

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MDANTSANE TOWNSHIP,
EASTERN CAPE**

BY

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this work, with the exception of clearly stipulated views of other people and specified references, is my original work and that it has not been submitted to any other institution(s) for any purpose(s).



Signature



Date

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To God Almighty, for the love, support, courage and guidance through difficult years of my life.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late father, **Herbert Landiso Rubushe** and my late brother, **Sabelo Christian Rubushe** who greatly inspired me to where I am today. To my grandmother, **Lizzie Myeki** who believed in me and protected me. To my sister, **Nombulelo** and my two younger brothers, **Bulelani** and **Masande**, I wish this to be your greatest inspiration in years to come and follow the dream. To my mother, **Nowetu Zelpha Rubushe** who supported me emotionally and otherwise, I love you, mom.

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the information needs of high school students in the Mdantsane township in the Eastern Cape and is based on the view that high school students have information needs other than their school-related needs. The building of a library in the township made the investigation of this substantial group's information needs a priority. Careful and thorough assessment of youth's information needs was important in establishing what sort of information service was required.

The study identifies the youth's information needs, their purposes for needing information, their information sources and/or the providers accessed or used to satisfy their needs for information and makes recommendations regarding provision to the planners of the new library.

Data collection included reviewing of related literature and a descriptive survey using self-administered questionnaires. A sample of 117 grade 11 learners was selected from five high schools using stratified random sampling. Simple coding sheets and content analysis were used in data reduction and analysis.

The findings of the study support the view that the school-going youth have information needs other than their school-related needs. There is a need for information provision on various aspects of their lives such as self-education, reaching a decision and solving problems. The youth were found to be less aware, or ignorant, of issues such as HIV/AIDS, sex, drugs and alcohol as also indicated in the literature reviewed. Informal sources and/or providers such as parents and friends were used to access information, in addition to more formal sources such as teachers, books, newspapers and magazines.

The study makes recommendations about developing information-searching skills in the youth, providing information for their educational, social and personal needs, and for sharing of resources and co-operation with other libraries.

Communication amongst teachers, librarians and students, and the promotion of leisure activities by libraries, parents, teachers are recommended. It is suggested that the youth should be involved in the information provision process because they are often used as a viable source of information by peers. The promotion of media usage and other forms of audio-visual and printed material by libraries is suggested. The development of community beliefs, values in the youth through churches, career programmes and career guidance needs to be prioritised as well as the provision of counselling and help groups using voluntary workers.

CONTENTS

Declaration of originality	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication	iii
Abstract	iv
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Context of the study	1
1.1.1 Mdantsane Township.....	1
1.1.2 The youth and information needs.....	3
1.2 Motivation for the study	5
1.3 Problem statement	6
1.4 Aim of the study	7
1.5 Objectives of the study	7
1.6 Research questions	8
1.7 Delimitation of the study	8
1.8 Operational definitions	8
1.9 Structure of the thesis	10
1.10 Summary of the chapter	11
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE	12
2.0 Introduction	12
2.1 Information and information needs	12
2.1.1 The importance of information.....	12
2.1.2 Information needs.....	15
2.1.2.1 Motivation to satisfy information needs.....	17
2.1.3 Factors that affect information needs.....	19
2.1.3.1 Occupation.....	19
2.1.3.2 Information systems or sources available to satisfy the need.....	20
2.1.3.3 Environmental factors.....	21
2.1.3.3.1 Social factors.....	21
2.1.3.3.2 Socio-political-economic factors.....	22
2.1.3.3.3 Decision-making factors.....	24
2.1.3.3.4 Curriculum-related needs.....	25
2.1.4 The inequalities of access to information.....	27
2.1.5 Relevance of information.....	29
2.1.5.1 Quantity of information.....	29
2.1.5.2 Quality of information.....	30
2.1.6 User satisfaction.....	31

2.2	Information sources	31
2.3	The youth and their developmental information needs	34
2.3.1	The concept of youth development.....	34
2.3.1.1	Cognitive development.....	35
2.3.1.2	Affective development.....	35
2.3.1.3	Social development.....	36
2.3.1.4	Normative development.....	37
2.3.2	Adolescence.....	39
2.3.3	The youth and their information needs	40
2.3.4	Black youth in South Africa.....	43
2.3.4.1	Impact of the South African education system on the youth.....	47
2.4	The role of libraries in satisfying the youth's information needs	51
2.5	The role of young adult literature (fiction)	54
2.6	Conclusion	56
2.7	Summary of the chapter	58
 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		60
3.0	Introduction	60
3.1	Research methods used in the study	60
3.1.1	The literature search and review.....	60
3.1.2	The survey method.....	61
3.2	The population	61
3.3	Sample	61
3.3.1	Sampling procedure	63
3.4	Instrument used	63
3.4.1	The questionnaire	63
3.4.1.1	Structure of the questionnaire.....	64
3.5	Pre-testing the instrument	65
3.6	Implementation of the survey	66
3.7	Data analysis	66
3.8	Evaluation of the method used	67
3.9	Conclusion	67
3.10	Summary of the chapter	68
 CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF DATA		69
4.0	Introduction	70
4.1	Biographical data	69
4.2	The students and their information needs	70
4.2.1	Purpose of the need for information.....	71
4.2.2	Sources and providers of information.....	73
4.2.3	Subjects about which the youth would like to obtain information	76
4.3	Summary of the findings	79

