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**AN EXPLORATION OF FOCUS GROUPS AS A MEANS OF INVESTIGATING
CAREER THINKING AND EXPLORATION IN A SAMPLE OF BLACK
LEARNERS IN AN UNDER-RESOURCED SCHOOL**

CHARITY THOBILE SIFUNDA

**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of**

M.Ed. (Educational Psychology)

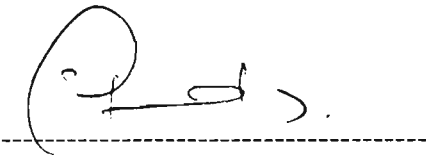
**at the
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL (PMB)**

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FEBRUARY 2001

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare, that the dissertation hereby submitted by me for the degree:
Master of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of Natal
(Pietermaritzburg), is unless otherwise indicated, my own work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Thobile Sifunda', is written above a horizontal dashed line.

Charity Thobile Sifunda

July 2000

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ABSTRACT

Much of the research on career development of black secondary school learners (Hickson & White, 1989, Ntshangase, 1995) has been focused on black learners in relatively affluent black areas, particularly townships. The aim of this study was to investigate career development and exploration in a sample of black learners from an under-resourced school in Pietermaritzburg. They were generally of a low socio economic status.

In order to assess the learners' career maturity, a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design was used. The central aim of this research project was to undertake focus group discussions. In order to facilitate career development, the discussions were learner-driven. These discussions were run over five sessions and allowed for an investigation of contextual influences on career development.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of data collected was conducted, in order to ascertain the effect of the focus group discussions on the learners' career maturity levels. The analysis showed a marked improvement in total career maturity scores of the experimental group as was measured by the Career Development Questionnaire. No significant changes were observed in the total maturity scores of the comparison group. Qualitative analysis of the discussions showed that the learners gained a great deal from one another and together they discovered and shared career information and life skills.

The results of this study showed the extent to which black learners from under-resourced areas are marginalized. They do not get the same exposure as their urban, suburban and township counterparts. The results further highlighted the plight of these learners whose contextual realities affect their career development.

These findings have implications for policy makers at the level of the school, the government and community in order to reduce uncertainty and to promote career maturity in these learners. It is suggested that curriculum packages include grass-roots, community based programmes, that are sensitive to contextual realities which impact on the career development of rural black learners.

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PREFACE

This study is about a group of rural black learners whose career development is embedded and dependent on contextual factors. There is a touching history of a rural black community isolated by apartheid and left to fend for itself. The rural black learners are children of this marginalized community.

The rural learners have made an impact on me ever since I left the employ of an affluent school run by ex-Department of Education and Training for schools that are under-resourced and run by the Department of Education and Culture. It is when I was at these schools that I became acutely aware of the deprivation of the rural learners. Most of these schools are understaffed, have mostly underqualified teachers and career guidance is perceived as a luxury. Most learners from these schools know very little or nothing at all about careers.

The need to understand and to assist these learners became a growing interest. It is largely the nature and influence of their social experience and its impact on their career development that I have been interested in analysing and making sense of. Hence the topic of this dissertation was not just an academic interest or intellectual pursuit. It is my wish to bring these learners' plight to the fore so that something can be done about it both at policy-level and at grass-root level.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief historical overview of career guidance in South African schools, particularly under-resourced black schools, and then to motivate for the research described in this dissertation.

This historical overview will hopefully bring to the fore not just the understanding of the consequences of the educational deprivation which has been experienced in black education (Benjamin, 1995) but also the understanding that there is a need to view Verwoerd's notorious policy of divide and rule as having resulted in inequalities and an educational backlog which is still profoundly salient in rural black schools to this day.

South Africa has been engaged in a profound and rapid transformation process during the past decade. One of the major tasks of the new democratic government which came into being in 1994 has been to bring a new non-racial society into being, where there is equality of provision and opportunity for all citizens. The government, however, still faces enormous challenges in all sectors which were affected by the inequalities of past legislation. Due to these inequalities there has been a significant imbalance in education, training opportunities and career mobility which has disadvantaged the black population severely (Burns, 1986). Although new legislation has been put in place to rectify these imbalances, the reality is that some communities remain marginalized, neglected and poverty-stricken due to the scale of the transformation that is needed.

These inequalities have manifested in the formal educational setting in which career guidance is located (Benjamin, 1995). During the apartheid era, African schools were administered by a variety of departments. Some of the urban ('township') schools were administered by the

Department of Education and Training (DET), from Pretoria, whereas most rural schools were administered by the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) of the various self-governing states (such as the KwaZulu Government based in Ulundi, KwaZulu - Natal). Most ex-DET schools had better resources (staffing, books, classrooms and other academic related facilities) compared to some of the ex-DEC schools. Career guidance was initially introduced in black schools in the 1980's but it has remained virtually non-existent in the ex-DEC schools due to poor resourcing and administration in these schools.

Career guidance (part of the non-examination subject, School Guidance), has been in existence in white schools since 1943 and was extended into Coloured and Indian schools with the introduction of differentiated education in 1967 (Hickson & White, 1989). Guidance as a subject in black schools was only introduced two decades later in 1981 following the unrest in black schools in the 1970's and a subsequent commission's recommendations (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999).

The School Guidance syllabus in formerly black schools had a powerful normative message: Learners should be guided to be responsible, helpful towards others, well-disciplined, obedient, a good example to others and generally well-behaved. Character traits such as loyalty, honesty, and responsibility were to be developed (Naicker, 1994). Since career education was an integral part of School Guidance, it also stressed matters such as time consciousness, dependability, willingness, productivity, thoroughness and obedience. This was in line with Verwoerd's policy originating in 1954, which states that "the bantu must be guided to serve his community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour" (Malherbe, 1977, in Naicker 1994, p.546).

Although apartheid has been abolished, its social control functions are still in place in areas that were hardest hit by apartheid policies. This is generally a result of the enormous urban - rural divide that resulted from the powerful policies cited above. To this day most of the unskilled, underpaid, 'well-behaved' and submissive workforce comes from the rural areas; where schools remain under- resourced, teachers underqualified, parents have little formal education, and many people are very conservative in their outlook. Such adults are role

models for the children leading to the cycle being perpetuated to some extent.

These factors thus contribute to a vicious cycle where lack of knowledge and opportunity are perpetuated from one generation to the next. Given these conditions, there is the potential for schools to at least substitute for some of the guidance that may be done by parents in more affluent areas. Instead, although guidance was meant to be part of the school curriculum in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) there was no provision for career education in many schools, particularly in the ex-DEC schools (Mtolo, 1996).

This is the situation that still prevails in most black under-resourced schools today. Important educational decisions are still taken prematurely at the end of grade 9 when most learners decide on a subject package that will see them through high school. These decisions are undertaken without any help or in some cases with minimal help from teachers. Learners' decisions are often taken for reasons which are not informed by future career planning for example, learners like a particular teacher or their friends are making a particular choice (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999). In some cases where the teachers are consulted for advice, they give a biased picture of the job market. They instil in learners the misconception that opportunities are for professionals. This is influenced by the fact that "they often have little experience in industry or other segments of the career world" (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999, p.9). Furthermore, in some rural areas education is still perceived as for men only and the woman's place is in the fields. Alternatively, education is seen as a luxury that only the wealthy can afford. Consequently there are a limited number of trained personnel to offer career education:

- (a) no periods allocated solely for career education;
- (b) still a great regard for examination subjects and guidance assumes a very low status;
- (c) no resources and oversupply of underqualified teachers who have a limited, and sometimes distorted understanding of the world of work (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999).

Black learners from under-resourced schools therefore experience special problems and therefore have special needs which need to be acknowledged by policy makers and addressed sensitively by career service providers. Now that a democratic government is in power and there has been a significant ideological shift and new education policies put into place, these policies need to be translated into action. In the same vein, if career education is to be introduced or resurrected in under-resourced black schools, it is important that whoever gets involved in its transformation, understands first and foremost, the culture of the disadvantaged and how this and other various contextual factors impact on the young peoples' career development. Furthermore, career programmes need to be flexible enough, relevant enough, and powerful enough to dispel the myth that there are no creative work opportunities other than in full-time paid jobs. As Naicker (1994) points out, counsellors should be trained to advise young people about seeking employment outside the formal sector. This is especially significant when jobs are scarce.

This historical overview of career guidance in South Africa highlights the need for adopting an indigenous approach when developing career guidance programmes. Career programmes need to be pertinent to people in a particular region. It is undeniably true that an important factor in career development is culture (Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1986). Blacks, particularly rural blacks, tend to be community oriented and be dependent on the wishes of significant others when making decisions (Holdstock, 1981; Mjoli, 1987). Moreover there are other contextual factors such as socio-economic status and individual differences that are peculiar to black rural learners, which further necessitate career education programmes suited to these learners' needs. The danger of the indigenous approach, however, is that its excessive use could stimulate ethnocentrism and cultural parochialism in the practice of career psychology (Kim & Berry, 1993). It must also be noted that certain cultural practices become outdated and even oppressive in a rapidly changing world (Nsamenang & Dawes, 1998).

1.2 Definition of terms

Law (1996b, in Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999, p.164) states that "we are educating when we try to help people question, explore and understand what is happening". For this reason, the term

'career education' instead of 'career guidance' or 'career counselling' is preferred for this study. Gibson and Mitchell (in Stead & Watson, 1999) define career education as "...those planned- for experiences that facilitate a person's career development and preparation for the world of work (p.164). The main aim of this study was to provide a forum for the learners to undertake a far wider range of activities rather than information giving and advising which is what traditional career guidance and career counselling may imply.

The terms 'rural' and 'urban' have not been used in their conventional sense to mean town and country respectively, but they have been used to distinguish between the African learners who come from relatively affluent black areas as opposed to their rural counterparts who live in areas where, until recently few services have been provided and many of the people rely on subsistence agriculture or travel long distances to work. The emphasis is on the urban and rural divide that apartheid policies created between black people, when certain people were able to live in designated 'township' areas, but others remained in less accessible tribal areas.

The terms learners and educators have been used in this dissertation to refer to school-going children and their educators in order to be in line with the current trends in education that have come with the new curriculum, Curriculum 2005.

1.3 Conventions to be followed and abbreviations used

Certain words have been abbreviated in this work in order to avoid repetition. These words are:

ex-DET	Department of Education and Training
ex-DEC	Department of Education and Culture
KZN	KwaZulu Natal

Black is used to refer to the indigenous population of this country and excludes other people of colour, for example Coloureds and Indians. The black population was the hardest hit by apartheid policies and thus black highlights the uniqueness of these people and signifies the hardships that they had to endure and continue to endure to this day.

1.4 Aims of this research

The primary aim of this research project was to develop and evaluate the use of career related focus groups as a means of facilitating career development in black learners from under-resourced schools. To achieve this, information on these learners had to be gathered, particularly information on these learners' career maturity. This was done by administering a career maturity questionnaire, (the Career Development Questionnaire), and by engaging learners in focus groups where they discussed various career issues. It soon became clear that it is important to find out about factors that impact on career development. Since these related mostly to context, it became necessary to gather information on the contexts that impacted on career development. Gaining information on context was thus done by gathering information on their families, their schooling, socio-economic and socio-political factors that impact on their career development during the focus group discussions.

A secondary aim of this research was to find out what African high school learners perceive as their needs in relation to their own career development. The black learners' needs have often been assumed to be the same irrespective of the schools that they attend. This was to find out whether there are indeed unique needs that are peculiar to learners who come from under-resourced schools.

1.5 Chapter summary

Chapter Two examines theories that have been used to inform career education and career theories that the writer feels should inform career education in the South African context with particular reference to under-resourced black schools. A review of research that has been done on career development of black secondary learners is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology which informed the way in which this study was conducted. Chapter Four describes the results and analysis of findings. Chapter Five, is a discussion of results related to the literature review, and Chapter Six concludes the dissertation with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will examine how mainstream career theories are largely individualistic and how in the process they tend to isolate individuals from their contexts (Stead & Watson, 1998). The widely used theory on career maturity is that of Super (1980). The developmental-contextual approach to career development (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986) will be considered as an alternative perspective for understanding career development of black learners in under-resourced environments. Finally, a description of various research projects undertaken in South Africa relevant to this study will be presented.

2.1 Super's theory of career maturity

A major argument in Super's theory (1980) is that the process of career development is essentially that of developing and implementing a self-concept. According to Super, the self-concept

"... is a product of inherited physical aptitudes and the opportunities to display these aptitudes in various roles, combined with the results of feedback from superiors and peers. Career choice he argues is the implementation of the self-concept" (Langley in Stead & Watson, 1999 p.70).

According to Super, "careers develop as individuals master the challenges proffered by psychosocial maturation and cultural adaptation" (Langley in Stead & Watson, 1999). He argues that the challenges that the individual faces are prompted by predictable developmental tasks that are more often than not associated with chronological age. This is his idea behind proposing a theory of developmental stages. One of the stages, which is termed the exploration stage, is important in adolescence. This is when the individuals are faced with the career development tasks of crystallizing, specifying and implementing a career choice. The concept of career maturity becomes important at this stage as well. It is through career maturity that the individual's readiness to make a career choice can be assessed.

According to Super (1980) each life stage has specific developmental tasks that have to be mastered. For an individual to be seen as having a high level of career maturity, he should be seen as ready to make a career choice that is appropriate to the life stage that he is at. Super argues that an individual has reached career maturity when he is ready to cope with the developmental tasks with which he is confronted because of his biological and social developments and society's expectations of people who have reached that stage of development.

Career maturity measures, an area of career development, have developed significantly over the past four decades in terms of instrument refinement (Chartrand & Camp, 1991). The development of the Career Development Inventory has culminated into a development of context-based career based instruments. The initiative undertaken in 1988 by Langley and her colleagues to develop a South African-based career maturity instrument was motivated by the need to address the shortcomings of both Super and Crites' work (Benjamin, 1995). Langley (1988) developed the measure of career maturity, the Career Development Questionnaire. This is a diagnostic instrument which is used to identify areas that "are blocking career development" (Benjamin, 1995, p.85).

Today's developmental psychology literature suggests that development neither proceeds in a universalistic stage like manner - especially in the portion of life after childhood - nor can it be understood without reference to the historically changing social and cultural context with which people reciprocally interact (Baltes & Danish, 1980; Lerner & Busch-Rossnagel, 1981, in Vondracek *et al.*, 1983a).

Such theories as that of Super, have been questioned for their relevance particularly among Africans. Fitzgerald and Betz, (in Savickas & Lent, 1994) argue that such theories fail to meaningfully include the group and family-orientated value systems or the collectivist value system predominant in the majority of the people in this country. These people normally choose careers for the good of their communities rather than to implement their self-concept. For these people a career choice is not an individual undertaking, it is a collective venture.

Van Niekerk and Van Daalen (1991, in Stead & Watson, 1998), have also questioned Super's developmental stages. They suggest that Super's developmental stages do not adequately reflect career paths of black youth who seldom have the opportunities to explore and implement a long-term career choice. Smith (1983, in Savickas & Lent, 1994) observes that in this country a permanent job or long-term job will never be a reality for many people. This raises the question of whether career development is a meaningful concept in the lives of the many people who are unemployed, or hold jobs that do not provide for full-time meaningful employment, upgrading and mobility; all of which are factors that represent the basic underpinnings of career development (Fitzgerald & Betz, in Savickas & Lent, 1994).

Although Super acknowledges that the above dimensions of career maturity are vulnerable to external factors such as socio-economic, political and educational variables (Benjamin, 1995), his theory remains "contextually blind in that contextual factors receive limited attention at the expense of personal factors" (Stead & Watson, 1999, pp.2-3). Super's theoretical constructs have undoubtedly a Western bias and ignore the experiences of non-Westerners. "He subscribes to a decontextualized vision with an extraordinary emphasis on individualism, mechanism and objectivity" (Stead & Watson, 1999, pp.497-498). Contextual factors that impact on black youth are very crucial when one wants to understand their career development because they reflect the realities within which these youth grow.

Prerequisites for the career theories with a Western bias, like those of Super and Holland are stability and predictability of the environment. Family, social, education, and political structures under apartheid have not allowed for stability and predictability to prevail in most black schools.

Since 1990, there has however been a shift from the use of these theories as if they were universally applicable, towards questioning their appropriateness and applicability in other contexts (Stead & Watson, 1999). For example, the applicability of the majority of these theories in the South African context is debatable. Most of these theories are based on Western individualistic values and are often applied indiscriminately to the majority of the people in this country, despite the fact that these people have a collectivist value orientation. It is against this background that there developed a need to view career development from a

developmental-contextual perspective in order to include the group and family oriented value systems predominant in the majority of the people in this country (Fitzgerald & Betz, in Savickas & Lent, 1994). This perspective may be appropriate to understand and intervene in the career development of individuals who must cope not only with their developmental changes, but also with dramatic environmental changes that complicate career exploration and planning activities (Stead, 1996).

2.2 Developmental-contextual theories

Developmental-contextual theories of career development introduce the idea of "examining the situation of career development in South Africa in terms of historical, cultural, sociopolitical, and economic factors, and to examine how such factors may interact with the career development of individuals" (Stead, 1996, p.270).

Like Stead (1996), the writer believes that the developmental-contextual framework of career development can foster an understanding of career development both during apartheid and in the post-apartheid era. This, it is believed can inform transformation policies which can in turn help make career education a meaningful activity.

The developmental-contextual perspective emphasizes the overarching and ever-changing cultural, economic and technological features of the context that undoubtedly influence career development. Vondracek *et al.*, (1986), developers of the developmental-contextual perspective, acknowledge the contribution of Bronfenbrenner in bringing this approach to the fore. It is therefore important at this stage to discuss Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that there are four ecological structures to describe the environment:

2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development is composed of concentric circles each of which represents a system that impacts on the development of an individual. There are four circles which he calls microsystems and the outer circle which consists of eight macro systems (see Figure 2.1). The bidirectional arrows in the model suggest a two

way interaction between all systems.

2.2.1.1 The microsystem

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics. The microsystem, encompassing the family, the school setting, the peer group, and part-time work contain the developing person. This therefore represents the most direct contextual influence on the individual.

2.2.1.2 The mesosystem

A mesosystem is a set of interrelations between two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant. For an example when an individual participates in the home and the school settings, there is an interaction between the two. There are several mesosystems that are important to the career development of children and adolescents. A particularly salient mesosystem for the career development of adolescents is the link between school and work. This pertains to the interrelations between school and the future work setting. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979).

"Development is enhanced to the extent that, prior to each entry into a new setting ... the person and members of both settings involved are provided with information, advice and experience relevant to the impending transition" (p.217).

