

**THE IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN  
IN AN UNDER-RESOURCED RURAL AREA**

by

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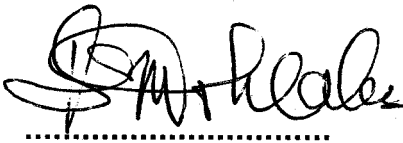
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**JULY 2000**

**DECLARATION**

**Student number: 444-673-9**

I declare that *Identification of gifted children in an under-resourced rural area* is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



.....

**SIGNATURE**

**(Mr S.C. Mohlala)**

21/9/2000  
.....

**DATE**

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the following people:

- The lovely memory of my fore-grandparents Mankhedi and Mamotsho Mohlala, as well as my dad, Kaya, who had passed away when I was only four.
- My lovely mother, Renate Nkatapu, who brought me up wisely and with inspiration and invested her wisdom and sense of application in me.
- My wife, Rosina Asnath, who always supports and motivates me when I explore to risk positively.
- My daughter, Mahlatse Cecilia and my son, Rapule, who are my lovely gifts and family investment.
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- My maternal uncle, Mabelane Mawela, who is my role model and my referee.

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- God, the Almighty, for life, vision, strength and mental empowerment to go through this wonderful work.

## **SUMMARY**

### **IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN IN AN UNDER-RESOURCED RURAL AREA**

**by**

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**Degree:** Master of Education (Educational Psychology)  
**Department:** Educational Studies  
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**Date submitted:** July, 2000

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the various categories of giftedness can be adequately identified in an under-resourced rural area.

To supplement the literature, a focus group was held and informal interviews were conducted with people in the area of research. Giftedness was ultimately defined as both potential and product which cannot be separated from the community where the person lives.

Apart from causes of underachievement such as poverty, illiteracy, lack of equipment, low motivation and difficult home circumstances, it was found that *fear* is a powerful hindrance in the actualisation of giftedness, as there is a strong belief that learners who stand out amongst their peers could fall prey to witchcraft.

In order to adequately identify giftedness, an identification method which is used by the Faculty of Education at Unisa, was applied to 10 learners. Various talents additional to academic talent were found among the respondents. The identification method was finally evaluated according to certain identification criteria.

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM STATEMENT, GOAL AND PLAN OF RESEARCH

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

Giftedness is a diverse concept, defined differently by both professionals and lay people. As such, giftedness receives both narrow and broad definitions from various authors. Therefore biological, theocratic, sociological and anthropological theories are often attached to giftedness.

#### 1.2 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher became aware of many learners in South Africa being socially and economically disadvantaged. Western definitions of giftedness have narrowed down identification of talents to the academic field - at the expense of other talents. Learners who achieve high results in the academic field are far more recognised and rewarded than learners in the field of music, performing arts, leadership et cetera. A lack of knowledge in educators and parents regarding giftedness has resulted in social-ills such as early school leavers and de-motivated individuals. An underprivileged background and a school system which inherited many problems have also often caused talented learners to be overlooked.

#### 1.3 PROBLEM ANALYSIS

In order to gain a broader perspective, a preliminary literature study was undertaken and informal interviews held. The following questions are therefore being asked:

- *Why do various myths exist regarding giftedness?*

When a concept is not fully understood, untrue definitions are often assigned to it. While discussing this factor during interviews it became apparent that culture has an important influence on the way giftedness is viewed.

- *How does culture influence views about giftedness?*

Culture is a way of life. People have different philosophies and attach meaning to things according to their cultural backgrounds. What is accepted in one culture may not be acceptable to the next. Giftedness, as a concept, follows a trend and its meaning differs from culture to culture.

- *How do certain beliefs influence the way giftedness is viewed?*

Giftedness could be a process, a style or a product. Traditional beliefs such as black magic and witchcraft may influence gifted learners adversely and detrimentally. As a result of a fear of such forces, some learners might hide their talents and refuse to perform (Lumadi 1998:150).

- *How was giftedness defined in the past?*

Life is steeped in history. In the past, giftedness was defined mainly as a single index. The main instrument used to determine the level of giftedness was an IQ test. The fortunate group who qualified for identification was the elite. Other factors that were considered included individual appearance and physique, for example it was believed that a taller and well built child was more likely to be gifted.

#### **1.4 PROBLEM SYNTHESIS**

From the preliminary literature study and interviews, the influence of culture, myths, beliefs, lack of resources, and the complexity of acknowledging and actualising giftedness became apparent. The existing models of identification in the Western culture is also a factor to be kept in mind. The problem statement for this research is as follows:

Is it possible to adequately identify giftedness in under-resourced schools by means of informal testing?

## 1.5 GOAL OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study is to identify gifted learners in under-resourced rural schools by administering the identification method which was designed in the Faculty of Education at the University of South Africa. The study also aims to explore theories regarding giftedness and investigate underachievement and variables that are relevant to giftedness.

## 1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

The field of study can be demarcated as follows:

- (i) Literature from a Western and South African perspective will be consulted.
- (ii) To support the literature study, information gained from interviews with people in rural areas as well as professionals and lay people will be utilised.

## 1.7 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The Empirical research will take place in Serisha High School in the Mhala/Mapulaneng area. The following approach will be followed:

### 1.7.1 *The selection method*

Ten learners in Grade 11 comprising of five boys and five girls respectively will be selected on a random basis, in order to avoid the bias selection of individuals who may be talented according to their teachers or their academic results only.

### 1.7.2 *The use of media*

The identification method used at the Faculty of Education at Unisa which provides standardised and non-standardised media will be used. This method will be discussed in Chapter 4.



## **1.8 STUDY PROGRAMME**

This work will be divided into the following chapters:

### **1.8.1 Chapter 2: The concept of giftedness**

In this chapter, the focus will mainly be on understanding of the concept giftedness. Definitions of this concept will be given.

### **1.8.2 Chapter 3: Understanding the gifted underachiever in under-resourced rural areas**

In this chapter, the concept of underachievement will be explained fully and defined theoretically according to the views of different authors and from the researcher's point of view. Both external and internal factors that may cause underachievement in rural areas will be discussed.

### **1.8.3 Chapter 4: Planning of the research design**

In this chapter, the empirical research will be planned. The identification method according to which the practical research will be conducted will be discussed, as well as media for identification of talent.

### **1.8.4 Chapter 5: Interpretation of results**

The test media media will be interpreted and possible identification will be done.

### **1.8.5 Chapter 6: Recommendations**

In this chapter, the problem statement will be answered, that is, whether or not it is possible to identify giftedness adequately in an under-resourced rural area. Comments that are relevant to the identification of giftedness in the Mhala/ Mapulaneng area will be made in the form of guidelines for future identification in under-resourced rural areas.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONCEPT OF GIFTEDNESS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the concept of giftedness is being presented as something phenomenal and very complex. A change has been taking place in the way giftedness and talent are perceived and featured in research literature. Giftedness would appear to have attained meaning relative to a given cultural context.

Existing literature presents giftedness as a product rather than a content; a process rather than a style. Giftedness will be defined as it is described in current literature, the focus group and from the experience of the researcher. From the definition of giftedness, talents will be categorised as they manifest in certain individuals. Giftedness will be presented as it is understood from history, through myths, tradition and science. In addition, the recent characteristics of giftedness as a combination of the views of the different authors will be tabulated.

#### 2.2 HISTORY OF GIFTEDNESS

Life is steeped in history. The concept of giftedness is not new in our century. It is a phenomenon which is located in time perspective from early civilisation.

A person with a special talent was viewed by the Greeks as “inspired by a god”. Such a person was understood to be akin to a god. A divine inspiration was thus understood to be the origin of giftedness. Giftedness was viewed within the trend of superiority and came in the form of superhuman inspiration. People who were perceived as being gifted were addressed as *men of gold* because of their superior intellect (Child 1997:58).

Plato, the Greek philosopher, credited boys with a superior intellect as *gilded lilies* or *golden boys*. He was in great support of early identification of and separate education for gifted children for the sake of a more perfect social order. For that reason, the

Patrician class which was exclusive for golden boys was instituted (Friedman & Rogers 1998:15).

Heller and Passow (1993:8) state in the legacy of Athens that boys ranging from ages 6 to 14 with a superior intellect were enriched in philosophic speculation, moral excellence, political insight, literary, musical, oratorical and artistic talents. Aristotle, another Greek philosopher, labelled these gifted boys as “young men with unusual mental ability” (Heller & Passow 1993:8). It was believed that exploring and utilising a child’s giftedness could be beneficial to the state. What was needed by the state was culminated in the children, be it philosophers, soldiers or orators.

The Roman Empire viewed special ability in line with military excellence. At the height of the Roman Empire, a man who could conquer nations in war was viewed as being gifted. Before the period of Charlemagne, gifted children were removed from mainstream education and placed in special schools to be trained for military leadership. Throughout and after this period, gifted children were identified from both the elite group and from the working class in the interest of developing their talents for the needs of the state (Friedman & Rogers 1998:25).

Eastern countries such as Turkey viewed giftedness as a product resulting from the influence of Christian philosophy. A person with the ability to go into a trance was perceived as having a great gift. Discoveries and ideas in science, law, literature and art were therefore studied as secular products and not seen as products of wisdom. Gifted people were viewed as the ones having special abilities above the power of reason, intellect and logic. The source of wisdom was understood to be a divine blessing bestowed on a very few chosen and favoured individuals.

There is at present still emphasis on the needs of the state when giftedness is defined and identified, while at the same time it is widely believed that the gifted child should be provided with special education in order to fulfil his potential (Kokot 1992).

### **2.3 MYTHS SURROUNDING GIFTEDNESS**

Myth is a part of life. Logic and scientific evidence may disprove myth but it will not kill

it (Freeman 1979:3). Through many walks of life, myth distorts reality. Kokot (1992:5) states that the many misconceptions regarding the nature of giftedness have resulted in a mythology that concerns gifted people. It is therefore necessary to take note of the myths that still exist as the guidance, support and schooling that gifted children receive are influenced by the beliefs that people hold.

A society which is influenced by myths perceive gifted children with prejudice. A Tartan proverb depicts giftedness as akin to madness. Myths such as this, depicting that "genius is next to insanity" (Wiechers, Kokot, Strydom & Venter 1997:61), could affect the attitude of teachers and parents about the exceptionally brilliant child.

Troublesome myths that are still believed to date will now be discussed and the truth that counteracts each myth will also be given.

### **2.3.1 Gifted people are perfect**

Some educators uphold the myth that gifted learners should not make mistakes or fail to hand in their work on time. In an informal interview conducted with an educator of Letshele Secondary School (Lekhoane, 1997) it was found that a strong belief exists that gifted learners can not underachieve and that their performance is absolute and fixed.

*Reality : Gifted people are human and can be affected by circumstances. They do have some areas of strength, but also fears and weaknesses, and they are able to fail.*

### **2.3.2 Gifted learners will make it on their own**

It is often believed that gifted learners can make it on their own without extra help. Differentiated programmes for gifted learners are regarded as a luxury and not a necessity. If this myth holds, there might be a danger that gifted learners will be ignored and neglected (Child 1997:32).

*Reality : It became clear from literature that gifted learners, as with everyone else, need support and guidance in order to actualise their potential.*

### **2.3.3 Gifted learners are a group of similar individuals.**

In an informal interview conducted with an educator of Letshele Secondary School (Lekhoane, 1997) it was found that mark schedules are used to group learners according to their aggregate percentages obtained. Learners who obtained 75% and more are grouped in "A" classes i.e. Grade 8A, Grade 9A and Grade 12A. These learners are the ones from whom the school expects the best performance and the best end of year examination results.

*Reality : Gifted learners vary greatly in their abilities, personalities and interests. Each learner is an individual with his or her particular strengths and weaknesses. Each learner should be educated according to his or her own merit, interests, accomplishments and aptitude.*

### **2.3.4 A high IQ score is an indicator that a learner can perform well in any area**

Many educators and intellectuals see a high score on an intelligence test as an indication that such a person is gifted in all areas.

*Reality : Although an IQ score is very important in testing an individual's intelligence, it is not a criteria to measure giftedness in other areas such as linguistic and leadership abilities, drama, music, sports and art. Learners are often denied opportunities to be recognised as gifted due to such an IQ mentality.*

### **2.3.5 All children are gifted**

Many people believe that every child is gifted as long as a child is able to demonstrate high ability in some school subjects and in general life. Children's strengths are often mistakenly equated with giftedness.

*Reality : Gifted and talented children can not be identified on the grounds of assumption. Professionally qualified persons can identify gifted children by virtue of outstanding abilities and high performance.*

## 2.4 DEFINITIONS OF GIFTEDNESS

Giftedness is a relative concept. Researchers and authors should take note that there is no universally accepted definition of giftedness nor is there complete agreement on the indicators of giftedness in any area. To some authors and researchers, the problem of defining giftedness is complicated by the use of different terms which appear frequently in literature but are not used uniformly, for example *clever, wise, bright, intelligent, talented* and *above average*, to mention but a few (Hagen 1980:4).

The term giftedness has different meanings to people and often causes confusion and miss-communication (Clark 1988:92). Giftedness depends largely on how it is defined by a specific society. Definitions of giftedness are influenced and affected by changes in values, beliefs and demographics. Some definitions of giftedness are fundamental to a particular cultural setting and embedded in beliefs and stereotypes (Carlson 1998:38).

Definitions of giftedness in this chapter will be based on how it is viewed by different people in the area where the research was done and how it is viewed and understood in literature. Views of giftedness from lay and professional people in the community will be noted.

In the area where the research was done, it was found that the community understands giftedness to be a blessing that befall one as a spiritual power or an ability to *know all things* through practice.

## 2.5 THE FOCUS GROUP AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF GIFTEDNESS

Separate informal interviews with two groups of individuals were conducted with the researcher on different dates and and at different venues.

### 2.5.1 Informal interview with three teachers attached to the Department of Education in the Northern Province

The names of the participants who were invited by the researcher to discuss their understanding of giftedness are as follows:

Mr. T. W. Moropane	Shatale, April 1988
Mr. C. F. Yankee	Shatale, April 1988
Mr. S. S. Buthelezi	Shatale, April 1988

In the informal discussion and interview, the participants expressed their opinions and understanding of giftedness as follows:

Mr Moropane views giftedness from two perspectives. Firstly, a person is gifted when his academic performance is above average. His second view of giftedness focuses more on the spiritual aspect. As an example, he mentioned his uncle, who is not medically trained but who is able to heal diseases and illnesses. As a herbalist, his uncle mixes different herbs, throws bones and predicts the future in order to diagnose an illness. He seems to be successful in his diagnoses, as a group of patients have confessed recovery from ailments. Mr Moropane believes a special ability beyond academic knowledge is a gift.

Mr. Buthelezi focuses more on the role of genetics and academic performance in order to understand the concept of giftedness. According to Mr. Buthelezi, gifted persons, of whom there are but a few in the population of any school, are able to achieve above average marks in all school subjects.

Mr. Yankee understands giftedness to be the product of both heredity and the environment. According to Mr. Yankee giftedness can not be defined and actualised if both heredity and environment do not complement each other. Inherited potential is actualised in an enriched environment.

### 2.5.2 Group discussion with intellectuals from various occupational fields

The names of the participants are as follows:

Mrs. B. K. Xaba	Principal of a secondary school
Ms. P. M. Shadung	Nurse in a community clinic
Dr. N. Frepong	Prospective medical practitioner
Mr. P. Sebela	Attorney
Rev. S. P. Maja	Pastor of the Lutheran Church

Following the rules of focus groups, no essential elements were identified by the researcher. An open discussion was held and every one in the group was free to identify these elements of giftedness by themselves.

Mrs. Xaba understands giftedness to mean intelligence and believes that giftedness is hereditary. Some people are gifted in working with figures while others are gifted in the area of languages and music. Some learners manifest more specialised abilities in a combination of art talent, music talent, mathematical talents and sports such as soccer, athletics and swimming.

Miss Shadung understands giftedness as high performance in difficult subjects, such as mathematics, chemistry and physical science. Inventors and discoverers of technological equipment such as computers, spacecraft, chemical weapons and the like are gifted according to her. The origin of giftedness, as understood by Miss Shadung, is hereditary.

Dr. Frepong understands giftedness to mean the combination of inherited qualities such as general intellectual talent, specific academic talents such as mathematics, science and technology, creative talents and mechanics. Dr. Frepong emphasised that an enriched environment empowers inherited potential. The Doctor cited the Japanese and Russians as examples and stated that they are giants in technology due to their giftedness in mathematics, science and mechanics. He believes that those who are not gifted in such disciplines can not invent, therefore the concept of giftedness can not be ascribed to them.



Mr. Sebela argues that giftedness can not be linked with the ability of achieving high results in natural science subjects. The country, according to him, is filled with gifted people in the fields of art, music, science and law. Mr. Sebela sees "clever people" as gifted due to these individuals having a native capacity for outstanding performance. Mr. Sebela states that many talented people in South Africa achieve excellent results in fields such as music and sport, although they may lack above-average academic abilities. He believes that giftedness is an inborn trait.

Rev. Maja differentiates giftedness from talents. He defines talents as inherited inborn traits while *gifts* are spiritual in origin, such as the gifts of the Holy Ghost to heal and prophecy. According to him, talents can be developed while *gifts* are divine blessings.

### 2.5.3 Summary of views on giftedness according to individuals and the focus group

The researcher discovered that the understanding of giftedness from both individual interviews and the focus group was explained from the perspective of intellect. It became clear that most of the participants understood and explained giftedness to be a synonym for intelligence. Almost every one of the participants viewed heredity as the major determinant for giftedness, while very few viewed giftedness from a spiritual point of view. Not many of the participants mentioned the environment as being an important factor in the actualising of giftedness.

There seems to be a strong view and a general belief amongst learners, educators and the community that subjects such as science and mathematics can only be mastered by gifted learners, whereas those learners who prefer subjects such as music, art and languages are often seen as not gifted. This misconception still exists and is very much believed in most black schools and by the rural community. Will this view lead to the conclusion that all bright or clever learners should be encouraged to take science classes?

## 2.6 HOW BLACK PEOPLE ACTUALISE THEIR GIFTEDNESS

Educational development in the black community is understood within the knowledge of the traditional African culture. According to Lumadi (1998:15) giftedness would

appear to have meaning relative to a given cultural context. If areas which are considered to be of major importance in a specific culture are excluded, such conceptions of giftedness may not be acceptable.

Giftedness acquires meaning in terms of performance and social skills. For example people in the rural areas use musical performance as an occasion for participating and doing, not for passive listening. Those who are gifted in the area of music demonstrate this talent with drumming and rhythmic excellence.

In the area of research, people with musical talents demonstrate their performance at occasions such as when a king is enthroned in the community, when boys graduate from circumcision school and at cultural festivals. Mediation and oratory abilities are some of the distinguished gifts which is used in the black community. In 1996 in the vicinity, young boys and girls were selected for a performance during the inauguration of a local king.

A young boy with an oratory ability was addressing the audience in the king's kraal while a young girl was praising the king in terms of traditional poems, songs and with beautiful and very intricate dance. All of this was done spontaneously and with no rehearsal or prior knowledge as to the composition of the words of both the praises and songs. A linguistic community became the mouthpiece between the king and his subjects. The performers were characterised by a good sense of humour and fast thinking skills. Moreover, the young man demonstrated his ability to make quick, rational decisions, which demonstrated interpersonal and situational intelligence (Gardner 1993:238).

## **2.7 THE VIEW OF GIFTEDNESS BY THE FORMER EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS**

As a result of a research project on giftedness in South Africa in the 1980's, a task group of the HSRC decided on the following definition of giftedness:

Giftedness may be defined as a remarkable potential or ability possessed by a person to achieve outstandingly in various fields. Giftedness is the umbrella term covering all exceptional abilities and the realisation of these through outstanding achievement (Haasbroek 1988:17).

Kokot (1992:49) quotes a definition offered by the HSRC as follows:

Gifted pupils are those pupils who, by virtue of their talent or realised superior abilities in one or more personal dimension are capable of consistent outstanding achievement and are identifiable on the basis of their achievement or their potential for achievement.

These definitions are the same as most other regarding giftedness in the sense that they refer to both potential and achievement.

The identification model of the HSRC was suggested for use in the whole of South Africa. It was, however, more suitable for whites than blacks for the following reasons:

- The former identification system rested heavily on IQ tests and the black communities had no structure for testing their children this way.
- Teachers were not trained to do the appropriate tests to establish whether a child was gifted or not, neither was there formal training for teachers wanting to specialise in gifted child education. Giftedness was discussed and explained in finer detail in Further Diplomas in Education, of which whites would enroll for to a larger extent as their qualifications were generally higher.
- Rural communities could not make full use of the identification model as the services of professional people such as psychologists are costly and not available to everyone.
- An awareness of the importance of the identification of giftedness was not cultivated among black communities.
- Individual intelligence tests did not exist for black children but only for Afrikaans and English speaking learners. There are, however, group intelligence tests for five African languages, that is, Northern Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana and Southern Sotho.

- A culture free IQ test which existed in the 1980's and which was available at the HSRC known as Catell's Culture Free IQ Test, did not cover the black school learning programme.
- A major oversight was that most of the testing had to be done formally and by a professional, and qualified personnel were not available. The identification was mainly done by the teacher and as mentioned above, the former model did not really equip the black teacher to identify gifted children in the communities where the need existed.

