get permission from the SGB of the school through the principal. The principal had to inform the researcher about the most appropriate date and time on which the research could be conducted. From the explanation above, it is evident that it was not necessary to ask each parent individually for their permission to allow their adolescents to be subjected to a questionnaire. Permission from the area office, the school governing body (SGB) and the school principal sufficed. In the instance where there could be an extremely exceptional case, parental permission would be sought.

4.2.3 Deciding on the sampling procedure and selecting the schools, learners and teachers

After the 1994 general elections in South Africa, the Republic of Venda stopped to exist. At present the former Republic of Venda forms part of the Vhembe District. According to the old dispensation, there were 197 secondary schools in six inspection areas (Ramalebana 1995:50). At present, according to the Department of Education's Northern Region School Submission List (1998:1-20), there are four inspection areas in which Venda speaking adolescents form the majority group, in two remaining inspection areas, they are in the minority. Venda as a mother tongue is offered in 222 secondary schools. It was practically impossible to conduct an empirical investigation in all Venda secondary schools. The obvious choice left to the researcher was to resort to sampling, as described in Fraenkel & Wallen (1993:243).

4.2.3.1 *Sampling of the schools and learners/adolescents*

(a) *Sampling of the schools*

At present, adolescents attend the following types of institutions of learning in the Vhembe District:

- Combined schools (primary and junior secondary)
- Junior secondary schools (Grades 8-10)
- Secondary schools (Grades 8 -12)

Out of the 222 secondary schools in the Vhembe District, five schools were randomly selected, one from each of the five inspection areas. Using the Department of Education's Northern Region Submission List (1998:1-20), the researcher has allotted numbers from 1 to 222. To select the schools, the researcher used random sampling numbers (Burns & Grove 1993:734). Schools were selected as follows:

Malamulele	:	School number 5 - (66 adolescents)
Mutale	:	School number 18 - (67 adolescents)
Vuwani	:	School number 50 - (30 adolescents)
Zoutpansberg	:	School number 109 - (67 adolescents)
Thohoyandou	:	School number 146 - (33 adolescents)

(b) *Sampling of the learners/adolescents*

In each of the five schools selected, only one grade starting from the lowest grade to the highest was chosen to participate in the study. This was done to minimise disturbance at the schools and to ensure proper supervision and monitoring of questionnaire. In school number 5, all the learners in Grade 8 were subjected to the questionnaire. In school number 18, learners in Grade 9 were subjected to the

questionnaire. In school number 50, 109 and 146, Grades 10, 11 and 12 respectively were subjected to the questionnaire. Arrangements were made with principals in advance, so that each principal knew which grade would be involved in his/her school.

4.2.3.2 *Sampling of the parents and teachers*

From the total number of 263 adolescents involved in the standardisation of the questionnaire, 124 were selected to participate in the final study of self-evaluation of the Venda adolescent. Parents and teachers of this final selected group were also asked to take part in the research project.

4.2.4 *Compiling a questionnaire*

The researcher has decided to use the quantitative method of research because this method of research is impersonal and therefore avoids personal preferences and views. With regard to the quantitative method, hypotheses are tested “against the hard facts of reality” (Leedy 1993:143). Leedy (1993:243) also states that the purpose of quantitative research is not to report data verbally, but in numerical values, expressing in numbers what is impossible to state in words. In order to apply the quantitative method, the researcher has decided to use a questionnaire as instrument.

The questionnaire as such has been in use for more than 150 years and was first used as a research instrument by Horace Mann in 1847. Leedy (1993:18) contends that at times data lies buried deeply within the minds or within the attitudes, feelings, or reactions of men and women. Leedy further argues that a common-place instrument for observing data beyond the physical reach of the observer is the questionnaire, as it can be sent to people thousands of kilometres away, whom the researcher may never see. The questionnaire can reach people far more quickly than it would take a researcher to visit each one personally (Jacobs, Oosthuizen, Le Roux, Oliver, Bester & Mellet 1989:95).