2.2.1.3 The exosystem

The exosystem is defined as consisting of one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by what happens in that setting. Again there are several exosystems that may be important to the career development of children and adolescents. An example is the events occurring within the community over which the developing child or adolescent has little or no control, or decisions made at a local government level which influence the provision of services.

2.2.1.4 The macrosystem

The macrosystem is the consistency observed within a given culture or subculture in the form of content of its constituent micro-, meso-, and exosystems as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such constituencies. The macrosystem is therefore the overarching blueprint of cultures and sub-cultures. Osuji (1976), who found that Nigerian students tended to commit themselves to careers much earlier than do students from more industrialized Western societies, concluded that culture and subculture represent potent macrosystem influences on career development. Osuji (1976) attributed these differences between Nigerian and Western students to such factors as:

- relative economic and technological underdevelopment
- limited job opportunities
- high job obsolescence
- strong societal presses towards upward mobility
- strong extended family obligations in the former group.

Bronfenbrenner's theory has had an impact on social scientists who study and participate in the formulation of public policy. This is appropriate when one is interested in examining how these various systems, particularly the macrosystem, impact on the development of individuals. In South Africa this is particularly important because public policies, for example on how much is to be spent on education, has in the past been determined by the different race policies. Black education has historically been allocated a budget that has been the lowest per capita when one compares it to the other race groups during the apartheid era.

2.2.2 Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg's (1986) developmental-contextual framework of career development

Vondracek *et al.*'s work was as a result of the "absence of theoretical formulations which deal with development in more than a superficial manner" (Vondracek *et al.*, 1983a, p.179). Vondracek *et al.*, (1983a), strongly criticized most of the developmental career theorists because they think that the theorists have made serious errors in applying developmental theory to careers. They list four major errors. First, developmental concepts have been adapted uncritically by career development writers ignoring inherent conceptual, methodological, and empirical problems. Second, the theorists have failed to use the new information in developmental psychology, such as the contextual factors now seen to be very important by developmental psychologists. Third, the career theorists have done very little longitudinal research, and what has been conducted has failed to be contextually sensitive. Fourth, there is the accusation of either misrepresentation or ignorance of developmental findings by vocational writers (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996).

Instead of presenting a theory, Vondracek *et al.*, (1986) present a developmental-contextual framework. They argue that this framework can throw some light on the interaction between the individual's career development and the ever-changing environment. Their approach has four fundamental features:

- A life-span, developmental emphasis;
- An interdisciplinary approach;
- A contextual perspective;
- An increased awareness of individual differences in vocational behaviour and career development (in Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996).

"The lifespan view of human development encompasses two perspectives, embeddedness and dynamic interaction" (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996, p.159). Embeddedness is a concept that illustrates the dependence of each level on all other levels. In other words a change in one life sphere promotes change in all other spheres. The small circles engulfed by the bigger circles in the model below as well as the bidirectional arrows illustrate this.

"These authors stress the impact of multiple contexts and environments impinging on the individual. People are seen as both influencing and being influenced by their context" (Spencer, 1999, p.15). The bidirectional arrows in the framework as illustrated by Figure 2.1 represent the interactions between the individual and the environment. The significance of this dynamic interaction is that not only do these contextual factors impact on the individual, the individual is not passive, she is playing an active role in her development. It is through this dynamic interaction between people and their contexts that people develop. This interaction is however not constant, at different times of a person's life different features of their contexts will impinge with varying strengths (Spencer, 1999).

Unlike other theorists, Vondracek *et al.*'s (1986) developmental-contextual framework does not focus almost exclusively on the individual and her attributes, it focuses on how individuals develop in relation to their environments and thus it allows for a broader if not comprehensive perspective of how a person's career development emerges.

The model consists of four inner circles which, like Bronfenbrenner's model are termed microsystems. The outer circle, on the other hand, has eight macrosystems. There are bidirectional arrows between the microsystems and also between the microsystems and the macrosystems. This suggests that there is a two-way interaction between the former and the latter. The following section will look at the emphases of their developmental-contextual framework (adapted from Lerner, 1984).

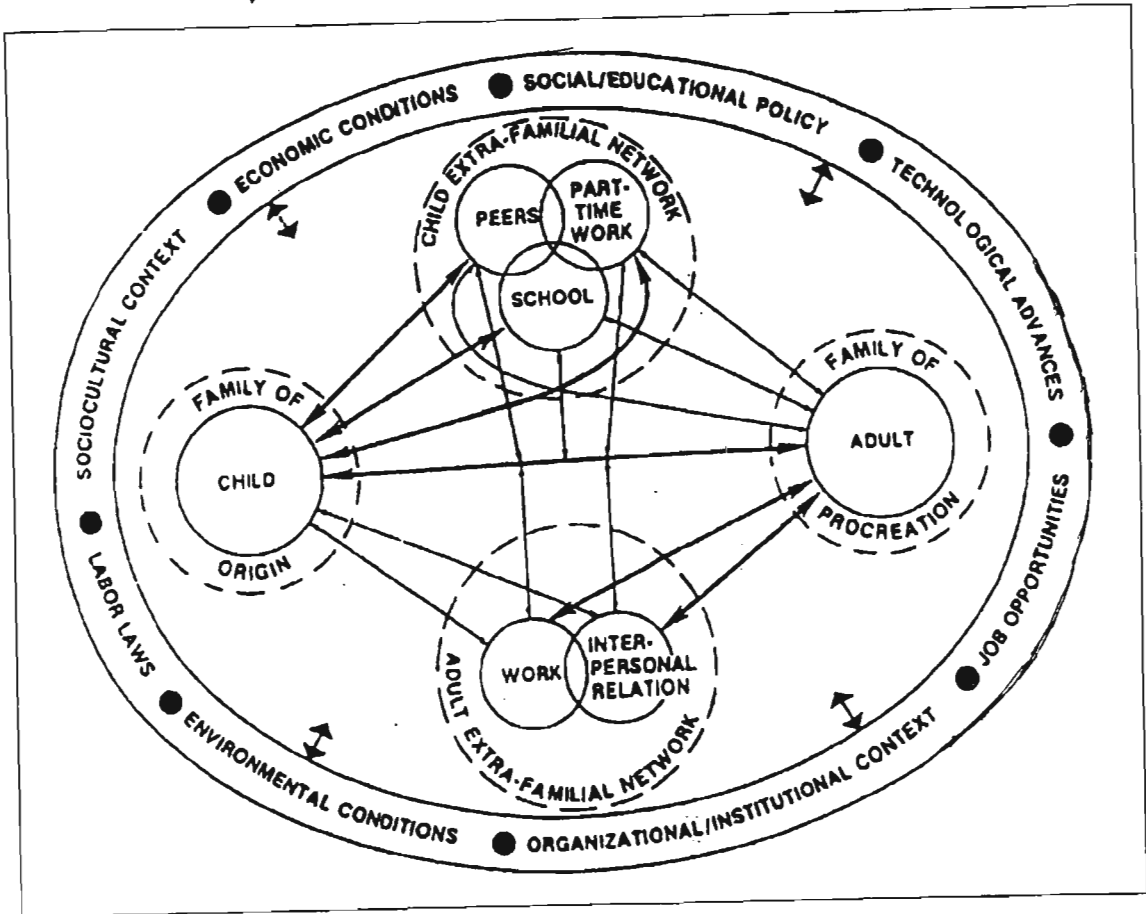


Figure 2.1: Developmental-contextual framework of career development (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986)

2.2.2.1 The microsystems

The four contexts that make up the inner circles of the model are the following: the family of origin of the child, the child's extra-familial network, the person's family of procreation and the adult extra-familial network. These microsystems are interdependent, interactive with each other and are surrounded by the eight macrosystems with whom they interact in a dynamic way.

Vondracek *et al.* (1986) emphasize that:

"The primary contexts in which the child develops, or the microsystems, need to be examined to discern differences in such factors as interpersonal relations, role models, opportunities and resources that may co-vary with social class" (p.46).

They argue that investigating first and foremost the person's family of origin and to some extent the school environment, the peer influence and the part-time work microsystems, can enable one to understand to what extent these proximal contextual factors impact on the career development of an individual as compared to the more distal ones, such as the macrosystems.

2.2.2.1.1 The child's family of origin

Vondracek *et al.* (1986) argue that "The family context is a complex web of several powerful forces that influence the career development of children" (p.49). Indeed the family is a system on its own. It is a primary socialization site where dynamic interactions are first experienced. A child, is fully dependent on parents, for nurturance, guidance in folklore, language, culture, tradition and customs. The parents play a crucial role in the physical, emotional, spiritual and occupational development of their child. The values, both implicit and explicit, that are instilled at home influence the development of the child. For example the child who lives for in a household which values education and professionalism might have different career aspirations to a child who lives in a household which does not emphasize or nurture these values. These two families may not have common interests, and there may also be other factors that are contributing to the differences in their values. This may include different child rearing practices and the availability of resources.

Some cultures do not permit a close or over-indulgent relationship between children and their parents. This may result in parents not knowing what their children's career aspirations are, or parents may not offer the support that their children need. Further, even if these parents were to show parental support they may not have the resources that are needed in order to give the support that their children need. This may include their own educational background which may be lacking and they may not have sufficient know-how to guide their children.

Physical resources in terms of finances and the availability or access to educational material may also be limited. With high rates of illiteracy and unemployment in this country, many parents may feel inadequate in helping to nurture their children's career aspirations.

Over and above this, the influence of gender in the learners career development cannot be undermined (Smith, 1993). Some parents, especially in the rural areas, still persuade boys more than girls to further their education. Because this is hardly reported in literature, some career theorists argue that, cultural barriers faced by these young people warrant theoretical consideration as well as extensive and appropriate intervention (De Bruin, 1992; Savickas & Lent, 1994; Seroka, 1992; Smith, 1993).

Those parents who allow at least their boys to further their education, encourage them to study towards white collar jobs. The Black community finds itself in the situation where parents do not wish their children to attend technical schools nor to study technical subjects. These are perceived as inferior to the academic institutions that are seen as leading to university education and white collar work (Makofane, 1994). This has adverse effects on the career maturity and career choice of these learners who have these factors to contend with, not necessarily related to the demands of the workplace (Seroka, 1992).

The factors mentioned above are mostly characteristic of Black families in South Africa, and they to a large extent, impact on the learners' career maturity. Studies have indeed shown that the level of career maturity of Black learners correlates with their experiences of their family (Benjamin, 1995; Van der Merwe, 1993).

2.2.2.1.2 Child extra-familial network

School:

The school is seen as the second most important microsystem after the family because it has a strong influence on the career development of the child (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). This is more so in some communities of this country because the school is seen as a valuable community resource. The school may be a place where children from disadvantaged backgrounds may learn to perform certain career oriented tasks. It may

be the only place conducive to written work because it has resources, and often it is basic resources that the learners need; for example, electric light which their homes may not have. In such communities educators are perceived as knowledgeable not only in academic subjects, but also in career information and other general information. Vondracek *et al.* (1986) argue that a number of factors make the school a salient microsystem. Among these they list:

"... the activities, the personal relations with educators, other students, and guidance counsellors, the various roles and role expectations, and the physical, structural, and material features of the school context" (p.49).

All these are seen as necessary in the career development of the child. The school in a broader sense is a site that can expose the learner to at least some of the realities that he will experience when he leaves school.

In a well functioning school, the learner is groomed and prepared for the big transition from school to work. This, however is the ideal situation particularly in most of the Black schools in South Africa. Historically Black schools have been targeted for maintaining the status quo of white domination and of ensuring that blacks remain in the 'underclass' (Fitzgerald & Betz, in Savickas & Lent, 1994). The Bantu education system played a salient role in ensuring that the schools were under-resourced in terms of not only the physical, structural and material features, but that the human resources, in terms of educators are ill-equipped for their job. Due to these experiences, a discrepancy develops between the learners' career choice and the demands of the workplace.

Furthermore, through legislation, such as the job reservation act the blacks were kept in certain jobs which most often than not ensured that they do not climb up the corporate ladder and that they remained outside the traditional class structure. "The youth were never informed about the national manpower needs and which careers are in demand and which careers are likely to be redundant in the foreseeable future" (Seroka, 1992, p.1). This situation exists to this day particularly in Black rural schools because "schools in the rural areas were the least resourced of all, their educators the

most in need of expansion of the knowledge of the world of work" (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999, p.7).

A further challenge is the AIDS epidemic which is threatening Black youth. The learners are forced to start parenting their siblings at a tender age because their schooling is disrupted not only by the aftermaths of apartheid, but also by life threatening events over which they have little control. Schooling may thus be disrupted by family issues, and for young women, teenage pregnancies may also contribute to disruptions.

Peers

Vondracek *et al.* (1986) see this microsystem as involving the interactions between the individual and the peer group. The peer group, like family, offers an individual the opportunity to explore ideas and an environment where there is sharing and experimenting with a variety of activities.

Since peers come from different family backgrounds, there is normally a variety of information about careers and the world of work in general. This may enhance career development because the information from peers may reinforce or challenge what parents have been saying. On the other hand this may be a limiting factor when career informants happen to be ill-informed.

In under-resourced black communities the absence of adult role models can make the peer relationships stronger in that the learners may be dependent on what their peers are telling them about the world of work. Parents may not be regarded as role models as far as education and professional matters are concerned because many learners have progressed further in the education system than their parents were able. Peers that are normally held in high esteem are those that are knowledgeable and have the necessary exposure in as far as work experience is concerned. These may include those that have an education, but it can also include those that are school drop-outs and who have work experience in the informal sector. This may also have some influence on the career decision of individuals who want to get out of the poverty cycle in the quickest ways

possible. These learners may regard the informal sector as the easiest way to better their living conditions.

Part-time work

This, according to Vondracek *et al.* (1986), is one of the ways that individuals gain experience of what the world of work is like. Such experiences as baby-sitting one's siblings are regarded as invaluable experiences because they provide first-hand experience of what lies ahead for them and may lead to the development of some basic skills that they may need in future.

In Black areas, particularly the rural areas, learners are not given much opportunity of getting more formal work experience because of the lack of resources and infrastructure. Meanwhile those in the urban areas sometimes get work experience in settings like supermarkets and departmental stores. Even if it is not learners in urban areas that take the jobs on offer, they get to know what a number of jobs entail through observing or at least through the word of mouth from their parents and or neighbours. They, in the process, also gain a number of skills such as those that pertain to relating to an employer, getting paid and disputing wages. In this way they are introduced early to bargaining skills and money matters. On the other hand their rural counterparts are mostly exposed to informal work settings such as tending cows, fetching water and ploughing in the fields. The lack of opportunities for these learners puts them at a disadvantage when looking for work because they may not have the skills that their urban counterparts have.

The absence of places of work in the rural areas exacerbates this. Most industries are located in the urban areas and so are other business projects which may be of value in as far as being sites where learners can gain work experience. These inequalities may not be salient enough to warrant any investigation, but it is one form of the discrepancy that exists between rural and urban learners which impacts on the career development of these learners.

2.2.2.1.3 The person's family of procreation

Most people who decide on careers are also at a stage where they are thinking of starting their families or in some cases there is pressure on them to start families. This necessitates that individuals consider all these life circumstances when deciding on a career. Some learners are culturally bound to start families at a certain age and to support their siblings and extended families. This may impact on their career decision-making in that they may not be allowed to look for work anywhere they please, they may be assigned roles of heading not just their immediate family, but also their extended families.

In this country there is also a high number of children raised by single mothers or by their grandparents. This then puts a lot of pressure, particularly on the girls and their families. The girls have a bigger responsibility of raising their child, in the meantime they also have to find a job so that they can look after their offspring. This delay may mean that the girl may have to finish matric late and possibly it will be through correspondence and this delays career development.

2.2.2.1.4 Adult extra-familial network

Work

Vondracek *et al.* (1986) note that people "view their work as something that is part of them; their careers can grow, change, and develop with them throughout their lives" (p.1). This has implications for career development of learners who have been socialized into believing that there will be work for them when they leave school. The unemployment rate in South Africa is very high and it is not necessarily people who do not have skills that are unemployed.

The concept of work has also changed a lot throughout the years. The rate of retrenchment as well as unemployment has meant that work is perceived in broader terms than just paid employment (Hoyt, 1975, in Spencer, 1999). This has resulted in people thinking of work as anything that can provide an income. There are however, many people who still believe that finding alternative employment is inferior to the set

standard of paid employment. The realization that there is alternative employment has resulted in people starting their own businesses such as the taxi business.

The work experience that employed people get, allows them to gain competence not just in the work that they do, but it also exposes them to a variety of other experiences, for example human relations. These competencies prepare people further for the world of work.

Interpersonal relationships

According to Vondracek *et al.* (1986), "an examination of roles and role expectations that exist in a given setting may be particularly salient to understanding the context of career development" (p.48). In Black communities particularly in rural Black communities, there exist distinct roles for the different sexes. Gender therefore plays an important role in socialization. Children are socialized into being girls and boys at a very young age and later on in life when they are deciding on careers, they are further socialized into thinking that there are male and female jobs in the job market. Their role models reinforce what they have been taught as children. Young women are the most affected by this.

Girls' roles are often perceived as inferior to boys' roles and this impacts on their self concepts and self esteem. Often, irrespective of their intellectual capacities, girls end up in jobs that are inferior in terms of monetary income and status. This can be explained by their lack of drive and motivation to succeed and also because they are primarily expected by their communities to get married and start families. When this happens the women are given the role of primary care givers and they are primarily responsible for taking care of their offspring. This further impacts on the kind of job that they can do and also on the working hours that are convenient to them. Since child rearing is not considered when policy is made in the workplace, women find themselves disadvantaged.

2.2.2.2 The mesosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines a mesosystem as a set of interrelations between two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant (in Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). These may be home and school, the workplace and the interpersonal network. At this level processes like interpersonal relations and other activities such as roles that the individual plays, take place across setting boundaries. The interrelations among the settings can take several forms and can impact on the individual in different ways. When an individual participates in two or more settings for instance home, school, workplace and interpersonal network he stands a chance of getting exposed to a variety of experiences which can enrich his career development. There are several mesosystems that are important to the career development of children and adolescents, including the various sets of interrelations among the family, the school, peer group or part-time work setting (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986).

By focusing on the interrelations between mesosystems, for instance the family and school mesosystem it is possible to discover the extent of the congruence between the educational values that exist in both settings (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). The argument that middle class values are inherent in the educational system of this country explains why academic success tends to be more likely to occur as one moves up the social ladder. In this country black people have not been part of the designing and planning of their education and this has resulted in an academic culture that is rooted in the value system of the minority of people of this country who are associated with middle class experiences, resources and goals. This explains not just the high failure rate in black schools, it also puts some light on the cycle of background socioeconomic status determining school success and socioeconomic status for generations.