### 2.7.1 The definition of giftedness by the ex-Lebowa Department of Education

In the former Homeland Education System, giftedness was defined and seen in the same light as intelligence. In an informal interview with the former Officer of the Lebowa Department of Education (Leso, 1999) it was found that giftedness was defined in terms of outstanding achievement in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and English. In an interview, Mr. Leso acknowledged that there was no policy documented on these subjects but that there was a tendency to recognise them as "difficult" subjects. Learners who could excel in those subjects were very few, therefore the government could assist the faculty of natural sciences and of English with special funds.

Learners who excelled in those subjects in the then Junior Certificate continued to further standards with financial aid from the government while those who excelled in matric were awarded scholarships to attend tertiary institutions.

Mr. Leso stated that the public interest in these subjects birthed a strong perception that learners in the faculty of natural sciences and with above average abilities in English are "bright, clever, intelligent and stars" (Leso, 1999). The definition of giftedness was born from the perception the former Department of Education held about certain school subjects being *status subjects*. Special state subsidised courses were presented to educators in these faculties. The strong preference for Mathematics, Natural sciences and English by the community influenced the Department of Education to consider achievers in these areas as highly intelligent.

No official document defining giftedness exists in the former Lebowa Department of Education. The concept of intelligence was formed as a result of the society understanding giftedness as outstanding achievement in the above subjects. Hagen (1980:4) states that whenever an attempt to identify the potentially gifted is made, two kinds of errors are generally made. The first is identifying an individual as gifted when she or he is not. The second is to fail to identify an individual as gifted when he or she truly is.

These two kinds of errors have different implications for educational programmes and for individuals, and arguments abound as to which is the more serious type of error.

### **2.7.2 The influence that educators' views on giftedness may have on academic support**

The belief held by some teachers in most black schools that gifted learners are defined to be the ones with outstanding abilities in mathematics, natural sciences and English is linked to the stereotype definition of giftedness. The following may serve as a representative example of the researcher's observation.

A teacher of a secondary school was looking at the school promotional report of a Grade 9 learner of Serisha Secondary School. The learner obtained 4<sup>th</sup> position with a 65.2% aggregate. The learner's school subjects were Tswana 1<sup>st</sup> Language HG, Afrikaans 2<sup>nd</sup> Language HG, Biology HG, Agricultural Science HG and Home Economics HG. In his remarks, the teacher asked why the learner did not follow the science stream because of her outstanding achievements. "You are a gifted girl, you have a mark of 70% for English, which is far above the class-average of 55%. This is excellent. You should take natural sciences and mathematics because you have brains. Your present stream will frustrate you and take you nowhere as it is for ordinary learners" (Mashego 1997, Rebotile 1997). These remarks are in line with the stereotype view of giftedness.

## **2.8 HOW GIFTEDNESS WAS DEFINED IN THE PAST**

Past views of giftedness will be discussed by describing narrow and broader definitions.

### 2.8.1 Narrow definitions of giftedness

By the term *narrow definition*, giftedness is understood solely as a single index that is measurable and converted to a score on an IQ test. According to Child (1997:107) this had the implication that only the facets of intelligence which are included in an IQ test are measured by the test. In addition, a minimum score is often set, which excludes everyone who scores below this point. The tendency to equate giftedness to heredity, and even to identify taller, good looking children as gifted also existed.

A brief overview of supporters of the narrow definition of giftedness

#### Louis Terman

Terman popularised the concept of a high IQ as a prerequisite for giftedness. He stated that children with a high IQ score could be identified as gifted as they are capable of outstanding academic performance. Terman assumed that intelligence is a genetically determined trait that is stable over the life of the individual. According to this view, the environment plays a relatively unimportant role. Terman's definition of giftedness, on which he based identification, included simply the top one per cent in general intellectual ability, as measured by the Stanford-Binet Intelligence or a comparable scale (Kokot 1992:9 and Lumadi 1997:68).

#### Leta Hollingworth

Hollingworth used intelligence as a basis for defining giftedness. According to her theory, intellectual giftedness is defined in terms of a line drawn at score level on an intelligence scale.

She is of the opinion that enrichment should assist gifted students to develop initiative and originality. Hollingworth does not believe giftedness to be solely hereditary but that opportunity in society is necessary if that natural ability is to develop and come to fruition (Kokot 1992:11).

### Francis Galton

Galton started his research into the meaning of intelligence or genius which lead him to believe that intellectual gifts were inherited rather than environmentally determined (Heller & Passow 1993:108). Galton defined intelligence in terms of the individual's acuity of the sensory organs, that is, vision, audition, smell, touch and reaction time (Kokot 1992:8). He constructed the first intelligence test which measured visual and auditory acuity, tactile sensitivity and reaction time. He therefore based the test on the theory that sensory acuity and general intelligence at infancy are related. Heredity, according to this theory, is the main determinant for intelligence.

### Alfred Binet

Binet highly popularised the concept of giftedness being equal to, or the same as intelligence. Binet stated that intelligence was subject to development and could be altered by education. According to Binet higher mental processes such as interest, attention, imagination and judgement were important determinants of intelligence (Kokot 1992:8).

According to this theory, an intelligent individual combines three essential strengths namely direction, adaptation and control. It is stated by Heller and Passow (1993:342) that *strength of adaptation* means that the gifted individual can effectively select and monitor strategies while performing a task. By *control* it is meant that gifted individuals have the ability to critique their own thoughts and behaviour, therefore ensuring that they are appropriately equipped for the task. Binet's theory is expressed through the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test.

## 2.8.2 The broader definitions of giftedness

By the term *broader definition* it is meant that the focus of giftedness is on an individual as a totality-in-function. If the definition of giftedness is broadened, we will end up with a larger number of individuals who will most likely be very heterogeneous on how they are selected. The broader definition of giftedness should be structured in such a way as to permit the majority of learners to meet their demands as opposed to the belief that

while giftedness is multi-dimensional, it remains a unitary trait (Child 1997:35). The theories of seven supporters of this definition will be discussed briefly.

### Howard Gardner and his theory of multiple intelligences

For the purpose of this study, the research will to a greater extent focus on Gardner's theory. His theory of multiple intelligence will be used mostly in the literature discussion and the empirical application of the project.

Gardner defines intelligence as an ability or set of abilities that permit an individual to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting.

His theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner 1993:3) is viewed in the sense that each intelligence is a system in its own right, rather than merely one aspect of a larger system. This means that one intelligence comprises of multiple abilities. According to Gardner, a person's abilities as assessed under one intelligence should not be predictive of that person's abilities as assessed under another intelligence (Gardner 1993:59).

Giftedness is understood by Gardner not as a unitary trait, but a multi trait of eight intelligences, that is, linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial-visual, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intra-personal. According to the theory of multiple intelligences, each of these has its own focus in the brain, its own symbol system and transmittable cultural history. A person's abilities or skills are localised in the brain which is the localised intelligence area.

According to Gardner's slogan "call them all talents if you wish or call them all intelligences" the theory of multiple intelligences is understood to mean that gifted, talented and creative people appear to be considered jointly as essentially one group which may vary greatly in the areas of high ability as well as in the extent of those abilities.

Gardner's work is noted as the most recent and most orientated towards public understanding. Because of this theory, one can understand that giftedness is not only



what intelligence tests measure. According to this theory there may be other possible intelligences that have not yet been identified. It seems that there may be evidence to support the rationale of this theory, as certain abilities for example rhetorical, creative and vocal talents, ball control, eye-hand co-ordination et cetera, is each localised in the brain.

These intelligences are to a large extent viewed by Gardner as not being measurable or convertible to a score as a universal claim to define giftedness. Gardner does not totally deny the traditional measurement of intelligence such as linguistic, logical mathematical, and spatial-visual intelligence. Gardner's problem in accepting the notion of IQ is due to the fact that quantification is convergently bound and not divergently bound.

#### J. S. Renzulli

According to Renzulli's theory, giftedness is defined from a triad approach jointly as the ability of above average intelligence, high task commitment and creativity. The interaction between these different components enables a child to produce performance of extraordinary quality (Kokot 1992:36, Renzulli 1977:20-28).

#### J. F. Monks

Monks (Kokot 1992:38) views giftedness as a product that exists when there is harmony between above average intelligence, motivation and creativity. According to Monks, a gifted person does not function in a social vacuum. Giftedness is the result of a favourable integration of internal and external factors. Monk's triad model extends Renzulli's model whereby the term motivation replaces Renzulli's task commitment. Monks adds a second social micro environment of a family, school and peers as very important external factors that support gifted potential to function.

#### A. J. Tannenbaum

According to Tannenbaum (Kokot 1992:38), giftedness is a product from a social psychological aspect whereby the main determinants are social norms and social

consideration. Kokot (1992:38:) states that according to the theory of Tannenbaum, giftedness is understood to be a quality that emerges when five broad conditions, encompassing both inner and environmental factors, are present. These conditions are presented in a star-shape as general ability, special ability, non-intellectual factors, environmental factors and chance factors. For giftedness to emerge, an interaction of potential with the individual's life-world is necessary.

### Barbara Clark

Clark (1988:3) defines giftedness and gifted/ talented persona from an integrative point of four specific brain functions. Clark defines intelligence and giftedness independently. According to Clark, there are gifted and highly gifted persons.

Giftedness may manifest itself in many ways ranging from outstanding cognitive ability and academic aptitude to creative behaviour, leadership ability and visual performing arts (Clark 1988:7). To define giftedness Clark bases her theory on the integration of four specific brain functions within a supportive environment. These brain functions are thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation. According to Clark's theory, giftedness has a biological origin. Clark (1988:68) states that giftedness is a label we give to children who are performing at high levels of intelligence i.e. advanced, accelerated, integrated, full-brain functions. Lumadi (1997:58) supports this view and states that although the quality of the four brain functions is genetically determined, they are not independent but vitally influenced by the environment.

### T. S. Mwamwenda

Mwamwenda (1989:437) understands giftedness to be a talent in one or more areas such as language, mathematics, science, music, drama, leadership and creativity. According to Mwamwenda, giftedness may be a single high level operation for example creativity, specific academic talents, leadership, ability in arts and psychomotor skills. He states that a gifted individual in the cognitive intellectual domain is identified by means of an IQ score above 130 which is obtained by about 2 - 4 % of any given school population.

### F. Gagné

Gagné understands giftedness and talent as two separate concepts. According to Kokot (1992:40), Gagné defines giftedness as a quality that corresponds to competence which is distinctly above average in one or more areas of ability. Talent refers to performance which is distinctly above average in one or more fields of human intelligence. According to his theory, Gagné identifies general fields of talent namely academic, technical, artistic, interpersonal and psychomotor field of talent. An application of one or more aptitudes to the mastery of knowledge and skill in a particular field is termed talent. According to Gagné's theory, these aptitude domains are intellectual, creative, social affective and sensorimotor (Kokot 1992:40).

## 2.9 THE RESEARCHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF GIFTEDNESS

This description of giftedness will not immediately start with a definition but with inferences about giftedness which have no universal standard but a societal standard. There is no uniform definition for giftedness or talents. Giftedness is not understood by the researcher to be a trait such as when one refers to an individual's height, built or the colour of his or her eyes.

This theory is supported by the fact that we infer giftedness by observing certain characteristics or behavioural manifestations. Observation of these characteristics or behaviours is a process and one can not claim to identify giftedness within a short period.

### 2.9.1 What giftedness is

The researcher is highly troubled with the way society has been deceived by the universally adopted expression *practice makes perfect*. Individuals who practise art, music or drama and look *perfect* in demonstration eventually are labelled by society as being gifted. A person does not become gifted by working hard.

The researcher is of the opinion that the definition of giftedness depends on whether a general or a specific designation of areas are considered. Not all people are gifted. Only

a small percentage of the population is distinguished by outstanding talent. A gifted individual is defined in terms of his or her own unique mental and temperamental processes, traits, qualities and products.

Giftedness is defined by the researcher as a psycho-physiological concept. It is the individual's cognitive and motivational potential as well as social and cultural conditions that are needed for achieving excellent performance. A gifted individual is distinguished by his or her excellent performance in one or more areas or in a specific domain.

The researcher's argument for the definition is that giftedness is basically hereditary and operates within a social-psychological sphere. All people are born with a certain genetic make up. In support of the theory of multiple-intelligences the researcher states that the brain directs all our abilities. A gifted individual in the cognitive-intellectual domain may have inherited super linguistic intelligence and his or her performance may be excellent as opposed to his or her friend who has inherited a weaker ability in the same domain. Another individual may have inherited a higher logical-mathematical intelligence than another individual in the cognitive-intellectual domain. One child, because of his or her genetic make up, may inherit exceptional psychomotor ability as an athlete while his or her friend may have inherited a weaker physiological ability.

Inherited ability is called potential. Potential is influenced by the environment, which plays the role of stimulating potential for performance by either improving or weakening the abilities the child has inherited (Lumadi 1997:15).

The right environment also stimulates and develops intelligence. When a child is identified as a gifted athlete it is inherited potential plus the environment which makes him or her excel in sport. It has been proven by science that stimulation, which leads to learning, brings about physical changes in the cerebral cortex (Kail 1998:32-40).

Inherited potential is indicated by outstanding achievement, task performance and insight performance which is termed collectively by the researcher as *giftedness or talent indicators*. For these inherited potentials to be triggered, a nurtured socio-psychological environment, where positive motivation, stimulation, self-concept, support and development are present, is necessary. In such an environment, indicators of

giftedness will be easily observable. Other useful variables to assist in facilitating task performance are social spheres such as school, parents and peers. Due to the hereditary factor, some potentially gifted children can perform at an adult level in a particular domain from an early age.

### 2.9.2 Gold as a symbol for giftedness

Gold is a precious natural mineral. It will however remain a stone for centuries unless it is mined, refined and marketed as a jewel. Gold needs to be processed in order to become a jewel. Inherited potential both in its quality and quantity may remain restricted to a gifted individual in a restricted, under-resourced socio-psychological sphere. The best “gold mine” for inherited potential is a resourceful, supportive environment.

The researcher’s support for the work of Heller and Passow (1993:103) assures his argument on the point that giftedness is hereditary. Scientists have proved that heredity describes *what is* and not *what could be*. This proves that talents are domain specific. Teachers and parents should not take for granted that if an individual IQ score is above 130, the individual “could be” a good sports person, a charismatic leader, mathematician, orator or musician. Proper identification and not a prediction is needed to identify talent.

Williams (Kokot 1992:139) supports the idea that knowledge and mental process based on cognition are attached to brain functions of which heredity is the major determining factor.

The researcher’s support of the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner 1993:3) assures his definition of giftedness in that the inherited potentials located in the brain are hereditary and are triggered by the environment, resulting in outstanding achievement, task performance and insight performance. An individual who excels in an interpretative art such as ballet and expressive dance may have inherited potentials located in the brain as bodily-kinesthetic ability or intelligence while a good leader may have both interpersonal and intra-personal intelligence.

## 2.10 THE CATEGORIES OF GIFTEDNESS

Giftedness is the umbrella concept for a variety of talents. To gain a better understanding of giftedness, the reader should keep in mind that, in terms of categorising talents, one should not deviate from the definition. It is the opinion of the researcher that both culture and society is very instrumental in defining and categorising giftedness.

In the past, American definitions and categories were widely used. In recent years, Gardner's theory, as discussed under *broader definition of giftedness* (paragraph 2.8.2) has gained momentum.

For the purpose of this study, both theories will be integrated in order to form more approachable categories with which giftedness can be identified. In order to categorise giftedness, the cultural context in which human beings find themselves, will be discussed.

The categories of giftedness will be expressed in the context of the distinction between talents, domains and fields of operation. The opinion that these categories, giftedness and talents are not the same, but differ in their level of generality and specificity, will be discussed.

By using the term *domain*, the researcher extends the characteristics of giftedness in a compound realm. The reader should note that in the realm of music talent, there are some individuals with unusual talent with the autonomy of musical intelligence. Several criteria which indicate a certain category of giftedness will be identified in order to identify a learner as gifted in a certain area, for example leadership, creativity, or visual and performing arts.

## 2.11 AREAS OF TALENT

For the purpose of this study eight different areas of talent will be discussed. These areas are mainly a combination of the six areas recognised by the United States Office of Education (Renzulli, 1981:16) and the intelligences according to Gardner's model.

The different areas are:

- Linguistic intelligence
- Logical-mathematical intelligence
- Spatial and mechanical intelligence
- Emotional intelligence (Intra- and interpersonal intelligence)
- Situational intelligence
- Creativity
- Artistic talent (musical, drama, dance and visual arts)
- Kinaesthetic talent

### 2.11.1 *Linguistic intelligence*

Language usage is a universal phenomenon but it manifests differently from one culture to the next. Linguistic intelligence is therefore defined according to cultural perspectives. People who are linguistically gifted have their every sentence overflowing with the sublime and beautiful. Most poets and authors are characterised by this type of intelligence. In the fifteenth century, William Shakespeare was linguistically gifted and stood out amongst the English society as a poet, playwright and author. According to Gardner (1993:21), linguistically talented people have the ability to think and express complex ideas and concepts; they have an excellent sense of humour and usually have a critical and questioning attitude.

Most people who are gifted in this area display characteristics such as an early mastery of the phonetic code, fluent descriptive language and by writing prose and poetry. They participate in debates, speeches, discussion, competitions, quizzes and many other forms of verbal performance.

### 2.11.2 *Logical-mathematical intelligence*

Mostly, this talent manifests itself in non-verbal thinking and abstraction. Unlike linguistic intelligence where fluency is characteristic, logical mathematic intelligence is characterised by logical reasoning and abstraction. Facts, rules, laws, formulas and experimentation are involved for proper understanding in deductive reasoning. The

products of this talent include the testing of hypotheses, the invention of products and taking part in science and mathematic olympiads.

People with high logical mathematic intelligence often come up with the answer to a problem immediately and then have to work out step by step how they reached the answer. In school, learners with a logical mathematical intelligence are conspicuous as they tend to work out science and maths problems quickly and accurately, but may not be able to explain this to their fellow learners, therefore leaving them behind.

### 2.11.3 *Spatial and mechanical intelligence*

Some people have an above average sense of direction and are able to represent their idea or mental map on paper. The ability to transform one element into another because of above average three dimensional thinking also belongs to this category. Individuals with superior spatial intelligence have the ability to form a model of a spatial image and manoeuvre and manipulate two- or three-dimensional images in their minds. Designers of machinery and buildings are examples of this type of intelligence. This ability is combined with others such as art, where choreographers manipulate movement in their mind in order to plan the performance of actors on a stage, and psychomotor abilities such as gymnastics.

### 2.11.4 *Kinaesthetic talent*

Some people by nature possess a more refined muscle movement. Such people are characterised by gross and fine buildup of muscles. Athletes, ballerinas, dancers and individuals who take part in sports have exceptional kinaesthetic skills and often impress other people with their physical and mental suppleness and agility.

### 2.11.5 *Artistic talent*

Artistic talent is the umbrella term that includes fine and graphic art as well as visual and performing arts. Being a cultural dimension, it has a value and a norm as a work of art may have significance to one community while it might not be acceptable to or appreciated by another. Lumadi (1993:15) states that in the black community, who



keep to their customs and traditions, there are strict sanctions applied to most performing arts, while in the more westernised community artistic activities are performed more freely.

Individuals who are talented in this field are able to express inner feelings such as love, joy and sorrow in their work. Some perform as actors while others develop into playwrights, models, photographers and architects.

#### 2.11.6 *Emotional intelligence*

This intelligence can be attributed to many faculties i.e. education, psychology, religion and human science. Concepts such as virtue, empathy, morals, leadership skills, self control, and tact are typical to this intelligence. Two types of emotional intelligences will be discussed briefly.

##### (i) *Intra-personal intelligence*

This intelligence refers to mental processes which occur within the individual. It is a correlative ability which is turned inward, a relationship which an individual creates with him or herself, therefore concepts such as self-knowledge, self-acceptance and the self-concept. An individual thinks rationally but is often managed by his or her emotions. An ability where an individual is mentally matured and possesses positive control of emotions, is termed emotional intelligence. Goleman (1996:42) maintains that emotional intelligence is characterised by high moral reasoning, self motivation, ability of an individual to deal with setbacks and disappointments, assertiveness, taking responsibility, self discipline, self assurance and the ability to put work before play.

##### (ii) *Interpersonal intelligence*

This refers to the ability which enables an individual to understand others. A gifted individual in this area is skilfully equipped to understand other people. For this reason this ability is also known as *social intelligence*. Thorndike (Goleman 1996:42) defines social intelligence as the ability to understand other people and

to act intelligently in relationships with them. It is a unique ability to discern and characteristics of this category include empathy with others' problems, extraordinary tolerance and understanding of others' culture and personal philosophies, the ability to radiate confidence to others and an above average ability to influence others in a positive way. It also includes personal traits such as honesty, problem solving and trustworthiness.

The visible products of emotional intelligence are generally the awarding of prizes which serve as social acknowledgement, for example the Nobel prize or awards in the community or country.