Even though a questionnaire has some disadvantages, the researcher has decided to make use a questionnaire because of the following advantages attached to it:

- It is an economic way of collecting information for both researcher and respondent, since questionnaires save time.
- If respondents are scattered over a wide area (like in Venda), a questionnaire is a better way of collecting data.
- Where a large group of respondents is covered, it also makes batch administration possible. (With regard to this research there were three groups involved, namely learners, parents and teachers.)
- A questionnaire is easy to plan, compile and administer.
- If well planned and carefully and correctly compiled, the researcher can ask someone to administer the questionnaire on his/her behalf.
- A questionnaire is generally regarded as an extremely reliable instrument for collecting data.
- Information of a personal nature is often readily obtained through a questionnaire, particularly if the respondents remain anonymous.
- A questionnaire places less pressure on respondents because they can complete it in their own time.
- Because a questionnaire is in writing and is accompanied by clear instructions, greater uniformity is achieved. Questionnaires do not allow for too much variation in responses.
- A questionnaire can serve as a preliminary instrument to collect data, which can subsequently be followed by an in-depth study.
- Data from close-ended items are relatively easy to tabulate.
- A questionnaire offers a simple procedure for exploring a new topic.
- Questionnaires can be flexible concerning the type of items, the order of items and the topics covered by the researcher.
- Analysis and interpretation of data can be more easily accomplished (Jacobs et al 1989:120; Treece & Treece 1986:277; Rambiyana 2001:73).

Examples of questionnaires are attached to this study and are named Annexure A, B, C and D. With regard to the items in the questionnaire, the researcher used closed-form items. Although this format has a limiting influence on the breadth of the response and requires more time and effort, as declared by Wiersma (1991:176), the closed-form items are advantageous because they enhance consistency

of response across the study, data tabulation is straightforward and less time consuming. Best & Kahn (1993:231) agree that this format keeps respondents focused on the subject and is relatively objective and easy to complete, to tabulate and to analyse. Another advantage as proposed by Vockel & Asher (1995:129) is that respondents are required to answer within the same framework.

A six-point scale was chosen for respondents to show the extent of their expectation on a continuum. A five-point scale or a three-point scale was not chosen because respondents often tend to choose the middle alternative on a three-point or five-point scale and therefore remain neutral.

The questionnaire consists of sixty items. Each item consists of two statements, one statement is in the positive and the other in the negative (see Annexure B). The sixty items are divided into six different self-evaluation dimensions, that is the physical self, social self, academic self, family self, value self and psychological self. Each dimension consists of ten items. The grouping of items is shown in table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1: GROUPING OF ITEMS ACCORDING TO SELF-EVALUATION DIMENSIONS

Subheadings	Items according to self-evaluation dimensions									
Physical self	6	7	17	27	37	38	49	51	53	59
Social self	4	9	15	19	21	29	36	41	47	55
Academic self	5	8	16	18	26	28	39	40	48	54
Family self	2	11	13	23	25	31	34	43	45	57
Value self	3	10	14	20	24	30	35	42	46	56
Psychological self	1	12	22	32	33	44	50	52	58	60

After careful consideration, it was decided to use the following items according to the different dimensions of self-evaluation:

Physical self

An adolescent gives us an impression about his/her body, physical ability and appearance. An adolescent with a positive physical self-concept will identify himself/herself as a healthy, attractive and valuable person. The opposite will be the case for a testee with a negative self-concept. An adolescent who would like to have looked different, for example shorter or taller, lighter or darker than he/she actually is, suggests that he/she is denying his/her physical appearance, and will therefore develop a negative evaluation of the physical self. A person with a positive physical self accepts himself/herself physically. The following statements serve as examples under this subsection:

- I am more attractive than any of my friends.
- I always feel healthy.
- I am satisfied with my physical appearance.

Academic self

The academic self has nothing to do with intelligence or a lack of intelligence of the learner. It has to do with how satisfied a learner is about his/her academic achievement. A learner with a positive academic self-concept will be satisfied that he/she performs to the best of his/her cognitive ability. It will not matter if others perform better or weaker than himself/herself. Such a learner will feel satisfied and will not find fault with everything that goes on around the school. Even if such a learner is not highly intelligent, he/she will not regard homework as unmanageable and will not regard teachers as unfair.

A learner with a negative academic self-concept will evaluate himself/herself as slow to understand. He/she will expect to get low marks and may not be comfortable if others see his/her schoolwork.

The following statements are examples under this subsection:

- I think that I do many things at school as required.
- I like mathematics.

- I find my school subjects easy.

Social self

A person evaluates himself/herself and finds himself/herself to be either an important or unimportant member of the society. A person's satisfaction as a member of the family, is broadened to the wider community. A person with a positive social self, is friendly to the community and to society at large. He/she can easily choose friends. He/she needs friends and will find that others also need him as a friend. Such a person is popular and is not an introvert, he/she is friendly to others, obedient and honest. The following statements are examples under this subsection:

- I choose friends easily.
- I am popular with people of my own sex.
- I am on good terms with my friends.