CHAPTER 5:INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEND- ATIONS	81
5.0 Introduction	81
5.1 The age of the respondents	81
5.2 Information needs	82
5.2.1 The need for information.....	82
5.2.2 The motive to find information.....	85
5.2.3 The purpose of the need for information.....	89
5.2.3.1 Self-education.....	89
5.2.3.2 School purposes.....	90
5.2.3.3 Recreation or leisure.....	92
5.2.3.4 Reaching a decision and problem-solving.....	94
5.2.3.5 Keeping up-to-date with news.....	98
5.3 Information sources	99
5.3.1 Informal sources and providers.....	99
5.3.2 Formal sources and providers.....	101
5.3.3 Other information sources and providers.....	102
5.4 Subjects about which the youth would like to obtain information	104
5.5 Conclusion	106
5.6 Recommendations based on the findings	107
5.7 Suggestions for further research	108
5.8 Summary of the chapter	110
Bibliography	112
Appendix A – Introduction from the Head of Department	123
Appendix B – Letter to the respondent (attached to the instrument).....	124
Appendix C - Survey instrument.....	125

List of tables

- Table 1:** Purpose of the need for information
- Table 2:** Rating of the purpose of searching for information
- Table 3:** Sources and providers of information
- Table 4:** Rating of the sources for information according to the degree of importance
- Table 5:** Subjects about which youth would like to obtain information
- Table 6:** Ratings of the subjects according to the degree of importance

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a background to the study and to its focus on youth and their information needs. It also includes the motivation, aim, problem statement and objectives of the study. Operational definitions to be used in the study are provided and the structure of the entire thesis set out.

1.1 Context of the study

This section introduces the study by giving the characteristics of the township under survey. It looks at its features like population, unemployment rate, levels of education of residents and availability of library facilities in the area. It further examines youth and their information needs and the significance of a library in the lives of youth.

1.1.1 Mdantsane Township¹

Mdantsane Township in the Eastern Cape, has an estimated population of 345 000 residents (East London Municipality 1997:10). It is an urban component of the East London Transitional Local Council (EL TLC) and the EL TLC's largest single residential suburb.

According to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) (East London Municipality 1997:14), Mdantsane has an unemployment rate of 45% and only 41,8% of the population is formally employed.

¹ Mdantsane township was under the Ciskei government until 1998 when it was integrated with the East London Transitional Local Council.

The percentages in the East London Municipality (1997:13), which describe rather wide categories, show that 10-14 year-olds constitute 40,7% of the population and 15-64 year-olds constitute 54,2%. The average levels of education are extremely low with 17% of the population having no schooling whatsoever and a total of only 24,7% of the population having an educational qualification higher than standard 6 (which is equivalent to grade 8 in new levels). The African National Congress (ANC) and its alliance partners politically dominate Mdantsane.

Hobongwana² (1998) described the background to the initiative for the new library in Mdantsane Township. He reported that there were requests from the people of the township to the Mdantsane Development Forum for a library to be built in the area. The Mdantsane community, the provincial government, the East London municipality and the Mdantsane Development Forum agreed to co-operate and each contributed financially to the building of the first public library in the township³. This library is still at the construction stage and will cater for the Mdantsane community as a whole.

The Department of Education, Culture and Sport: Mdantsane District Office (1998) reported that there are no schools with library facilities under their administration. This means that this new library has to cater for the community, and also for students.

² Mr Phakamisa Hobongwana is a Principal Public Relations Officer at East London Municipality. He was the one who gathered the information from Ms Mary Davidson and other government officials who are engaged in the process of initiating this new library. Mr Phakamisa Hobongwana communicated the background on the establishment of Mdantsane library.

³ A similar case has been noted in Wyley (1997: 4) of development forums established to prioritise and oversee development delivery, for example, Inanda Development Forum, Bergville Development Forum, and Durban Functional Region Development Forum.

There are other libraries available in other suburbs that form part of the East London TLC. However, these are very far from Mdantsane. This township in itself is widely scattered and transport is costly.