In a similar fashion, one could analyze the link between the family and the peer network. It has been found that adolescents are more likely to follow a given career path when both parental encouragement and peer aspirations are in accord (Kandel & Lesser, 1969, in Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). In a situation where parents do not possess the expertise that are needed for career guidance, there may not be such encouragement. Peers were found to be far more influential in career decision than parents in a local study (Mtolo, 1996).

A particularly salient and important mesosystem for the career development of adolescents is the link between school and work (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979),

"Development is enhanced to the extent that, prior to each entry into a new setting, the person and members of both settings involved are provided with information, advice, and experience relevant to the impending transition" (p.217).

In the absence of career education in the under-resourced black schools, there are no opportunities for work-relevant information and experience. In these communities there is heavy reliance on the school to prepare the youth for employment and yet there is no congruence between the school and the world of work. "Nevertheless it appears that a strong link between school and future work is imperative for a successful transition into the world of work" (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986, p.59).

2.2.2.3 The exosystem

The exosystem is a setting which that does not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by what happens in that setting. There are several exosystems that may be important for the career development of children or adolescents. For example, events occurring within the community, over which the child has little or no control.

The political violence in the Black areas has seen the youth taking an active role in politics and leaving school to organize and to attend political rallies and political meetings. This may influence the youth's career development because of altered perceptions of what their country is like politically. Perhaps through a process of comradeship on the part of the community, peers and the political leaders, the youth felt obliged to show that they are part of the struggle for freedom. This has resulted in many of these youth dropping out of school and engaging in self destructive behaviours, for example the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

One of the most important exosystems, for the developing child or adolescent is the parents' workplace (Kohn & Schooler, 1983 in Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). Research has provided clear,

but not conclusive, 'evidence demonstrating the causal link between characteristics of the parents' workplace and socialization practices, and the career-relevant processes and outcomes in the child (in Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). This, in more specific terms, means that working-class men whose jobs require compliance with authority and work values, tend to value obedience, respect and conformity in their children, whereas middle-class men whose jobs depend more on self-direction, tend to value initiative and independence in their children.

In the South African context these findings imply that the majority of the people of this country who, because of the apartheid regime belong to the working class will raise their children to be conformists. This has implications for the career development of their children who may not feel able to climb the corporate ladder because the work values in the world of work are opposite to those that they have been socialised into. The corporate world promotes people who are independent thinkers and who can take initiative.

2.2.2.4 Macrosystem

"The macrosystem is the final and highest order ecological subsystem" (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986, p.62). It reflects the distant environmental and social factors that impinge on the individual. It consists of the following: labour laws, environmental conditions, organisational/institutional context, job opportunities, technological advances, social/educational policy, economic conditions and the socio-cultural context. Consequently, the macrosystem impacts on the career development of children and adolescents in a variety of ways.

2.2.2.4.1 Social policy

Socialization is one of the ways that career development is shaped. Ogbu (1981, in Vondracek *et al.*, 1986) argues that:

"... child rearing in the family and similar micro settings in the early years of life and subsequent socialization of adolescents are geared toward the development of instrumental competencies required for adult economic, political, and social roles. These cultural imperatives vary from one cultural group to another as do the required

competencies" (in Vondracek *et al.*, 1986).

In the South African context, there are discrepancies in the socialization of these instrumental competencies crossculturally. The legacy of apartheid and its social policies which include "labour laws, minimum wage laws, government training and sponsorship programmes" (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986, p.65), has ensured that for the African population there is a lack of proper career education, that there are limited job opportunities and a general lack of resources in every sphere of their lives. Consequently there are crosscultural differences in career development.

2.2.2.4.2 Educational policy

With a new, non-racial single education system, education policy has changed such that career guidance is included in the life orientation section of the new curriculum. Despite these changes, Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) point out that the reality is that career education in South Africa "has been further curtailed or discontinued as the present monetary constraints in both formal education and former Non-Governmental structures impact on staffing and resource provision" (p.1).

In this country, legislation and policy that guides the provision of career education in schools, has not been translated into practice. What exacerbates this situation is that career education by virtue of the fact that it is non-examinable, has been seen by the teaching staff as a waste of time as they are struggling with their normal load of work. Secondly guidance during the apartheid era was used as a state's tool to control and manipulate the guidance syllabus and to control the political unrest in the township schools (Dovey & Mason, 1984; Nonyokela, 1993, in Euvrard, 1996), hence African learners tended to view it with suspicion.

In spite of the new social and educational policies, designed for preparing the previously disadvantaged population for participation in the labour force, black people continue to face tremendous backlog. As a result, when they leave school their work capacity is still funnelled into a few race-typed jobs in which their pay is low, their influence is limited and their mobility and their options are restricted (Fox & Hesse-Biber, 1984, in Vondracek *et al.*, 1986).

The *status quo* is such that there is a huge disparity between policy and its operationalization. This necessitates intervention programmes in black schools that are for both knowledge generation and knowledge application (Vondracek *et al.*, 1983a). This has huge implications for career education service providers, for example schools, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), universities and other governmental structures, in that they have to be at the forefront of transformation and start practising what they preach in terms of affirmative action, inclusivity at former white educational institutions and non-racialism. Although there is a significant shift in most institutions of this country, with regards to transformation *per se*, most of the intervention programmes have tended to focus on the presenting problems of the previously disadvantaged for instance by providing funds for students and offering bridging programs for learners with poor matric results. Vondracek *et al.* (1983) suggest intervention programs that focus on optimization and prevention. Such intervention programmes need to be initiated at schools in order to be more effective.

2.2.2.4.3 Job opportunities

In the apartheid era, decent and well-paying jobs were reserved for the white race.

"Blacks were not privileged to go to school, those who worked were working as assistants and to most it was hard labour (as a consequence) those who went to school, they studied for careers that would enable them to obtain white collar jobs" (Makofane, 1994, p.1).

This scenario, coupled with the fact that "the curriculum available in many black schools was also purposely designed to close occupational doors for pupils" (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999), has led to a remarkable concentration of black graduates in careers that were not previously reserved for whites.

When the democratic government took over it introduced amongst others, affirmative action and employment equity act as part of the legislation that was to redress the imbalances of the past in as far as job opportunities are concerned. In spite of improved employment opportunities for the African population due to these changes, many black people remain unemployed because of a number of reasons. A key reason is that they still do not possess

the necessary skills. Schein (1996) argues that blacks comprise the majority of the unskilled group and have the lowest educational qualifications of all the population groups. This has influenced their ability to enter the formal labour market of South Africa (Beukes, Davies, van der Kooy & van Wyk, 1990). There is a strong relationship between labour force participation and educational attainment.

Secondly, Beukes *et al.* (1990) contend that the

"Black population has the highest birth rates, the highest annual growth rates, the youngest age structures, the biggest dependency ratios, the lowest educational levels and the highest unemployment rates" (p.84).

They further argue that in this country the economic growth rate is lower than the growth rate of the economically active population and as a result the economy is simply not able to provide enough work opportunities for the growing population. This demographic data analysis should be linked to long-term development planning where various plans and strategies to overcome unemployment and poverty can be coordinated and implementation thereof closely monitored to ensure that the set goals are achieved.

In the interim, the trend in South Africa today is for those who do not meet the requirements of the formal job market, is to join the informal sector.

2.2.2.4.4 Organisational/institutional context

The organisational institutions that most of the Black learners become part of are deprived. Most of the schools that they attend particularly rural schools are impoverished and as observed by Pretorious (2000) "don't even have the money to fix their broken windows" (p.13). The situation is such that the educational institutions that they attend have few facilities, if at all and no culture of learning.

When they leave school some of these students join tertiary education institutions and they experience a totally different environment. They meet different people from different cultures and for many, the experiences are overwhelming. They may for the first time experience how

it is to have a bed, a tennis court, a swimming pool and they may also find that the institution at which they are enrolled sets a high standard academically. They may have to attend special programmes that have been designed for the previously disadvantaged in order to bridge the gap whilst their counterparts get on with their degrees and finish in record time. Those who are fortunate enough to make it to their chosen fields, may have to contend with the competitive spirit that characterizes most of the tertiary institutions. Their performance determines whether they are promoted to the next level or not. Performance also determines whether they get financial aid or not. To most of these learners it is a matter of survival in an environment for which they have little preparation. Some make up the statistics of students who fail and are excluded from the institutions and most of these students are not given a chance to explore other career alternatives.

2.2.2.4.5 Environmental Conditions

Vondracek *et al.* (1986) list environmental conditions as one of the macrosystems that impact on the career development of individuals. The environmental conditions such as the availability of resources, are crucial in determining the career destiny of an individual. The socioeconomic background of the family determines to a large extent whether the parents will be able to support the career aspirations of their children or not. Parents who do not have the bare necessities like food and shelter are less concerned about their children's education and their career aspirations.

Some of the resources that some people take for granted like the availability of electricity and water, are not freely available in other communities. These are some of the environmental conditions that hinder some of the learners in their pursuit of their career goals. They are caught up in a cycle of poverty and desperately fight for basic needs of survival. Whilst learners in schools in the affluent areas have access to computers in preparation for the information age, their rural counterparts study by candle light.

2.2.2.4.6 Labour laws

Labour laws have changed since the democratic government took over in 1994. Amongst these is the Employment Equity Bill of 1998. This was instituted in order to redress the inequities of the past. Affirmative action has been put into place to ensure that the previously disadvantaged people are protected. This new ruling ensures that certain racial quotas are met in places of employment, that is a number of positions are filled by the previously disadvantaged depending on such factors as the demographics in the company or organization. However, the effects of the law are yet to be felt in terms of access for school-leavers.

2.2.2.4.7 Sociocultural context

The most pervasive factor affecting parenting in the South African context is the shift from the clear child-rearing responsibilities and practices of the traditional cultures. With the introduction of an open education system most people, particularly black parents, were optimistic that their children will receive a good education. The excitement almost hid the reality of a cultural transition that was to result in severe conflicts between their adopted Western lifestyles and residual belief systems. Racial integration has increased the people's anxiety about change and the challenge to their cultures.

This has culminated in the existence of superficial equality where there was none before. In reality people's expectations of a new South Africa where there is equality and no poverty have yet to be fulfilled. The high rate of unemployment means that a large proportion of people in this country still live in poverty.

2.2.2.4.8 Economic conditions

As a result of South Africa's transition to political democracy in April/May 1994, there has been a wide range of favourable macro-economic trends in many economic sectors. Despite these developments,

"... the growth rate of overall gross domestic product [GDP] was constrained by two main factors. Firstly, the primary production sectors showed sharp production declines in 1995. Secondly, the import intensity of the domestic

spending rose to its highest level in 15 years" (Carnegie Enquiry Report, 1989, p.5).

These factors together with the birth rates which far exceed the GDP growth, have an adverse effect on the economy of the country. Furthermore, the greater link to the global economy in recent years has meant that the rand has not been able to rise favourably in comparison with other foreign currency such as the dollar and the pound. This influences the economy by limiting development in many areas.

2.2.2.4.9 Technological advances

Technological advances in the last few decades have resulted in a significant shift in the labour market. The primary labour market which includes large corporations and government departments, is characterized by

"... job stability, job security, progression up the clear career ladders meanwhile the secondary labour market tends to have small employers, operate in intensely competitive, labour intensive sectors, employment insecurity and careers are no more than a succession of jobs" (Killeen in Watts, 1996, p.12-13).

These distinct differences between the primary labour market and the secondary labour market is being replaced by modern forms of the labour market which are characterized by "flatter hierarchies where rewards and career progression are dependant upon a highly individualized form of performance appraisal" (Killeen in Watts, 1996, p.13).

Although this increases job opportunities for those that are multi-skilled, Vondracek *et al.* (1986) note that with increasing technology many people have lost jobs. These changes necessitate that people redefine their careers (Spencer, 1999), particularly those who have suffered retrenchment. These people need to explore alternative options outside the formal labour market, for example, part-time employment, subcontracting and casual labour.

In order to be in line with these changes in the labour market, career counselling needs to heed Gellat's call for positive uncertainty (Gellat, 1989, in Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999). This

according to Gellat is "a decision framework which helps learners to deal with chance and ambiguity and inconsistency" (Gellat, 1989, in Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999, p.252). This has implications for career programmes that are developed for learners. These will need to incorporate programmes planned for equipping learners to deal with uncertainty and continuous changes in the labour market.

2.2.2.4.10 Concluding remarks

"The importance of contextual factors in career choice and career development has been under-emphasized although authors such as Fred Vondracek and Richard Young have consistently reminded the field that contextualist, holistic, systemic, or developmental-contextual approaches to career psychology need serious consideration" (Stead & Watson, 1999, p.2).

Stead and Watson (1999) argue that the ideology of individualism serves to isolate individuals from their contexts. Vondracek *et al.*, (1986) argue for a holistic approach and through their model, they illustrate the complexity of the various systems as they impact on the career development of individuals. Their model, as discussed in this chapter, seems to suit the South Black context because it encapsulates diversity and as a result it gives a broad perspective on the career development of individuals within their contexts.

2.3 Career education research in South African black secondary schools

Career education research in South Africa has largely been influenced by the political climate of the country. Consequently, career education research and "programmes have largely targeted white samples" (Benjamin, 1995, p.54). It is only in the mid-80s that there is a significant shift from white samples to samples from the black population group. This is due to the fact that guidance was only introduced into the black schools in 1981 (Naicker, 1993).

This illustrated by the upsurge of career education research in black education particularly in the 1990s. This section considers some of the career research that has been undertaken in black education to date.

The following studies have been conducted with participants from senior classes, standard nine and ten in Black secondary schools. Pruss (1990) preselected a group of standard nine repeats and non-repeats. He conducted a two-day, small group workshop on career decision making. He found that short term intervention on career decision-making is not significantly effective in positively changing the cognitive processes measured in his study. However, his findings indicated that the learners' verbal creative thinking, abstract thinking and self esteem had been moderately changed.

Seroka (1992) sampled a group of rural school leavers and investigated external factors involved in career choices. His findings were that blacks are disadvantaged in a myriad ways and thus mostly choose careers in the social services for example teaching and nursing.

Sedibe (1995) investigated how black adolescents from single parent families experience personal, social, educational and career choice problems and how these problems affect the way in which the adolescent constitutes his life world. He found that the major problem that these adolescents face is coming into terms with the self. This manifests itself in a myriad ways including problems establishing an identity and difficulty establishing relationships with family, school and peers. Consequently, they lack guidance from significant others in order to adjust well in the world and make relevant decisions.

Van der Merwe (1993) aimed to describe the career maturity of black Protec standard nine and ten students. He investigated the effect of sex, age, school standard, socioeconomic status, family structure, exposure to careers guidance, goal directedness and identity status on career maturity and also identified variables which serve as predictors of career maturity. His findings indicate that family structure (intactness), age, school standard, identity status (albeit partially) and school standard related significantly to career maturity. The variables most effective in predicting career maturity were found to be goal directedness and exposure to careers guidance. This study indicates the importance of career guidance to learners.

Benjamin (1995) conducted her study on black high school students. She assessed the effectiveness of career education programme on students' career maturity levels. Her results highlighted the need to enhance career maturity levels and career development through career

education programme intervention.

The following studies have been conducted on black students in tertiary education. Smith (1993) conducted a cross-cultural study of first year technikon students. He assessed career development of these students by focusing on three critical career constructs: life roles, career maturity and career decidedness. His findings were similar to those of Benjamin (1995) and Sedibe (1995) in that he identified contextual factors impacting on career development. The three contextual factors that he identified are: gender, socio economic status and culture. He identifies culture as a significant determinant of career behaviour of first year technikon students. Like Benjamin (1995), he recommends that career development deficits in black students need to be addressed.

Makofane (1993) investigated and observed attitudes of technical educators towards technical education. He found that there existed a general belief that people who are not able to perform well in class are those who must follow a technical education and work in workshops. He attributes this to parental guidance that these students receive. Parents in black communities do not encourage their children to attend technical schools nor to study technical subjects.

Mtolo (1996) focused her study on tertiary students' perceptions of career education which they received at secondary school level. The results of this study indicate that students received inadequate exposure to career guidance at school. The results of this study further suggest that friends and guidance educators are considered to be the most important helping agents in relation to career choice. Parents on the other hand are found to have had little influence on their children's career choices. It is also indicated in the results of this study that environmental influences affected the respondents' career knowledge. She recommends that career guidance should be enforced at school as this will help students make responsible career choices.

Spencer (1999) implemented a career education programme on a sample of black students enrolled for the Science Foundation Programme at the University of Natal. She found that informed and carefully considered career planning is lacking in black students from

disadvantaged backgrounds and that through career programmes designed with these students' needs in mind, appropriate career decisions can be made. The research findings also highlighted the value of discussion as an important adjunct to other careers education techniques for it encourages the individuals to take a more active role in their career development and career decision making.

Some researchers, for instance, Katranas (1999) and Ntshangase (1995) focused their research on the junior classes of secondary school. Katranas (1999) assessed the effectiveness of subject choice workbook in enhancing skills to make career decisions. The sample consisted of middle class, Tswana, standard seven learners. He found that the subject choice workbook possesses sufficient internal validity for use in standard seven classes. He further recommends that career development programmes using self-exploratory measuring instruments need to be validated. Ntshangase (1995) on the other hand investigated the perceptions of black secondary school pupils regarding the guidance services they have received in the twelve areas listed in official syllabi. His findings were that the standard seven pupils did not perceive the guidance educator as the preferred helping agent. This thus challenges the way in which guidance in schools is conducted.

In summary, although most research in South Africa during the apartheid regime has been on senior students with an emphasis on white samples, recent research has gradually focused on black samples as well. There is, however a tendency for the researchers to focus on urban and township areas and as a result very few rural Black samples have been used. Career research on the previously disadvantaged groups is in its infancy. This is indicated by Nel and De Bruin's (1991, in Benjamin, 1995) survey which indicated that of the research done between 1980 and 1990 only 7,07% targeted black high school students. This research also indicates a trend in current progressive research to equalize all the previously disadvantaged groups irrespective of whether they come from rural or urban areas. This to a large extent, neglects the unique contextual realities that characterize the rural Black population.

De Bruin overviewed the situation of career counselling research in South Africa in the decade stretching from 1980 to 1990. He indicates that most research centred around diagnostic aspects of career counselling and that the emphasis fell mostly on interests,

personality variables, and career maturity. He also found that most research on career counselling is produced by education faculties at universities. Consequently, the shortcomings of the research concerned the lack of career education programmes and means of assessing outcomes of career counselling in the education sector.