#### 2.11.7 *Creativity*

This talent is unique as the individual who is gifted in this area brings into existence a new product, method or approach. In the creativity movement a distinction is made between processes of creativity, products of creativity and creative people (Gouws, Louw, Meyer & Plug 1993:193).

The characteristics of creativity are intelligence, fluency, novelty, non-conformity, flexibility, originality, fantasy, unusual visual perspective, sense of humour and uniqueness (Olivier 1984:48).

An individual who is gifted in this area lives a life of experimentation, inventing new things and improves products and ideas. They tend to contribute significantly towards problem solving in any existing field, and they have a wealth of ideas.

Friedman and Rogers (1998:96) distinguish between the following phases of creativity:

- *Preparation*

Creative people spend a long time thinking about a specific idea, asking questions, meditating and giving free reign to their thoughts. This is a conscious preparatory phase.

- *Incubation*

During this phase thinking is unconscious and ideas are refined in the unconscious.

- *Illumination*

After the first two phases the creative person may experience a breakthrough, suddenly clearly visualising a wonderful idea and jumping up saying "I've got it!" He or she now spends long hours on the new creation and inspiration, delight and perseverance drive the person to give form to his or her ideas.

- *Verification*

This is a revision phase and the product is now tested. The creative person is extremely critical of his or her work and puts a good deal of energy into refining, analysing, evaluating and finally finishing the product.

#### 2.11.8 *Situational intelligence*

This talent can not be measured and its manifestation does not follow the rule of logic. Factors such as chance or "by accident" play a role in the actualisation of this talent. Many authors mention luck or fate as one of the factors which may determine whether or not a person achieves according to his/ her potential. The identification of this category of giftedness is not specifically concerned with luck or chance, but rather emphasises situations which push people to achieve what they never thought possible, therefore becoming a situational achiever. This type of intelligence can be seen as an instinctive reaction to a sudden problem situation - it may even be as sixth sense that some people have. A person may not be aware of this talent until a situation develops where the right action or decision is necessary. The individual with this kind of talent will act with exceptional insight in a emergency situation (Kokot 1992:123).

In the black society or community, traditional healers and palmists may use this intelligence to heal or to predict omens to their patients. The ability to act appropriately

in an unexpected situation, sudden appearance of an ability of which the bearer was not aware of, as well as empathy with people and the environment are the core characteristics of this talent.

## 2.12 NECESSITY FOR IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTEDNESS IN UNDER-RESOURCED RURAL AREAS

As a secondary school teacher, the researcher finds it necessary for an identification programme to be initiated in schools, especially in the rural community among black people. Although the previous inequality and education has brought disadvantages to the black education system, the researcher's point of departure for this research is rather an educational than a political one. Reasons for the necessity of an identification programme in under-resourced rural schools will now be stated from an educational point of view.

### 2.12.1 *The move from an IQ mentality to a multidimensional perspective of giftedness as a point of departure*

Educators and intellectuals in most rural areas should be made aware that giftedness is a diverse concept. Its perspective is not just a single measurable inset but it involves the broader scope of human abilities. Although intelligence tests give a lot of necessary information about intelligence, it focuses more on verbal ability, language fluency and spatial abilities. Other important aspects of giftedness, for example creativity, emotional intelligence, psychomotor talents and visual and performing arts can not be tested with most intelligence tests.

### 2.12.2 *Altering of cultural beliefs and cultural sex-role stereotypes*

A very real stumbling block in the identification of giftedness is that many black people reserve their potential and suppress their talent manifestation due to fears that prevail in most black communities.

In schools and different situations, most learners fear to stand out and fear to be praised. They prefer to remain a part of the group at the average level even though they

are able to excel. The reason for this is a strong fear of witchcraft and black magic that exists among many black people in rural communities in South Africa. It is believed that diseases and ailments such as severe headaches, insanity and death emanate from witchcraft and black magic.

The following may serve as a representative example of the researcher's observation.

- Most learners in black schools, especially in the rural areas, refuse to lend their exercise and text books to their school friends for fear that the lender's book may be charmed with "medicine" which will affect the lender with serious diseases or problems such as headaches, blindness and misfortune. The main victims are learners who perform well in the academic field.
- During an interview with the principal of a secondary school, who is a member the Zion Christian Church (Mogakane, March 1988) it was learnt that every year, as the time for final examinations approached, the ZCC learners would bring their books to the nearest church to the elders for purification. This purification service is believed to be a guard against witchcraft and a means for a blessing. The owner of the book will live a fearless life but should not lend his or her books or belongings to others.
- There is, to a large extent, a fear of a "pseudo death" whereby the victim whose performance in academic subjects is excellent, fears to stand out among his or her peers as he or she will be recognised as being intelligent. It is believed that the victim may be bewitched and turned into a Zombie. It will as appear as if the victim is dead, but in reality it is strongly believed that a "pseudo-corpse" will be buried while the real person is turned into a zombie who serves the witch invisibly. As a result of this fear, most black learners refuse to have their academic achievement displayed on notice boards at school (Anonymous a: 2000).
- Cultural stereotypes also exist amongst black people, especially in the tribal rural settlements. Tribal leaders are not identified according to the characteristics of giftedness as it is understood by most people. A leader of the Mapulana tribe will inherit this title on the following conditions:

- . He must be the son of a chief from the patrilineal royal family.
  - . He is identified by means of birthright and not emotional intelligence.
  - . He is a graduate from circumcision school (not being circumcised medically but has spent some months in the initiation school).
  - . He can not be a leader until he has been married to a wife chosen for him by the tribe.
- The sex role stereotype commences at babyhood. Boys play tough games outdoors and learn to explore (Bee 1994:208). Girls are always with their mothers or any female relative within the plot premises. When girls play boyish games for example climbing a tree, they are strongly reprimanded. When boys associate themselves with a girl's game, they are called diminutive names and made fun of.

At school level, although they are starting to break away from this behaviour, some subjects for example Mathematics, Natural Science, Engineering and Woodwork are believed to be taken by boys. Certain leadership positions are regarded as belonging to boys for example HSRC President, Class Monitor and Sport Organiser.

Girls are made to follow subjects that will keep them indoors in their prospective careers for example home economics and hairdressing. If a girl deviates from these cultural sanctions, she may forfeit a chance of being married.

The researcher is of the opinion that identification of giftedness is a necessity in the rural areas. It is hoped that identification will assist to dawn a renaissance and to break cultural rigidity, stereotypes and beliefs. The identification of giftedness may help in defining giftedness and identifying and developing talents more scientifically.

### 2.12.3 *Preventing talent erosion*

The researcher's term for *talent erosion* is symbolic to the agricultural science term for *soil erosion* whereby fertile soil is blown by strong winds and rain to change from arable to non-arable land. In order to prevent talent erosion, all learners should receive a fair chance to actualise their potential. The researcher is of the opinion that the society in general is misappropriating talents. There is no proper programme for identification and it seems as if intellect is valued at the expense of other talents. This results in more social problems and early school leaving. The danger exists that these early school leavers may use their talents outside socially acceptable boundaries.

The focus and the goal of the research is to identify gifted children by introducing the talent identification programme which was designed in the Faculty of Education, Unisa, to reach all cultures, to avoid too much focus on formal testing and a too rigid structure of panel forming, school policies, et cetera. This model will focus more on different kinds of intelligence and reach more children with specific talents rather than only those with high academic performance.

### 2.12.4 *A new chance for gifted learners*

The post-apartheid era is ripe for an identification programme for gifted learners that can be used by all culture groups. During the apartheid era, the use of separate education systems added to the confusion of the definition and identification of giftedness. Although cultural differences are still upheld in South Africa, there is currently only one system of education for all learners. As mentioned in Paragraph 2.7, learners in rural areas can be tested by means of group intelligence tests available in their mother tongue in the intellectual category.

Tlale (1990:104-110) criticises the Institute for Psychological and Edumetric Research of the HSRC for tests prescribed to Africans. This is due to the fact that in the past, these tests were based on the Western culture and therefore could not reveal the full ability of the black child. It is hoped that the programme of Unisa which will be utilised in the research will be proved as being culture free.

## 2.13 SUMMARY

Giftedness is a diverse concept. In literature and research done on this subject to date, giftedness has been awarded many definitions.

Some definitions are made from a single index that is measurable while others which are recent are made from a multi-dimensional point of view. Giftedness is not a new concept. It is steeped in time perspective from early civilisation. The term giftedness serves as an umbrella concept of many special abilities. According to Gardner's theory, special abilities are represented by certain localised intelligences.

The understanding of giftedness is relative. Some authors define giftedness as the synonym for talent while others see giftedness and talent as two different and interdependent concepts. It was argued that identification of gifted learners is a necessity in our times, especially in rural areas where all learners need to actualise their potential by making use of special programmes for the gifted and talented.

The reason for identification of gifted individuals is not only based on the needs of the state but it is mainly motivated by mere humanitarian purposes - to provide special educational programmes.

In chapter 3 underachievement will be discussed.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **UNDERACHIEVEMENT**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the concept of giftedness including its history, myths, definitions from the narrow and broad perspective were discussed. The categories of giftedness according to Gardner and the United States Office of Education were also discussed. In this chapter, the concept of underachievement will be discussed and will be focussed on as a phenomenon as well as a disaster that may befall gifted learners and which can eventually lead to the community suffering its side effects.

Underachievement is not a new phenomenon but it is known from different time perspectives. Various authors and researchers have defined underachievement and highlighted causes and categories of underachievement.

Underachievement may be found in either acute or chronic stages, depending on the nature or the cause. It is believed by various authors that this disaster can be remedied through proper intervention (Lumadi 1998:50 and Kokot 1992:78).

It is also the object of this chapter to highlight the concept of underachievement according to the African perspective and to shed light on the way giftedness is wrongly viewed by the community, especially in under-resourced rural areas.

#### **3.2 A DESCRIPTION OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT**

The broadness of the concept, the complexity of society as well as the multitude of existing theories make it difficult to define exactly what underachievement is. There is therefore no single and final definition. It is not an inherited trait and it is viewed and understood as phenomenon which manifests due to a variety of internal and external factors. Underachievement originates from various sources caused by negative circumstances and is relative in nature.

The relativeness of this concept can be attached to a term *talent dynamics* which is used by Heller and Passow (1993:382).

By *talent dynamics* it is meant that *underachievement refers to an individual lagging behind and failing to achieve*. To *lag behind* means that an underachiever falls behind or the effort to achieve is decreased due to unfavourable circumstances. To *fail* in this context means to work in vain or to be unsuccessful. An underachiever is not a failure but someone who is lagging behind. This will cause the performance of the individual to be below the expected achievement level.

In chapter two a definition of giftedness was given from a broader perspective. It was stated that one is not gifted because of hard work, but because of potential. Giftedness is the product that exists when there is harmony between above average intelligence, motivation and creativity within the favourable integration of internal and external factors. The disharmony that may befall a gifted person and disturb the integration of these factors may cause underachievement.

It should be noted that underachievement is not a decrease of potential but low performance as a result of negative circumstances. The manifestations of underachievement are directly related to inadequate motivation.

### 3.2.1 *A traditional view of underachievement*

Traditionally, underachievement was narrowed down to academic performance. It is, however, realised now that a child can also underachieve in other areas such as drama, psychomotor ability and creative ability to mention but a few.

In a personal interview with an educator at a secondary school (Nxumalo, 1999), it was found that underachievement is seen as the antitheses of over-achievement. According to this person, a score or a symbol is used to determine whether an individual is underachieving or overachieving by comparing whether there is a drop or a growth of mark from an achievement or from the average level. According to the interviewee, the achievement level is a mark and a norm set by the education department, for example 50%. When a learner achieves a mark lower than this level, for example 45%, he or she

is seen as an underachiever. When the learner achieves 53% or more, he or she is seen as an overachiever.

Although the interviewee's notion may not be scientific, it can be substituted by the phrase *achieving over the expected level* instead of *overachievement*.

### 3.2.2 *A current view of underachievement*

According to the recent view of this concept, underachievement is holistic in the sense that it is not exclusive to the area of intellect and academics. At present there are many categories of giftedness and some are still being identified through research and literature. Underachievement is therefore possible in every existing talent where the performance of an individual is lower than the expected level of performance according to that learner's potential.

## 3.3 THEORETICAL VIEWS OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Lumadi (1998:279) states and defines an underachiever as "one whose performance, as judged either by grades or achievement test scores, is significantly below his high measured or demonstrated aptitudes or potential for academic achievement".

Three theoretical views of underachievement will now be discussed.

### 3.3.1 *Underachievement according to A. J. Tannenbaum*

According to Tannenbaum (1983:210), underachievement has attracted a lot of attention from educators who find it a difficult problem to solve. He states that this concept has also attracted attention from behavioural scientists who seem tantalised by it, judging from a huge body of research they have published on its nature and remediation. Tannenbaum defines underachievement to be a discrepancy between expectation and performance.

According to Tannenbaum, there is no uniform definition of this concept which exists to guide all researchers in judging who fits the description and who does not. The New

York State Commissioner's regulation (Article xxiii, Section 187, 1965) a child listed as an underachiever "is one who, on the basis of the teacher's or teachers' judgement(s), has not achieved for a year in accordance with his capacity" (Tannenbaum 1983:211).

*Causes of underachievement according to Tannenbaum*

According to Tannenbaum's theory (1983:212) underachievement is caused by an absence or breakdown in at least one of the linkages between promise and fulfilment. This cause of underachievement can not be separated from the idea of a discrepancy between expectation and performance. The cause of underachievement in this regard may be an event. There is no clear evidence that can clearly justify specific causes and concomitants. Tannenbaum had conducted more than ninety empirical studies between 1931 and 1961 in order to identify the causes of underachievement, yet he could not find a definite way of explaining why some so-called gifted children do not measure up to their potential.

*Categories of underachievement according to Tannenbaum*

According to this theory, the levels at which gifted learners underachieve may differ. Farquahar and Payne (Tannenbaum 1983:211) reviewed techniques of selection and discovered that underachievement fall into four distinct categories:

(i) *Central tendency split*

In this category three types of learners are identified.

- Learners with extremely high general ability and extremely low achievement scores are considered underachievers.
- Those rated relatively low or relatively high in both are considered par achievers.
- Those of extremely low ability but are high achieving learners are overachiever.

*(ii) Arbitrary partitions*

Learners who are considered underachievers in this category are those with extremely high general ability but who achieve extremely low. It seems as if there could be a gap in the self-realisation of the underachieving individual that need to be addressed.

*(iii) Relevant discrepancies splits*

In this category, learners are identified by a discrepancy in rank separately on achievement and general abilities scores. If the discrepancies exist and there is a split between achievement and general ability score, a learner is declared an underachiever.

*(iv) Regression model selection*

To consider who an underachiever is in this category, achievement is predicted by general ability test scores. If a learner performs below expectation, he or she is considered an underachiever, but if a learner performs above expectation, he or she is considered to be an overachiever.

### 3.3.2 *Underachievement according to A. K. Heller, J. F. Monks and H. A. Passow*

Heller and Passow (1993:897) confine their understanding of underachievement as an essentially academic centred concept i.e. intellectual underachievement. According to Heller and Passow (1993:897) "underachievement refers to all those who, for whatever reasons, fail to develop their potential maximally". If there is a serious gap between potential (which is meant to be used to full capacity) and achievement scores, underachievement may develop. According to the researcher it seems that underachievement is an event when a gap is created between performance and potential. According to this definition, it may be appropriate if underachievement is a school centred concept. This deems true as achievement can be measured easier than potential. According to the researcher, it is not possible to assess potential with sufficient accuracy to enable prediction of performance for all individuals.

It is stated by Monks (1992:650) that a gifted underachiever is “one who not only fails to achieve the academic level of which he is capable, but is often found to be lagging behind the achievement levels of the contemporaries of average ability”. A view from Shaw (Monks 1992:650) about the gifted underachiever is the person who is in the upper 25% of his or her class with respect to intellectual ability and who falls below the class average with respect to grades. According to the author, it means a learner whose score on a scholastic aptitude test places him or her at a high percentile and whose grades place him or her at an average percentile is identified as an underachiever.

Apparently the nature of underachievement in gifted learners can be recognised when it is manifested in the usual expectation schools may have, for example the expectation and acceptance of convergent behaviour (Hickson 1989:680-683).

By this definition, mathematics or biology teachers can identify who the underachievers in their classrooms are. In order to identify the underachiever in such a way that the zone between performance and ability is known, an IQ score as well as an achievement score will be needed. Although this attempt may hold a solution, there may be problems with reliability as IQ score results and achievement test results are influenced by environmental and personality factors. In order to know what the zone between performance and ability for each individual learner is, more variables than IQ and performance should be taken into account.

*Causes of underachievement according to A. K. Heller, J. F. Monks and H. A. Passow*

Heller and Passow (1993:898) see the cause of underachievement as “phenomenological factors related to the underachiever’s self-concept, self-ideal, motivation and adult-model”. These authors also include various other factors such as family factors which include parental pressures, expectations, attitudes and home climate and support. Rimm (Heller & Passow 1993:898) describes the cause of underachievement as a combination of both external and internal factors. These external factors refer to school programmes and classroom conditions, while the internal factors refer to the individual’s personality characteristics and motivation amongst others. According to the author, the probability of underachievement and the intervention strategies proposed for reversing it are diverse.

### 3.3.3 *Underachievement according to S. J. Kokot*

Kokot, who is regarded as one of the pioneers of gifted child education in South Africa, clarifies, defines and highlights the concept of giftedness according to a South African perspective.

For so many years the study field of gifted child education received mostly a Western approach in literature, journals and research. Kokot provides a new look on who gifted learners are and how their self-actualisation can be affected by circumstances.

Kokot (1992:112) defines this concept as follows: "Underachieving gifted pupils are those who have exceptional potential in either an intellectual or other sphere but fail to actualise this potential. They are children who hint at special ability but do not achieve excellence." Although many believe that children of high ability who "get by" with C's and D's but never push themselves too far are acceptable, it is not Kokot's point of view to acknowledge this situation as over-achievement.

Galler (Kokot 1992:111) defines underachievement as a social tragedy, "the extent of which is difficult to measure but which is surely great". This is understood to mean that underachievement can not be measured and be converted to a score or a symbol for identification purposes. It may be legitimate to accept the term underachievement as referring to a discrepancy between children's school performance and some index of their ability such as intelligence, scholastic achievement, creativity score or data gained through observation (Kokot 1992:112).

#### *Categories of underachievement according to Kokot*

##### *(i) Underachievers from socio-economically average families*

From this category, learners underachieve in spite of a favourable milieu or resourceful environment. It is not a guarantee that children from privileged families are always successful just because they are exposed to favourable opportunities required for learning. These children also underachieve, therefore they need support and motivation from parents and counsellors.

(ii) *Underachievers from lower income groups*

The *lower income group* consists of part time labourers, unskilled labourers, poverty-stricken families and low wage earners. By observation, children who come from such home situations may underachieve because of the inferiority complex that engulfs them.

The importance of a positive self-concept is underscored by the statement of Maslow (Kokot 1992:139) that an individual's healthy psychological development is almost synonymous with essential humanness.

It is further argued by Weiten (1992:4) that if both psychology and physiology do not co-ordinate systematically, there will be no tangible progress. It is of no surprise, that if children come from poverty stricken families they may display demotivated behaviour and as learners at school, they show no tangible progress because of a low self-concept.

Kokot summarises five categories of gifted underachievers according to Tannenbaum as follows:-

- Those who fail to come up to expectation because their general abilities have been overestimated.
- Those with insufficient special abilities.
- Those whose learning habits are inadequate.
- Those who are inadequately nurtured at home, in the school or in the community.
- Those who lapse into mediocrity because of circumstances outside anyone's control.



There is yet another classification of underachievement made by Clark (Kokot 1992:113):

(i) *The situational-bound underachiever*

This group of underachievers are temporarily disturbed by unfavourable circumstances such as strikes and violence at school, illness, death of a family member and disruption either in the domestic or school routine.

(ii) *Chronic underachievers*

Underachievers in this category experience irreversible conditions such as impairedness for example visual-motor, auditory -motor or perceptual disorders. This group of underachievers continuously experiences learning problems which impede optimal performance.

*Causes of underachievement according to Kokot*

Kokot (1992:114) states that underachievement may be caused by poor school management, socio-ecological as well as politically related issues. Looking at the present situation in South Africa, these causes can be clearly seen. The media reports on class boycotts, strikes, sit ins, violence as well as racial and ethnic conflicts (Sunday World, 12 March 2000; Saturday Star, 15 June 1999 and The Sowetan, 8 June 1999). When disciplinary measures decline in schools, gifted learners are de-motivated and end up being part of a lawless society (McGeevy 1987:33-56).

Most schools have become a political zone. In some schools, especially secondary black schools, most learners are members of different organisations and gangs such as L.R.C., Pasom, Asasco and Cosas, to mention but a few. The Sunday Times, (31 January 1999:5) printed an article entitled *Schools gripped by fear*. This article reported that "...gun-toting pupils, rampant gangsterism, rape on school grounds and intimidation" is a daily problem in South African schools.

The children's energy is harnessed in these organisations rather than in school activities. Opportunities for learning are disturbed because of differences and squabbles among members of organisations. This may result in insufficient contact sessions between learners as well as between learners and teachers which may eventually lead to learning breakdown and underachievement.