A library staff member, Hackmock (1998)⁴ from the Institute of Training and Education for Capacity Building College (ITEC) reported during our personal communication that their institution is offering some services to high schools in Mdantsane. One of these services was career guidance which has had to close down because of lack of funds. There are matriculation classes that only cater for students who are doing mathematics, science and geography, as well as resource books for teachers and for students. There are videos on all subjects, some of which are for home loan. Another service to these high school students is a catalogue of tertiary institutions covering bursaries, information on courses offered and addresses. The ITEC College is also far from the township and is situated in the city of East London.

1.1.2 The youth and information needs

Although Manaka (1997:32-36) wrote about the information needs of blacks in general, his relevance is acknowledged when he states that "no matter which environment young people find themselves in, there will be circumstances that require answers to questions, solutions to problems, situations in which they must understand something or locate a fact and in which they must improve the quality of life both in the family and community." Amey (1985: 43) argues that many studies are limited to treating adolescents in their role as students rather than to investigating their overall information needs. The undeniable fact is that young adults

⁴ Ms Karin Hackmock is working at ITEC College in East London. She communicated to the researcher all the information about the services offered by them to the high school students in Mdantsane. She also said that two of the staff members who were giving career guidance had to be retrenched due to the lack of funds.

are information poor because of limited resources and limited access to information and are also generally unaware of the value of information. The majority of these young people are not even aware that they have information needs; and those who are aware of the need may not be articulate about it.

According to Krikelas (1983:5) and Manaka (1997:32), it is imperative to describe information needs according to the setting in which people live or work. In their view the understanding of the everyday environment has an influence on the nature and type of information requirements of individuals. Fourie and Kruger (1995: 226) reveal that "the pupils' information needs can be derived from a study of personal attributes such as their basic human needs, their needs at various stages of development, and from the educational and other environmental factors which are from the context of their daily lives." They maintain that this approach enables one to attain four categories of information needs: that is, basic, developmental, curricular and personal information needs (Fourie and Kruger 1995: 226).

The youth have much to contend with in life and lack the relevant and necessary support and that is why "access to information and ideas can be a powerful catalyst in their lives" (Mathews, Flum and Whitney 1990: 34). Public libraries, when equipped adequately, can be potent change agents to these young people's lives. Although public libraries cannot solve all the problems of these young adults they can make a significant difference in their lives (Mathews, Flum and Whitney 1990:34; Millward 1994:67; Poston-Anderson and Edwards 1993:25). Poston-Anderson and Edwards (1993:25) further maintain that public libraries can help to meet

the personal, recreational, and information learning needs of these young students.

1.2

Motivation for the study

Mathews, Flum and Whitney (1990:34) states that access to information and ideas is indispensable to the development of human potential, the advancement of civilisation, and the continuance of enlightened self-government. Correspondingly Fourie and Kruger (1994:103) argue that in order to empower our youth, critical thinking skills are required so that they are able to compete in the leadership world. Authors like Biagini (1983:77) and Allen (1983:117) also believe that young adults need not be developed educationally only, but developed to make them independent individuals. Kuhlthau (1986:41) agrees with Allen (1983:117) that the information needs of young people go far beyond school assignments, even though libraries continue to be filled after school with teenagers doing their homework. They add that youth also need information to survive and advance. Kruger and Gouws (1994: 9-10) support this in their statement that although young people's lives are mostly school-oriented there are also other factors included like physical, cognitive, affective, social, conative (will and inner drive to achieve a particular goal) and normative development.

As black townships, like Mdantsane, have been less provided for or less equipped with information and library services (as also noted in Wyley (1997:4), to help these students in the past, more relevant services must be provided when the resources are available. Public libraries are often mentioned as mostly providing a place to study for students (Bekker and Lategan 1988:65,69; Zaaiman, Roux and Rykheer 1990:50; Fairer-Wessels and Machet 1993:102; Omotoso 1993:3-4), but it is also clear that public libraries have a remarkable role to play in the lives of young

pupils. Baskin, Carter and Harris (1988:65) realised that it is not only in the classroom that we find expression of values but also in public libraries where there is material which contains opposing viewpoints and materials that provide various opportunities for young adults to confront and examine their own actions. The potential that public libraries have in as far as helping South African youth with relevant information has been shown explicitly in Millward (1994:64) where a programme called the Johannesburg Public Library Youth Forum is helping to identify the needs of young adults and help them with related and relevant information. This programme also assists those who have no access to study materials in their areas.

It is essential for public or community libraries that serve black students to be able to identify their information needs; to be able to identify information sources to meet these needs and provide access to information sources required for satisfying their needs. A careful and thorough assessment of their information needs is a crucial part of information provision for young people, hence this study. As Krikelas (1983: 63-9) and Kaniki (1999: 198) put it, needs assessment will help the library to establish clearly-defined service goals. Shera (in Kaniki 1999: 187) suggests that the library, as a social instrument, is designed by the communities and societies in which they exist in terms of their objectives and planning.