This chapter proposes that the developmental-contextual framework of career development (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986) can foster the understanding of career development under apartheid and the changes that may need to occur in a post apartheid era for career development to become a meaningful activity. The paucity of literature on career development of black rural learners as is indicated in this chapter, highlights the shortage of research that has been conducted in such areas. The next chapter describes the research design and methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study to be described in this dissertation explores an approach to career education utilizing focus group interactions. In this chapter, the aims of the research, the rationale for selecting a qualitative approach and the specific tools utilized are explored.

3.1 Summary of aims

The aims of this study (as described in section 1.4) were the following:

- To find out what black high school learners perceive as their needs in relation to their own career development.
- To find out how they perceive contextual factors such as family of origin, extra-familial network, economic conditions and job opportunities as an influence on their career development.
- To develop and evaluate the use of career-related focus groups as a means of addressing some of the learners' career development needs through career exploration.

3.2 Rationale for employing qualitative research design and methodology

In an attempt to understand and bring to the fore the contextual realities that influence the rural learners' career maturity, the researcher selected a research paradigm in which subjective reality is pre-eminent and taken seriously (Burgess, 1985). Stead and Watson (1998) argue for a narrative approach when dealing with African cultures. They suggest this method since African cultures value the oral tradition hence they argue that qualitative research may be used effectively in situations which include talking.

Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data. Qualitative researchers assume that human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). They recognize that issues are not simple but are intimately linked to political, social, historical and particularly personal contexts and therefore cannot be separated from the broader milieu (Dickson, 1995). While quantitative researchers tend to use a positivist approach and tend to treat the uniqueness of cases as potential sources of data contamination (Burgess, 1985), qualitative researchers emphasize the uniqueness of individual lives and experiences.

Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected are in the form of words rather than numbers. The written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation. Unlike their quantitative research counterparts, qualitative researchers are non-reductionists: "They do not reduce pages of narration and other data to numerical symbols" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.30). This study attempted to analyze data with all of their richness as closely as possible to the form in which they were recorded or transcribed. This was done because the "qualitative research demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.30).

Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively:

"They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study, rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.31). Further, unlike the quantitative approach, "interpretation is not confined to the identification of variables, the development of instruments before data gathering" (Dickson, 1995, p.106). This is reflected in the study to be described. The researcher attempted to construct a picture, to raise an argument, drawing conclusions that took shape as she collected, selected, categorized, compared, synthesized and interpreted data.

Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. Qualitative researchers are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives. This accounts for the

researcher's decision to enter into a dialogue with the subjects. The main reason was to gain participant perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Hence questions to capture participant perspectives were posed during the focus group discussions. The questions give clues as to how participants structure their world and are important in checking that the researcher's interpretations match those of the informants.

In the following paragraphs, the researcher discusses some of the criticisms that are put forward by quantitative researchers and qualitative researchers' responses.

The first criticism is that qualitative research is subjective. The argument is that researchers' opinions, prejudices and other biases influence data. Qualitative researchers' response to this criticism is that indeed there are biases and the researcher's duty is to limit these biases instead of trying to eliminate them. Biases are acknowledged and taken into account as a method of dealing with them. In this research the researcher tried to guard against biases by recording detailed field notes that reflect on her own subjectivity. As an additional check on bias, the researcher employed a educator observer with whom she engaged in discussion.

The second criticism is that qualitative findings are not generalizable. The response is that qualitative researchers do not think of generalizability in the conventional way. They are more interested in deriving universal statements of general social processes than statements of commonality between similar settings. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The question of generalizability was however not the main concern of the researcher.

The third criticism is that the presence of the researcher changes the behaviour of the people she is trying to study. Qualitative researchers admit that this happens and refer to it as researcher effect (Cohen & Manion, 1989). They argue that all research is confounded by this problem. To address this the researcher tried to interact with the subjects in a way that was transparent. The focus groups engaged in activities that were to an extent learner-driven and this allowed them to explore career topics without the researcher striving to impose her own perspectives. This approach is in line with qualitative researchers' argument that "if you treat people as research subjects, they will act as research subjects, which is usually different from

how they usually act" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.132), whilst engaging participants in an active co-operative process encouraged them to respond more naturally.

3.3 A quasi-experimental design: the non-equivalent comparison group design

The quasi-experimental design means that the experimental and the comparison groups have not been equated by randomisation, hence the use of non-equivalent as a term to describe it (Cohen & Manion, 1989).

The use of a quasi-experimental design was chosen in order to include another perspective. Cohen and Manion (1989) observe that "often in educational research, it is simply not possible for investigators to undertake true experiments" (p.198). The researcher, however attempted to make the experiment and the comparison group as equivalent as possible. This was done by matching, followed by random assignment to experiment and comparison groups. Matching was conducted using the following variables: age and subjects taken in matric.

3.4 Qualitative approaches used

A multi-method approach was used for qualitative data collection because using a single method and finding a pretty clear-cut result may delude the investigator into believing that they have found the right answer (Jick, 1979, in Robson, 1993). Furthermore, a multi-method approach enabled the researcher to "obtain greater density of information, more vividness of description and greater clarity of meaning" (Jick, 1979, cited in Strumpfer, 1990, p.224).

3.4.1 Questionnaires

Self-completed questionnaires were designed such that they had closed questions and open-ended questions. The former were used more than the latter because "open-ended questions are more difficult to code and analyze" (Robson, 1993, p.247). Questionnaires were used in order to gather information and to enable learners to do some form of evaluation. This necessitated using other methods to supplement data collected by using questionnaires. In the same vein, the group itself may influence the nature of the data it produces (Corey & Corey,

1992). This needs to be acknowledged in this study. Interacting in a group, particularly a group of adolescents (as was the sample in this study), who can easily be influenced, influences what each individual will contribute to the group.

In order to check for related trends in the results, all members of the experimental group completed a biographical questionnaire adapted from Benjamin (1995). This included details of gender, age, parents' background information and academic subjects taken. Some of the questions were open-ended in order to establish what they expected to gain from the programme. These to some extent determined the direction of the discussions (see Appendix 1).

An evaluation questionnaire was used to collect data of a qualitative nature. The evaluation questionnaire was designed such that it was short and it allowed for anonymity. This was to guard against boredom since it was completed on the last day of term and also to ensure that they respond as honestly as possible. The questionnaire was structured such that it had both closed and open questions. The former was intended to assess what they had gained from the sessions with particular reference to the sub-scales of the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ). The latter questions were open-ended and allowed for qualitative feedback from the subjects (see Appendix 5). Reflections by the research assistants on the focus group discussions were used in the qualitative analysis.

3.4.2 Observational methods

"As the actions and behaviour of people are a central aspect in virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to describe, analyze and interpret what we have observed" (Robson, 1993, p.190).

Both the researcher's and the research assistants' observations and reflections were used for qualitative data collection. This method is known for its directness, but the major issue concerns the extent to which an observer affects the situation under observation and consequently the result. This aspect was noted in this study. The researcher was concerned with facilitating focus group discussion particularly at the initial stages where the participants

seemed to need guidance with regards to material to be discussed.

3.4.3 Focus groups

Since it is important that participants benefit from a research endeavour, an approach which encouraged both learner exploration and which facilitated data generation was sought. The use of focus groups thus appeared to be most suitable.

Morgan, (1997) defines focus groups "as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (p.6). This is what the researcher felt was an appropriate technique in an exploratory study. In such a study it is the researcher's interest that provides the focus and the data comes from group interaction (Corey & Corey, 1992)

This method was further preferable because it allows the researcher to focus the group and consequently "produce concentrated amounts of data on precisely the topic of interest" (Morgan, 1997, p.13). In this manner data is gathered efficiently.

Efficiency in gathering data is also enhanced by the fact that focus groups can access a number of people within a short space of time. For this study focus groups were ideal because the subjects were matriculants and needed to use their time efficiently. Other research methods, for example, interviews would have consumed a lot of their valued time. Moreover it was easier to assemble the groups because they were in the same class and same school. Focus group sessions were run after school.

However the presence of the researcher as a facilitator in focus groups and the fact that the researcher's interests drive the focus groups can contaminate data. Morgan (1997) argues that there is a very real concern that the facilitator in the name of maintaining the interview focus, will influence the group interaction.

3.5 Quantitative methods used

3.5.1 The Career Development Questionnaire

Langley (1988) developed a South African-based career maturity instrument and called it the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ). The CDQ consists of five key components which are pivotal to career development. These components are: self-awareness, decision-making, career information, the integration of information of self and the world of work and career planning. Each of the five sub-scales are characterized by developmental tasks which facilitate informed career decision making (Benjamin, 1995). The 100-item version of the CDQ was used for this research study.

The CDQ was administered to several samples to ensure its reliability for university and high school students. A reliability coefficient of 0.90 was established for the total scores of the 100-item CDQ with Langley's research among first-year Zululand and Rand University students in 1989. The sub-scale reliability coefficients of 0.70 enhanced the CDQ's reliability as a diagnostic instrument which identifies problem areas blocking career development (Benjamin, 1995).

The CDQ was chosen because evidence has been accumulated to establish its validity as a measure of career maturity (Langley, 1992). It was designed for use with Grade 12 learners (and norms for black learners are available, although it is administered in English).

3.6 Research participants

Both the experimental group and the comparison group consisted of subjects from a black rural high school matric class near Pietermaritzburg. The experimental group were volunteers that were selected from a larger pool of respondents. The comparison group also came from this pool of respondents and was matched to the experimental group as closely as possible. Each group consisted of ten participants. The comparison group which was selected to match the experimental as closely as possible, was not involved in focus group discussions. It is however to be acknowledged that, although every effort was put at making these two groups as similar as possible, they remained dissimilar in some respects.

3.7 Ethical issues

In order to ensure that ethics are not compromised the researcher approached the Education department for consent (see Appendix 3). Authority for conducting the study was granted by the Superintendent of Education Management. Parents' consent of both the experimental group and the comparison group was sought (see Appendix 2). Parents' consent was also obtained by means of a letter that they had to sign. Both groups were guaranteed confidentiality and that the information gathered would be used exclusively for research purposes. The experimental group was also informed of the significance of their involvement in the development of career programmes in the future.

3.8 Procedural details

The research site was identified on the basis of its location. It is a school in a troubled area that is under the jurisdiction of chiefs. It is under-resourced and is located in a relatively poor area. Both the principal and the Superintendent of Educational Management under whose jurisdiction this school falls, were approached for permission to conduct research in the school.

A meeting was then held with the principal of the school in order to brief him in detail about the aims of the research and the administrative procedures were discussed. The procedural details were spelled out as follows:

- (1) Meetings with the learners who had volunteered to participate in the study, were scheduled to take place after school once a week over a five-week period.
- (2) The sessions would be an hour long, and would be divided in this manner:
 - (a) The administration of the CDQ.
 - (b) Focus group 1: Building rapport with the learners through gathering important career information by asking them what their expectations from the research were.

- (c) Focus group 2: Engaging learners in career discussions with the aim of encouraging learners to conduct individual and group career research.
 - (d) Focus group 3: This session would be dedicated to an analysis of the learners' approach to career research, the emphasis being on factors that impact on career development.
 - (e) Focus group 4: This focus group session was for learners to reflect on their chosen careers and consider such things as the accessibility of the chosen careers and to match these against the job market.
 - (f) Focus group 5: This session was solely for the administration of the CDQ and providing learners with career information and bursary information. The CDQ was however, administered first because the researcher wished to discuss the career information in detail with each one of the participants.
- (3) A horseshoe seating arrangement was considered the best for encouraging discussion and for ensuring that everyone participated. The researcher, the research assistant and the two educators involved in the research took turns in facilitating the sessions.
- (a) The research assistant was employed in this study in order to co-facilitate the first and second focus group sessions. The research assistant had conducted a similar study albeit with black students at an affluent tertiary institution. Her experience, particularly with facilitation skills, was considered valuable in insuring a smooth flow of discussion in the focus group sessions.
 - (b) Two educators volunteered to be observers in the study. These educators, the participants' class educators, were approached for this role because one of the subtle aims of the study was to empower educators by imparting a number of skills, e.g., facilitation and research skills. It is hoped that they will replicate the study in their daily interaction with learners in order to enhance their career development.

- (4) The English version of the CDQ was administered to both the experimental and the comparison groups simultaneously. The CDQ was administered according to the instructions on the manual. The learners who experienced difficulties in understanding the meaning of certain words and/or phrases were given the explanations in English by the researcher. The test was administered in a classroom context.

The post-test was administered on the last day of term. The groups completed the CDQ in a satisfactory manner with no significant number of omissions, nor a significant number of multiple responses.

Since success of the programme depended on the attendance of the experimental group, the researcher tried to keep the rate of attendance high particularly because attendance was voluntary. This was done by firstly, arousing some interest in the volunteers by informing them of the importance of a relevant career programme. Secondly, they were informed that at the end of the last session they would be provided with career information. Career information was reserved for last to avoid contamination of the CDQ scores. Hence the CDQ was completed by both groups immediately after the career information was distributed. The learners' appetite for learning and discovering new things seemed to encourage their presence in most of the sessions. As a result only one member dropped out and the rest of the group attended all five sessions.

There were certain extraneous variables that were difficult to control in this study. For instance when one of the experimental group member's parent passed away, the whole group mourned and seemed to be adversely affected by this. The supportive atmosphere of the group led to the session being cut short to allow learners to attend the memorial service. The element of practice that is inherent in a pre-test post-test design would also not be controlled.

3.9 Conclusion

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from the experimental group and the rest of the data was from the reflections of the researcher and the research assistants. The chapter that follows describes the analysis of results both qualitatively and quantitatively.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The results of the research on focus groups as a means of investigating career thinking and exploration, in a sample of black rural learners, will be presented in this chapter. Section 4.1 focuses on the demographic details of the sample. Section 4.2 deals with the career needs that the learners highlight in the career focus group discussions. Also included in this section are the contextual factors that learners spoke of as impacting their career exploration and development. The next section, 4.3, gives a brief overview of each of the focus groups. Section 4.4 gives a descriptive summary of focus group process. The analysis of the focus group process is covered in section 4.5. Section 4.6 deals with the analysis of the focus group method. Section 4.7 outlines unexpected spin-offs from the project. Section 4.8 is a brief summary of the results of this chapter.

4.1 Demographic details

Language, age, gender and subject choice were considered as these represent elements that may influence the accuracy of the results (Dorrian, 1998).

4.1.1 Language

All participants were Zulu-speaking. Since Zulu is their first language, a number struggled with some items on the CDQ but these problematic items were explained, and when there was a need, a Zulu equivalent would be given.

4.1.2 Age

The participants' age varied from 17 to 23. The mean age is 20. Table 1 shows the distribution of age for the two groups.

Table 4.1: Participants

Age	Experimental	Comparison
17	3	1
18	1	2
19	2	2
20	2	1
21	2	1
22	0	2
23	0	1
Mean Age	20	20

Note: The above table includes all participants including drop-outs in both the experimental and the comparison groups.

In South Africa it is intended that learners should leave school at the age of 18 on average. This sample shows that many of the learners were over 18 with six aged 21 and over. This is as observed by Cloete (1981, in Benjamin, 1995), in contrast to international research which assumes that age correlates well with education level (in Benjamin, 1995).

4.1.3 Gender

Participants from both the experimental and the comparison groups were comparable in terms of gender. In each group, there were five females and five males.

4.2 Career needs

The following table gives a summary of the expectations that the learners had from a career programme. These were responses to the question: How would you like this programme to assist you? (see Appendix 1).

Table 4.2: Learners' expectations from career programme

Learner's Career Needs	Number of Responses
1. Career information	8
2. Financial advice/information	4
3. Orientation to tertiary education	1
4. Study methods/skills	2
5. To enable me to help others	2
6. Decision making	1

The results reveal that the learners need career information the most. It is not surprising that this was expressed as a need because this subscribes to the nature of the group. However this table of results also highlights their need for financial advice/information as pressing as well. The expressed needs for orientation to tertiary education and decision making also came as no surprise because these needs are related to careers. The one surprising response was "to enable me to help others".

4.3 Focus group discussion of career needs

4.3.1 Focus group 1

The aims of this session were to build rapport, to provide an outline of the study and to find out what the learners' expectations from the study are:

a) Career information

The focus group discussion 'evidence' of the learner's expectations or career needs was extracted from the transcripts of the focus group. It was decided that the number of sentences related to a particular identified topic would be counted. These are labelled as a number of utterances in the table below.

Table 4.3: Career topics - Focus group 1

Career	Number of utterances
Chartered Accountant	15
Pilot	5
Law	4
Not sure	4
Social work	1
Journalist	1

Note: In this and the following tables, the 'number of utterances' refers to the number of times each career was mentioned in the focus group discussions

These responses show that there was a lot of emphasis on the three professions: Chartered Accounting, Law and being a Pilot. These are professions where entry is limited and the qualifications needed are advanced. These careers require university training and degree qualifications.

While some learners enquired about the process of getting a qualification, others inquired about career options with regards to chosen subject packages. Others were more interested in career options *vis-a-vis* matric pass.

The following are some other examples of the nature of the learners' contributions:

"I wish to know how one becomes a Lawyer".

"I wish to know about social work and other careers one can do with a general subject package".

"I would like to know about careers one can pursue without a matric exemption".

This shows learners' concerns about career issues as well as their concern about school subjects and grades, and indicates that at this late stage, some learners were still at an early stage of career exploration.

4.3.1.1 Contextual factors

The learners expressed concerns about career issues as well as contextual factors that influence their career development. They mentioned different levels of contextual influences on career development: the immediate socio-economic context as well as the school context.

"I come from a very poor family and there is no way that my folk could cough out thousands that universities want ...".

"I hope that this project will help me find help financially ...".

"I just get concerned about the poor results that we get at the end of the year".

"I am more concerned about how to study in order to pass".

These comments highlight two pressing concerns which seemed to preoccupy learners: their perceptions of the cost of training and lack of access to finances, as well as their results at school.

4.3.2 Focus group 2

This session aimed to assess the learners' current understanding of the careers that they have chosen and to encourage individual and group career research.

(a) Career needs

The table below tabulates the types of careers mentioned in the second focus group in order of preference.

Table 4.4: Career topics - Focus group 2

Career	Number of Utterances
Law	10
Social Work	7
Prison Warder	7
Policeman	6
Journalist	6
Accounting	6
Driver	4
Fireman	2
Pilot	2

There was a significant shift in the number and types of careers mentioned in focus group 2 when compared to focus group 1. While careers mentioned in the first focus group were all in the professional field, careers mentioned in the second focus group were a combination of both professions and semi-professional/semi skilled careers. This would seem to indicate learners broadening their thoughts about career options.