Due to the idea of multiplicity of causes of underachievement being applicable to the South African situation, it will be expanded on as a multiplicity of causes which form a network.

- Relationship with parents

A lack of a healthy parent-child relationship can lead to underachievement. The father figure may often be away from home, and children become too dependent on their mother. Failure by parents to reward achievement is another possible cause of underachievement. This problem is very evident in rural areas where most children do not live with their parents but whose caretakers are elderly people or siblings (Angent & De Man 1996:102).

- Overprotection

Many parents overprotect their children from responsibility and accountability. The researcher has observed a situation where a mother was completing mathematics and geography assignments for her son in Grade 9 while the boy was watching television. In doing the work she was not guiding her son but hindering his responsibility. Overprotection impedes the child's opportunity to venture and explore in learning areas (Bee 1996:189).

- Excessive and unrealistic expectations

Some parents expect their children to follow in their footsteps academically or career wise. According to Kokot (1992:118), there are parents who feel themselves a failure and expect their children to achieve the success they

could not attain themselves. These parents in particular escape their sense of personal inferiority by basking in the reflected glory of what their children achieve.

– Lack of adequate mediation of learning at home

Children often need their parents to assist them with academic matters by means of learning mediation. Learning mediation has the advantage that intellectual-, social-, spiritual and problem solving skills can be developed and improved by the involvement of an adult in the learning events. A lack of learning mediation could result in convergent thinking, for example closed questions and closed answers. The following questions serve as examples of a closed and an open question.

- . How many legs does a millipede have? (closed question)
- . If a millipede had six legs, how do you think it would move and why? (open question)

Closed questions do not stimulate thought, call for reflection or provoke opinion and argument.

– Belittlement of children

Belittlement of children by either parents or other adults hurt the children's self worth. It lowers their morale and may lead to underachievement. When children receive support and encouragement there is a maximum possibility to perform excellently.

– Personal appearance

Although physical appearance is a universal matter, some individuals are adversely affected by what they look like. If individuals cannot accept themselves as they are, for example being very short, or having a physical impairment, they may be reluctant to participate in some activities,

therefore suppressing their potential either in the class, sport and other activities.

*Children with chronic ailments* underachieve due to poor concentration and lack of physical strength. In this regard, children with illness such as epilepsy, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic illnesses may underachieve.

### 3.4 THE VIEW OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT IN UNDER-RESOURCED RURAL SCHOOLS

The problem of underachievement in the rural area schools, especially where gifted learners are concerned, is a matter of serious concern (Lumadi 1998:10). According to the researcher, underachievement is both a phenomenon because it is manifesting and it is also a disaster because its end results may affect the learner, the society and the nation.

The definition of this concept depends on the category from which giftedness is being defined. From the discussion of the theories of underachievement, it becomes clear that no definition of this concept is completely accurate. It seems that a compromise would be necessary in order to arrive at a workable, widely accepted definition.

Underachievement can occur in all categories of giftedness. In the area of academic achievement it is more visible than in other categories. A subject teacher, for example, can observe that the performance of an able learner in mathematics is declining. Mark schedules and performance is noticed and scores analysed, but an underachieving person in the kinesthetic area can only be identified by a mentor or an expert who watches and interprets the performance. It often happens that gifted learners underachieve but still perform on an average level.

#### 3.4.1 *The researcher's definition*

A gifted learner who performs lower than is reasonably expected of him or her is underachieving. This means that the individual's performance is lower than his or her potential.

In some areas of giftedness, this lowering of performance can be observed in certain talents while it is measurable in others. Underachievement in intelligence can for example, be determined by an intelligence test.

For the purpose of this research, the definition of underachievement according to Tannenbaum (1983:210) which is stated as “discrepancy between expectation and performance” and from Heller and Passow (1993:897) where it is defined as “failure to develop one’s potential maximally” is supported. The definition of Kokot (1992:112) whereby an individual with “exceptional potential in either intellectual or other spheres but who fails to actualise his potential” is also supported.

Underachievement can thus be defined according to a twofold approach namely a general- and specific definition. By a general definition, it is meant that the definition of underachievement is seen as an umbrella description for all performance that is declining in every field. This can involve descriptions of the problem by lay people, parents, teachers and significant others.

By a specific definition, it is meant that the definition ought to be stated in a more scientific way. An underachiever should be viewed in terms of a specific field, be it intelligence, creativity, specific academic performance, exceptional artistic talent and exceptional psychological abilities to mention but a few.

#### 3.4.2 *The causes of underachievement in under-resourced rural schools*

For the sake of the research, underachievement will be discussed as it is caused by circumstances in schools in the far eastern part of Northern Province in the Mapulaneng/Mhala area. In this area, there are public, private and farm schools. The distinguished population is Mapulana, Tsongas, Swati and a few immigrants. Most schools in this area are extremely under-resourced, especially the public and farm schools. These schools range from pre-primary to secondary schools.

### 3.4.3 *Description of an under-resourced school*

These are schools with de-motivating factors which hinder effective teaching and learning due to a lack of resources. In the preliminary research done, it was observed and noticed that most schools are lacking the following facilities:

- Buildings: Classrooms, libraries, laboratories, store rooms, toilets and sportsgrounds
- Furniture: Learners desks, chairs, stationery, communication media, textbooks and chalkboards
- Water sources: Tanks and taps
- Electricity

### 3.4.4 *Under-resourced schools in the Mapulaneng / Mhala rural areas*

In order to demonstrate the extent of the problem in under-resourced schools, the HSRC statistics (Education Foundation 1996) for the Northern Province will be displayed. Some of the statistics will be compared with the statistics in the Western Cape.

In comparing these statistics the researcher aims to support the hypothesis stating that under-achievement in under-resourced areas is more prevalent than in resourced areas.

In the Northern province, the following statistics hold:

- *Number of schools according to type of schools:*

a	Special schools	11
b	Primary schools	2764
c	Secondary schools	1389
d	Combined schools	80

- *Percentage of schools inadequately supplied with textbooks in Mapulaneng/ Mhala political map:* 50.1% - 60.0%
  - *Power supply at schools*
    - a Not supplied 3280
    - b Supplied 898
  - *Percentage of schools with telephones* 32%
  - *Number of schools according to condition of buildings:*
    - a Good and excellent 1412
    - b Minor repairs 1013
    - c Weak and very weak 1703
  - *Percentage of secondary schools with instruction areas for specialised subjects:* 18%, as compared to the Western Cape which has 88%.
  - *Percentage of schools with media centres:*
    - a Primary schools 2%
    - b Secondary schools 9%
- As compared to Western Cape:*
- a Primary schools 42%
  - b Secondary schools 87%
- *Classroom shortage:* 13 670
  - *Learners-laboratory ratio:* 2 291:1
  - *Percentage of schools without sport facilities:* 44%

– *Water*

Within walking distance	24%
On site	41%
Water indoors	25%
Communal tap	8%
Other	2%

It is clear that most schools in rural areas, especially in the area of research, are under-resourced. Underachievement will be discussed in conjunction with the HSRC statistics and preliminary findings and observations. The causes of under-achievement will be categorised into external and internal causes.

### 3.5 EXTERNAL CAUSES OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT

#### 3.5.1 *Underachievement emanating in the schools*

##### 3.5.1.1 *Inadequate curriculum*

An *inadequate curriculum* means that the curriculum has inflexible and irrelevant content which may cause underachievement (Rex 1996:15; Kokot 1992:65 and Gallagher & Gallagher 1994:291). This type of programme encourages able learners to be disgusted with routine drill and teaching which stifles initiative, creativity, divergent thinking and problem solving activities.

An adequate curriculum is interrelated with a totality of aims, learning content, evaluation procedures, teaching-learning activities, opportunities and experiences. "Under-teaching" can cause gifted children to adopt a negative attitude and to attempt to prove the class and/or the teacher wrong just for the sake of argument.

In the area of research, namely the Mapulaneng/ Mhala rural area, it was observed that the curriculum is very inflexible and narrow. Teaching in this area is not activity based. Learners are not engaged in exploring, experimenting, venturing and doing their own



research and scientific group work. Didactic practices, for example routine drill, recitation of facts, reproduction of facts and test scores are based on convergent thinking. Thus, the curriculum is mainly content based and the scope for independent thinking from the learners is narrowed. Teachers mostly work according to very rigid teaching methods and programmes.

The unfortunate situation is that no proper programmes for gifted education in black schools exist. There is still very little opportunities to address basic education fairly and properly (Lumadi 1998:51). In Mapulaneng/ Mhala area, the demand for regular classrooms and teachers has not been met, let alone the need for specially trained teachers who can effectively teach gifted learners. It seems that classes are more like museums than workshops. There are no opportunities that provide children with the intrinsic motivation to do independent scientific investigation, or to advance their interest through vigorous exploration of their world and risk taking.

### 3.5.1.2 *De-motivating learning environment*

An environment which de-motivates an interest and desire for teaching and learning may cause underachievement.

In the area of research, a personal interview was conducted with a young male teacher (Mzimba 1998). He responded as follows:

"This place is boring, I just work here because I did not find a work somewhere. My colleagues are working in a better place. There are only six classrooms, no staffroom, laboratory, microscope, and overcrowded classrooms, with only eight of us including the principal. The toilets are bad and we carry water for drink because we do not prefer the water from the fountain. The classroom doors have been stolen and in the afternoon and evening people from the village use our classrooms for their filthy purpose. Some boys meet with their girlfriends and some bring beer cans while goats get in and dirty the classrooms.

Every morning about 90 minutes may be spent to clean the dirty classrooms and surroundings before the lessons are commenced. I am preparing to leave this place,

not me only, all these teachers are even prepared to either join other sectors than being at this school”.

From this interview, the researcher realised that a de-motivating learning environment is a major contributing factor towards underachievement.

In the Mapulaneng/ Mhala area, there are many farm schools. In the preliminary research, it was observed that in one school there are 80 children from grade 1 to grade 7 with only three educators including the principal. In this school, learners are combined as follows: Grade 1 and 2, grade 3 and 4 and grade 5 and 6. Two grades are combined in one classroom. These children are instructed simultaneously with any available textbook suitable for that grade. There is no effective instruction. When teachers hold staff meetings with the farm manager, children either go home or play outside.

In one school where the researcher carried out a survey, there was overcrowding of learners, for example in a grade 8 class it was found that there were 92 learners in one classroom. According to the school policy, monthly tests are written. By observation, it was found that the teachers do not mark the children’s work. This is not the school’s policy. Learners are instructed to bring along red pens, exchange their test books and the teacher dictates answers while the learners mark their answers either right or wrong. The subject teacher will then put his or her signature in the book.

With some essays, it was found that children write almost similar ideas. Before an essay is given to children, it is treated. The researcher learnt of evaluation which is called “spiritual marking”. It is explained by some teachers to mean granting marks by random guesses without having read and evaluated the children’s work. A learner may get 70% or credits which he or she does not deserve. In an informal dialogue with these teachers, one teacher stated that is was the most effective way of dealing with and controlling overcrowded classes. The teacher stated that it was impossible to mark and control the books of 820 learners every month.

In order to submit the mark schedule and prepare another class activity, without working overnight marking books, spiritual marks or crediting marks randomly is regarded as the safest alternative. It is an unfortunate state of affairs that most mark sheets reflect these

spiritual marks. This may affect the identification progress of academically gifted learners. There is, therefore, no accurate marking from both the teachers and the learners.

Learners have to walk  $\pm$  600 metres looking for river water to drink and the school toilets are dirty, unsafe and not fit for use. It is also an unfortunate state of affairs to see most children walking a distance as far as six kilometres to school, in a single trip. Parents can not afford to pay bus fare. When it is raining while the children are at school, those learners who receive lectures outside the building go into any classroom and mix with the other children, which causes interruptions in lessons. It also happens that during rainy seasons, many children do not even attend school. When it is dark in the classroom because of no electricity, lessons suffer.

Bosman (1968:10) makes the following statement:

“n Beroep groei en ontwikkel saam met die gemeenskap waarin dit beoefen word. In 'n land met 'n uitgebreide stelsel van elektriese krag sal daar vanselfsprekend veel meer geleentheid vir 'n elektriese wees as in 'n land waar ontwikkeling van elektriese krag nog in 'n beginstadium is”. Although this statement was made as early as 1968, the quotation states that when no opportunities exist, career possibilities dwindle as well.

### 3.5.1.3 *Attitude of teachers mutually*

It is not unusual to find negative relationships and attitudes between teachers and the community and teachers on an ethnical and racial level. Negative attitudes may develop due to the following circumstances:

- Learners are often of the same age as the teachers - which makes it difficult to take control over older learners.
- Physical circumstances for example poor accommodation and old fashioned worn out buildings tend to influence teachers negatively.

- Negative attitudes of parents towards schooling their children may cause teachers to become despondent.
- Mistrust that exist between certain tribes, that is Mapulana, Tsongas and Swazi often cause tension between different groups.

#### 3.5.1.4 *Lack of equipment and facilities*

Until recently, not a single school in the rural area existed which was properly equipped to facilitate a better learning environment. In order to understand underachievement of the gifted, the historical context should also be viewed.

Since the time of Bantu Education, whether in urban or rural areas, no black schools have had adequate facilities. As could be determined from the political map of the Education Foundation, the Mapulaneng/ Mhala district shows that 50.1% - 60.0% of schools are inadequately supplied with resources to cater for education (HSRC 1996).

In any situation where there is not sufficient equipment, learners lack concentration, display poor work and study habits and also acquire poor reading skills. Generally they are de-motivated, lose interest in their career choice and develop emotional conflict with themselves which may result in underachievement.

#### 3.5.2 *Causes of underachievement which are community related*

##### 3.5.2.1 *Socio-economic factors*

Home climate is considered to be a strong factor for both achievement and underachievement. Poverty is a disturbing feature, particularly in the South African context. It affects everyone - children, adolescents and adults. More underachievers appear to come from large families where educational love, educational communication and discipline are lacking, leading to sibling rivalry and the comparison of one child with another (Lumadi 1998:289).

During the preliminary research on the possible causes of underachievement, it was found that poverty was the biggest contributing factor to underachievement. Most parents whose children are of school going age and attending school are unemployed. Many large families live in very small homes. During the research, the researcher became aware of a family of 15 living in a five roomed house. The husband is a bigamist and each wife has eight and four children respectively. Some houses are occupied by extended families, for example a grandmother staying with her unmarried daughters and their children, where the principal source of income is an old age pension. In such situations, school children have no space for private studies. In most houses, there is no electricity, radio, television, magazines or any media that can reinforce education or provide stimulation.

Due to poverty, many school aged children work at local farms. Those who manage to attend school have almost no school attire or shoes. This affects their participation in most activities.

In the area of research, no grazing camps for cattle exist. Most people depend on the produce of farming to make a living. There are no fences to ward off livestock and wild animals to keep them from destroying the crops. During the autumn season, young boys are kept from attending school, and spend most of their school days in the field chasing away these animals. Girls to a very large extent are excused from such duties due to cultural reasons. In one extended family where the researcher collected data (Mogane, 1999) it was found that three brothers, Sello, Piso and Markus rotate their school attending days. Sello is absent every Monday and Tuesday, Pitso every Wednesday and Friday while Markus is absent every Thursday.

These boys miss many contact sessions with their teachers and fellow learners. If the area was resourced with grazing camps and fences around the fields or if the parents could hire staff to do this work, the children's school attendance could improve.

### 3.5.2.2 *Socio-cultural diversities*

#### – Absorption into the western culture

Education can not be separated from culture. Learners feel comfortable when their culture is precipitated at school. Black children are at the cross roads. For example, it is practice in the black culture that children are expected to squat when they talk to parents. This is seen as a sign of respect, while at some schools squatting is viewed as a sign of inferiority. Black children who suddenly find themselves in a western environment may be treated as though they are inferior. It is the opinion of the researcher that the cultural, historical and developmental context of each ethnic group in a country colours its perception of education. Education of the gifted can not be separated from the larger context of what is taking place within a certain country or within its cultural context (Lumadi 1998:88).

A tendency has developed amongst parents of a higher socio-economic status to enrol their children in private schools where the practices are mostly Western. Black learners are required to adapt to western practises and learn the dominating culture's language. This may create psychological problems as children may hesitate to freely answer questions in the classroom, for fear of expressing themselves incorrectly. Culturally diverse children are at risk of becoming underachievers. It is sometimes difficult to identify high intellectual abilities in children who have been socialised in cultures and sub-cultures whose values and cognitive experiences differ from those of the dominating culture.

#### – The influence of initiation practices

The initiation schools in the Mapulana/ Tsanga areas disturb the school learning programme during the winter season. During this time, both boys and girls who become candidates by the choice of the family are put in seclusion and are instructed there by their graduated friends as well as by adults. During this "school" period each candidate is monitored by a girl or a boy who has already graduated.

Where the total enrollment is 75, there may be at least 70 monitors as each candidate is monitored by a girl. One female might supervise as many as three candidates at a time. During an interview with a parent whose child has gone to initiation school, the following statement was made: "It is our practice. I have taken two of my children in the initiation school. They are all girls. I have hired a monitor who is doing grade 9 and my children are doing grade 7. This monitor has some duties to do. She accompanies my girls from home to the owner of the initiation school, from there she accompanies them to a place called 'Sebitlo' [a zone in the valley far from the village where candidates are instructed into cultural dance, poems, sex education, defensive tactics and other practices]. Each monitor is paid R80.00 per candidate, so it means I am going to pay the monitor R80 x 2 including all the duties carried out. For a boy candidate, each monitor is paid R120.00 because they stay in the mountain for almost ten weeks. The boy's monitor does more duties than the girl's (Phiri 1999).

The period spent at initiation school may range from mid May to early August annually and there is no special programme for these children to catch up on lost days and school work. During the initiation school, programmes of both primary and secondary schools are affected.

There are many rewards for being a supervisor at initiation school. These supervisors are rewarded financially and at times with new clothes. They also find it a great reward, spiritually, being able to instruct the candidates. Initiation practices are highly honoured by the members of the community as it is viewed as a part of their cultural identity.

### 3.5.3 *Violence and fear in the community*

#### 3.5.3.1 *Witch hunts*

Witchcraft is not only a topic of antiquity but it is still relevant. According to Gehman (1989:104) Africans are not alone in their traditional fear of mystical powers, but from time people of many races and continents have believed in the mystical powers of magic, witchcraft and sorcery.

Historically, especially amongst the black society, witch hunt was mainly practiced by adults. Around two decades ago youths confiscated this power from the adults. They intimidate and threaten the community by hunting the so called witches and burning them alive with tyres soaked in gasoline, put around the victim's neck and set alight.

#### *Kangaroo courts*

It is very unfortunate that learners between 16 and 25 years are more engaged in witch hunting, kangaroo courts and violence than school activities (The Sowetan, 8 June 1999:9; 10 April 2000 & The Saturday Star 15 May 1999). In an interview with a grade 11 boy, it was found that the boy attended comrade meetings and joined them in their violent actions, as not co-operating could result in his property being damaged, him being used as a scapegoat, or his parents being labelled as spies or traitors (Anonymous a: 2000).

#### 3.5.3.2 *Violence in civic affairs*

The integration of different ethnic groups in the area of research often results in violence. There are continuous conflicts between the Mapulana and Tsonga tribes. This conflict influences the learner's peer and teacher relationships.

In one primary school where both Mapulana and Tsonga learners attended one school, it was observed that 80% of the members of the teaching staff rebelled against their principal and his deputy, who are Tsongas. The Mapulana teachers in support of the other civic members of the same tribe resent the Tsonga teachers. Teachers let go of their duties and as a result the learners suffer. Rebellion is continuous and chronic. Such attitudes may affect able learners to co-operate with their teachers and the minority group stops thinking, taking initiative and perceive themselves as unable to solve problems. As a result they cannot express themselves freely.

#### 3.5.3.3 *Violence in terms of party politics*

A large portion of the youth, especially in secondary schools, are intensely involve in political issues, to such an extent that most of their school days are spent attending



youth meetings. Due to a lack of knowledge regarding politics, most learners disturb the running of the school by refusing to pay school fees. Those learners who pay school fees and honour attendance are victimised and there are continuous skirmishes.

The researcher has noticed to what extent the spirit of team work among the fellow students and with teachers is adversely affected.

#### 3.5.4 *Gender role*

Mwamwenda (1995:296) states that teachers can have an effect on socially / psychologically determined sex role difference by encouraging their students to explore fields traditionally reserved to a particular sex.

Although gender role is a universal issue, in rural areas the sex role is mainly culturally determined. The issue of gender role in rural areas is not complex and challenging but very simple and straight forward. Due to a lack of sex education and awareness in the rural areas, women make it a priority to influence their daughters in matters related to customary marriage, rather than supporting them to pursue education. Many girls are married at the age of 19. Before the age of marriage, girls identify themselves with affection, neatness, gracefulness and choose school subjects that are related to their lifestyle. Boys believe that subjects such as woodwork, technical drawing, natural sciences and gymnastics are exclusively for males while needlework, social sciences and cooking are for females. Choosing subjects with this motivation in mind, may lead to underachievement. Because of gender role, females believe that their potential to for example produce a drama or a film will be perceived negatively by people in their culture.