1.3

Problem statement

The Mdantsane community has never had a library, which means that this community has not been provided with library-based information relevant to their needs. This problem has also affected the youth. These young people have information needs over and above those that are related to education, which have to be satisfied. Although a new library is being

planned, the needs of the youth (excluding curriculum-related ones) have not been assessed and as a result their information needs are not known. Hence there is a need to conduct a study that will explore their information needs.

1.4 Aim of the study

This study explored the information needs of high school students in the Mdantsane Township. This was achieved by surveying a sample of Standard 9 students from five high schools in the township using the survey method and a review of the related literature including international literature identified through, amongst others, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Wilson (Social Sciences Index) in Compact Disk - Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) and other abstracts and indexes like Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), Theses and Dissertations and South African Bibliographic Network (SABINET), South African newspapers and magazines and personal communications.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- ✓ to establish the information needs of high school students in Mdantsane;
- ✓ to find out the students' purpose for needing information;
- ✓ to identify the information providers/ sources available to meet the needs of high school students;
- ✓ to make recommendations regarding the information needs of secondary school pupils to the planners of the new library.

1.6

Research questions

At the end of the research, the study should be able to answer the following questions:

- what are the information needs of the senior secondary school students in Mdantsane?
- for what purpose do these high school students need information?
- who/which are the information providers they access or use for information?
- what recommendations should be made to the planners of the new library?

1.7

Delimitation of the study

The Mdantsane Township has 17 residential areas, which are called zones or units. The study was confined to five high schools (all located in Unit 1) out of a possible 32 high schools in the Mdantsane Township.

Due to limited funding to conduct the study especially with the transportation, photocopying, and other word processing services costs, the study does not seek to specifically investigate empirically the curriculum related needs of the youth in the survey since those are well known. These needs, however, are reviewed in the literature review and discussed elsewhere in the thesis.

1.8

Operational definitions

The following operational definitions are used in the study:

- i) **High school students** - the terms "high school students" and "secondary school students" refer to

learners at grades 8 to 12 who are attending high school in a full-time capacity.

For the purpose of the study the terms secondary school students, high school students and youth will be used interchangeably throughout the study. This is based on the view of Fourie and Kruger (1995) that the secondary school pupils "should be seen as individuals who are at a certain stage of physical, psychosocial, cognitive and affective development, all of which contribute to their information needs".

ii) Information needs -

these are needs for information an individual "user" or "potential" user has whether they may be aware of them or not (Rohde 1986: 52; Kaniki 1999: 192-3). Dervin (1983: 156) suggests that the word "need" implies a state that arises within a person suggesting some kind of gap that requires filling. When it is applied to the word "information", as in information need, what is suggested is a gap that can be filled by something that the needing person calls "information".

iii) Information seeking -

An activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that

satisfies a perceived need (Krikelas 1983: 2).

iv) **Information source** - Any individual, agency, publication, organisation, institution or group of institutions that is utilised by the individual as a means to meeting this need (Chen and Hernon 1982: 5).

vi) **User satisfaction** - the fulfilment of a user's needs or wants depends in part on a channel supplying the desired information, therefore user satisfaction suggests the user's state having had the needs fulfilled via an information channel (Poole 1985:133).

1.9

Structure of the thesis

Chapter One provides background to the study and the youth and information needs, motivation for the study and problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, scope of research and operational definitions.

Chapter Two presents the review of related literature. The sections include information needs, information seeking situations and sources and lastly the youth and their developmental information needs. **Chapter**

Three discusses the research methods used in the study. **Chapter Four** covers data presentation. **Chapter Five** discusses and interprets the data. In **Chapter Six** conclusions and recommendations are provided.

Summary of the chapter

This chapter entailed sections such as background to the study. The background of Mdantsane Township and a section on youth and information needs were briefly discussed. Motivation for the study and statement of the problem were also included in this chapter, including the aim and objectives of the study. Research questions were presented. The factors that limit the study and topics that were not covered by the research were mentioned under delimitation of the study. The concepts that were operational in the study were also discussed, followed by the structure of the entire thesis.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the importance of information as well as information needs and factors surrounding these information needs in South Africa and internationally. The discussion below is based on the researcher's idea that:

- i) youth have families who are subject to factors which influence their environment which later impact on their information needs as supported by some authors;
- ii) although the study is about South African black urban youth, it is imperative to study youth in other countries like North America because there is limited material on South African youth and some commonalities could be expected

2.1 Information and information needs

2.1.1 The importance of information

In the works of Ford (1977: 2) and Krikelas (1983: 63), information has been viewed respectively as a tool which is "capable of changing the image-structure of a recipient" and also as a "stimulus that reduces uncertainty". Martyn (in Dervin and Nilan 1986: 26) add that information is a human asset that can be exploited for the improvement of the human condition. He asserts that in order to exploit this resource fully, a change in the attitudes of the whole community is required.