Other career needs related issues varied from lack of career role models to a lack of relevant and adequate career information:

"No one seems to have information on pilots".

"I struggled finding people in the accounting field".

"There is nowhere to turn to".

"None of the people I consulted were of any help".

This indicates that the learners struggle to find people qualified in their chosen careers and as a result first hand career information is hard to come by.

The important role of educators was highlighted in the following diverse comments:

"I spoke to my history educator".

"Educators were very helpful".

"Our educators played an important role in our career research"

"Educators were very helpful, but the knowledge they have on my career is limited".

"Mine I think is the odd one out because I must confess that none of the people I consulted were of any help, that includes the educators".

"My educators told me that Accountants calculate the economy of the country".

Learners report varied experiences of 'educator helpfulness'. Some learners perceive educators as helpful and important sources of career information. Other learners acknowledge the educators' helpfulness, however they also raise a concern that they provide inadequate career information.

(b) Contextual factors

These ranged from responses from some learners indicating frustrations of having to choose a second choice career because of financial constraints, to learners reporting that in the absence of adult role models, they had consulted peers for career information. None of the learners reported getting career information from their families.

"I don't want to be a policeman - I still want to be a pilot ... I have no choice - I cannot afford the fees".

"I went to a police friend who explained how one becomes a policeman".

"I would like to be a driver and so I consulted a friend who is a taxi driver".

4.3.3 Focus group 3

This focus group aimed to find out how learners go about their career research, that is who and what they consult for career information.

(a) Careers that were mentioned during this group are tabulated below.

Table 4.5: Career topics - Focus group 3

Career	Number of utterances
Prison Warder	4
Lawyer	4
Social Work	3
Policeman	3

There is a significant shift from discussing careers where access is limited to a discussion that includes careers where more people may be accommodated. It must be noted that all four of the above careers relate to employment in the formal, government sector.

The following reasons were cited as having influenced/impacted on the learners' career research.

- Accessing people in their chosen career fields was reported as a struggle:

"I tried to phone Durban Westville, but the local public phone was not in order".

"I also struggled getting the social workers. They were either out of the office or were not available at all".

"I also could not get anyone".

- Learners reported resorting to their educators for career information when they fail to access professional people in their chosen fields.

"I then decided to speak to one of my educators".

"I also, like Queen, ended up asking one of the educators".

"I spoke to my history educator".

- Educators were reported as having limited career knowledge:

"My educator said the difference between an Advocate and a Lawyer is that the Advocate has superior knowledge to that of a Lawyer. He said he was not sure how a magistrate compares to the two".

- (b) The following responses reflected difficulties that the learners experienced as a result of their socio-economic backgrounds as they conducted career research.

"Most of us come from impoverished backgrounds ... we are so poor that a simple thing like phoning we cannot afford at times".

"Some of us come from poverty-stricken homes, where phoning can be viewed as a luxury when there is bread to think about".

"I didn't have cash to phone".

"Our parents just cannot afford".

Their socioeconomic conditions thus influenced their career research, in particular the accessibility of career informants. Educators and peers are reported as easy to access for career information.

"I spoke to my friend because he is easy to access".

Families were reported as not worth consulting for career information because they are viewed as lacking in career information and non-supportive:

"Our parents don't know a thing ... I mean really ... it's so frustrating".

Instead big families are reported as aggravating the lack of resources:

"We are many at home ... come to think of it there are two sets of twins at home and every one of us is at school".

4.3.4 Focus group 4

This focus group aimed to shift the focus group discussions to include a session on entrepreneurship.

- (a) Careers that were mentioned during this group are tabulated below.

Table 4.6: Career topics - Focus group 4

Career	Number of Utterances
Gardener	4
Street Vendor	3

After reflecting on the various careers that the learners had discussed in the preceding focus groups the researcher, in consultation with the research assistant, decided to shift the focus group discussions to include a session on entrepreneurship. This was in line with one of the research aims which is to address some of the learners' career

development needs through career exploration. After the preceding focus group discussions it transpired that the learners were focusing mainly on professions and work in the formal sector, particularly government, and did not look at self employment as an option. Due to lack of insight on the availability of other non professional careers, it was decided that the fourth focus group would be dedicated to exploration of entrepreneurial skills.

These are some of the responses that the learners came up with after having been given homework to think about any business-related skills that they may have.

Learners report a lack of understanding of what entrepreneurial skills are:

"I do not know if that (working in the streets, doing odd jobs) constitutes business skills".

"When I think of business skills I think of something very sophisticated".

"Can you really regard my sewing skills as business skills?".

"I work as a gardener over weekends, and I have never considered that as a business skill".

Contextual factors, particularly socioeconomic factors are cited as having coerced them into acquiring business skills:

"It is circumstances that are forcing me to consider that (finding work immediately after matric) as an option".

"Poverty has sent us out on the streets to look for work in the; process we have acquired a lot of experience doing odd jobs".

Family seems to play a role in determining which skills the learners are going to be exposed to and acquire.

The learners cite their economic needs as primary factors in their search for work:

"Work for me is anything that is going to give me an income".

"Getting paid means that I am not going to starve".

"Even if it (working) means selling fruit and vegetables, I will go for it instead of folding my arms and doing nothing to help myself".

Thus, learners express a determination to find ways of earning an income.

Learners also cite socioeconomic factors as the main reason for working after matric which in turn prevents them from studying further.

"Most of our parents are very poor and they cannot afford to pay our basic needs yet we want them to pay thousands of rands which they obviously cannot afford".

"The family will decide because they will be in a better position to say whether they can afford or not".

"We may not have enough money to pay for the fees".

An element of culture influencing decisions that families make with regards to gender appropriate roles came through. Gender is reported as an important factor in influencing the type of skills that one acquires. While girls reported being persuaded to stay at home, boys reported having first-hand experience of getting a job and of working at least part time. Two of the girls said:

"My father always says there is plenty of work at home, why should I need to work somewhere else. My mother has never worked".

"I am not allowed to find work outside my home".

[My parents] "... are so keen to have my younger brother at tech next year, it's like they have forgotten all about me".

4.3.5 Focus group 5

The last focus group was dedicated to filling in of the CDQ and the distribution of career information. Learners were given career information, bursary information, and were counselled on the various career opportunities available to them. The results of the CDQ are analyzed quantitatively in the section Quantitative Programme Evaluation described below (Section 4.6.1).

4.4 Descriptive summary of focus group process

This section gives a descriptive summary of focus group process with regards to changes in career exploration and changes in group participation.

4.4.1 Changes in career exploration

Figure 4.1 illustrates the learners' bias in focus group 1 towards professional careers that require high qualifications.

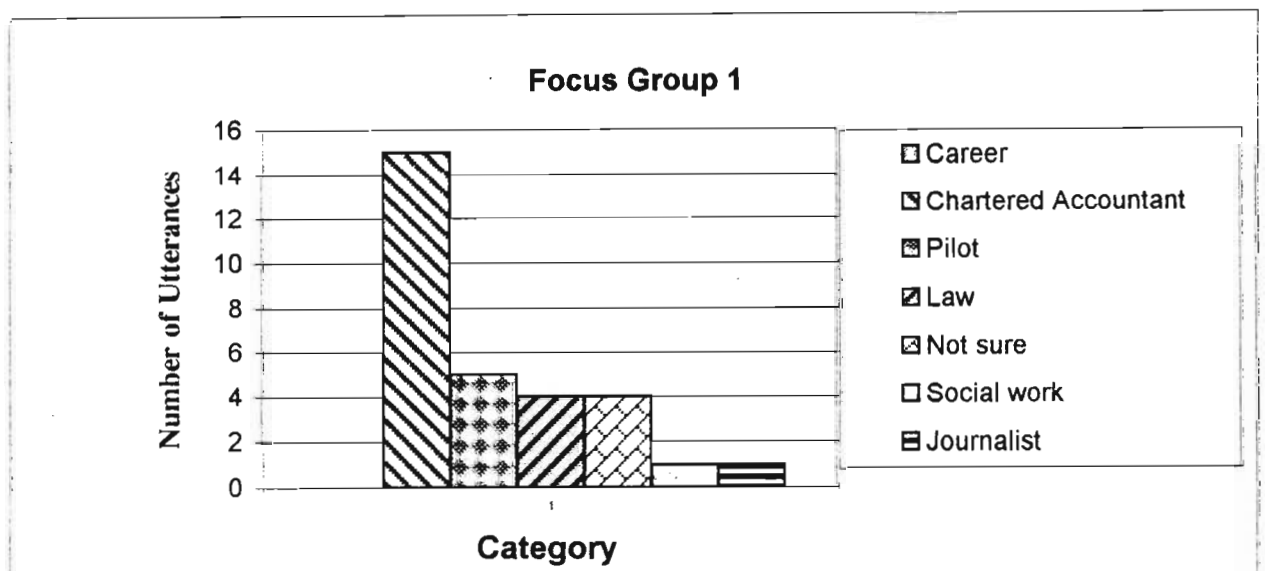


Figure 4.1: Focus group 1

Figure 4.2 illustrates a shift in focus group 2 from careers that require high qualifications to the inclusion of careers that are relatively accessible because they do not require high qualifications.

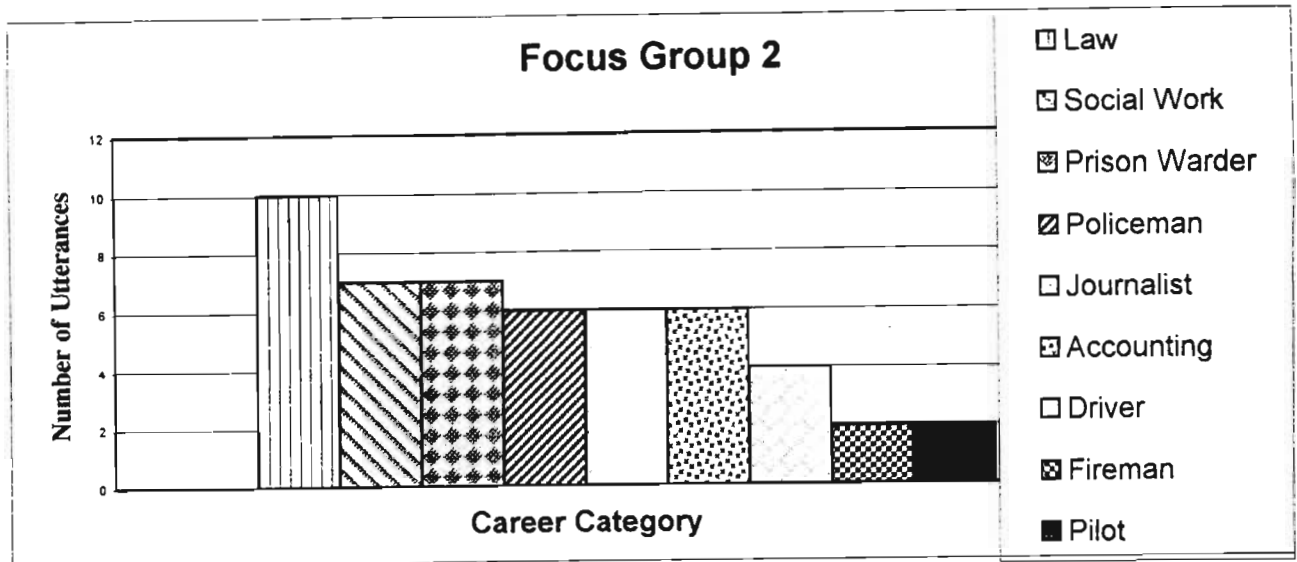


Figure 4.2: Focus group 2

Figure 4.3 shows a decline during focus group 3 in the number of utterances that relate to careers that are not easily accessible to those that can be easily accessed without high qualifications.

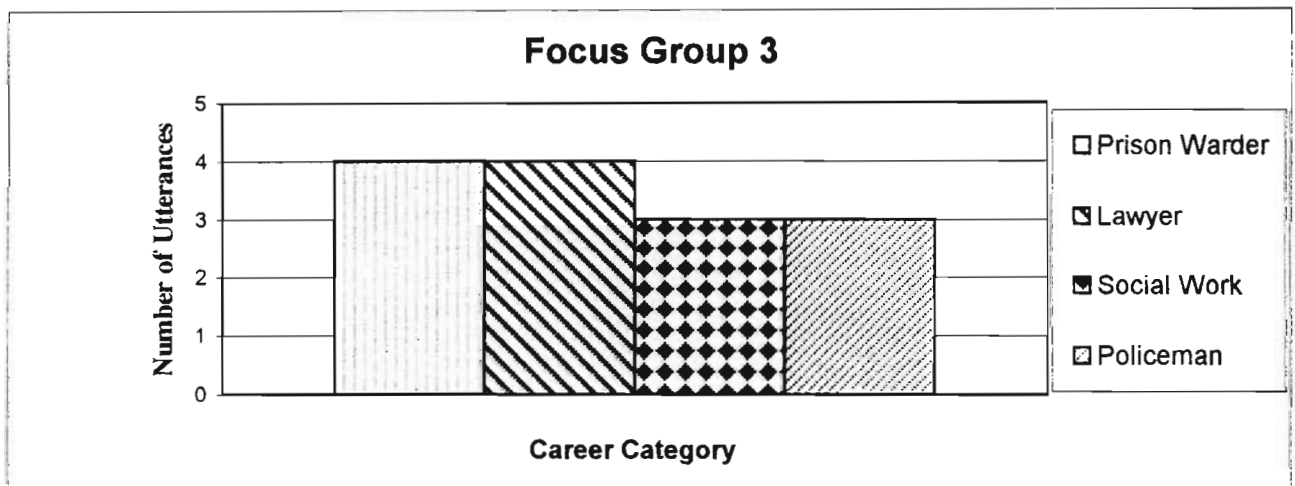


Figure 4.3: Focus group 3

Figure 4.4 shows how the learners include careers in the informal sector which may not need any qualifications at all in focus group 4.

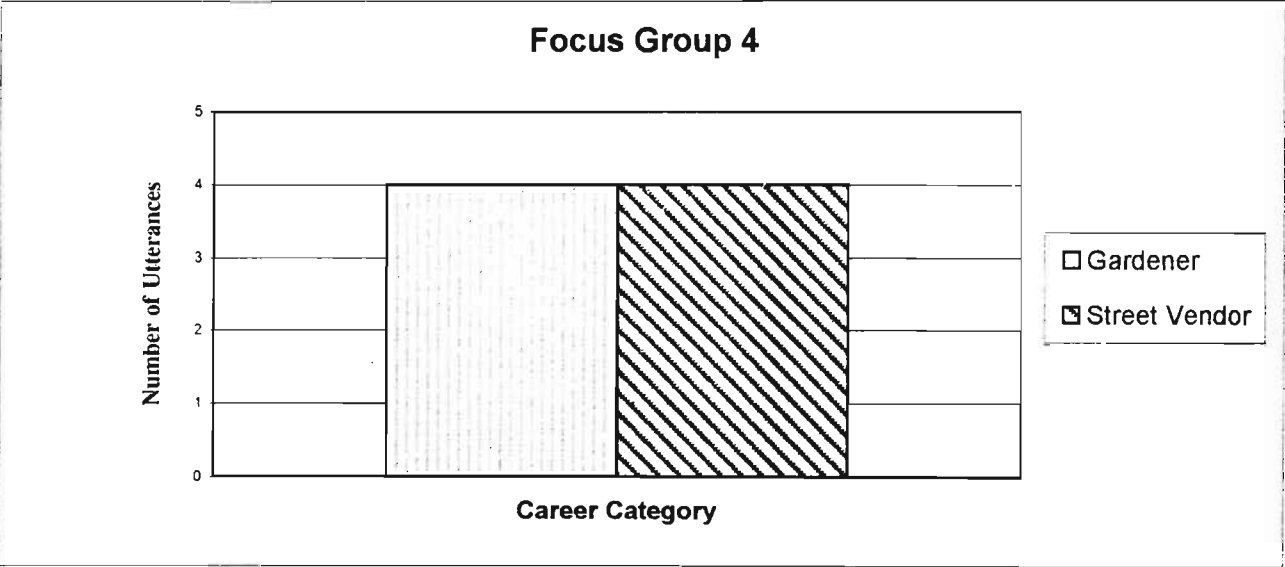


Figure 4.4: Focus group 4

The four graphs above show that in the focus group discussions there was a significant shift of emphasis from careers that require high qualifications and are as a result not easily accessible, to careers which can be more easily accessed. The learners evidenced a lack of insight on the availability of non professional careers but in the latter sessions there was a shift towards lower-level careers in the informal sector, particularly self employment.

4.4.2 Changes in facilitator’s style

The use of direct or open-ended questions by the facilitators had an impact on the participation of the learners. In the first group meeting more direct than indirect than open-ended questions were used, and the number of responses from the group was limited as shown in the graph below. The use of open-ended questions encouraged participation in later groups as illustrated in Figure 4.5 below.