#### 3.5.5 *Problems emanating from the family situation*

##### 3.5.5.1 *Rejection*

Parents and guardians are the most important figures in a child's life. They can either provide good support or discourage their children. When children lack support, they feel rejected. A child who feels rejected by parents or guardians cannot concentrate on

intellectual activities assigned to him or her. The cause of rejection is mainly an attitude that a person may have towards the next person (Rice 1992:250).

According to Ford (1996:21), gifted children who lack the feeling of being accepted are under threat and such children are incapable of examining at all the data available to them, or evaluate the various techniques that may be applied to problems.

A child who is rejected by parents cannot effectively utilise his or her potential. Such children experience negative feelings such as apathy and blocked emotions. In the area of research it was found through interviewing parents about the whereabouts of their children that they had gone to stay either with their grandmothers or relatives (Phake 1998). Stepchildren are most often rejected, and they therefore see themselves as less acceptable.

#### 3.5.5.2 Divorce

Although marriage among the black society is customary, in some families couples live in co-habitation. Divorce in this context is not a civil affair. Children are mostly affected by divorce as they have to adapt to a new environment and are often left financially or emotionally insecure by their parents. In the area of research, it is a very common practice for a husband to leave his wife and children and go and stay with a new wife and her children. Divorce is a major factor and affects children socially, physically and psychologically. This may result with what Kokot (1992:113) terms *situational underachievement*.

Sisk (1987:226) states that when behaviour is negatively affected, the individual's acquisition of knowledge and different learning skills become distorted. Children whose parents divorce, develop a sense of insecurity and resentment. These children experience frustration and identity crises because of the change in their social structure. In an interview with a grade 12 learner (Zondi, 1999) it was found that her ability in mathematics, geography and her initiatives as a netball captain have taken a declining curve. It was also found that her frustration was caused by a man who was staying with her mother, who is the biological father of the mother's three children aged 9, 7 and 2 years. This man has abandoned the woman and her children to go and live with

someone else. The children miss their father, therefore they are also not performing well in their primary classes.

#### 3.5.5.3 *Illiteracy of parents*

Many parents, especially in the Mapulaneng/Mhala area have received basic education but most are completely illiterate. Children who are from these families do not recognise the importance of education and they are materially under-resourced. There are no newspapers, books, magazines or educational toys. Parents are incapable of motivating their children and they lack the skills to monitor and intervene in their children's academic progress. There is no opportunity for career and subject choice. It therefore becomes a problem as both parents and teachers lack knowledge of giftedness and do not realise that a child who is performing on average, may be a gifted underachiever. They fail to see the giftedness behind average marks.

Lack of parental support, according to Sisk (1987:226) and a failure to assist and monitor the child's academic progress because of illiteracy, is detrimental to children's performance.

#### 3.5.5.4 *Social problems*

In an area where there are no recreational centres, stadiums, community halls, parks or entertainment centres, people become bored and often indulge in drugs and alcoholism, which is the main social problem in under-resourced rural areas (Oyserman & Markus 1990:141). Adult males are often seen smoking dagga, and sharing this with younger boys. Many school aged boys and girls who smoke dagga, sniff glue and take alcoholic drinks harness their energy mostly in such activities rather than in school activities. In the Mapulaneng/Mhala area it is very common to see young boys and girls misbehaving because of drugs, alcoholism and sexual relationships which often result in teenage pregnancies. Due to factors such as these, youngsters are more vulnerable to social problems unlike the areas where recreational facilities are available.

### 3.5.5.5 *Lack of interest by parents in school activities*

In the area of research parents do not turn up at school meetings. This is a very strong statement posed by many a concerned and discouraged school principal, especially in the rural areas. In the preliminary research, in an interview with a parent (Malapane, 1999) it was found that parents generally have a negative attitude towards education, school activities and teachers.

It was found that most parents do not regard themselves responsible for the education of their children. They are reluctant to pay school fees, fees for educational excursions or any other funds which a school may need. Some parents therefore do not honour invitations to the school as they feel that they may be told about the debts of the school and reminded of outstanding school fees.

Some parents have a wrong perception of their school principals. They believe that all principals demand school fees to be paid, while these funds are then applied for the principal's personal use. Many parents do not approve of foreign teachers as they believe that their cultural activities will be undermined.

Parents believe that the government should take full responsibility for schools, provide all the necessary funds and equipment, and that there should be no payment of school fees. Often parents do not support their children in their activities. It was found that school activities such as karate and student Christian organisations tamper with traditional values for example the African traditional religion of believing in ancestors and African rites.

Some parents work on farms and in different towns, and are unable to attend school meetings as it is too far a distance to travel, while other parents wish to attend but can not obtain the necessary permission from their employers. It is also a very common occurrence, especially in black secondary schools, for children to demand parties and functions to be held for them at the end of the school year, at the expense of the school. These children believe that school fees are paid for this purpose and many principals are threatened and forced into arranging such functions. Almost no co-operation exists between the school and the community.

### 3.5.6 *Problems emanating from the peer group*

#### 3.5.6.1 *Peer pressure*

Being a teacher, the researcher often observes that children who underachieve are threatened and belittled by their peers. These underachievers fear their peers and try to please them to a large extent. An underachiever lacks the feeling of personal adequacy and acceptance by his or her peers. Due to these feelings, the underachiever can not invest in others as he or she may risk failure. Children therefore tend to be negative in their evaluation of their peer group and hold a high degree of hostility towards others as they distrust and lack faith in others. Children who harbour feelings of hostility are at high risk of underachieving as they can not use their potential to the maximum, they can not be productive or creative.

A child who is repeatedly rejected by his or her peers has little opportunity to practise these skills. Such children may have strong ego defences and frequently rationalise their errors to eliminate their own responsibility. The problem of isolation, peer rejection, loneliness and alienation afflict many extremely gifted children. Children who are rejected by their peers have difficulty in accepting reality and in working with distant goals as they lack persistence. Eventually, peer pressure causes gifted children to undermine their interests, abilities and their achievements. As they feel a need to be accepted by their peers, gifted children may capitulate and join in the odd behaviour.

In the Mapulaneng/ Mhala rural area, peer pressure forces children whose performance is above average to lose interest in school activities, to deliberately rebel against teachers and to refuse to participate in activities. They adopt a negative attitude toward teachers and parents in order to be accepted by peers. A drastic decline became apparent in the performance of a grade 11 girl who always used to perform above average. She experienced feelings of loneliness and isolation. As a result her peer group called her "stupid", as she refused to take part and join them in their activities. As a result of being rejected by her peers, this learner, although very assertive, became very passive and tolerant and started performing below average.

### 3.6 INTERNAL CAUSES OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT

#### 3.6.1 Motivation

Motivation is a strong psychological factor that causes, initiates and directs behaviour. Some individuals are highly motivated to succeed and they expend a lot of effort striving to excel while other individuals are not as motivated to succeed and don't work as hard to achieve.

Underachievement results from the lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Achievement is motivated by both internal and external factors, thus children will be educated and also left to educate themselves. The phrase *be educated* is not confined only to the academic field but to broader and more complex fields of actualising a variety of talents.

In under-resourced rural areas, sources of motivation are very limited. In the area of research, there are primary schools, secondary schools, two teachers training colleges and one technical college. There are a number of students who study at these institutions and graduates from these colleges who are unemployed. In addition to these colleges there are no other institutions. This fact is experienced as limiting and de-motivating by learners and there is an ever present frustration of trying to find employment in an area where opportunities are very limited.

#### 3.6.2 *Locus of control*

In most instances, gifted underachievers all seem to speak the same language, that is, they admit that they see and accept themselves in a positive way, but blame circumstances for their underachievement. Most learners perceive themselves as being unfortunate, having bad luck or blame others when they score below their expectations.

Gifted underachievers often seek a scapegoat for their low performance. In the area of research, underachievement is connected to witchcraft or black magic. Although this allegation exists, it is not very strong. It is sometimes believed that a learner's book(s) may have been secretly taken and "treated" with medicine to cause the victim to suffer

from diseases and bad luck. The more children and their parents believe in such forces and rituals, the more the learners may become psychosomatic and fearful. Fear in both school and home climate and within the victim's life results in underachievement.

### 3.6.3 *Low self concept*

Self-concept is an individual's perception of him- or herself. This perception can be positive or negative. A negative self-concept may affect the individual's personality and behaviour in terms of the social, physical, psychological and/ or the intellectual domains. Attributes such as shyness, inflexibility, proneness to guilt, a submissive stance and social reservation can develop as a result of a low or unrealistically low self-concept (Baumeister 1995:51-98).

It has been noticed through observation that learners whose self-concept is low, perform below expectation. These children have an intense feeling of frustration derived from perceiving a large gap between their performance goal and their level of functioning. Their self-expectation frequently tends to be quite unrealistic as they conceptualise outcomes and plans to complete tasks appropriate for their age. The following factors may cause low self concept:

- Inferior status of parents
- Lack of identification with the father figure, for example a child within a family where each child has had a different biological father
- Learners who are older than their classmates
- Negative experience of their physical appearance
- Diseases or disabilities such as epilepsy, HIV/Aids and cancer
- Any family crisis

#### 3.6.4 *Illness*

Illness affects everyone whether it is physically, psychologically or socially. It is therefore necessary for learners to be well both in body and mind for better concentration, exploration and practising of skills. The most troublesome illnesses that attack learners are chronic headaches, malaria, asthma, heart disease, tuberculosis, ulcers, nose-bleeding, stomach problems, respiratory problems, kidney trouble and sexually transmitted diseases. Among the black community, diseases related to witchcraft and black magic become a high risk factor. Should a person believe to have been affected, the patient is either taken to a traditional healer, sorcerer or exorcist rather than to a medical practitioner.

A patient who is under the care of a traditional healer may spend days or even weeks away from school. This may place the child at a high risk for underachievement. Malnutrition is a problem which may lead to a breakdown of the immunity system and ultimately cause serious illness. A high percentage of families in the area of research are poverty stricken. Some eat only one type of food for several weeks for example porridge, or what is termed "mokhusa". This is an African term for pumpkin leaves that have been cooked, sun dried and preserved as a relish for an extended period. Due to malnutrition organic dysfunction such as minimal cerebral dysfunction or neurological impairment present in children may develop. This condition is a very high risk factor for underachievement.

#### 3.6.5 *Fear of failure*

Failure often poses a threat to talented learners. In order to avoid failure, some learners may select easy assignments and leave those which seem difficult. Taking risks and venturing are characteristics of a gifted child. In an informal interview with a grade 11 male learner (Theko, 1999) it was found that he was not prepared to take part in the district Biology examination. The school identified learners according to their mark sheet profiles and the boy's records in the subject were above average. The boy was afraid that learners from other schools might do better than him in the examination.



His reasoning for not wanting to take part was that he would not be able to perform a certain experiment, as there is no laboratory at his school, and the other children were from well resourced schools. He stated that he was not prepared to disappoint his teachers, especially the biology teacher by becoming a failure. The boy was influenced by a myth that able children are perfect and cannot fail.

Fear of failure causes gifted learners to believe that if they should take a risk and fail, they will face embarrassment and problems that will temporarily or permanently destroy their creativity, problem solving skills, innovativeness, dreams and visions.

### 3.7 SUMMARY

Underachievement is caused by both external and internal factors. Underachievement, especially for gifted learners, is a puzzling and challenging phenomenon. It is not an exclusively academic centred concept. Depending on the type or category of giftedness, under-achievement may be interpreted through scientific measurement, for example an intelligence test. Standardised tests can, however, not test under-achievement in fields such as creativity, leadership, art, et cetera.

Underachievement occurs in all categories of giftedness. Although there is no universal definition of this concept, the problems or circumstances which may cause it can easily be identified.

In rural areas, underachievement is caused mainly by environmental factors for example a lack of resources. The Human Sciences Research Council has carried out a scientific survey in order to analyse the types of resources lacking in all the nine provinces. These statistics indicate a potential problem for talent identification and development in rural areas.

Other causes that may have negative effects on gifted learners include internal factors that may vary from person to person. These causes of underachievement, for example chronic illnesses, affect learners differently.

Illness is a universal problem that cause learning problems, but the black society suffers it from different angles. It can have a negative influence because of the limitations illness can cause, but also because of the strong link that exist in black communities between illness and witchcraft.

Looking at the South African definition of underachievement, especially in under-resourced rural areas, it should be noted that both external and internal causes seem to be perennial problems. The problems that cause underachievement are the same ones which hinder possibilities for adequate identification of giftedness. It is doubted whether the traditional methods for identification of giftedness can be successful, when the information that was gained from observation, personal interviews, focus group discussions, the literature study and the results of the HSRC are taken into account.

In the next chapter the empirical research will be planned. The identification programme as used by the Faculty of Education at the University of South Africa, will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, underachievement and problems that may cause underachievement, especially in under-resourced rural areas, were discussed. In this chapter the empirical research will be planned.

As the research will be qualitative, an explanation thereof will first be given. The rationale for adopting this approach, the criteria for a successful identification method and the selection of the sample group will also be discussed.

The identification method as used by the Faculty of Education at Unisa will be explained, as well as the media which were selected for the identification procedure of the respondents.

#### 4.2 AN OVERVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:71) qualitative research may be generally classified as a primarily interactive field or primarily non-interactive document research. Various researchers choose qualitative research because it includes the use of open-ended and ethnographic data collection to focus on interpretation, allowing the immersion of the researcher in the social setting and facilitate inter-subjectivity and understanding between researcher and participants.

According to Ary et al (1990:26) qualitative research is descriptive. "It describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt or trends that are developing." Its major purpose is to tell what is.

### **4.3 RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD**

Qualitative research is interpretive and a naturalistic inquiry. The goal is to obtain as much information as possible about giftedness from the perspective of the belief system and culture of the area where the research will take place. Such information is not obtainable through experimental research or by conducting standardised tests. Because of this even the literature study for the research had to be complemented by information gained from personal interviews with people living in the area of research, as almost no such information is presently available in literature.

### **4.4 RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THE IDENTIFICATION METHOD USED BY THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNISA**

In the past, identification was done mainly with standardised tests for example intelligence, aptitude and scholastic achievement tests compiled by the Human Sciences Research Council. These tests were not readily accessible to learners from the various black culture groups in South Africa, as they were mostly not culture free and could only be conducted in English or Afrikaans. The identification media as used by the Faculty of Education, Unisa, consist mostly of informal tests, that is, interviews, observation, sentence completion and peer group evaluation. All the information will be interpreted mostly in a qualitative way, as to intercept all possible information which could enrich the research.

The second reason for choosing this identification method, is that identification does not involve a panel of experts or a psychologist to conduct the tests, as the use of formal, standardised tests is optional in this method. This factor makes the identification method under discussion especially suitable for this research, as no such structures exist in the area where the research will be undertaken.

The use of the identification method is to the advantage of the group of respondents, as no costs are involved in conducting and interpreting the tests. All the tests are such that they can be conducted and scored by teachers and not necessarily by psychologists. It is also to the respondents' advantage as each respondent who is tested, will benefit as his or her unique abilities are identified, whether he or she is gifted

or not. The identification method thus lends itself to development of potential in general, not only to the identification of giftedness.

#### 4.5 CRITERIA FOR A SUCCESSFUL IDENTIFICATION METHOD

The following criteria for adequate identification of giftedness, were gained from Kokot (1992), Wiechers, Kokot, Strydom and Venter (1999) and from interviews which were conducted with people in the area of research.

- An identification method should be flexible and usable *by teachers* and not only by psychologists.
- An identification method should be flexible to be used by *one person*, i.e. a teacher, or by a *panel* consisting of professional personnel.
- It should be structured in such a way that it can be used to *evaluate only one person* or a *group* of people.
- It should not only focus on academic performance and high marks, but also intercede for the *underachieving gifted person* who may be gifted in several other areas, but who does not perform well academically.
- It should be able to identify *all possible aspects or categories of giftedness*.
- It should take into account *cultural differences, language and gender* and not be discriminatory in any way.
- It should not depend on the availability of *standardised media*.
- It should not *isolate the identified individuals* but rather help them to use their talents and abilities as a *part of the community* where they live.
- It should be open enough to intercede *information* that is important and relevant to the individual's life and *which the researcher cannot necessarily foresee*.

- It must be designed in such a way that the *individual himself or herself can be a part of the identification process* and that they can learn more about themselves.
- The identification procedure should *not compare between and rate the respondents*, but should identify each respondent at his or her own right.

#### 4.6 SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE GROUP

The sample group was selected from the Grade 11 class of the Serisha Secondary School in Shatale in the Mapulaneng area. The total number of learners in the class is 37.

Ten respondents, of which five boys and five girls, were selected. In order to give each learner an equal chance to be selected and in order to avoid the halo effect, ten learners were selected in random order. In this way the selection of 10 learners who may be gifted according to the teacher, was avoided. The idea with the random selection was also that the identification procedure would differentiate between the respondents in all aspects, as some of them may be highly gifted and others may have only one or two special talents.

In order to rule out the variable of gender, two separate containers, one containing the names of all the boys in the class and the other containing the names of all the girls in the class, were presented to the class. A neutral learner from another class was invited to randomly take out the first five names of the male group and the first five names of the female group.

#### 4.7 AN EXPLANATION OF THE IDENTIFICATION METHOD USED AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNISA

##### 4.7.1 *Introduction*

The purpose of this identification method is not to gradually isolate learners from their world while assisting them in actualising their giftedness. The idea is to identify and

develop talents within the child's milieu and in their community. The identification process is thus seen as a step in developing talent with the aim of uplifting the community.

The identification method consists of three legs which will now be discussed:

(i) *First leg: General awareness of talent*

In order to evaluate a group, for example a group of 7<sup>th</sup> graders, certain steps are necessary. Firstly, the whole group will receive information in order to motivate them to take part in the project. Details of what they can expect, are discussed with them and relevant information on giftedness is distributed, which may create awareness among learners and a need to discover their talents.

A panel of personnel in the school who are interested is selected. Any other interested parties, for example parents or community leaders, may also be a part of the panel.

Care is taken to include every learner in this phase and not to let academic performance be the overriding screening criterium. The following two media are suggested for this phase:

Observation; and  
talent checklists.

Firstly, teachers *observe* learners and look for certain characteristics which could be determinants of specific talents. The teacher will, for example, take note of learners with a wide general knowledge and learners who have special hobbies and interests outside the school. Some learners are very inquisitive and ask a lot of questions, while others may have a special sense of humour. These are broad criteria, but may help the teacher to look beyond academic performance and see other important talents.

Secondly, teachers complete a talent checklist for each learner, on which all categories of giftedness appear. Under each category a number of behaviours and characteristics are noted. Each learner is marked according to a five point scale on each behaviour or characteristic. The behaviour checklist provides teachers who are not familiar with all the categories of giftedness with these characteristics, and thus a semi-structured list to work from. Teachers can also add to the information they collect by speaking to the learners. Teachers should, however, be careful not to be subjective.

The learners are now screened according to the above media. If a learner becomes conspicuous during the observation process, he or she should be selected for further identification. If a learner receives high marks on any one or more categories of the behaviour checklist, he or she should also be selected for further identification. It is important that feedback is given to all learners who are not selected for further identification. If a learner received average marks in a category in the behaviour checklist, the learner should hear that he or she has a certain talent in this direction. The learners can also be told that they will all, in due course, take part in a community project where they will be able to use their special talents. While further identification takes place, they can start planning and thinking about the project and their involvement in it according to their talents.

(ii) *Second leg: Further identification*

During this phase all learners who were selected for further identification are subjected to the rest of the media. Specific talents are identified here, for example psychomotor talents, artistic talent, emotional talent, et cetera. The following Annexures contain the various media:

- Annexure A: Sentence completion
- Annexure B: Peer group evaluation
- Annexure C: Self-evaluation
- Annexure D: Talent checklists
- Annexure E: Creativity test



Learners receive feedback on their talents. Each learner should receive at least a portfolio indicating what was tested and which talents were identified. Special teaching programmes can now be planned for learners whose abilities include academic performance. It is important for all talents to be channelled in such a way that they can be ploughed back into the projects which will be to the advantage of the school and community. This element forms the third leg of the identification method.

(iii) *Third leg: Ploughing back of talent into the school and community*

Although in some areas facilities such as magnet classes, special schools and extracurricular programmes for gifted learners exist, many areas in South Africa are still without these facilities. Many gifted learners in rural areas belong to families and communities where there are various problems and needs. Due to gifted individuals usually having a high development in moral reasoning, they often struggle with the problems their communities experience and wish they could do something to help.

The aim of this leg is to create a symbiosis between the community and the talented person, where the problems in the community are addressed and where the community supports the gifted person to actualise his or her potential.

After the identification programme as explained in the first leg of the identification method is conducted and after all the learners have received feedback of their talents and abilities, a meeting is held where a community project is identified. This could be a feeding scheme for elderly people, or a cleaning up operation in the community. Each person should feel that he or she can help in a way with his or her special abilities. Creative learners are invited to come forward with new ideas for the project; learners with organisational and leadership abilities are appointed to organise and lead certain facets of the project. Learners with psychomotor abilities are involved to help with tasks that require these skills and learners with artistic talents can paint posters or arrange for a concert in order to raise funds. Special organisational talents are also required from the teacher who acts as the project leader. His or her duty is to involve and motivate all the

learners who were tested and to let them feel that they are using their skills to do their part for their community.