Dervin (in Rohde 1986: 60) states that the value of information lies in its ability to describe reality, potentially or completely, thereby reducing uncertainty and allowing people to function more effectively. She also contends that "information can be transferred from one person to another like a brick and that knowledge can be accumulated from there".

Nehnevajsa (in Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 241) asserts that people do need information and there is no question about that. He further states that it is imperative to see to it that the information available is relevant, also in terms of "quality, quantity, accuracy and timeliness".

According to Cleaver (1987: 29) and Walter (1994: 112) people need information because it has the potential to reduce uncertainty and it also helps to make sense of specific situations, in decision making and solving problems. Cleaver (1987: 29) asserts that information can be data until used to resolve uncertainty. She declares that if students are to become information users, it is essential for them to think about the role and value of information because it does not exist independently but is a construct of the user. She argues that it is not possible to teach students to be effective information seekers and users unless they formulate a concept of information for themselves.

Kuhlthau (1987: 22) states that it is essential for a person to be information literate in an information society. She believes that in order to do this one needs to be able to locate, comprehend, and apply information. She also believes that these basic abilities involve critical thinking about information and about the ideas encountered in literature. Tsebe (1985: 129) maintains that information is a resource and a valuable commodity that is needed by human beings in order for them to function effectively. He further views information as an artifact of knowledge and

states that "without knowledge there is darkness and without new information there is stagnation."

Varlejs (1990: 1); Kuhlthau (1990: 6); Hart (1998: 37) and Sayed (1998: 2-3) contend that in order for an individual to be information literate, s/he must recognise situations in which information is needed. S/he must then have the ability to locate, evaluate and use the needed information effectively. The information literates are the ones who have learned how to learn. Thus they know how to learn because they know how to organise knowledge, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. Sayed (1998: 2-3) states that in order to be information literate one should be able to locate information and in order to do that one should be able to access various information sources. He suggests that certain skills such as the ability to use a library, computer and the internet are essential. McClure (in Sayed 1998: 3) refers to these skills as network literacy, traditional literacy, media literacy and computer literacy. He suggests that information literacy activities should be directed towards solving a problem or a task. Varlejs (1990: 1) suggests that information literates are "people who are prepared for lifelong learning because they can always find the information needed for any situation or decision at hand." In order to do this Hart (1998: 37) recommends what she terms the "big-six model". This model includes steps one to six whereby a person has to analyse the information need, decide where s/he is likely to find information, find and select relevant information, process the information s/he has found, synthesise the information to create a final product and finally, evaluate process and product.

2.1.2 Information needs

According to Rohde (1986: 53) the combination of the two concepts "information" and "need" suggests a "basic need" which is not different from other basic human needs identified by psychologists, such as physiological, affective, and cognitive needs. She contends that they are interrelated in that one type of need may have an effect on another and maintains that when a person searches for satisfaction of his/her needs, s/he might seek information.

Rohde (1986: 52) claims that needs differ according to an individual and his/her situation and, most of all, are internal. A **need** is viewed as being shaped by an activity, such activity being to solve a problem, make a decision or answer a question and is also manifest through a passive reception of information which is later stored as **knowledge** (Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 246). It is further stated that as this knowledge increases, whether passively or otherwise, additional specific information needs are generated. Devadason and Lingam (1997: 42) believe that a need is specific and generally time-bound depending on behaviour. There is also a view by Krikelas (1983: 66) that needs are insinuated by demands and information-seeking situations. He sees immediate needs as those that include "crisis" and "immediacy" and associates them with information-seeking behaviour. On the other hand, he sees deferred needs as acquiring data that is dichotomous and that which refers to "sometime in the future". He then associates deferred needs with information-gathering behaviour.

Manaka (1997: 37) declares that in the case of blacks in South Africa, the majority do not know whether or not they have information needs. Rohde (1986: 52) and Devadason and Lingam (1997: 41) concur that apart from information needs specifically identified, there are those that are

expressed, unexpressed, and most difficult to identify, unmet needs. The unmet need is one an individual is not aware of until it is pointed out and at the same time the individual readily agrees that s/he has a need. Manaka (1997: 32) and Kaniki (1999: 192-3) support the issue of unmet need in that information need exists only in the mind of an individual who experiences that particular need. It is the individual who sees his/her problem in different dimensions, like coping with a worry, decision making, solving a problem or understanding a situation, just a concern, and so on. In these situations the individual may as well want information, instruction, reduction of uncertainty, relief from a situation, reaffirmation of reality, companionship, or social support, as listed by Dervin (in Rohde 1986: 54). Kaniki (1999: 192) says the state of lack or absence of information required to accomplish the task results in an information need.

Manaka (1997: 37) maintains that even those who are aware that they have information needs are sometimes not articulate about them and it is the responsibility of a librarian and other relevant agencies or professionals to help them identify their information needs, identify information sources to meet them and provide access to information relevant to their needs.