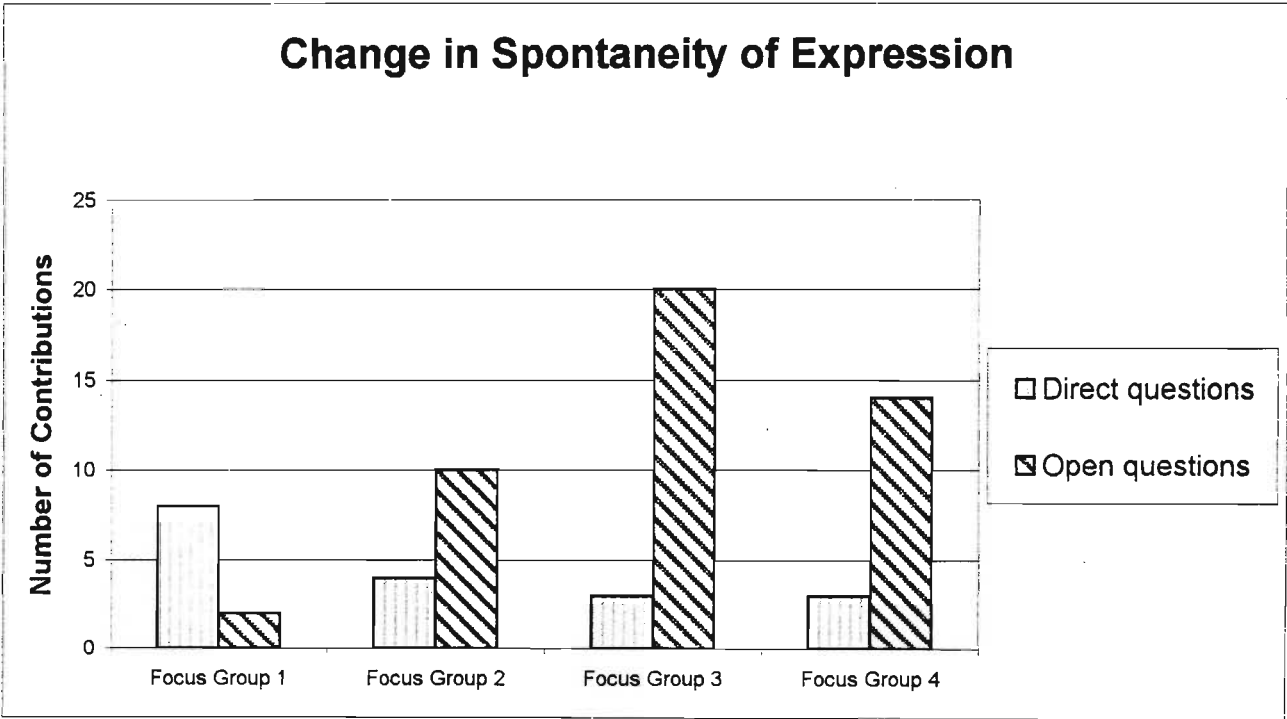


Figure 4.5: Changes seen after facilitators moved from using direct to open-ended questions

The group seemed very uneasy to start off with; girls sat on one side and the boys on the other side. Although they responded well to probes by the facilitators, they were initially neither spontaneous nor interactive with each other. They were however, put at ease after the throw-the-ball ice-breaker and there was a considerable shift to spontaneity in expression after rapport was built.

The learners were expecting handouts, guidance and advice from the research study. The researcher found it difficult to shift from this desire to provide information, advice and material towards a facilitative role where the learners are encouraged to take the leading role. As a result it became important to provide some direction initially and to facilitate spontaneity gradually.

In most cases the learners' spontaneity in group discussions increased considerably over the time of the four focus groups. This was most noticeable when the facilitator posed open-ended questions without restricting the questions or the discussion to individuals. This gradual change is illustrated in Figure 4.5 above. This trend was particularly noticed after the facilitator had built rapport with the learners. This includes an informal incident where the facilitator agreed to a photo shoot at the end of the first session at the request of the learners.

4.5 Analysis of focus group process

4.5.1 Interactions with the facilitators

The learners and the facilitator had to shift from the traditional way of interacting within a school context: the facilitator assuming a traditional 'educator's role' of imparting knowledge and the 'pupils' assuming the role of receptors of knowledge. This was not an easy process because although the Outcomes-Based Education has been introduced at schools it is still not being implemented in higher grades. Consequently, the learners still perceive a educator as the person who knows everything, who is going to provide, and their role as to absorb what has been taught. This manifested itself in the earlier discussions. The learners were remarkably quiet and some, particularly the girls were shy and only participated when asked to. The facilitator's role of drawing them in became important because it looked like they were not going to partake in the discussions unless singled out and asked to comment. The

facilitators had to be sensitive to the culture of learners being silent in school and find ways of encouraging them to participate without learners feeling coerced.

Starting at this point with the learners was potentially problematic because, the researcher was set to facilitate their career exploration instead of giving them hand-outs which is what the learners were hoping to get. Facilitating proved a challenging skill to put into practice considering that the researcher had a strong urge to provide what they expected. This was overcome first by agreeing to provide career information at the final session and by grading the facilitating process until the learners felt comfortable with contributing to the process.

Although the discussion did not proceed easily to start off with, the learners soon learnt that by contributing to the discussions they in fact could influence the discussion to suit their needs. There were also other factors that seemed to affect the learners' participation in the group discussions. One of these was the presence of a white research assistant in the group discussions. Some of the learners reported feeling inhibited; they felt that there were some issues that they could not discuss in her presence. These learners were freer to discuss particularly their socioeconomic status when the white person was not there.

4.5.2 Interactions with peers

The learners' interaction skills with each other were inhibited at the beginning. When issues were raised which needed to be debated or which needed other learners' input, there seemed not to be a natural flow of conversation. The learners presented their ideas to the facilitator and seemed to be interested in what she had to say in response to what they had said, they seemed to be caught up in the idea discussed above that the educator has all the answers. The facilitator's role was to make them realize the importance of working and exploring together as a team. This was done by encouraging them to work as a team on their career research. When they reported back at the third session, it was as a team and then gradually their interaction skills were enhanced.

The boys dominated most of the first session and this can be explained by their cultural backgrounds which regard a woman who dominates a conversation as bad-mannered especially when there are men around. Without necessarily undermining their cultural

heritage, the learners were treated the same in every respect in the group discussions. This was done in order to encourage the girls to participate fully in the activities. Segregation of sexes also encouraged male dominance. Boys sat on the one side of the 'horseshoe' and girls sat on the other side, and thus there was limited interaction.

To encourage full participation the learners were grouped together for their career research projects and in presenting their findings they sat as groups that had worked together, thus interaction was further enhanced and gender segregation was discouraged. This resulted in the learners beginning to challenge each other's ideas. For example when one of the learners said she wanted to be a journalist, some of the learners challenged her and said she was too shy to be a journalist and they further suggested that she investigate other careers. This was a good indication that the learners were shifting from their set ideas that the educator is there to provide information to sharing information, challenging each others' ideas and supporting each other irrespective of gender. This indicated a shift towards a more learner-centred approach.

4.6 Evaluation of the focus group method

One of the aims of this research was to evaluate the use of career-related focus groups as a means of addressing some of the black rural learners' career development needs through career exploration. The results rely on descriptive statistics and are tabled in the following table. The quantitative results are discussed both in terms of the total and then the sub scale scores for career maturity as measured by the CDQ. The qualitative results are discussed in terms of the learners', the educators' and the researcher's evaluation of the career-related focus groups.

4.6.1 Quantitative programme evaluation

The pre- and post-test means for the total scale and the sub scales of the CDQ for the experimental and the comparison groups can be found in tables below. A major limitation of attempting statistical analysis relates to the small group size in both experimental and comparison groups.

Table 4.7: The pre- and post-test means for the total scale

Total maturity scores	pre-CDQ means	post-CDQ means
Experimental	52.63	69.00
Comparison	55.29	53.14

According to the CDQ manual, the norm for black high school learners for the total CDQ score is 62.90 (with a standard deviation (SD) of 13.03). This shows that before the focus groups, both the experimental and comparison groups scored below the mean, with the average score approaching one SD below the mean.

An examination of Table 4.7 suggests that differences occurred between the means of the pre- and post-test total and sub-scale scores for both groups. For example, while the total mean score of the experimental group increased from 52.63 (pre-test mean score) to a post-test mean score of 69.00, the comparison group's total mean score decreased from the pre-test score of 55.29 to a post-test score of 53.14.

A two way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) test with group as a between factor and test time as a within (repeated measures) factor was run to assess whether the differences noted between the pre-post test total career maturity scores were significant for the experimental and the comparison group.

The ANOVA yielded no significant difference for the group factor ($p > 0,1$) or the time (pre-test vs post-test) factor ($p > 0.1$), suggesting that both groups scored at similar levels and the pre- and post-test responses were equivalent overall. However, the interaction of these factors approached statistical significance ($F_{1;13} \sim 4,21$; $p < 0,07$). This would suggest a slight trend for the experimental group to have scored higher on the post-test, but this suggestion needs to be viewed cautiously as the difference did not reach statistical significance.

4.6.1.1 Profile of career maturity sub-scales

The mean scores for each group on each sub-scale at each test time may be seen in Tables 4.6-4.11 below and are represented graphically in the corresponding figures below:

Table 4.6: Self-information means (SI)

SI	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Experimental	11.6	13.6
Comparison	12.6	11.9

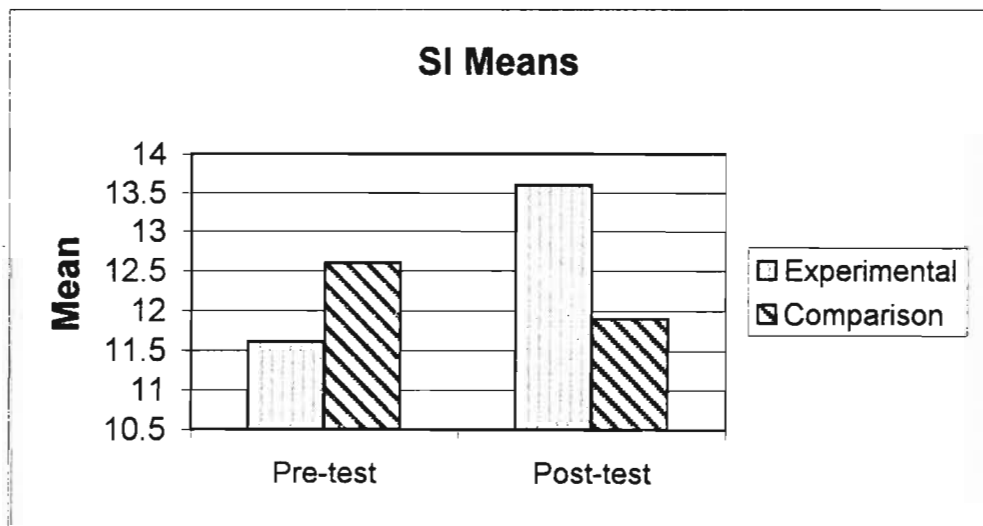
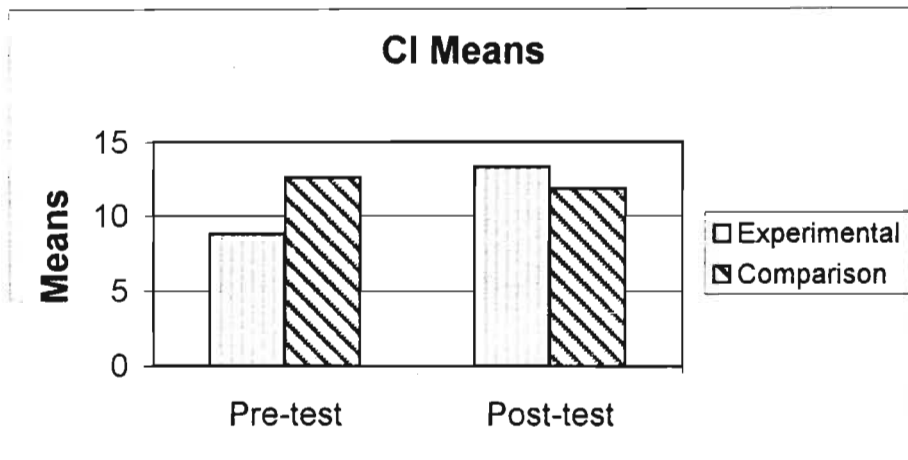


Figure 4.6: Graph showing self-information means (SI)

According to the CDQ manual, the norm for black high school learners for the self information sub-scale is 14.02 (with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.56). This illustrates that before the focus group intervention, both the experimental and the comparison groups scored below the mean, with the average score approaching two SD below the mean.

Table 4.9: Career information means (CI)

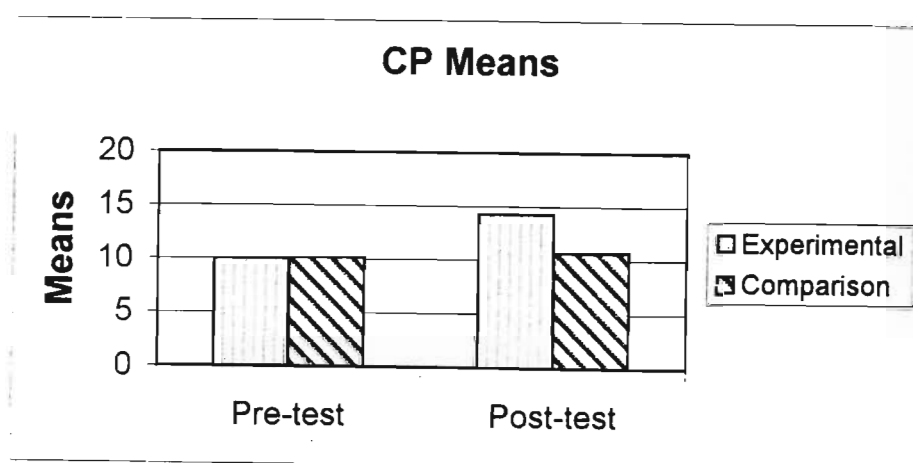
CI	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Experimental	8.8	13.3
Comparison	8.4	9.3

**Figure 4.7: Graph showing career information means (CI)**

The norm score mean for black high school learners for the career information subscale is according to the CDQ manual 14.40 (with standard deviation (SD) of 2.86). This shows that both the experimental and the comparison groups scored below the mean before the focus groups.

Table 4.10: Career planning means (CP)

CP	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Experimental	10	14.3
Comparison	10.1	10.7

**Figure 4.8: Graph showing career planning means (CP)**

According to the CDQ manual, the career planning subscale norm score mean for black high school learners is 11.49 (with a SD of 3.00). The graph and table above illustrates that both the experimental and comparison groups scored below the mean before the focus groups and that the experimental group scored above the mean, after the focus group intervention.

Table 4.11: Decision-making means (DM)

DM	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Experimental	11	14.3
Comparison	12.7	10.9

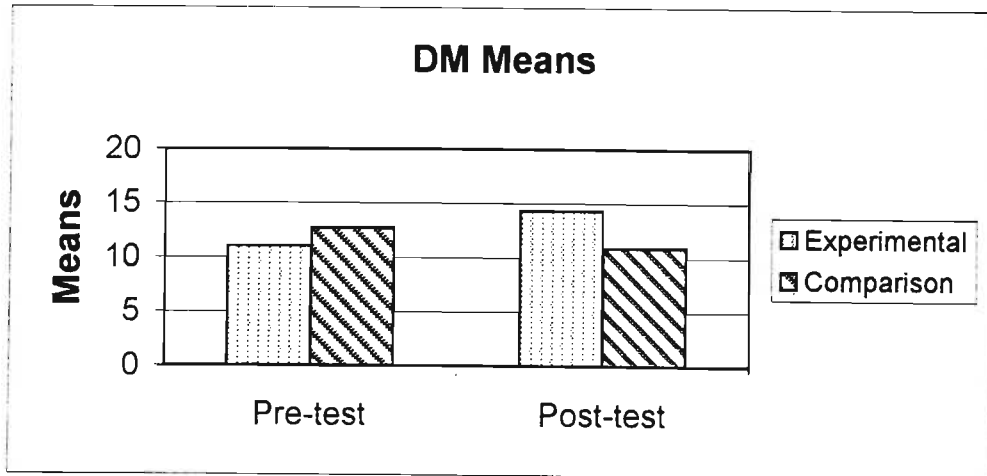


Figure 4.9: Graph showing decision-making means (DM)

The decision making subscale norm score mean for black high school learners is according to the CDQ manual, 13.53 (with a standard (SD) deviation of 2.95). This shows that before the focus groups both the experimental and the comparison groups scored below the mean.

Table 4.12: Integration of information of self and the world of work means (I)

I	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Experimental	11.3	13.6
Comparison	11.4	10.4

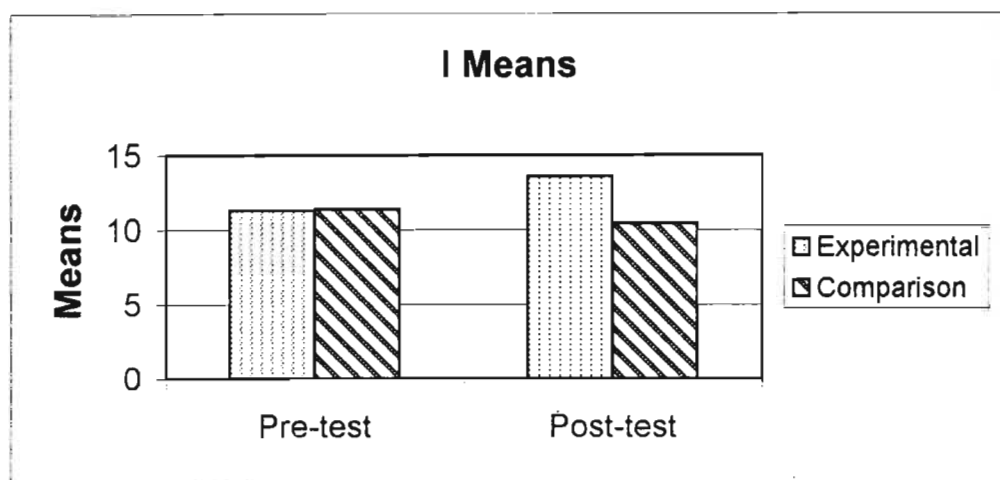


Figure 4.10: Graph showing integration of information of self and the world of work means (I)

According to the CDQ manual, the norm score mean for black high school learners for the integration of information of self and the world of work scale is 12.66 (with a standard deviation (SD) of 3.10). This once again shows that both the experimental and comparison groups scored below the mean before the focus group intervention.

On visual inspection, a noticeable increase was noticed in the career information subscale of the experimental group with pre-test mean score of 8.75 and a post-test mean score of 13.25, in contrast the comparison group's career information sub-scale increased from 8.43 to 9.29. Similar increases seem to be evident for the career planning, decision making and the integration of information of self and the world of work scales.

These scores were submitted to a three way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with group as the between factor and test time and subtest as within (repeated measures) factors. The ANOVA yielded no significant differences for the main effects of group ($p > 0.3$) or test time ($p > 0.3$), while the sub-test differences did reach significance ($F(4;52) = 3.347$; $p < 0.025$). There were no significant interactions to weaken this main effect. The primary

interaction group by subtest was not significant ($p > 0,3$), while those of group by test time ($F(1;13) = 3,567$; $p < 0,09$) and test time by subtest ($F(4; 52) = 2,458$; $p < 0,07$), were possibly approaching significance. While not significant, these results would add to the trend by locating differences on particular subtests. The secondary interaction of group by test time by sub test was not significant ($p > 0.1$).

Since the sub test factor reached significance, and given the trends indicated in the interactions, further simple main effects analyses and post hoc comparisons were carried out.