## 4.8 MEDIA WHICH WILL BE USED

As the research is undertaken in an under-resourced rural area, the following media which form a part of the portfolio of media in the Unisa identification method, were deemed as suitable, tangible and accessible:

### 4.8.1 *Interview*

One may argue that to the *uninitiated* or the ordinary person, interviewing is the same as a conversation. In actual fact, interviewing is more than talking. Burger (1996:1) points out that an interview is a therapeutic technique, and its effective or ineffective use determines the therapeutic process.

In order for an effective interview to be conducted, there should be an atmosphere of mutual trust between the client and the interviewer. In this situation, the client should experience love, respect, care, trust, honesty and acceptance so that he or she can feel free to express his or her thoughts, feelings and attitudes, without fear of being judged or ridiculed. To this effect Ivey, Ivey and Simek-Morgan (1993:21) postulate that the interviewer should be able to *walk in the client's moccasins*. This implies that the interviewer should be empathic. However, these authors further warn that interviewers should remain separate, true to themselves and to their own beliefs.

One very important aspect in an interview is the knowledge and good usage of interviewing techniques by the interviewer. It is always best for the interviewer to operate from the *external frame of reference* as opposed to the *internal frame of reference*.

The *external frame of reference* implies a situation where the client takes the lead in presenting and unfolding information according to the goal of the interview, with the interviewer only helping the client to continue exploring and going deeper. The interviewer conducts the interview with an open mind. This implies that the interviewer

comes into the interview situation with no pre-conceived ideas. This then calls for the interviewer to demonstrate his or her knowledge of interviewing techniques like paraphrasing, reflection on content and feelings, confronting where necessary, et cetera. Operating from an external frame of reference helps the interviewer not to judge, advise or lecture the client.

For the purpose of this study, a semi-structured interview will be used as specific information, that is, information regarding talents, is sought. This does not mean that the interviewer should lose the aspects of the interview as outlined by Brammer, Abrego and Shostrom (1993:83-86) and Burger (1996:23). These aspects are briefly discussed below.

– *Uniqueness/ Commonality*

It refers to the ability to recognise that every client is unique and comes with his or her own personal characteristics, background and challenges.

It should also be noted that every interviewing relationship is unique and different from the previous one. The interviewer's objectivity as well as emotional involvement is important.

– *Objectivity/ Subjectivity*

It is very important to respect the client's views. Therapists should not force their views on clients. Subjectivity, amongst others, includes emotional warmth, psychological closeness and intense interest in the client.

– *Cognitivity/ Affectiveness*

The interviewer should be sensitive as to when to encourage discussion of a problem and when to encourage exploration of feelings and emotions.

– *Ambiguity/ Clarity*

The interview situation may be overwhelming and confusing to the client. It is the interviewer's duty to explain the process and clarify the relationship, however, ambiguity is necessary at times, since people tend to treat ambiguous situations in their own unique way and therefore project their inner feelings. The therapist should therefore use ambiguity if it may serve as a projective technique.

– *Responsibility/ Accountability*

The client has the responsibility of disclosing his or her problems. The interviewer's responsibility is towards guiding the client to find a solution to the problem and the outcome of the interview.

– *Trust/ Distrust*

Help from a person who can be trusted is gladly accepted, whilst distrust leads to rejection. The interviewer should ensure that his or her efforts to build a trustful relationship in the interview relationship are not viewed as a ploy to manipulate, control or punish the client.

#### 4.8.2 *Observation*

Observation is a scientific method of collecting information. The individual is observed as a totality and the context in which he or she functions is taken into account.

The researcher is able to observe learners both in and outside their school environment on a daily basis. Various aspects such as nonverbal language, behaviour in different situations and communication can be observed. As learners are not aware that they are being observed, they will act naturally and therefore unknowingly offer more information. This medium was chosen due to the researcher being in a position where interaction with the learners and their parents is possible. It is not costly to conduct and it is open to all age groups.

#### 4.8.3 *Mark sheets*

A great deal of information can be obtained about a learner by looking at the marks he or she achieves in tests and exams. The best source of this information covering the entire school career is mark sheets and cumulative cards. From the mark sheets information about the learner's performance in school subjects, the average percentage of the individual and of the class in different grades, the area of achievement and underachievement and teachers' comments and remarks may be found.

Unfortunately, as all learners who are taking part in the research project are from an under-resourced area, mark sheets may not be correct due to the spiritual marks being allocated, as explained in Chapter 3. Some mark sheets will also not be available due to the school's administration building being burnt down.

#### 4.8.4 *Sentence completion (Annexure A)*

In using this medium, the researcher aims to capture the respondents' interests, attitudes and feelings regarding their circumstances, and in their relations to self, parents, teachers, their school, objects and peers (Abt & Bellak 1959:379). It is an expressive medium which allows the researcher access to the self-dialogue of the individual. It is also possible that this medium may reveal hidden talents, personal strengths and frustrations (Smith 1990:112).

#### 4.8.5 *Peer group evaluation (Annexure B)*

Learners themselves can be a useful source of information on the talents and abilities of their friends and fellow learners. According to Renzulli (1980:3-9) peer group evaluation is only reliable for learners older than ten years, as younger learners tend to be less objective and could favour their friends. The research deals with an age group ranging from age 17 to 23 years. Data obtained by means of peer group evaluation can be represented by a graph or a histogram, which displays the number of each category of talent for each respondent. This medium is easy to apply and does not need to be conducted by an expert.

In order to conduct the peer group evaluation, a questionnaire will be handed to each learner in a Grade 11 class of 25 learners. The peer evaluation for the respondents will be evaluated.

The following questions in the questionnaire represents the specific categories of giftedness or talent:

CATEGORY OF GIFTEDNESS OR TALENT	QUESTION NUMBER
Linguistic talent	1, 12
Logical-mathematical talent	4, 2
Spatial and mechanical talent	14, 3
Creativity	6, 17
Art: Drama	7, 9
Art: Fine art	11, 8
Art: Music	13, 20
Art: Dancing	16, 21
Emotional intelligence	23, 15
Leadership talent	24, 5
Psychomotor talent	8, 10
Situational intelligence	19, 22

#### 4.8.6 Self-evaluation (Annexure C)

A self-evaluation questionnaire will be completed by all respondents. In this way the respondents can reveal information about themselves such as preferences, experiences, dislikes, hobbies, ideals, patterns of thought and disposition. It is possible to make many deductions from autobiographical data such as this. This medium is preferred especially by teenagers, as privacy between them and the researcher is preserved.

#### 4.8.7 *Talent checklist (Annexure D)*

A list of characteristics of each type of giftedness is prepared and made available to all subject teachers, for evaluation of each respondent according to the characteristics on the list. The fields of giftedness covered by the checklist are creativity, logical mathematical, spatial, psychomotor, art, linguistic and situational intelligence.

No medium is perfect and the possible disadvantage of this one is that it may give room to subjectivity or feelings of prejudice. Provided that this medium is properly used, it may produce unbiased information.

The advantage of checklists is that they can be completed during the course of normal classroom activities. No formal testing or special procedure is needed. It is not a rigid medium as the researcher may still add or amend some characteristics that are relevant for the purpose of identification.

#### 4.8.8 *Creativity test (Annexure E)*

There are numerous kinds of creativity tests for example the Torrance Test, William's test, et cetera. For the purpose of this research a test which forms part of the identification method at Unisa which was designed by Dr A Conroy, former Head of the Department of Specialised Education of the College of Education of South Africa, will be used. Creativity tests are constructed in such a way that there are no correct or incorrect answers to problems. In contrast to most other tests in which marks are earned or credited for giving the correct answer, credit is given for originality, unique expression and the ability to see things from more than one point of view.

For evaluation purposes, the following aspects will be interpreted: originality, flexibility, divergent thinking, fluency, expression of feeling, richness of imagery, vividness, colourfulness of imagery, unusual visual perspective, science fiction and fantasy.

#### 4.9 SUMMARY

Research was explained as a scientific means of collecting data in order to provide an answer to a question, or to test a hypotheses. Two types of research were distinguished, namely quantitative and qualitative research. Whereas qualitative research involves narration and is expressed through description and interpretation, quantitative research involves experiments and is usually interpreted statistically. The choice of qualitative research for the purposes of this study was motivated.

For the purpose of this research, media which form a part of the identification method at Unisa, were selected and discussed. This media include observation, interviewing, talent checklists, a creativity test, peer group evaluation and self evaluation. The above-mentioned media were chosen as they cover all categories of giftedness.

The identification method which is used by the Faculty of Education at Unisa was discussed, as well as the way in which this method strives to create a symbiosis between gifted persons and their communities. It is the point of departure of this study that gifted learners should be identified in order to plough back their talents into the community and not to be isolated from their community.

In the next chapter, an interpretation of the empirical results will be made.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the research design and methodology were discussed. In this chapter the empirical research will be interpreted.

#### **5.2 THE IDENTIFICATION MEDIA**

The following media were completed by the respondents:

- Mark sheets
- Self rating questionnaires
- Behaviour checklist
- Peer group evaluation
- Sentence completion
- Creativity tests
- Interviews
- Observation

#### **5.3 PROBLEMS WHICH WERE ENCOUNTERED DURING THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

Initially the researcher experienced only appreciation from the school. The expectation of the teachers was high because they were eager to understand the process of identification of giftedness. They were also keen to know the categories of giftedness and were anxious to understand why gifted children would sometimes act differently from the rest. The idea of the enrichment of talents was of interest to them, especially in the rural community.

The learners were happy to participate in the programme as they were eager to discover more information about themselves and understand their talents career-wise. They were also relieved to learn that in identification of giftedness not only the academic field is deemed as important.

The parents and guardians in general became interested in the programme and some supported the idea of the identification of giftedness.

Soon however, some teachers started to de-motivate the learners by telling them that the research was of no benefit to them, but only to the researcher. When information regarding the academic history and the behaviour checklists for each respondent had to be obtained from their teachers, it was found that some teachers declined to give information regarding the learners. When the respondents were together in a group, they were victimised by the teachers and warned that they "cared too much for something that would never make them pass their examinations".

As a result some learners withdrew from the programme and had to be substituted by other willing learners from the same gender. Some learners who had already completed almost all the media, did not return the last tests to the researcher. When approached in the presence of their friends, some of the respondents would not communicate with the researcher and appeared stubborn. Although some were de-motivated, others stayed friendly and open to communication.

During the process of identification, some learners were engulfed with fears. The main reason for this seemed to be that should a special talent be identified, they could fall prey to witchcraft. Some of the respondents approached the researcher secretly and shared with him their fear of standing out among their peers, as this could lead to jealousy and hatred and cause them to become victims.

During the time of research one of the respondents became ill. With the fear of witchcraft being so strong, it was believed that he fell ill because he was praised as a talented artist. Some parents also reacted by taking their children out of the programme, for fear of witchcraft.

Lack of knowledge and motivation were also factors which played an important role. Many learners do not care much about schooling. Most learners do not stay with their parents but are alone with their siblings. There is, therefore, no consistency in their learning. Most learners also do not attend school regularly. This problem has already been discussed in the literature chapters but is brought up here as the laxity of the learners and the fact that they have no future plans, also influenced their attitude towards the research.

Obtaining academic information also presented a problem, as most information prior to 1997 was difficult or impossible to trace. The school library, administration building and home economic centre were set alight by a group of comrades. All documents and books were damaged and as it was considered to be a case of arson, the police became involved. Some respondents who were transferred from other schools had mark sheets available. The reliability of some of the marks that could be provided by the school, can be questioned as a jumbled stream has been followed in specific grades. The information will, however, be provided without any alteration.

Due to the difficulties faced by the researcher, not all the media were returned by all the respondents.

#### 5.4 INTERPRETATION OF MEDIA FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

Media as completed by each respondent will now be discussed under the name of each respondent.

##### 5.4.1 Respondent 1

Name	:	Nonyane, Jeffrey
Age	:	18
Grade	:	11C
Gender	:	Male

### Interview

Jeffrey's parents are divorced, therefore he is visibly not very relaxed when responding to certain questions. He misses his mother, who has left them to go and live with another man. The learner lives with his paternal grandmother and the family circle is very large. Jeffrey's sense of humour is excellent, even though it is evident that he is experiencing mixed feelings. There is no support for Jeffrey as far as his school work is concerned, therefore he has joined the comrade gangs for consolation. Using the counseling of the researcher, the learner has started to see life anew. He confesses that the divorce of his parents has contributed a lot to the disturbance of his visions and dreams. Prior to the counseling received from the researcher, the learner decided to leave school and join the labour market. According to the researcher's observation, this is due to the learner having lost interest, having no motivation and a lack of guidance. His hobbies include playing soccer and watching television. He usually depends on the neighbour's television as they do not have one of their own.

### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets of 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 were studied. For the first three years, the respondent's marks, which are average, was more or less stable, but some improvement appeared in the last year. There is fluctuation present in his marks, especially in Business Economics.

### Self rating

The respondent lacks self confidence. According to his responses, he is not willing to listen to suggestions of friends, and gives up easily even if he feels that he is right. Jeffrey is not interested in creative writing, and is only a little interested in sport. He enjoys helping others.

### Peer group evaluation

According to his peer group, Jeffrey has a talent to see humour in situations. He also has empathy for people.

### Behaviour checklist

The respondent is seen by his teachers as a learner who has good psychomotor abilities, as well as one who does well in his school subjects, in particular Business Economics. Jeffrey shows a high interest in the subject and performs excellently. He is rated as a good leader and has status in his group. From the behaviour checklist it can be deduced that the respondent has the potential to perform well in the psychomotor category, provided his talent is nurtured and catered for.

### Sentence completion

Jeffrey's interest in Business Economics has resulted in a belief that nothing is for free, and that everyone should pay for what they receive. This becomes more evident when the respondent states that patients should pay in order to receive a good service, and that learners should pay for education.

The respondent is viewed as a learner who has a lot of potential, but the lack of opportunity and lawlessness causes him to project anger and violence.

### Creativity

Jeffrey is aware of boundaries which are present and preventing him from realising himself as a person. Jeffrey is able to use unusual visual perspective, and although movement is not evident in his drawings, he seems to be a systematic thinker who plans and gives much thought to detail.

### Summary

Although he has many personal problems, Jeffrey possesses a good sense of humour, which assists him in seeing life, and his problems in a better way. Although Jeffrey enjoys being in a group, and he depends on the opinions of the peers in this group, he seems to be able to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. He also seems to have been misunderstood and ill treated by many adults, and he therefore shows empathy towards others, and will not stand for his friends being ill treated.

Jeffrey appears to be an intelligent, sensitive person with personal and intellectual skills for tertiary studies. He also shows above average psychomotor skills.

#### 5.4.2 Respondent 2

Name	:	Mashego, Prudence
Age	:	19
Grade	:	11C
Gender	:	Female

#### Interview

This learner is very assertive and her responses are relevant. She is very free and flexible. She states that she has a large circle of friends, but no best friends. Prudence prefers topics related to cultural history. Her hobbies are sewing, watching television, singing and cultural dance. She states that she spends more time talking to her mother than to her father. She enjoys languages such as Sotho, English, Afrikaans and Tsonga. She prefers reading factual literature, and not fiction. Her parents are old age pensioners, therefore there is no help available with regards to her schoolwork. Prudence dislikes natural sciences at school, and she dreams of becoming a producer of television programmes. Prudence also dislikes gossip, and supports her friends when they are in need.

### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets of 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 were studied. There is an indication of interest in Sepedi as the performance in this subject ranges from good to excellent. The average per grade shows an escalation.

### Self rating

This respondent radiates confidence and assertiveness. She encourages fellow learners to be all they can be in spite of circumstances. She can take a risk and is able to positively handle any form of criticism. She is physically fit to do sport. She is psychologically balanced to stand against any circumstance because she believes in herself, she is self reliant and positive. Although she is so confident, she fails to actualise her potential. She does not always welcome intellectual challenges but she believes she has potential in performing art. This respondent can thrive well in the field of visual and performing art and she also has enough energy to do sport.

### Peer group evaluation

Prudence is seen by her peer group as extremely talented in drama and psychomotor activities.

### Behaviour checklist

Linguistic intelligence seems to be thriving in this respondent. This is evident in her expression of herself and the ability to do well in Sepedi as a school subject. She is rated by some teachers as being a leader. Her sense of humour and popularity are the major external influences. This respondent may do well in drama where her richness in vocabulary and interest in reading may ignite and develop her talent in the visual and performing arts.

### Sentence completion

The respondent's projection in this test shows that she does not accommodate suffering and hurt. She is full of empathy and loves to see other people being successful in life. At home there seems to be conflict when a duty is assigned to her, as she would rather do things such as plant vegetables for the community. Her empathy ends up hurting her, as she would rather tolerate than confront. Her way of hiding hurt and anger is by smiling.

### Summary

Prudence possesses emotional intelligence, as she is confident, assertive, self-reliant and she is prepared to take responsibility for her actions. She also has interpersonal intelligence as she has empathy with other people and will not allow people's feelings to be hurt.

She has above-average leadership abilities, which is shown by a sense of humour, popularity, assertiveness and self-reliance.

Prudence is a creative person and has above-average originality and flexibility. Her dream of becoming a producer of television programmes is realistic and should be realised.

#### 5.4.3 Respondent 3

Name : Rose Chabalala  
 Age : 17  
 Grade : 11c  
 Gender : Female

### Interview

Rose is very reserved during the interview, and does not lengthen her responses. She has never repeated any grade. During her free time she sleeps or just sits. She



enjoys *games* in the classroom such as spelling, synonyms, find a word, children's encyclopedia, et cetera. Her boyfriend is a secondary school teacher and he is the one who helps her with school work after hours. She never completes a project on her own. Rose loves reading, and she is dreaming of becoming an accountant or a teacher. She dislikes people who insult others, who are unfair and who do not fulfill their promises. She enjoys being with friends who have direction in their lives.

### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheet of 1997 and 1998 were studied. According to this, the respondent is doing well in English, Sepedi and Business Economics. The average ranges from 55.6% in 1997 to 71.5% in 1998. There is a strong improvement in her academic performance. The mark sheet indicates that this respondent is gifted in most school subjects.

### Self rating

Although this respondent seems to be gifted in most school subjects, she tends to engage herself in learning and memorisation. It is as if she feels safe to learn only by memorisation. She will not approach a problem by using another way than the formula in the textbook. She often assists her friends with their school work.

### Peer group evaluation

Rose is evaluated by her peer group as having high logical mathematical intelligence.

### Behaviour checklist

Rose's ability in the area of intellect is higher than the rest of the fields especially in memory, general knowledge and power of concentration as well as vocabulary and in tests. Her high achievement in mathematics makes her popular among her peers.

Her popularity is not because of specific personality traits, but because she works hard and she is viewed by her class mates as their heroine in mathematics.

### Sentence completion

The extrinsic motivation that this respondent receives from her family is very strong. Her role models are educated people. It is for this reason that the respondent is engaged in learning, studying, is ambitious, prefers corporal punishment to be administered and prefers memorising facts. According to her responses, she prefers to be alone and have more opportunity to study. Peer discussions that are not educational make her feel very uncomfortable. She sees success as being related to hard work and she views areas such as dancing and music not as educational but entertaining.

### Summary

Rose possesses linguistic and mathematical intelligence. She prefers to solve problems in a convergent way, by keeping to solutions that she already knows will work. She appears to have emotional intelligence, especially intra-personal intelligence, as she is responsible, ambitious and a hard worker.

#### 5.4.4 Respondent 4

Name : Khumalo Patricia  
 Age : 21  
 Grade : 11C  
 Gender : Female

### Interview

Patricia is very free in responding to questions. She prefers to be alone most of her time. She left school early due to teenage pregnancy, and stayed away for two years. Her hobbies include sewing, gardening, playing a keyboard for gospel music and cooking. She stays with a domestic servant. Her mother is sick and has been admitted to a traditional healer 400km away from home for six months. Her father is doing part time work and comes home at unscheduled times. There is no one to help her with schoolwork and she struggles alone. Her dream is to become a music artist,

and she likes Economics and English. She does not enjoy mathematics and accounting.

#### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheet of 1997 and 1998 were studied. Her grades are average, but she performs above-average in Business Economics. There is no fluctuation.

#### Self rating

The respondent can take initiative, but she is not assertive and depends on the approval of others. She enjoys reading, prose and poetry. She also seems to enjoy participating in sport, sharing her ideas with peers and her teachers.

#### Peer group evaluation

Patricia is evaluated by her peer group as a person with musical abilities and musical talent.

#### Behaviour checklist

The respondent seems to be respected by her teachers. She is seen by her teachers as a leader, as she is assertive and reliable. Her intellectual ability in Business Economics and Northern Sotho is also noted by her teachers.

#### Sentence completion

The respondent is assertive, self-reliant and confident. She can delegate tasks and she can also take responsibility. The respondent seems to have goals and are aware that she is responsible for them. She is not threatened by external factors such as gossip, condemnations, poverty and negativity.

She uses her talent in music to spread the message against any negativity. She is not in favour of seeing someone do work she can do herself. She states that she would not employ anyone to do her work.

### Summary

Patricia has leadership abilities, as she is a responsible and an assertive person. She can take initiative, solve problems and has the ability to change the atmosphere by means of her friendly, lively personality.