Chen (1982: 5), Rohde (1986: 54) and Manaka (1997: 32) agree, although using slightly different backgrounds of argument, that the information needs of individuals and communities are closely linked to the situations in which they find themselves. Chen (1982: 9) alleges that information needs cannot be understood as questions asked of an information provider but need to be placed in their context. He further states that an information need cannot be separated from the situation which created it and the individual who perceived it.

It can be argued that information needs are not universal nor are they objective entities but are rather characterised and formed by an individual and his/her environmental circumstances (Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 246). Tsebe (1985: 237), in his paper on the information needs of black South African people, presents the world of black people as two-dimensional. He says that they live in a world that is less developed and therefore need information to develop their world whilst, psychologically and physically, they spend most of their time in a world that is well developed. Therefore, they also need information to function effectively in this developed world. He suggests that there is a need to recognise and meet these information needs of black users.

Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 248) identified another aspect about information needs namely, that they change as the different issues of a problem or an activity are completed or an old need fades and a new need emerges. Krikelas (1983:68) concurs with this in that a decline in information need occurs and this can be attributed to either a change in situation or an establishment of an information source which satisfies the need. A new situation may mean that the service is no longer needed or it may alter the need. It is reported also that it is very rare that individuals have needs that recur regularly without forming a strategy to meet them. He also argues that other information needs grow logically out of previous needs. He says that this happens when a solution evolves, new ideas or issues arise and the work progresses from one problem to the next.

2.1.2.1 Motivation to satisfy information needs

Mulder (in Fourie and Kruger 1995: 227) defines the concept of motivation "as the impulse to behaviour which arises from a need and which ends in the satisfaction of a need". When an individual has a need that is psychologically or socially based, in order to satisfy the need there is a

motivation to take a certain action. Fourie and Kruger (1995: 227) believe that what motivates an individual to seek information lies in his/her basic human needs as identified in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Herman (in Fourie and Kruger 1995: 227) states that needs for health, nutrition, emotional security, and intellectual stimulation are life needs that form part of youth's information needs.

Fourie and Kruger (1995: 227) state that when motives arise from basic needs this results in a form of behaviour. So when these young people find themselves in a search for satisfaction of their needs they become engaged in an information-seeking behaviour. The instinct to seek information can be found within an individual who is intrinsically motivated. On the other hand an extrinsic motivation is when an individual seeks information and may expect to be rewarded at the end for the effort made to find the information. Hatt (1976: 41-2) concludes that when an individual reads towards a clearly defined purpose such as to seek information to make a decision, solve a problem or perform an action there is an underlying and deeply rooted need to do so. An example has been made that although a student may go to the library to seek information for his/her school assignment, underlying that need is a deep-rooted one for achievement and approval.

Thus what motivates an individual to seek information may be a perception of some individual benefit and intellectual experience (Blom 1983: 4; Fourie and Kruger 1995: 228). Another intrinsic motivation is when an individual acquires relevant information for someone and that is a reward on its own. The best person to define the importance of satisfying the need is the actual person who feels the need to find information. So, Ford (1977: 2) gives the information seeker the benefit of the doubt. He suggests that "the extent to which information seekers

transfer the information into their own knowledge structures may reflect at least in part the extent to which they really needed the information".

Kaniki (1999: 192) adds that the process of information seeking and the degree to which the seeker satisfies the need depends upon the level of information literacy or information seeking, searching and use, knowledge or skills an individual possesses.

2.1.3 Factors that affect information needs

According to Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 248) and Kaniki (1999: 193) information need depends on aspects of the individual's persona like age, race, level of education, geography, occupation, financial situation, hierarchical status in the community, or organisations to which they are affiliated, social and economic background. Kaniki (1999: 193) further believes that there are other factors that are resource based like availability, awareness of availability and ease of use of resources. Although there are a large number of factors that affect information needs, a selection of them is discussed in this section, such as the occupation of an individual, sources available to satisfy the need, environmental factors which include social factors, political factors, socio-economic factors, curriculum-related and decision-making factors.

2.1.3.1 Occupation

One of the factors that have been listed as best determining an individual's information needs is his/her work activity (Devadason and Lingam 1997: 42). Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 248) state that information needs of individuals are seen to vary according to the type of activity in which they are engaged and certainly also by the subject interest of the individual. It has also been found that the stages of an individual's career changes influence his/her information needs. According to Krikelas (1983:68) a person has an information need within a wide range of

personal and work-related situations. Even though Kaniki's (1995: 15) study was conducted in rural areas it relates to the current study. He made a finding that the students he surveyed had school-related problems and that although these dominated, there were problems other than their school-related ones.