The Neuman-Keuls test indicated that Career Information was significantly lower than the other sub tests, especially at pre-test level. The change between pre and post test just reached significance ($F(1;13) = 4.65$; $p < 0,05$). Career Planning showed a similar, but non significant trend ($F(1;13) = 3.73$; $p < 0,08$).

The only subtest to yield significant differences in the form of a group by test interaction was decision making ($F(1;13) = 7.61$; $p < 0,02$). Inspection of the means in Table 4.12 would show the source of this to be the higher post-test score in the experimental group.

Taken together these results suggest that career-related focus groups to some extent, seemed to facilitate career maturity in learners as measured by the CDQ.

4.6.2 Qualitative programme evaluation

The above quantitative evaluation was followed by a qualitative evaluation offered by both the experimental group and the educators who were observers.

4.6.2.1 Participants' evaluation of the programme

Nine participants evaluated the focus group discussions. The learners were given an evaluation questionnaire (see Appendix 5). The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions and closed questions. In the former, the researcher wanted honest feedback, in their own words and in the latter the researcher aimed to elicit responses evaluating specific issues of the focus group components. Their responses are tabulated below as frequency counts.

Table 4.13: Qualitative evaluation of the career-related focus group components

Comments on focus group components	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure
1. I enjoyed being part of the experimental group	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2. I know what researching careers is	7 (78%)	0 (0%)	2 (22%)
3. I know who to consult for career information	8 (89%)	0 (0%)	1 (11%)
4. I have enough information on my proposed career	6 (67%)	2 (22%)	1 (11%)
5. I know what entrepreneurship is	2 (22%)	0 (0%)	7 (78%).

According to Table 4.13 100% learners report having enjoyed and gained from the programme. 67% report that the focus group components have enhanced their career information. Further, about 89% indicate that they have become aware of the information sources. It appears as though that about 78% of the learners have not benefitted from the focus group discussion on entrepreneurship. This may be related to the fact that only one session was devoted to this, and the term itself was not emphasized.

Learners’ recommendations for future career-related focus groups were solicited. All learners felt that focus groups were a worthwhile means of discussing careers. In addition, 78% recommended that time be increased by at least 30 minutes and 22% recommended that there be career related focus groups throughout the year. Thus, generally the learners seemed to benefit from the focus group discussions. More important than this though were the learners’ recommendations. These indicated that learners have other career needs that this intervention did not meet.

The presence of their educators through our discussions was an invaluable experience for the writer who gained a lot from their input as well. The recommendations that the learners put forward link very closely to what their educators observed and recommended. A brief summary of their qualitative evaluation of the career-related focus groups follows. Their recommendations will be tabulated thereafter.

4.6.2.2 Observer evaluation of programme

The two educator observers that were observing the focus group process reflected on the proceedings and reported the following.

- ***Rapport***

The educators report that rapport was built quite easily and helped sustain the group. This they attributed to the researcher's ability to connect easily with learners. They said that it is normally one of the areas that they struggle with because "*learners would abuse their generosity and want to play instead of learning*".

- ***Facilitation***

The educators were pleased to "*watch OBE in action*" as they put it. It is the

"... very demonstration that we have been looking for, everyone seems to be theorizing and no one seems to practice what they preach. At least with our encounter we have learnt that OBE is a possibility".

This has to be seen against the background of an education in transition and educators who still feel ill-equipped to deal with the proposed new curriculum.

- ***Content of the focus group discussions***

The educators report that they would have felt very uncomfortable with the absence of structure. "*It would be like I was jumping around like a headless chicken*" said one of the educators. Educators are very dependent on their knowledge and their traditional ways of teaching such that change is perceived with scepticism.

These are some of the comments that show that the intervention received positive evaluation from the educators as well, but like the learners they also have put forward recommendations that are very similar to those of the learners. Their recommendations are listed below:

"I felt that the learners could have done better with time. I recommend one hour sessions instead of your 45 minute ones".

"If only this could be carried on or at least started as early as possible in the year so that there is enough time for the learners to apply".

"I don't know how you feel, but the learners have exposed how lacking we are in career education ourselves. Maybe to run workshops with the educators can also help".

"We ought to demand that the government provide us with teaching posts for career guidance".

"I agree. Educators need to receive some training in career education".

These recommendations are very similar to those that were indicated by the learners. Further they highlight the need for researchers to focus their work not only on the needs of the learners, but in the needs of the educators as well.

4.7 Unexpected spin-offs from the project

The educators have reported that the participants in the experimental group have changed a lot since their involvement in the project. They report that the learners are well motivated, take initiative and are self-disciplined compared to the rest of the matric class. Although this is an unexpected spin-off of the project, the educators are very happy because they believe that this will have positive influence on the rest of the learners at the school.

It is possible that other factors played a role in the facilitation process that the researcher may not have been aware of. These include the researcher's facilitation skills, and personal style of dealing with the issues, particularly cultural issues that emerged. The learners may have been modelling some of these and hence the educators reported this group as 'different' from the rest of the learners at school. A further effect is that they have continued to speak English during school hours when previously, despite the fact that English is the approved language at school, the learners have resisted the use of English within the school premises. Secondly

they seem to be better motivated and are more positive in their outlook. Further they are reported as actively involved in class activities and they are using the time slot that we had used for research for study purposes. This the educators attribute to the researcher's approach of confidence in the learners and their ability to take charge of their lives and influence their destiny.

4.8 Summary of results

The focus group discussions and the qualitative evaluation of the focus group method by the students gave the researcher an indication of the learners' career needs which have not yet been met. Through the focus group method, a number of contextual factors that impact on their career development emerged. The results illustrate that career-related focus groups have the potential to serve as an effective tool to address some of the learners' career development needs through career exploration.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Chapter Five considers the results of this study in the light of the literature on career development and the aims of this research. The first section considers what the results illustrate in terms of Vondracek *et al.*'s (1986) career development framework. The second section deals with what results say of learners' career maturity as measured by the CDQ. The third section looks at what the results illustrate related to the literature on career education in South Africa.

5.1 Contextual factors that came out of the focus group discussions

The Vondracek *et al.* (1986) developmental-contextual framework was used as a guide to structure the focus group discussions around career development. This model highlights the contextual realities that impact on the learners' career development.

5.1.1 Microsystems

The microsystems seem to be the most predominant systems impacting on the learners' career development. This is evidenced by the number of learners who cite contextual factors as influential in their career development. These will be described further below.

This is also illustrated by the learners' efforts to redefine themselves and their chosen careers in light of their experiences and expectations. It further shows that their perspectives on their career development change over time.

5.1.1.1 The child's family of origin and cultural issues

The learners, their families and their communities seem to be intertwined. In every focus group there seemed to be a reference to gender inequalities and distinct cultural constraints, particularly for girls in as far as career development is concerned. Concerns expressed were that girls are still not treated as equals to boys. Girls reported incidents of not being allowed to further their education after matric because their parents believe that it is a waste of time and money since girls are destined for marriage, a change of surname and they leave their family of origin. The girls appear to be caught up between being complacent with women's roles in the rural community and assuming the urban woman's status of getting an education and working.

Most of these girls prefer a combination of both because they are unwilling to challenge social norms. There is a strong sense of belonging to a culture of respect where young people are expected to conform to folk ways. These girls therefore experience internal conflict because they have to come to terms with a range of roles that are not easy to reconcile. Although these girls seem not to want to challenge the boundaries of their lives, they exhibit coherence in their attitude towards wanting to shift perceptions of the traditional role of a black rural woman to accommodate further education and work outside the home.

Further, these girls are aware of the big discrepancy between what the world of work wants of them and their conceptualizations of how work should be. These girls acknowledge that it is difficult to have children and family life as well as be full time workers. They are aware that careers are still defined in the traditional way that favours men. Career commitment is inseparable from upward mobility and therefore women who want to raise their children and look after their families have little chance of enjoying the same privileges as men. Despite all this, these girls seem to want that freedom of choosing to be all these things.

A common feeling expressed by learners was that of shame about the education background of their parents. There is also an expression of pressure to get an education as it is viewed as the only way that they have at their disposal to improve their families' status quo. They are also very strongly committed to their extended families.

Spencer (1999) argues that if it were not for their poor backgrounds, lack of resources and skills training, these extended family members could provide a variety of role models in different careers. The lack of exposure to a variety of careers within their families has meant that they have to broaden their career knowledge by consulting more knowledgeable people. These people are mostly their educators and peers.

5.1.1.2 Child's extra familial network

Another contextual factor that also influences career development is peer influence. Because the parents generally have little education, and are therefore semi-skilled or unskilled workers, the learners seem to think that they can discover the world of work alone without the help of their parents. For them, parents epitomize poverty, helplessness and to a certain extent, defeat. As such the learners believe that there isn't much career advice that their parents can give and they find other people that can provide career information.

5.1.1.2.1 Peers

Peers are an alternative source of career information. Peers for them include people, not necessarily their age group, who are easily accessed for information and are perceived as knowledgeable. These people however seem to be biased towards careers in the public sector and they lack access to people employed in the private sector.

As a result of these factors, the information that the learners get through their peers may be distorted, unreliable and the learners may be misinformed. This has adverse consequences for their career development. The influence that their peers have on their career development supports the findings of Haffajee (1991), Ntshangase (1995) and Mtolo (1996) that peers, particularly older peers have a strong influence on students' selection of career.

The learners embrace the spirit of Ubuntu. This comes forth when they address each other as brothers and sisters. This manifests itself in the sharing of career material that they find. They also have study groups which they formed of their own accord. This prepares them well for when they leave school for further education or later when they start working because they will have acquired the necessary interpersonal skills to work with other people.

5.1.1.2.2 School

These learners are at a school that lacks resources. Career Guidance Counsellors are non-existent and the learners have to rely on their subject educators for career information. Despite the fact that these educators lack the necessary qualifications, they are perceived as knowledgeable and are therefore more influential in learners' career development than their parents. Studies that have been done on other population groups contrast with this perception. Skuy *et al.*, (1985); De Haas (1991) and Haffajee (1991) found that parents were more influential in the learners' career decision making than their guidance educators.

Mtolo (1996) argues that when parents are perceived as uneducated and therefore not knowledgeable about the various careers available, their children normally consult other people in the community particularly their peers for career guidance. In most cases the learners are more educated than their parents and therefore cannot seek advice from their parents. Hence the greater importance of educators in this context.

Further the school does not have other resources such a career library where the learner can get career information. None of the learners reported getting career information from career magazines or career publications. The only reading material that they have are newspapers that educators bring to school. The newspapers sometimes feature articles on various careers and the learners benefit from these.

5.1.1.2.3 Part-time work

The four learners who reported that they have part time jobs do not perceive these jobs as opportunities for them to develop skills that are essential in economic and social awareness. Thus, potentially valuable experience that can benefit them in future employment is not perceived as such.

Moreover opportunities for part time work are a rarity in the rural areas. The jobs that they get are often in the urban areas and these are mostly menial jobs such as gardening and hawking. Unlike their urban counterparts, these learners do not appreciate that these jobs provide them, albeit on a small scale with valuable skills. For instance, when they earn

money, they become economically aware.

Urban learners on the other hand have a wider spectrum of part time work to choose from. They can work at restaurants, supermarkets and retail business and as such acquire numerous skills that are not only valuable for future employment but are also marketable.

There is also a sense of learners discounting the kind of work that they do over weekends. Most learners are embarrassed by the work that they do because it reflects on their socio-economic background and their friends often laugh at them when they are employed as street vendors, gardeners, hawkers of fruit, vegetables and other merchandise.

5.1.1.3 Family of procreation-adult

Some learners, particularly girls, reported that they have their own children that they have to bring up. This, coupled with their poor socioeconomic background, pressurises them to start providing for their offspring. The influence of the socioeconomic background of these learners should be seen against the background of a parent body that is mostly unemployed and earning below the poverty line income. This results in their offspring feeling pressured to start earning an income so that they may help in the bringing up of their siblings. The part time jobs that some of these learners have over the weekends are for this purpose rather than for individual development.

5.1.2 Macrosystems

The outer circle of Vondracek *et al.* (1986) developmental-contextual framework of career development is the macrosystem. This outer circle reflects on the more remote and distant social and environment influences (Spencer, 1999).

This section considers how these remote social and environmental factors have influenced the career development of these learners.

5.1.2.1 Educational policy

The educational policy initiated by the new democratic government had as its broad aim to make education provision equal for all race groups. This has meant that schools that have been disadvantaged by the apartheid government policies will improve. Since change is a gradual process, policy has not fully translated into implementation particularly in the marginalised black rural schools.

These schools remain under resourced and the open education system has so far benefited the those that can afford to send their children to the more affluent schools. Most parents in this area have not considered this as an option because it is beyond their means. These learners therefore have not benefited much from the change in education policy.

5.1.2.2 Technological advances

Only one of these learners reported that he has attended computer literacy courses at the University of Natal as part of the university's matric tutoring project.

Some of the learners understand the importance of being computer literate because they have first hand experience of people being retrenched because the jobs they have been doing were to be computerised. They know that computer literacy gives them greater opportunities in work settings but they do not have access to computers or even electricity in some cases.

5.1.2.3 Job opportunities

These learners need to acquire skills in order to be able to compete in the job market.

Although they have a wide gap to close when they leave school, with the new labour policies such as Affirmative Action and the Equity Act, these learners may have a better chance in the job market because these policies are there to redress the inequalities of the past. However, learners need to be equipped with skills related to job-seeking, and to develop marketable work-related skills.

5.1.2.4 Institutional context

These learners are fully aware of the fact that they are attending school in one of the most deprived schools in the area. They acknowledge that the neighbouring schools are better resourced than theirs is. There seems to be a general acceptance that they can never compare to other race groups in terms of resources. The realisation that other race groups are better off than them is a disillusionment for some of these learners because they feel that they can never match others from different backgrounds.

Others believe that the black political leaders are an inspiration to them because despite their mostly deprived backgrounds they have managed to reach the top of their careers. This motivates them to believe that they also can do well irrespective of their disadvantaged education backgrounds.

5.1.2.5 Environmental conditions

The learners' environment generally lacks basic facilities such as: electricity and easily accessed water. In the absence of a community hall, the school is used for most of the community meetings and social gatherings.

The *status quo* is however changing with the introduction of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP provides services particularly to rural communities, where none existed during the apartheid era. This community is one of those that have been targeted for the construction of roads and building of reservoirs for storing water. This means that these learners may be living in better conditions in a few years time.

In the meantime, however the learners have to contend with the limiting environment. One learner put across their frustrations when he said: "*the more things change in this country the more they stay the same in our area*".

5.1.2.6 Labour laws

Recent labour legislation in the form of Affirmative Action and the Employment Equity Bill enables the previously disadvantaged race groups to advance in their chosen careers without facing unfair discrimination. This has had a ripple effect on education provision for blacks in particular. Black learners are now eligible for sponsorship programmes that were not available to them during the apartheid era. This enables them to move on to tertiary education with less financial difficulty than in the past.

The learners in this area however remain uninformed about these developments and the availability of such financial assistance. Even if they were more knowledgeable, they may not be eligible for such programmes because these programmes are not yet fully attuned to these learners' circumstances.

5.1.2.7 Sociocultural context

The learners have experienced both political and social turmoil. They have experienced the oppressive years of apartheid and have also experienced the social turmoil that resulted during the transition from the apartheid era to the democratic government. Some have lost family members, friends and relatives in the violence that characterised this political shift.

The apartheid era entrenched in their minds the belief that black people are inferior to whites and that whites are providers. In the focus group discussions, the prevalence of these inferiority and dependency feelings was evidenced by the learners by-passing the researcher and asking the research assistant, a white person, to provide them with career information, scholarships and bursaries.

This illustrates that the learners perceived the white researcher's role as superior to that of the black researcher. The former was seen as competent, knowledgeable and the latter was not viewed in the same light.

The tendency to be dependant further explains some of the resistance that was witnessed in the focus group discussions. The learners were expecting that they will be provided with career information not that they were to collect information themselves.

5.1.2.8 Economic conditions

The democratic government is introducing a number of programmes to curb the unemployment rates. The hardest hit by unemployment are those that are not skilled or semi skilled and have as a consequence been found redundant by their employers and have been retrenched. The parents of these learners are mostly semi skilled and others do not have skills at all. They are the most affected by the rate of unemployment and cannot avoid the vicious cycle of poverty.

These circumstances coupled with the prospects of poor matric results, has potentially set the learners up for the cycle of poverty. This has detrimental effects on the learners' motivation and self esteem and some of these learners have lost hope in ever breaking this cycle.

These learners are faced with a conglomeration of environmental factors that impact on their career development. The developmental-contextual model portrays this very well because "in this model, not only are the individual's characteristics salient but so are economic, cultural, educational, and sociopolitical factors" (Stead, 1996, p.270).

5.2 Career maturity as measured by the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ)

5.2.1 The enhancement of career maturity through focus group discussion of career related topics

5.2.1.1 Total career maturity scores

Increases approaching significance were observed for the experimental group. The post test results of the CDQ indicated that the change in the experimental group's total career maturity score approached significance. A number of reasons could explain this. Career maturity cannot be seen as an independent entity because it is a product of a conglomeration of factors.

It is influenced by the ever changing environment (Vondracek *et al.*, 1986). In this study the impact of these contextual factors was investigated and this may have impacted on their career maturity score.

Although change was observed in the experimental group after the post test, this may be due to the element of practice (Drew & Hardman, 1985) and possibly to bias towards what the subjects consider as favourable responses after going through special treatment.

5.2.1.2 Impact of short term intervention on the learners career maturity

Benjamin (1995) argues that

"... a short term classroom-based career education programme can enhance the career maturity levels of economically disadvantaged black high school students who have not had formal career guidance" (p.116).

These results, like Benjamin's indicate that career related focus groups can facilitate career development in black rural school learners. The focus groups seem to have allowed for the liberty of discussing issues that the learners were lacking in and this was sufficient to facilitate their career development.

5.2.2 The enhancement of components of career maturity through focus group discussion of career-related topics

Differences occurred between the mean scores of the pre and post test subscale scores for both the experimental and the comparison groups. Each subscale is a component of career development and as such the mean differences between the comparison and the experimental groups will now be discussed.

The decision making subscale showed a significant change between the pre and post test score. This indicates that the learners seem to have benefitted from the liberal approach used in the focus group discussions where the learners made decisions about what was discussed

in the groups. This freedom to choose may have been in total contrast to their traditional values which dictate that adults decide and children follow instructions (Hickson & White, 1989). The focus groups therefore enhanced the learners' decision making skills.