She is academically talented and also has interest and potential in music. Her internal locus of control may result in not allowing external factors to get in the way of her goals.

#### 5.4.5 Respondent 5

Name : Thete Florence  
Age : 21  
Grade : 11C  
Gender : Female

### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheet for 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 were studied. Her secondary school work in the last grade shows an improvement from 49.6% to 51.6%. She excelled at Business Economics. No fluctuation is noticed.

### Self rating

The respondent is self reliant. She can take a risk and experiment without the approval of fellow learners. She understands quickly, but academics is not her area of interest. She dislikes writing prose and poetry.

The respondent is not a conformist and she may influence learners to follow her way of thinking. She has an average memory capacity.

#### Peer group evaluation

Florence is seen by her peers as a person who can face a challenge and will not give up.

#### Behaviour checklist

The respondent's teacher sees her as talented in psychomotor activities. The respondent enjoys physical exercise most of the time. On the average this learner can do well or thrive in this category as she has an excellent sense of balance. The learner seems to do well in her academic subjects, but this can be ascribed to the fact that she shows interest in these subjects only because they can assist her in her career in the psychomotor capacity.

#### Sentence completion

According to her responses, Florence seems ready to meet any challenge. She sees economic, political, social and moral problems, but she is determined not to give up. She is seen as a person who does not believe in failing but persevering until a goal has been met. This is evident in her responses where she does not approve of a parent doing something which she herself has been assigned to do. She would like to become a business woman.

#### Creativity

Although Florence includes unusual visual perspective in her drawings she tends to think more convergently and stays with traditional models of problem solving.

### Summary

Florence is outgoing, a group person and self-reliant. She is mostly a non-conformist who will disagree with others when necessary. She also does not need the group's approval to act. She has above average emotional intelligence as she is responsible, persevering and is a problem solver. She is also talented in the psychomotor category and has extremely good balance.

#### 5.4.6 Respondent 6

Name : Mashego Difference  
Age : 20  
Grade : 11C  
Gender : Male

#### Interview

Difference lives with his mother. His father has deserted the family. His mother is illiterate. He enjoys repairing items such as radio's, televisions and watches for a fee. He learnt these skills by observing other people performing them.

He often visits the rubbish dump to collect old parts of radio's et cetera, which he uses to make new items. He pays his school fees from selling these items. He wishes to pursue a mechanical career. His brother and sister left school early to start working as there was no money available for their education. Difference states that he dislikes arguments and that he does not really enjoy his school subjects.

Difference appears to be very shy. He enjoys listening to music and watching karate.

#### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets of 1995, 1996 1997 and 1998 were studied. There is a lot of fluctuation and decline present, and he does not do well at school. In 1998 he was condoned to the next standard.

### Self rating

He sees himself as not being good in the academic field. Difference prefers to imitate, and does not really have innovative ideas. He enjoys the company of his friends, and is not easily manipulated. His judgement is very firm. What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong.

### Peer group evaluation

Difference's peer group evaluates him highly on spatial and mechanical intelligence.

### Behaviour checklist

In the area of psychomotor ability, Difference is rated by his educators to be excellent in working with mechanical apparatus and machines. In other areas he is viewed by most of his teachers as a poor performer.

### Sentence completion

There is a pressure present in this respondent's life, which is very frustrating to him. This pressure seems to be coming from peers, teachers and parents. His friends talk about him and this makes him insecure and shy. Teachers do not trust his work, and he therefore lacks support and motivation. He becomes frustrated by arguments with his parents, and he will compromise behaviour in order to be accepted.

### Summary

Difference has high mechanical abilities. His good observation skills, interest and perseverance have attributed to the fact that he has learnt most skills that other people need to be taught in a special electronics course.

Although he is shy and withdrawn, he possesses emotional intelligence and high moral reasoning as he takes responsibility to earn money to pay for his school fees and will not be manipulated by other peoples' opinions.

#### 5.4.7 Respondent 7

Name : Bongekile Mthombothi  
Age : 17  
Grade : 11c  
Gender : Female

#### Interview

Bongekile is very free and relaxed in responding to questions. She prefers to mix both English and her mother tongue. In as far as her personal profile, she prefers to be alone most of her time and do handiwork such as gardening. She reads during her free time, and she lives with her elder brother while her parents work far from home. Her parents come home mostly at the end of the month when they have received their wages.

She wants to become a lawyer as, according to her observation, many innocent people suffer. She does not enjoy mathematics, hates to see animal abuse, and dislikes routine.

#### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets of 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998 were studied. She does not excel in school subjects. According to the mark sheet, although below average, there has been an improvement in her average. There is no evidence to rate her in the excellent performance category and deem her a high achiever.

#### Self rating

The respondent's memory is remarkable and she displays a firm assertiveness. Although she has some ideas that differ from others, these ideas remain potential and cannot be realised. She seems to be suppressed by some circumstances. She is reserved in the company of peers, but still enjoys being with them. She is confident, and her physical fitness provides an opportunity for her to take part in



sport. According to her responses, this respondent is an extremist who will either engage herself fully or not at all. She dislikes prose and poetry.

#### Peer group evaluation

Bongekile is seen by her peers as confident and assertive.

#### Behaviour checklist

Teachers rate this respondent as an average learner. Her Northern Sotho teacher acknowledges her performance in this subject. On the average, this respondent does not show any unique and excellent abilities.

#### Sentence completion

The respondent states that she favours progress, and that when she studies she gives herself fully. She states that, should she be school principal, she would not allow other learners to come to school late, as it would disturb progress to teachers and learners. She seems to be a learner who wants to share opportunities with others, and shows ambition. Her self-concept seems to be low, as she states that she does not participate in class activities, as she believes and accepts herself as being weak. She seems to lack intrinsic motivation, and therefore she does not perform.

#### Creativity

Bongekile uses clues in half-structured pictures as definite guidelines, but she shows the tendency or the need to break away from the expected and think creatively. She also makes use of unusual visual perspective in her drawings. In her verbal creativity test, Bongekile shows her preference to fairness and the treatment of human beings as equal.

### Summary

Bongekile made herself known through her tests as a person who will throw her full weight into a project she believes in. Her ground motive is fairness towards people. It seems as though she has developed passed the stage of egocentrism and will not be manipulated into giving in once she has set a goal. She seems like a homemaker and practical person who likes to brighten up her environment. Bongekile may be encouraged to develop her interpersonal skills as she may form a valuable part of a group who have committed themselves to a goal.

Bongekile possesses emotional intelligence and high moral reasoning as she would like to become a lawyer to help other people. She is also assertive and ambitious.

#### 5.4.8 Respondent 8

Name : Mashiloane Kholofelo  
 Age : 17  
 Grade : 11c  
 Gender : Male

#### Interview

This learner is very assertive and not easily influenced. He likes to play soccer and enjoys drawing cartoons. In his free time he reads and then represents what he has read in his drawings. Kholofelo is very imaginative, and also likes photography, watching television and doing crossword puzzles.

Kholofelo receives help with his school work from his aunt, who is a teacher. The subject he likes most does not belong to the school curriculum, therefore he enjoys mathematics and his mother tongue. Kholofelo's parents do not recognise and support his talent, but is forcing him to follow an academic career. He states that he is feeling oppressed, and that he receives no money from his parents to buy paint and art materials. He enjoys the outdoor life.

### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets of 1996, 1997 and 1998 were studied. He does not display any outstanding performance in academic abilities. According to the mark sheet, the respondent can not be rated as academically gifted.

### Behaviour checklist

According to his teacher's views, the respondent excels in the area of visual and performing arts. He does not excel academically, as is the expectation from both teachers and the community. He has an interest in art. He is also seen by another teachers as a learner who may be psychomotor talented.

### Self rating

The respondent wants to do things by imitating. He is not inclined towards work that is theory related. He does not like to compete with friends but trusts his own pace to complete tasks. According to the responses, it seems as if the respondent is intrinsically motivated to perform. He does not give up easily when he believes that he is right, whatever others might say.

### Peer group evaluation

Kholofelo is seen by his peers as extremely talented in fine art.

### Sentence completion

The respondent has an extra-ordinary dream to fulfill. He pictures himself in the world of art and making three-dimensional models. To him, his future is something full of hope, but the socio-economic status of the family at times dims his outlook regarding his future career.

School is a safe haven for the respondent, a place where he can unlock potential. He states that, should he be the principal, he would not allow repeaters in the class

and would make more resources available. He believes that one should work hard in order to be successful. For this respondent, school broadens the horizon of his vision while at home his visions and dreams are narrowed. Artwork is both a hobby and a prospective career.

### Creativity

Kholofelo projects his struggle between becoming an artist and choosing an acceptable academic career in his verbal creativity test. His story ends with a crocodile who had his teeth pulled out in order to be like *all the rest*, only to find that by doing that, he has lost the essence of his existence. Kholofelo makes use of unusual visual perspective and there is resistance against boundaries in almost all his sketches. He seems to be looking for a *way out* as he draws roads, traffic signs, stop signs, arrows and a kite that is ready to float in the wind.

### Summary

It is evident that the identity Kholofelo chose is not accepted. He has a dream in which his parents have no interest. Kholofelo is an avid reader with a wide general knowledge. His friends see him as a person with leadership abilities, as he is assertive and possesses intrinsic motivation. He is also known as a people helper, which indicates inter-personal talent. Kholofelo has thus above average abilities in art, leadership, psychomotor and emotional intelligence.

#### 5.4.9 Respondent 9

Name	:	Mashego Alfred
Age	:	18
Grade	:	11c
Gender	:	Male

### Interview

Alfred responds well to questions. Both his parents have passed away. He is assertive and is characterised by a sense of humour. He uses his free time wisely, by sewing curtains and linen and selling these for a profit. He states that his love for sewing came from his mother. His guardian is a lady teacher who backs him both academically and in part-time opportunities. He is longing to become a business person, to own a clothing and textile factory. He also enjoys reading and baking. He prefers to avoid the company of his peers, as to avoid pressure. He enjoys English, but dislikes mathematics and sport. Alfred has made a number of products on his own, such as bed spreads, cushions, curtains and comforters. He is very sympathetic and prefers to live with people older than himself.

### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets for 1997, 1998 were studied. It was found that the learner's academic performance is below average. There is no fluctuation in his work. There is not school subject at which the learner excels; there is therefore no evidence that he is gifted academically.

### Self rating

The respondent is a people's person. His relationship with others is free and open and he sometimes helps them when they are experiencing problems. He is a person who follows instructions, and he is not able to take a risk. He states that he never does something before being told how to do it. Activities that are school related are not his favourites. He likes to read.

Alfred seems to be physically fit and can take part in activities. His love for music is both a hobby and a prospective career.

Peer group evaluation

Alfred is seen by his peers as a talented musician and as a person will go far in business one day.

Behaviour checklist

Although this respondent enjoys and is credited with Business Economics, it is only the love of the subject and the interest in business that gives him a high rating. Where the respondent is rated *very good* under leadership, it is due to his conformity.

Summary

Alfred is skillful and handy. He has an above average interest in working with textiles. Together with his high interest in business, he should be able to realise his dream of opening a business.

He has above-average emotional intelligence as he has empathy for older people. His ability to follow and throw himself wholeheartedly in with a group project holds the possibility that he may become a good manager who will lead by helping with the work and being an example to his followers.

5.4.10 Respondent 10

Name : Mashego Wander  
 Age : 18  
 Grade : 11c  
 Gender : Male

Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets of 1997 and 1998 were studied. His academic performance is far below average and there is no school subject at which the learner

excels. According to the mark sheet, he had failed grade 10 twice and was then condoned to grade 11 in 1999.

### Self rating

The respondent's memory capacity is good. He rates himself in the area of academic, sports and entertainment. He is physically fit and likes his sport. His ideas are not firm. When he thinks that they are not supported by his friends, he changes them. He states that he needs repetition and clarification more than once. He can not lead, as his ideas might be good, he is unable to influence his friends to see the quality of his ideas.

### Peer group evaluation

According to his peer group, Wander is a good sportsman and leader.

### Behaviour checklist

Although Wander does not perform above average academically, his teachers feel that he is intelligent. His teachers also feel that he has leadership qualities.

### Summary

Although Wander does not perform above average in the academic field, his teachers and peers, through observation, feel that he has above average intelligence. Wander also has psychomotor talents, according to himself and his peers.

#### 5.4.11 Respondent 11

Name	:	Chiloane Dankie
Age	:	19
Grade	:	11c
Gender	:	Male

### Interview

This respondent is very confident and responds well to questions. He participates mostly in topics regarding sports, drama and talks related to machinery. He enjoys repairing vehicles, bicycles and watches. He spends his free time either on the sport field, or repairing machinery. He prefers to be with his father, and when he wants help with assignments and school work, he would rather be with his classmates than his parents. He enjoys accounting, mathematics and art. His ambition is to become a vehicle mechanic and owning a workshop. His alternative dream is to become an accountant and repair vehicles part time. He does not like violence, quarrels, truancy or being a gang member. He likes the company of learners with vision. In the community he is a member of the music club that sings to entertain people on occasions such as weddings. He lives with his parents most of the time.

### Mark sheet

The respondent's mark sheets of 1996, 1997 and 1998 were studied. According to the learner's performance in some school subjects, there is not evidence in which a researcher can classify him as gifted in the academic area. The quantity of marks obtained in different grades, the average obtained as well as the general outlook and his achievement in the school subjects put him in the below average category.

### Self rating

According to Dankie he is able to perform well. He realises that there is a lack of resources which is restricting his potential. Dankie can make a firm decision, and take a risk. He possesses the ability to think new and originally. He is also able to come up with flexible ideas which differ from those of his teachers and parents. He has a great interest in music.

### Peer group evaluation

According to his peers, Dankie can stand by his decisions, has many good ideas and is also mechanically talented.



### Behaviour checklist

This respondent has wild and funny ideas, and shows an interest in experimenting. These characteristics indicate that there is a restricted potential, and that the respondent will make use of any available resource to experiment.

He shows creative characteristics. There is a danger that if teachers interpret his creative behaviour wrong, he might be viewed as being stubborn, cheeky and not co-operative. He is also rated in the ability of visual and performing arts and the use of artistic media to express ideas and feelings. He is psychomotor and spatially talented as he enjoys working with mechanical apparatus and machines.

### Summary

Dankie possesses a unique self-confidence which is evident in people who are certain of themselves. He is ambitious and has commitment and vision as he is already working towards his dream of some day opening a vehicle workshop.

He has high technical abilities as he is interested in repairing vehicles, bicycles and watches in his free time.

He enjoys to be with his peers and shows above-average interpersonal talent. He does not like quarrels and untruthfulness and will distance himself from such problems.

Dankie is definitely creatively talented as he likes to think new and originally and likes to experiment. He also shows flexibility and can come up with wild and funny ideas. He is also artistically talented as he has potential in and takes part in music. His interpersonal intelligence is actualised by him being a member of the music club.

#### 5.4.11 Respondent 12

Name : Komane Moses  
Age : 21  
Grade : 11c  
Gender : Male

#### Mark sheet

The respondent's marks of 1996, 1997 and 1998 were studied and it was found that his marks are in the average range, with Sepedi in the high average range. No fluctuations are present.

#### Self-rating

Moses experiences himself as someone who understands learning matter easily and who has a good memory.

Although he is an independent thinker, he will listen to the opinion of other people.

The respondent's affection for other people and his probable emotional intelligence or leadership abilities can be seen from the fact that he always helps his friends when they are experiencing problems. He has broad interests and is involved in activities such as sport, making things, performing, making music and writing stories or poems.

#### Peer group evaluation

According to his peer group, Moses is a good leader. He is able to think originally and also possesses situational intelligence.

### Talent checklists

The talent checklists, as completed by the respondent's teacher, reveal the following:

Moses is evaluated as of high average intellectual ability. He has an excellent sense of humour, is a critical thinker, likes experimenting and puts reasonably great demands on himself.

His high leadership abilities can be seen in his very high sensitivity to fellow human beings, his popularity, fairness, reliability, tenacity, adaptability and his organisational skills.

The respondent's psychomotor abilities are above average, as he displays excellent ball control, physical suppleness and speed.

In Northern Sotho, his teacher rates Moses as diligent, participating and motivated.

From the behaviour checklists it can be deduced that the respondent has an average to high intellectual ability, is creatively talented and is an exceptional leader. He also has average to high psychomotor abilities.

### Sentence completion

Moses's leadership abilities are vividly displayed in this test. He wishes for control not for the sake of being in control, but in order to negotiate until everybody is happy. He is aware of his high tolerance for other people's ideas and has a secret ambition to create jobs in order to fight poverty.

The respondent's integrity as a person is displayed in his need, which is almost a demand, to be treated in an honest way and that his dignity as a person should always be kept in mind. He displays his boredom with teachers who write notes for learners, but cannot explain it. He is realistic about the future, as he sees it as "open" but also "hard".

### Peer group evaluation

The respondent is rated the highest in the class for linguistic abilities. He is seen as a creative thinker who will always try to solve a problem or come up with a new idea when nobody else knows what to do. He is seen by his peers as talented in drama and is acknowledged as a person who can act bravely and work hard, despite many personal problems, which points to the exceptional characteristic of situational intelligence. Lastly the respondent is seen as a leader by 21 of his 24 classmates, a talent which is supported by his need to help others and to treat them fairly.

### Summary

Moses probably has an above-average to high intellectual ability and special personality traits which makes him a candidate for working with people and among people where a high premium will be placed on personal integrity, problem solving skills, organisational skills and interpersonal intelligence. His wide interests in sport, the arts, people and reading underscore the fact that he is a highly talented and gifted person.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the empirical results were interpreted. The media as completed by each respondent, were interpreted and possible talents were identified. Each respondent's media discussion was concluded with a summary.

In the next chapter a synthesis and recommendations will be made.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter the results of the empirical research were interpreted. In this chapter, the findings of each chapter will be given. A synthesis of the information gained from the empirical research and informal interviews will be made. It will be attempted to indicate points of comparison and contradiction between what was found in literature and in practice.

A recommendation on the basis of research findings and the identification programme will follow. The identification method used at Unisa will be evaluated according to the criteria of an adequate identification method as discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally limitations of this research and recommendations for future research will be given.

#### **6.2 CHAPTER 2: THE COMPLEX OF GIFTEDNESS**

This chapter involves the broad literature study on the subject of giftedness. A variety of theories on the definition, the history of and views on giftedness were discussed.

In order to supplement the theories, which were gained mostly from sources outside Southern Africa, interviews were conducted and a focus group was held with people in the area of research.

It was noted that giftedness is usually understood from a certain perspective, that is the culture of the community who defines the term, or the specific needs in the community at the time.

After discussing various views of giftedness, the researcher described giftedness with a view to bring together the similarities between information gained from the literature as well as from the focus group and interviews. Giftedness was then defined as a complex phenomenon which is not only defined from a product, but also from potential.

### 6.3 CHAPTER 3: UNDERACHIEVEMENT

In this chapter possible factors that may be the cause of underachievement, were discussed. As in Chapter 2 information from literature was supplemented by information gained from the area of research.

Under external causes of underachievement it was found that inflexible or inadequate curricula, a rigid learning environment and teacher attitudes could hinder adequate self-actualisation. Lack of equipment at school, poverty at home and in the community and gender-role expectations were further factors. Conflict at home, single parent families and lack of interest and knowledge of parents in school affairs are also external factors contributing to underachievement. Although all the above-mentioned factors were also found in the area of research, they were much more extreme as severe poverty and a shortage of funds exist in the community.

Where one would note a factor such as *rigid learning environment* in the literature, an example of a certain primary school where three grades, namely grade 3, 4 and 5 are combined in one class and are instructed simultaneously, confirmed the seriousness of the factor.

It was found that in the area of research which is the Mhala/ Mapulaneng district, there is no electricity, tap water, school buildings, chalkboards or pit-toilets. Learners walk five to six kilometres to school and when it rains, school activities literally come to a standstill.

A further external factor that was found especially in the area of research, is that learners' work is not marked objectively, but spiritual marks, as it is called, are given to schoolwork. Peers also exchange books and mark one another's work.

Gender stereotyping in the area of research leads to males being seen as more superior than females. That is why study and academic performance are rather expected of boys than of girls. Boys are encouraged to take part in activities that may support and develop psychomotor and mechanical intelligence, while girls are encouraged to focus on basic education, which will adequately prepare them for their role as wives and mothers.

Internal factors that may contribute to underachievement were investigated and self-concept, locus of control, low motivation and physical problems were found to be important.

In the area of research it was found that all the above factors play a role, but that the *emotion of fear* was a major contributing factor to underachievement. There exists fear of witchcraft, fear of black magic and fear of performing above-average which could make one too conspicuous. Fear of witchcraft has many side-effects on the performance of all children, but especially on the performance of talented learners.

#### 6.4 CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the empirical research was discussed and planned. As the qualitative research method was chosen for the empirical research, qualitative research was defined and discussed.

The goal of the study was to determine whether giftedness in an under-resourced rural area could be adequately identified. For this purpose it was decided to apply the identification method used at the Faculty of Education at the University of South-Africa. The media which form a part of the identification method were discussed and appear as annexures to this study.

A secondary school in an under-resourced rural area was identified and 10 learners were randomly selected. The variables of gender and age were eliminated.