Value self

Values such as honesty, love, friendliness and patience are displayed by a person who identifies himself/herself with religion, for example Christianity, and such a person is serious about the requirements of that religion and is faithful to it. A person with a positive value self is comfortable with norms and values, for example those stipulated in the Bible. He/she strives to uphold values such as honesty, friendliness, obedience, et cetera. A person with a positive value self is not hesitant in his/her decisions. He/she respects and is respected. The following are examples under this subheading:

- I seldom do things I regret later.
- When I receive more change than expected, I will return it.
- I regret telling lies.

Family self

The respondents should indicate their relationship with their families. Depending on whether the person has a positive or negative evaluation of the self, this person would also develop either a positive or a negative relationship with his/her family. A person with a positive family self, will be faithful to his/her family and his/her family will, in turn, develop trust in him/her. Such a person will be sure of their love, trust and support. The way in which a person accepts himself/herself is proportionate to the way in which he/she is also accepted by others. A person with a positive family self will display love, respect, fairness and understanding towards the rest of his/her family members. Such a person will pay others a visit and they in turn, will visit him/her. He/she treats family members with kindness and consideration. His/her conduct (behaviour) is of such a nature that other family members are satisfied with him/her. The following statements are examples under this subsection:

- I never cause my family problems.
- I am a member of a happy family.
- I am sure my family members love me.

Psychological self

A person with a positive self-concept is satisfied with himself/herself. Such a person is always cool, calm and collected. He/she does not feel small but does not look down upon others either. He/she does not lose his/her temper easily. A person with a positive psychological self accepts himself/herself as he/she is and does not experience self-guilt. He/she a person is in a position to deal with problems as they arise and face them and solve them accordingly.

He/she believes that he/she can. He/she is firm on her convictions and decisions but is not impulsive, is ready to listen to others and readily takes advice. The following are examples under this subsection:

- I hesitate to do what I am supposed to do.
- I am normally fast in finishing my work.
- If I start my work, I finish it

4.2.4.1 *A questionnaire for adolescents*

The researcher has realised that there is a serious lack of English language proficiency among Venda adolescents, and therefore decided to translate a self-evaluation questionnaire into Tshivenda (Venda language) as well (see Annexure A). This would help adolescents to respond to the items in the questionnaire with full understanding. It would also minimise explanations on the part of the researcher when the questionnaire is answered by the adolescents. The Tshivenda and English questionnaires are attached to the last pages of this research and are marked Annexure A and B respectively.

Learners in lower classes, for example Grade 8 will most probably prefer to respond to a Tshivenda translation, but gifted learners and learners in higher grades, namely Grades 11 and 12, will possibly prefer the English translation.

4.2.4.2 *Modifying the questionnaire for parents and teachers*

The questionnaire for the adolescents was modified for the use by parents and teachers. For the parents and teachers, the items were adjusted, for example if an item read “I am more attractive than my friends”, it was changed to “John is more attractive than his friends” (see Annexure C and D). The reason for doing so was to compare the way in which adolescents evaluate themselves with the way in which teachers and parents evaluate the same adolescents. Hopefully this would lead to a more objective picture of the self-evaluation by Venda adolescents.

4.3 EXECUTION OF THE RESEARCH

As arranged and agreed with the schools, the researcher distributed the questionnaires. When permission was granted to the researcher by the schools, the suitable dates and times were given at each school. The researcher adhered to the set dates and times as stipulated by each school. The questionnaires were distributed in a manner as set out below.

4.3.1 Applying the questionnaire and procedures followed during the investigation phase

Three groups were involved in the final measurement, namely the 124 adolescents, their parents and their teachers. It should be noted that only adolescents whose mother tongue is Venda (Tshivenda) and who are attending public schools, are subjects in this study. Parents were given the same questionnaire as the one given to adolescents, with adjustments as explained. Parents were required to evaluate the adolescent using the same test that the adolescent had used.

The third group was the teachers who were subjected to the same questionnaire as the one given to the parents.

It was not possible for the researcher to visit all the chosen schools in one day. The researcher visited a school a day. Arrangements were made with the school principals about the date when the researcher would visit the school. This meant that each of the five schools were visited twice, firstly for the sake of arrangements, and secondly for distributing questionnaires. The procedure above was mainly applicable to the learners. For parents and teachers, the procedure was different. The procedure followed in each of the three groups is described hereunder.