A significant change was recorded on the career information scale. This is encouraging particularly because this scale was significantly lower than the other sub scales at pre test level. This indicates that the learners' career information increased significantly and it also highlights the value of short term career education interventions in enhancing career development (Benjamin, 1995; Katranas, 1999; Spencer, 1999). The evaluation of the intervention indicated that the learners had become aware of career information sources and that they knew a lot about careers that are available to them.

Like the career information scale, the career planning scale was also lower than the other subscales at pre-test level. Although the change between pre- and post-test did not reach significance, the increased score at post-test level illustrates that a degree of career development has occurred. The learners have acquired the ability to plan and follow the necessary steps towards making an informed career decision.

The results as measured by the CDQ illustrate that career development may have been facilitated. These findings are similar to those of van der Merwe (1993) who showed that career guidance appeared to influence scores on the CDQ positively.

Programme intervention in black schools is viewed positively in literature on career education research in South African black secondary schools. The next section looks at how these results correspond with the literature on career education research in South African black schools.

5.3 Career education research with black participants

Career education research on the previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa is in its infancy particularly in black under-resourced schools. De Bruin's (1991) overview of the career counselling research in South Africa in the decade stretching from 1980 to 1990,

indicates that most research studies conducted centred around diagnostic aspects of career counselling and that the emphasis fell mostly on interests, personality variables and career maturity.

The few studies that have been done on black samples have indicated that black learners' career development is dependant on a variety of contextual factors for instance gender, socio-economic status and culture (Seroka, 1992; Sedibe, 1995; Benjamin, 1995). Research on career education programmes and their effectiveness in black schools has been minimal.

Some of the studies on black learners have gone beyond diagnosing the problem towards addressing career development deficits in black learners. The studies that have been done have as their focus ways to enhance career development in black learners who have had no formal and structured career guidance. The researchers who have been involved in this venture have highlighted the need to enhance career maturity levels and career development through career intervention programme intervention (Benjamin, 1995; Spencer, 1999).

Spencer (1999) investigated a career education programme which dealt primarily with the issue of contextualism. Spencer focused on the students' macro and micro contexts and the role that these play in shaping the students' careers. Her findings were very similar to the findings of this study. Spencer's (1999) work demonstrates that career information given in isolation is not sufficient. She argues that it needs to be located within the participants' context.

The results of this study also show that career related focus groups can also facilitate career development of black learners from under-resourced schools. The findings demonstrate that a myriad of contextual factors impact on the learners' career development and that through focus group discussion these factors can be identified and addressed.

Research of this kind in black schools raises issues of inequalities that still exist in black education and how these impact on the learners career development. Giving career information without acknowledging these contextual factors tends to narrow the intervention into an individualistic approach which is not ideal when one is working cross culturally.

5.4 Limitations of this study

The limitations of this study will be discussed in terms of the CDQ and the career related focus group discussions that the researcher had with the participants over five sessions.

The CDQ was used because it was standardised on a sample that is representative of the South African population. Despite this however, the language used in this measure was found difficult by some learners such that the researcher had to explain certain words in order to facilitate the learners' understanding. This might have been caused by the assumption that the group of students that the CDQ was standardised on was truly representative of the South African population when in fact it may have overlooked the fact that black learners from under-resourced areas may have not been included in the sample.

The explanation of some terminology may have contaminated the results because the explanations given may have been the researcher's interpretation and this may have resulted in the learners giving a biased answer. Given the multicultural nature of the South African society and the fact that some population groups are disadvantaged by the use of a language other than their own, the instruments that researchers use need to be considerate of this and where possible the instruments used should be in a language that they are most comfortable with. In the case of the participants in this research, some English terminology was translated into Zulu.

In facilitating the focus group discussions, an "us-them" dichotomy seemed to exist between the researcher, the research assistant and the learners. This may have prompted the learners to think of the researchers' role as providers and theirs as recipients. Perhaps a sitting strategy could have been used for instance the researcher could have separated herself from the research assistant and sat amongst the learners. Ice breaking exercises could also have helped in diffusing this dichotomy.

Time limitations also prevented the researcher from addressing sufficiently some of the issues that came out of the focus group discussions. The learners were not given enough time to explore bursary opportunities and the possibilities of organizing work experience opportunities

for them.

One of the more subtle aims of this research was to empower the educators who were observing the focus group discussions with the necessary skills to run career-related focus groups. If there was enough time, these educators should have been given an opportunity to facilitate career-related focus groups to enable them to continue with such groups in future. This could have allowed the researcher to ascertain whether they could cope with the presentations and the content of the presentations on their own. Educators may have observed as one of them said "OBE in action", but because they themselves have little career knowledge, they may not be able to conduct these sessions competently.

This then raises questions about the sustainability of the project at the school. There is the concern that educators tend not to have much drive, expertise or even the time to initiate and implement education programmes unless they have full support of management of the school. This necessitates the establishment of a good understanding between the educators and the people in authority.

Although this is undeniably one of the issues that the researcher has had to take into consideration to ensure that there is ongoing cooperation and understanding, the educators were constantly there to observe and to contribute in the running of the group. It is hoped that through their involvement with the process they have learnt a lot. It is believed that the educators have been empowered to carry on with the career focus groups. It is further hoped that this will enable them to initiate and to lead a process that has for years been non-existent at the school. This is in line with today's policies of community development and capacity building. People have to be empowered at grassroots level to run and to own their projects.

An issue which was of grave concern to the researcher and her supervisor was that the comparison group should have had access to a similar intervention after the research had been completed. Ethically it would have been advisable to offer the comparison group the same treatment as was offered to the experimental group but because of pragmatic constraints, for instance the unavailability of the learners towards exams meant that the researcher could not give them the same treatment. This is a serious limitation to the present study.

The findings have however shed some light on the career development of black learners from under-resourced schools in this country and this may help future researchers in the career development field to prioritize in this diverse and unequal society.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The aftermath of the Soweto uprisings of 1976 have resulted in a tendency to see black education as equivalent to township education. Much of the research on career development of black secondary school learners has been focused on black learners in relatively affluent black areas, particularly townships (Benjamin, 1995; Ntshangase, 1995; Mtolo, 1996; Spencer, 1999).

This bias has resulted in paucity of information regarding the contextual realities of the learners in under-resourced areas. The lack of such information limits our understanding of the impact of these contextual factors on the career development of these learners. Given the history of white domination and the divide and rule policies of the apartheid government, the inequalities that existed as a result thereof, and the fact that in the post apartheid era rebuilding the nation is one of the objectives of the democratic government, a broad spectrum of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds should be considered in order to understand the impact of such variables on the career development of black adolescents. There is a distinct difference between the ex-DET and the ex-DEC schools, but this has been ignored and most researchers have opted to conduct research in ex-DET schools.

This research demonstrates the utility of the developmental-contextual model of Vondracek (1986) in a developing country. There is a complexity of factors that impact on the career development of the learners which this model highlights. This model is also flexible and provides potential topics for group and individual exploration. As is shown above the career related focus groups had a positive impact on the career development of the black learners from an under-resourced school. As such the incorporation of such an intervention into the schools that do not have formal career guidance programmes may help compensate for the lack thereof.

The focus groups allow for flexibility of what gets done in them. As is demonstrated above the focus group methodology also produced unintended side effects for instance the learners were empowered and gained in confidence. Whilst at the initial sessions they were shy and passive, they later were actively driving the discussions. The after effects of these discussions were that the learners continued to role model the researcher in that they continued to speak English even after the research had been completed. The educators seemed to have gained from the focus group methodology as well. They report that they also had been granted an opportunity to watch the Outcomes-Based Education in action and were keen to start running career related focus groups.

The difficulties that the researcher, a trainee psychologist experienced in facilitating the focus groups highlight that educators will need a lot of support in order for them to be able to do the same. Capacity building in educators and to some extent, retraining will be necessary to help the educators handle career-related education.

The research findings also highlight the importance of research linked to intervention that is action-related and not merely research for the sake of research. The gap that exists in black education cannot be bridged solely by government policies intervention.

Programmes no matter how small may have a great impact in the under developed and under resourced communities.

6.1 Recommendations for further research

In the light of the above discussion, there are several recommendations that can be made. The use of focus groups on a much longer term could be explored. This could enable the researcher to deal with other issues that may arise in focus group discussions. The present research could not address financial need issues nor was there enough time to allow for career information exploration as the need arose.

More extensive research linked with intervention, particularly in under-resourced areas, will ensure that the education gap is bridged and that certain skills are left in these communities in order to allow for the sustainability of the intervention. Furthermore such

interventions as the one researched in this study should be incorporated into the formal educational system to compensate for the lack of career-related education which prevails in black rural schools to this day.

Since this research has demonstrated that a positive impact can be achieved within a short space of time by using career-related focus groups, there is the potential for educators to facilitate this in guidance periods and could use focus groups to meet the unique difficulties that their learners experience. Further research is however necessary: how could educators be enabled to use such methodology and change from traditional methods?

The generalizability of the present findings could be extended by undertaking research on a larger scale with a sample that is more representative of the under-resourced population of this country. The sample that was used for this study comes from rural area that is very close to the city or the urban areas. This may impose limitations in terms of matched samples for the purposes of comparative analysis in terms of the learners' geographical location. The findings of this study may therefore not be generalizable to learners that come from deeper rural areas and slums.

Not only is there a shortage of information regarding the impact of the context on the career development of black learners from under-resourced schools, but the existing research findings on black learners cannot be generalized to the sample of this research and consequently the results of this study cannot be generalized to other rural samples. Given the history of divide and rule policies it is important that further research consider the possibility that there may be a difference between the career development of learners from city periphery and those who come from deep rural learners.

6.2 Concluding comments

Given the disparities that still prevail even in the aftermath of the apartheid era in the schools that were hardest hit by apartheid, career education programmes need to be designed such that they are sensitive to these and also prepare learners for the world of work. In order to do this, career education needs to emphasize the whole person and to

bridge the gap that still prevails between school and work. School programmes need to be structured to prepare the learners for the world of work and the latter needs to complement the former by being accessible as a learning site. A developmental-contextual approach to career education as is conceptualized by this study can inform these career education programmes and thus have a valued impact on the career development of the learners and the economy of this country.

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APPENDIX 1

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS:

We would like you to have some say in the Career Education Programme which we will be running with you. For the programme to run successfully, we will need the following data. Tick the appropriate block where blocks have been provided. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

STUDENT’S NAME AND SURNAME

STANDARD AT SCHOOL	8	9	10
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CLASS (e.g. 8c):

AGE	14	15	16	17	28	29	20	21	22	23	24	
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DATE OF BIRTH:

SEX:	MALE		FEMALE	
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SCHOOL SUBJECTS TAKEN THIS YEAR:

SUBJECTS	HIGHER GRADE	STANDARD GRADE
1 ZULU		
2 ENGLISH (2nd Language		
3 AFRIKAANS (3rd Language		
4 BIOLOGY		
5 MATHEMATICS		
6 HISTORY		
7 GEOGRAPHY		
8 ACCOUNTANCY		
9 BUSINESS ECONOMIC		
10 ECONOMICS		

WHICH CAREER OR JOB ARE YOU CONSIDERING WHEN YOU LEAVE SCHOOL?		
A		
B		
C		

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING WOULD YOU NEED TO DO THE CAREERS OR JOBS WHICH YOU HAVE MENTIONED ABOVE?		
A		
B		
C		

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE THIS PROGRAMME TO ASSIST YOU?		
A		
B		
C		

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE OR YOU AT HOME?	
A	YOUR FATHER?
B	YOUR MOTHER?
C	SOMEONE ELSE (specify)?

WHAT IS THIS PERSON'S HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL?	
A	NONE
B	STD. 3-5
C	STD. 6-9
D	APPRENTICESHIP
E	STD. 10
F	STUDIED FURTHER (e.g. technical college, etc.)
G	UNIVERSITY

WHERE DOES HER/SHE WORK?
.....

WHAT KIND OF WORK DOES HE/SHE DO?
.....

WHAT KIND OF WORK DOES HE/SHE DO?

HAVE YOU LEFT SCHOOL FOR MORE THAN A YEAR BEFORE RETURNING?	YES	NO
IF YOU HAVE, FOR HOW LONG WERE YOU AWAY FROM SCHOOL?		

● HAVE YOU WORKED BEFORE AS A PAID EMPLOYEE?	YES	NO
IF YOU HAVE, FOR HOW LONG DID YOU WORK? WHAT KIND OF WORK DID YOU DO?		
● HAVE YOU WORKED AS A CASUAL WORKER DURING WEEKENDS?	YES	NO
● DO YOU HAVE A WEEKEND JOB AT THE MOMENT?	YES	NO

WHO DO YOU GO TO WHEN YOU NEED ADVICE ABOUT CAREERS?

.....

.....

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORMS - FOR PARTICIPANTS AND PARENTS

A. CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, give my consent to Mrs C.T. Sifunda to be a participant in her research study on career education.

Signed by:

at

on

B. CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

I, permit my daughter/son to participate in a research study conducted by Mrs C.T. Sifunda on career education.

Signed by:

at

on

APPENDIX 3

***LETTERS TO THE SUPERINTENDENT
OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT, KWAZULU-NATAL,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE***

AND

***THE PRINCIPAL OF PHAYIPHINI HIGH SCHOOL,
KWA-MPUMUZA***

REQUESTING PERMISSION FOR THIS STUDY

404 Nedbank Plaza
60 Durban Road
Scottsville
3201
29 April 1999

The Superintendent of Education Management
KwaZulu Natal Department of
Education and Culture
Private Bag 9044
PIETERMARITZBURG
3200

Dear Sir/Madam

**RESEARCH PROJECT IN SCHOOL CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAMME
DEVELOPMENT**

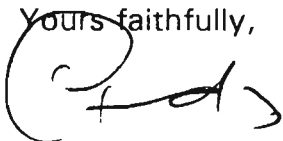
As part of the requirements for an M.Ed. (Psychology of Education) in the department of Educational Psychology at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) I wish to undertake a research project at Phayiphini High school.

The study will investigate the development of career maturity in rural black learners.

I have discussed the matter fully with the principal of the school who has been most supportive and has given me permission to carry out this study. Participation by Grade 12 learners is voluntary and confidentially regarding the identity of the learners will be maintained. Parents will be informed in writing.

I would like to request the permission of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture to carry out this research.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C.T. Sifunda', written over the closing 'Yours faithfully,'.

C.T. Sifunda (Mrs)

404 Nedbank Plaza
60 Durban Road
Scottsville
3201
29 April 1999

The Principal
Phayiphini High School
Kwa-Mpumuza
Pietermaritzburg

Dear Sir,

**RESEARCH PROJECT IN SCHOOL CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAMME
DEVELOPMENT]**

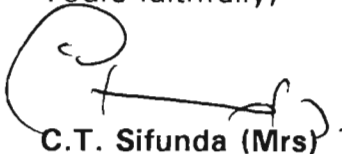
As part of the requirements for an M.Ed. (Educational Psychology) in the School of Psychology of the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg), I wish to undertake a research project in career education at your school.

The aim of the study is to investigate the development of career maturity in black rural learners.

This study is targeting the grade 12 learners and I would like to be granted permission to work with this group. Participation by the grade 12 learners is voluntary and confidentiality regarding the identity of the participants will be maintained. Parental consent will be sought in writing.

Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated,

Yours faithfully,



C.T. Sifunda (Mrs)

APPENDIX 4

FOCUS GROUPS

FOCUS GROUP 1: BUILDING RAPPORT

Aims:

- To build rapport
- To provide an outline of the study
- To find out what the learners' expectations from the study are
- To explain what will be provided.

Topics discussed and activities

1. Rapport

Throw-a-ball

Facilitators and learners to throw ball around and whoever catches it introduces himself or herself

2. Outline of study

The facilitator outlines the study.

3. Expectations

Learners brainstorm their expectations of the project. Facilitators to encourage learners to be open and to prioritise from the list of their expectations what they think can be done, given the time constraints.

4. Clarification of the role of facilitator

Since one of the salient aims of the project is to encourage learners to be open and to prioritise from the list of their expectations what they think can be done, given the time constraints.

Homework

Learners to think about what careers they would like to pursue.

FOCUS GROUP 2: CAREER RESEARCH

Aims

- To assess their current understanding of the careers they have chosen.
- To encourage information gathering on one's own and in a group with common interests.

Topics discussed and other activities

1. What is a career? (20 minutes)

Learners discuss the concept and give examples of their chosen careers.

Facilitators assist them by hinting at some of the sources of career information. For example, newspapers, magazines, and people in the various fields.

Homework

Learners to find as much information as possible on their chosen careers. Learners are encouraged to work in groups.

FOCUS GROUP 3: CAREER RESEARCH (Continued)

Aims:

- To find out how they went about their career research, i.e. whom and what they consulted for career information.

Topics discussed and other activities

1. Action plan

Learners (in groups) give a full account of how they went about searching for the information.

2. Content

Learners to assess the content of the information they have.

Facilitators to give guidelines for a discussion around the following: Is the information enough? Can they make sense out of it? Will they be able to use it?

Homework

Learners to consult professionals in their chosen fields and also to think about entrepreneurial skills that they may have.

FOCUS GROUP 4: ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

Aims

- To find the reason for the learners to consult their educators instead of professionals for career information.
- To find out what they understand by entrepreneurship.
- To find out what entrepreneurial skills they possess.
- To find out what business experience they may have.

Topics discussed and other activities

1. Whom did they consult?

To find out if they have managed to consult professionals. If not, why?

2. Entrepreneurship.

What entrepreneurial skills do they have.

3. Learners list a number of skills they have and they share their work experiences.**4. Facilitators encourage simplicity in the sense that it does not have to be a sophisticated skill.****FOCUS GROUP 5: CAREER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE*****Aims***

- To provide career information, for example pamphlets, faculty handbooks of tertiary institutions in South Africa.
- To encourage learners to share the limited resources available.
- To encourage them to use the information.

Topics discussed and other actions**1. Tertiary institutions.**

Entry requirements and basic information on tertiary education.

2. How and when to apply.

Various application formats: application for bursaries, admission and work.

3. Question time

Open time for questions and or comments.

APPENDIX 5
EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

It has been a great pleasure to work with you. In order for me to know how you found our sessions, I would like you to tick a square that describes the way you feel about our discussions.

		YES	SOME-TIMES	NEVER
1	It is of great importance that learners are part of a programme like this.			
2	I understand the importance of career information			
3	The session on entrepreneurship was very useful.			
4	I understand what my chosen career entails.			
5	Were there times when you could not understand the language used in our discussions.			
6	What did you find most useful?			
7.	What did you find least useful?			
8	What would you like me to add to the programme?			
9	What would you like me to leave out of the programme?			