2.1.3.2 Information systems or sources available to satisfy the need

Devadason and Lingam (1997: 42) concur with Lin and Garvey (1972 : 6-12) that information needs can be stimulated simply by a knowledge of what facilities and/or materials are available. The sources available to people are believed to affect information needs and can change, re-define or cause an information need to emerge as stated by Fourie and Kruger (1995: 226). They argue that pupils use information channels and sources to satisfy their needs and that these pupils' media needs are the result of their real and underlying needs.

Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 244) noted that some systems and sources available are not planned, plannable or organised, for instance, the oral communication system where elders or parents are consulted in times of trouble. September (1993: 76) states that "as societies become complex, their systems for conferring rights and responsibilities become more equally complex". He notes that it was in the olden days that locally-based information which could be orally communicated was required but much information is available on other aspects such as legislation, development programmes and knowledge generated in other communities. Such information needs to be made available to elders and parents.

2.1.3.3 Environmental factors

The Department of National Heritage (1995: 7-9) view factors affecting information needs. It enlists education, recreation or leisure, technological developments, social and changing family structure as factors that affect information needs. There are factors⁵ that contribute to defining blacks, like the Mdantsane residents, in South Africa. These factors define their environment and the situations in which they find themselves and have to deal with in their daily lives. Some of these factors are discussed below.

2.1.3.3.1 Social factors

The living conditions of many black people changed over the past decades from rural to urban and semi-urban areas and that resulted in changes in family life and structure (De Visser and Le Roux 1996; Manaka 1997: 32). Zille (1986: 143) sees urbanisation as social change and views it as the most fundamental problem in many black people's lives. Manaka (1997: 32) concurs that urbanisation introduced a new tempo of life. Urbanisation is a remarkable problem that may not be tackled through tribal wisdom but rather a new dispensation which requires technological skills acquired through education, which may be in conflict with the tribal norms and practices these black people are used to.

Marshall (1975: 20-40) regards the child's social environment as crucial. She states that it moulds a child from birth, physically and mentally. She sees a teenager as being conditioned by his/her social upbringing, by class, parental attitudes and lifestyles, peer group activities and by his/her years of physical care, verbal and visual stimuli and opportunities for the development of mind, body and spirit.

Fourie (1998: 20-21) agrees with Marshall (1975: 20-40) that social environments have an effect on teenage attitudes to reading, school and the use of leisure. She perceives the youth as a product of their communities who are likely to remain at the level common to those communities unless they go on to further education. She believes that the social environment in which the youth live is linked to their intellectual and emotional problems, and social inequalities not only produce inequalities of knowledge but also of sensitivity, understanding and responsiveness. She claims that these have a bearing on attitudes to reading and responsiveness to what is read.

2.1.3.3.2 Socio-political-economic factors

According to Manaka (1997: 35) there are changes that are taking place in people's lives. These changes are caused by modern living and put heavy demands on people. A need to cope with the changes emerges. As the society becomes complex so do the needs to cope with crisis situations and these increase as an individual becomes unable to cope with the pressure.

According to Skinner, Elder and Conger (1992: 260-1) one of the pressures facing the youth is economic hardship that can be expressed through poverty, income loss, and/or unemployment. They maintain that three types of family relationships can be affected. It is viewed that parents are responsible for the financial support of the family and the marital relationship is most vulnerable to economic pressures; the parent-child relationship is influenced by marital difficulties, and this has an impact on the youth's attitude and behaviour. Myburgh and Smith (1990:157) perceive a stable and

⁵ The researcher is aware that there are blacks who have not been affected by these factors but the study refers to the situation of the majority of blacks in South Africa especially those who live in urban

secure family base as one that provides intimacy with the realities of society. They say that this enables a young person to take his/her place in youth organisations, churches, schools and among friends. They believe that information about the dynamics of family resources is needed in order to be able to investigate family resources. The economic factor is highly visible in the black urban scenario. Botha and Ackermann (1997: 72) observe that because many of these young people are economically disadvantaged they choose careers which hold promise for financial independence. Fourie (1998: 20) supports this view in that these disadvantaged students have to work to improve their financial problems at home. She further observes that illiteracy and unemployment lead to poverty, poor nutrition and bad housing conditions. These factors can be both causes and effects. She views these conditions as leading to "lack of interest, concentration and apathy among the disadvantaged youth."

Bailey (1995: 71) refers to political change in South Africa as having had to manoeuvre to provide quality of life for ordinary people. Braungart and Braungart (1995: 77) see this rapid historico-social change as having a profound impact on all age groups, especially the youth. They stress that youth's self-development occurs within the context of national development, modernisation and institutional change. The youth's lives are linked with change in society. The black youth in Braungart and Braungart's study identified the hopes and fears of the youth as centering around wanting to help South Africa become a better place for future generations. They also established that they wanted to achieve more modest career goals so that they could have secure jobs and be helpful and influential to their societies through jobs and work. They raised concerns of violence

townships.

and conflict. They reported that they hoped for political improvement in South Africa in aspects like democracy, equality, peace, stability, harmony, co-operation and tolerance.