By doing a thorough literature study, conducting interviews with people in the under-resourced rural area and by investigating specific problems that may cause under-

achievement in the area, criteria for an adequate identification programme were identified. After conducting the empirical research, the identification method which is used at the Faculty of Education at Unisa, was evaluated according to these criteria.

## 6.5 CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF TEST RESULTS

In this chapter problems which were experienced with the empirical research were discussed. The main problem which was found was a general distrust in the idea of identifying giftedness. The distrust was projected through fear of witchcraft and rejection of the empirical research by some respondents and their families.

The following media were given to the respondents:

- Peer group evaluation
- Self-rating questionnaire
- Sentence completion
- Mark sheets
- Talent checklists
- Interview
- Creativity test

Information from the different media, as completed by each respondent, were discussed. A summary of each respondent's talents was given after the interpretation of the media.

## 6.6 EVALUATION OF THE IDENTIFICATION METHOD USED AT THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNISA, ACCORDING TO THE CRITERIA IN CHAPTER 4.

- 6.6.1 The method took into account *cultural differences, language and gender* and was not discriminatory in any way.
- 6.6.2 No standardised tests were used.



- 6.6.3 The teachers at the local school could, without special training, complete the talent checklists and do observation on the learners.
- 6.6.4 The method involved the respondents in the identification of talents, which made the experience more personal for them.
- 6.6.5 The identification method could evaluate all eight fields of talent, with their sub-fields, for each respondent.
- 6.6.6 Teachers with no special training in the identification of giftedness could conduct some of the tests.
- 6.6.7 The method was flexible enough to test either a group or an individual.
- 6.6.8 The method did not only focus on academic performance and high marks, but also interceded excellently for the *underachieving gifted person* who may be gifted in several other areas, but who does not perform well academically.
- 6.6.9 Adequate identification did not depend on the availability of *standardised media*.
- 6.6.10 Although the identification procedure isolated the identified individuals to some extent, because of distrust and fear, a community project where the respondents will plough back their talents into the community, could help to restore the trust.
- 6.6.11 The identification method was open enough to intercede *information* that was important and relevant to the individual's life and *which the researcher could not necessarily foresee*.
- 6.6.12 The identification succeeded in allowing the respondents to be a part of their own talent identification.
- 6.6.13 The identification method succeeded in identifying the respondents without comparing between them and rating them.

- 6.6.14 The variety of media which is used in the identification method, makes it difficult to control the administration. As some of the lists are to be completed by teachers and some by the learners themselves, important information can get lost.
- 6.6.15 The method is also time consuming as tests must be filled in by teachers, parents and the children and must be interpreted.
- 6.6.16 The involvement of parents was low as many parents are illiterate and therefore did not value the importance of the research.

## **6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

It is possible that there may be certain limitations in the research because of the following reasons:

- 6.7.1 The identification method was tested for the first time empirically and changes should be made according to the information that was found.
- 6.7.2 There is still a lot of distrust in identification of giftedness in the rural areas. An education programme which could give information and break down barriers between the people who are prepared to bring the tests to the children and the community, could be of value.
- 6.7.3 As was noted in the research, the schools in the area of the research are totally under-resourced. If such problems existed to identify giftedness, one wonders how these learners will be specially provided for with enrichment programmes and special attention to their areas of talent.

## **6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.8.1 Although the circumstances of learners will not change overnight, talent identification can bring new hope to learners. In this research, the horizons of the learners who

focussed only on the academic area was broadened. It will cost nothing for teachers to make a paradigm shift and help learners identify their talents in order to give them self-knowledge and hope for the future.

- 6.8.2 It is the opinion of the researcher that the identification method should be registered as an identification model such as William's model, the Torrance model, Kranz's model and Clark's model.
- 6.8.3 It is recommended that bodies such as the Association for Gifted Education in South Africa continue discussions with the National Department of Education for the recognition of gifted children as children with special needs in schools.
- 6.8.4 More research on identification of giftedness in under-resourced rural areas is necessary so that these children can be noted and helped by the community and for the sake of the community.

## 6.9 CONCLUSION

It is the researcher's conviction that a great treasure lies as invisible potential within the gifted children of our country. Although many problems were encountered, it was possible to adequately identify giftedness in an under-resourced rural area. It is hoped by the researcher that more research in this regard will follow.

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## ANNEXURE A

### SENTENCE COMPLETION

NAME: .....

Complete the following sentences. Complete them quickly without thinking too long about each one. There are no wrong answers.

1. I have always wanted .....
2. If I were in charge.....
3. My secret ambition in life.....
4. For me the future looks.....
5. One day I believe that I have the ability to.....
6. The thing that I am the very best at is.....
7. I am better than most of my friends at.....
8. From an early age I was already able to .....
9. My family .....
10. If my parents would only.....
11. My family knows .....
12. Most of my friends' families .....
13. When luck is against me.....
14. I will never be able to .....
15. My school subjects .....
16. I'm not good at.....
17. The thing I will miss when I'm finished school one day.....

18. The pressure that teachers put on learners sometimes.....  
.....
19. If it weren't for school.....  
.....
20. My teachers.....  
.....
21. It frustrates me no end that.....  
.....
22. Something which people can't understand about me is.....  
.....
23. I sometimes become afraid if I have to.....  
.....
24. The thing which makes me the most angry.....  
.....

## ANNEXURE B

### PEER GROUP EVALUATION

(Use for learners from gr 5–12)

There are different types of learners in your class. Think a bit about your classmates and then try to see which of the descriptions below match some of the learners. You may enter more than one person's name next to one description, and you may enter a person's name more than once. You may also write down your own name if you think it is the best match. If nobody in the class fits a particular description, leave it open.

1. Who reads a lot of books and probably knows all about space travel, dinosaurs and laser beams?
2. Which of your classmates would be chosen to take part in a debate because he or she argues well?
3. Who loves mathematics?
4. Who does beautiful and interesting handwork?
5. Who is able to take the lead if nobody has a solution?
6. Who has a good imagination?
7. Who would be chosen to take the lead role in a concert?
8. Who is the best sportsman/sportswoman in your class?
9. Who is going to be a well-known actor one day?
10. Who spends a lot of time doing sport and has a lot of energy?
11. Who sometimes helps others in the class to sketch or draw?
12. Who would be chosen to represent the class in a quiz?
13. Who plays in an orchestra/ would be good at playing in an orchestra?
14. Who is always busy with machines and builds models of houses, trains and so on?
15. Which learner in your class would you trust with an important secret because he/she is trustworthy and honest?
16. Who dances in his/her free time and has already participated in competitions?
17. Who has the most unusual ideas and can come up with the best plans?
18. Who makes you think of a real artist with a paint brush and palette in his/her hand?
19. Who copes very well with everything expected from him/her at school, despite many personal problems?
20. Who can play more than one musical instrument?
21. Who is the best dancer in the class?
22. Who has proved to have acted bravely and intelligently in class?
23. Who can laugh at himself/herself if he/she has made a mistake?
24. The whole class has to spend six months on an island. Who would turn out to be the true leader of the group?
25. Who will go far in life, and why?

#### INTERPRETATION OF PEER GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

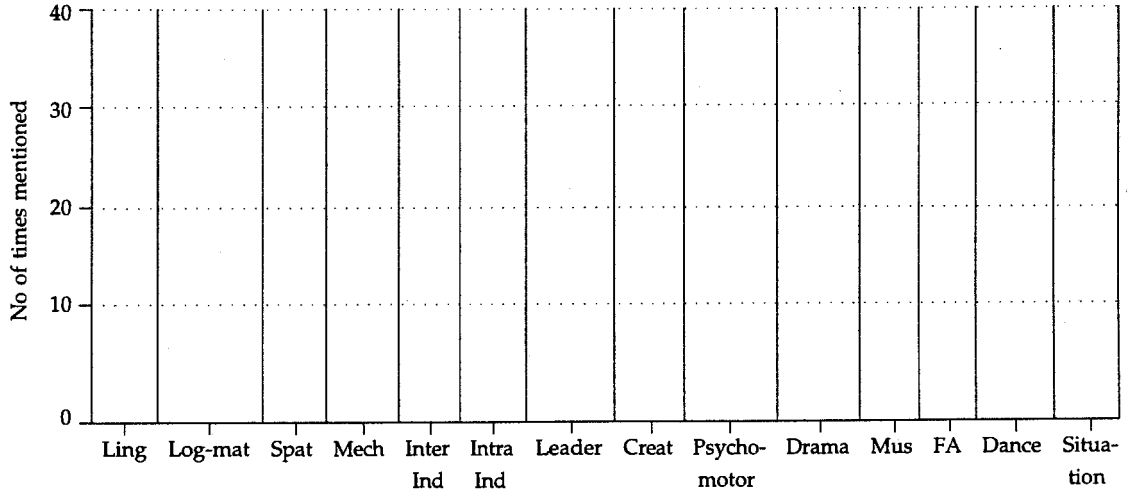
Although the names of most of the learners in the class will appear somewhere on the list, only those names which are significant should be analysed. Draw up a histogram for each learner who is going to be evaluated. However, every learner in the class should be given some oral feedback on his or her talents, even if his or her name does not appear a significant number of times.

Name of learner .....

Grade .....

Age .....

# PEER GROUP



## ANNEXURE C

### SELF-EVALUATION

(Compiled by A Conroy)

Answer the following questions by drawing a cross in one of the right-hand blocks. Try to be very honest; you know yourself the best. The value of the numbers above the blocks are the following:

- 1 Always
- 2 Frequently
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Seldom
- 5 Never

	1	2	3	4	5
I grasp things quickly if they are explained to me					
I am very precise about the appearance and outlay of things					
I am a keen reader					
I remember all that I have read or heard					
I like to be among people					
My friends usually follow my suggestions					
I like to help my friends if they are having problems					
Many of my ideas differ from those of my friends, family and teachers					
When I believe I'm in the right, it doesn't matter what others say					
I like to do things without being dictated to about how to do them					
I enjoy writing stories or poems					
When I see or hear something beautiful, I want to do it					
I enjoy making music					
I enjoy performing in front of others					
I'm very fit					
I do a lot of exercise					
I'm stronger and faster than my friends					
I enjoy doing sport					

## ANNEXURE D

### TALENT CHECKLISTS

#### 1. LINGUISTIC ABILITIES

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Learnt to speak at an early age					
Has an extensive vocabulary					
Spoken language is descriptive and expressive					
Reads a lot					
Enjoys writing poetry, stories or prose					
Uses complex thoughts and concepts					
Critical and questioning					
Has a good memory					
Enjoys talking, especially with people older than himself/herself					
Speaks and/or writes more than one language fluently					
Enjoys recitation and dialogue					
Good compositions and prose					

#### 2. LOGICAL-MATHEMATICAL TALENT

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Is able to reason logically					
Sceptical and questioning					
Is able to make deductions from rules					
Is able to derive rules from facts					
Wants to understand and explain things					
Tends to experiment with things					
Shows an interest in/does well in mathematics					
Good numerical skills					
Wants to establish the truth of facts by way of testing					
Applies knowledge of one field to another field					
Perseveres until a problem has been solved satisfactorily					
Is able to reason abstractly					

### 3. SPATIAL TALENT

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Manipulation of three-dimensional objects in his/her head					
Can envisage visual patterns in his/her head					
Good sense of direction					
Is able to describe the appearance of a planned model accurately					
Expresses ideas on paper					
Understands and uses maps and diagrams					
Builds models eg cars, aeroplanes, bridges					
Makes three-dimensional forms eg figurines					
Visualises well					

### MECHANICAL TALENT

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Is interested in mechanical gadgets and machinery					
Is constantly busy taking apart and assembling gadgets					
Has hobbies involving mechanical objects like radios, model trains and construction sets					
Shows exceptional insight into mechanical problems					
Likes to draw up designs and to plan and work on mechanical equipment					
Reads magazines and books on mechanical subjects					
Exceptional ability to work with his/her hands					

### 4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

#### ● INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Can postpone pleasure, eg save for a long-term project					
Is well aware of own weaknesses and strengths					
Pays more attention to others than himself/herself					
Realistic about setbacks					
Does not blame his/her own mistakes on the environment					

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Takes responsibility for own decisions					
Is able to criticise himself/herself if necessary and can laugh at himself/herself					
Has a great deal of self-motivation					
Is able to deal with changes to the environment and personal circumstances					
Does not easily get confused/upset by unexpected events					

● **INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Trustworthy and honest					
Patient					
Does not get entangled in others' problems – is able to distance himself/herself					
Will help others even at his/her own expense					
Can relate to another's reasoning and way of thinking					
Insight into the nature of humanity					
Supportive and loyal					
Empathy for the emotional states of others					
Empathy for others' problems					
Is able to assume leadership if needs be					

**5. SITUATIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
An indication of a special ability which was not obvious previously					
Appropriate action in an unexpected situation					
Flexibility and adaptability					
Involvement in new problems and problem situations					
An empathy for people and the environment					
Deals exceptionally well with difficult life situations					
Courage in crisis situations					



## 6. CREATIVITY

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Flexible way of thinking					
Resists the ordinary (nonconformist)					
Mood appropriate to situation					
Enjoys fantasising					
Colourful, lively personality					
Has a long attention span and is able to persist with a task in which he/she is interested					
Looks at ordinary things and situations in unusual ways					
Does not like to be dictated to					
Positive self-image					
Original ideas and solutions					

## 7. PSYCHOMOTOR TALENT

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Very energetic and spends a lot of time participating in physical activities					
Good balance					
Good ball sense					
Accurate					
Grace and physical suppleness					
Speed and strength					
Exceptional fine and gross motor skills					
Likes outdoor sports, hiking and camping					
Is prepared to spend a lot of time practising physical activities					
Participation/achievement in sports					

## 8. VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### • DANCE, MODERN DANCE AND MIME

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Strongly developed feeling and appreciation for the fine arts					
Shows an unusual interest in creative movement					
Has a high level of energy and stamina					
Moves gracefully and fluidly					
Exceptional ability to convey feelings by means of bodily movement					
Participates in dance performances					
Exceptional physical suppleness					

● **DRAMA AND ACTING AND PUBLIC APPEARANCE**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Keen to participate in class and school plays					
Effective use of voice, gestures and facial expressions to convey feelings					
Evokes emotional response in the audience – makes people laugh, frown, feel anxious, et cetera					
Creates original plays and stories					
Can imitate people well					
Spends free time on drama and acting					

● **TALENT IN FINE ARTS**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Takes art at school and as a hobby					
Reads books on artists and art					
Good colour sense					
Has a drawing style unique to himself/herself					
Makes use of different media, eg water colours, oil paints and pastels					
Is always critical about a completed product					
Excellent ability to evaluate and appreciate works of art					

● **MUSICAL TALENT**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Weak
Interest shown as early as preschool					
Exceptional appreciation for the quality of sound					
Excellent concentration					
Composes own melodies and songs					
Can identify fine differences in tone					
Remembers tunes easily and can reproduce them well					
Shows a sustained interest in musical activities					
Can express feelings through sounds and music					
Recognised as a musical performer at school or in the community					
Takes music extramurally or at school and/or has achieved something in the field of music					

**ANNEXURE E**

**CREATIVITY TEST**

(This creativity test was formulated by A Conroy)

NAME ..... AGE .....

GRADE ..... DATE OF TEST .....

There are no incorrect answers to this test. Try to be original and come up with things that nobody else would have thought of. Enjoy the test!

*(a) Verbal creativity*

1. Think of all the possible uses for a garden hosepipe. Try to give as many examples as possible. The hosepipe can be of any length.

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2. Tell a story about a unicorn who could read or a crocodile who didn't want to bite.

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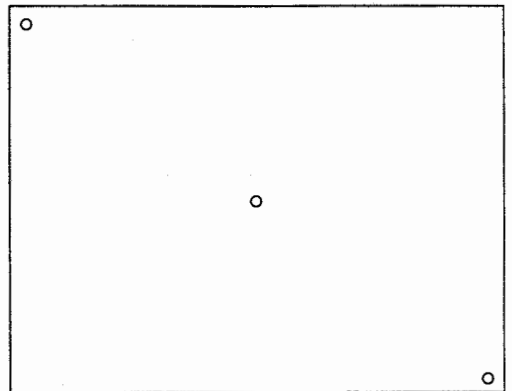
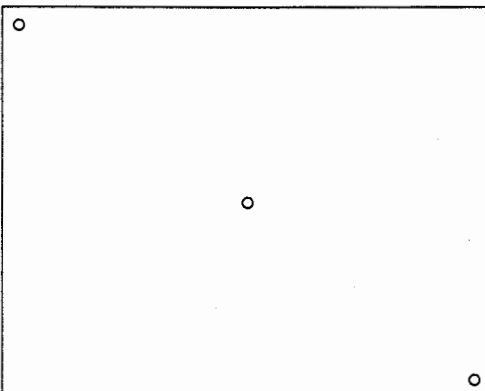
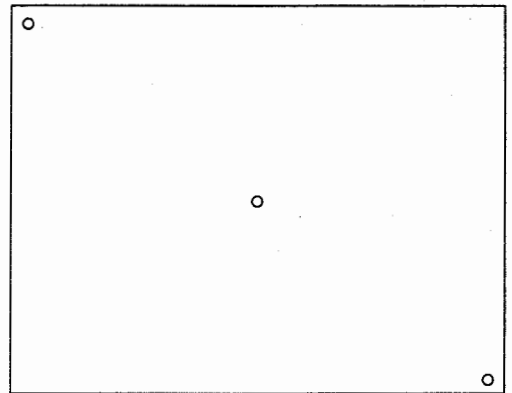
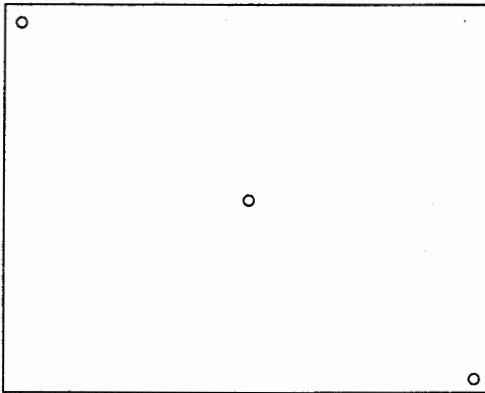
3. What does the word "sun" make you think of? Give as many ideas as possible.

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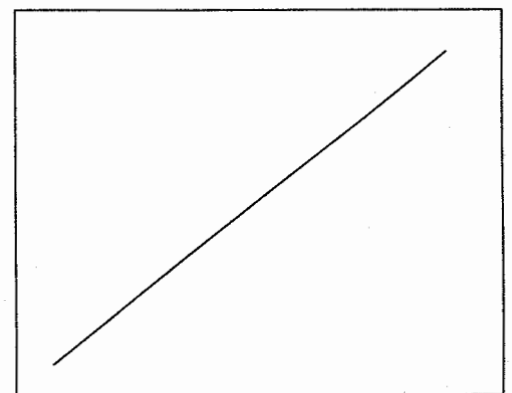
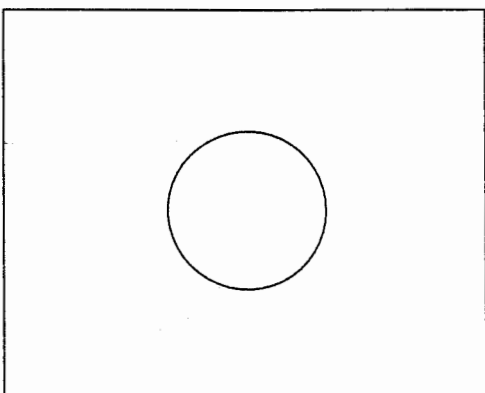
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*(b) Nonverbal creativity*

1. Draw a picture in each of the following blocks.

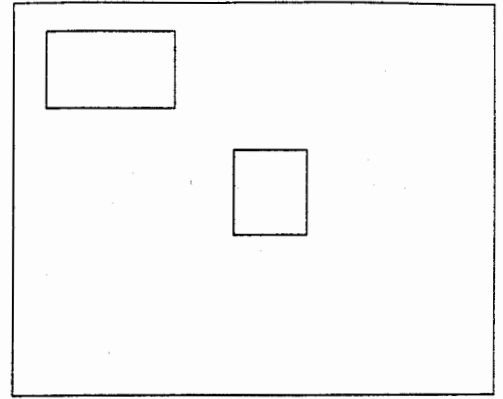
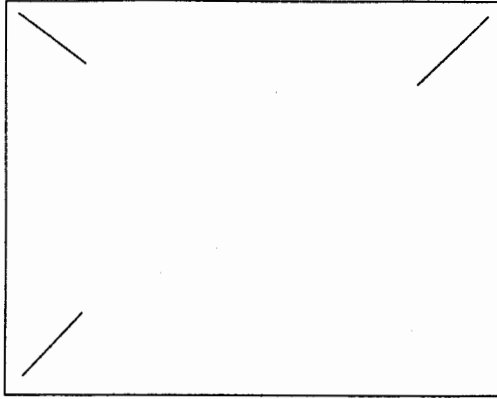


2. Complete the following sketches to tell a story. Give each sketch an interesting title and fill it in under the sketch.



1. ....

2. ....



3. .... 4. ....

3. Complete these two sketches in a creative way.