4.3.1.1 *Applying the questionnaire to the adolescents*

As already stated, only one school was visited per day. Only one grade per school was subjected to the questionnaire. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to all learners, explained what they should do, monitored the session as an invigilator and also collected the questionnaires after completion. No questionnaire was sent by post. The total number of adolescents subjected to the questionnaire was 263. There were 126 girls and 137 boys. The total group was used to standardise the questionnaire. Grade 8 comprised two class groups A and B. Two teachers were involved in marking the attendance registers, one teacher for group A and the other for group B. The two class groups were normally accommodated in two separate class rooms. On the day of the questionnaire, the two class groups were moved into a school hall. Grade 9 in school 18 as well as grade 11 in school 109 were also two class groups each. Two class teachers were responsible for grade 9 and two for grade 11. Grade 10 in school 50 and grade 12 in school 146 comprised one class group each with its own class teacher. The 124 completed questionnaires were received from the eight teachers as stated above. From this

total group (263), 124 adolescents (and their parents and teachers) were selected to assess and analyse self-evaluation by the Venda adolescent. See table 4.2 for the adolescent sample.

TABLE 4.2: ADOLESCENTS ASSESSED BY TEACHERS AND PARENTS, THEIR GENDER AND GRADE

GRADE	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL
BOYS	14	11	8	10	16	59
GIRLS	14	14	8	12	17	65
TOTAL	28	25	16	22	33	124

These 124 adolescents were selected randomly. The parents and teachers(8) of these 124 adolescents were subjected to the questionnaire as indicated below.

4.3.1.2 *Applying the questionnaire to the parents*

The process of coordinating parents was facilitated by the schools. After the learners had been selected randomly as stated in section 4.2.3.1 above, the school helped to locate the parents. In some schools, some of the parents were unavailable during school hours, so the researcher left the questionnaires with the class teacher. The class teacher was also given a few questionnaires in Tshivenda (refer to Annexure C) to give to those parents who would prefer their mother tongue. The researcher left the questionnaires for parents with the class teacher for over a period of a month, as some of the parents involved would only be home during month ending. The questionnaires for the parents sent through the teachers were far in the minority as the majority of parents received the questionnaires directly from the researcher. Some parents assessed more than one adolescent as some adolescents did not have biological parents, but were sent to school by their guardians. In some schools, one polygamous male parent assessed more than one adolescent in one grade, from different mothers.

4.3.1.3 *Applying the questionnaire to the teachers/educators*

In each school visited, class teachers of the grade chosen were given the questionnaire. The researcher left the questionnaire with the teachers for over a month as explained in section 4.3.1.2 above. This period provided ample time to the teachers to complete the questionnaires at their own pace. The same learners who had been assessed by parents were to be assessed by their class teacher or teachers as well. All questionnaires issued were received by the researcher.

4.3.2 Gathering and marking the different questionnaires

When the adolescents were busy with the questionnaire, the researcher acted as an invigilator. Learners were allowed to ask questions on items that were unclear to them. A learner who responded fast to the questionnaire and finished early, waited for others to finish, so that learners could disperse at the same time for the sake of order at the school. After all the learners had completed the questionnaire, the researcher collected them and had a quick check for any irregularities, like items not responded to or items left out.

4.4 ASSIMILATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.4.1 Applying a statistical programme to analyse the data

After the researcher had collected all the questionnaires from the adolescents, parents and teachers, the questionnaires were checked very carefully, and the information was then submitted to be analysed.

4.4.2 Writing the final report

Data collected from the process of computerisation as stated above was then evaluated and interpreted by the researcher.

The next chapter, namely chapter five, contains a detailed analysis of the results of the empirical investigation.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Adolescents, on the one hand, may be subjective in their self-evaluation while parents, on the other hand, may hopefully be more objective in assessing the adolescents. Teachers are regarded as parents at the school. Many rural black parents are migrant labourers. They leave their children with their grandparents. In such situations, teachers are as good as their parents in the evaluation of the adolescents. Serpell & Boykin (1994:400) refer to the fact that in rural African schools, teachers are faced with the task of interpreting the world for other people's children in ways that will expand their horizons without alienating them from the culture of their home community. Teachers and parents are both educators even if they operate from different situations. Though many Venda parents are not educated and some never attended school, they are still expected to give a balanced evaluation of their children. They are expected not to be biased in their assessment of the adolescents.