Bekker and Lategan (1988:65) observe that when families are experiencing socio-economic problems, the information that is needed is primarily that which will enable a community to take advantage of existing opportunities to help itself. Information to help an individual should be targeted to self-help opportunities as well as easy access to the labour market. Edwards (1973: 118) perceives that youth are in a crucial time in their lives where they need information concerning their lives and where they stand in society. He declares that they need literature which deals with social injustices, economic deprivation and political tyranny. He says that they need to be provided with information which shows how people struggle to find economic security. A study by Braungart and Braungart (1995: 83) showed that the majority of the black youth needed hope for improvement in the South African economy, decrease in unemployment, equal distribution of wealth, end of racism, social equality and improved education.

2.1.3.3.3 Decision-making factors

The stage of decision-making is the most crucial stage in the life of an individual and society as a whole. In a person's life there are times when s/he has to make a decision which will affect his/her entire life or lives of other citizens as a whole (Devadason and Lingam 1997: 42). These decisions are made at home, work, business, locally, internationally, at schools and so on. In cases of the school-going youth, they make decisions in their schools, organisations and in all other aspects of their lives.

Kruger and Gouws (1994: 10) refer to this stage of decision-making as part of conative development. They allege that conative development, according to its description, includes aspects like motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), aspirations, making choices (such as career choices) and decision-making. They perceive that another factor in this stage is the greater psychic vitality with which young people pursue and realise the goal. They become independent in their choices and decision-making and that leads to disputes between them and their parents, their teachers or between themselves (Kruger and Gouws 1994: 10). Poston-Anderson and Edwards (1993: 27) concur that the youth are engaged in decision-making choices regarding careers, relationships with people around them and drugs and alcohol. Myburgh and Smith (1990:158) realise that when youth are orientated towards society, they will come across new choices and decisions. They have a strong viewpoint about religious values that are passed by parents to their children as the most powerful determinants in making choices and decisions. When dealing with the decision-making process it is imperative that one obtains information that is relevant to decision-making.

According to Manaka (1997: 36) many blacks occupy high positions in which they have to make strategic decisions. There is a growing need to find information to govern and to make informed decisions. In addition the youth need information to make decisions on dating, sex education, and social and health concerns (Mayekiso and Twaise 1993: 23; Olivier 1996: 5-8).

2.1.3.3.4 **Curriculum-related needs**

The importance of this topic emerged from the consensus by various authors in the fields of library and information science that it is

impossible for someone to study the youth without concentrating on their curriculum and school-related needs. The importance of these needs is caused by the fact that youth's lives are mostly spent around school environments (Kuhlthau 1988: 51-2; Fourie and Kruger 1995: 229 and Denham 1996: 2). As the youth spend much of their time in school environments, it is imperative to see how the education system is designed to help them cope with real life in general and solve their personal problems other than school-related ones.

According to Manaka (1997: 35) the past education system in South Africa was politically motivated rather than culturally motivated. Hlongwane and Basson (1990: 100) also view the inadequate education system in South Africa as one of the major factors that contributes to poor achievement in black schools and has the effect of a negative self-concept on scholastic achievements of black students.

Baskin, Carter and Harris (1988: 68) argue the point very strongly that the youth can have difficulties in testing their own vision when given literature especially if their curriculum stresses the teaching of literature rather than letting the youth interact with literature. They view the latter approach as helping students to "move from simple, emotional responses" and make their discoveries within the works. They strongly object to ready-made knowledge being offered to youth and rather suggest the need for an opportunity for them to create their own knowledge. The other characteristic of the ready-made method is that it puts more emphasis on rote learning with the syllabus content-based and broken down into subjects. It is the teacher who is responsible for the learning and motivation of the youth and success depends on the personality of the teacher.

Behrens (1995: 258) also criticises this approach in that it deprives most South African students of the qualities of independence, self-direction and even of simple curiosity in their attitudes to learning. She further comments that "these spoon-fed, uncritical and, as a result, mentally lethargic students are not prepared for learning, let alone a lifetime of it". She further argues that although these students may have a knowledge base from the rote learning they are exposed to, the question is whether they can use it independently to learn further or even retain it. She says that they seem to lack the necessary skills that are useful in the identification of a problem, they lack skills to verbalise and explain the problem, and they also lack those to evaluate and find solutions to problems. Another problem identified by Fourie (1998: 21) is that this method confuses children in regard to the nature of reading. They perceive reading as subject matter rather than a pleasurable activity. Because reading is viewed as a rather meaningless exercise it loses personal relevance to these young people's lives. As books are used as a means of instruction and fact-finding for their schoolwork, they assume that this is the only purpose of the book. Fourie (1995: 130) identifies the curricular information needs of students as topic needs (linked to specific subjects), task needs (instant information, short assignments and long projects) and media needs and usage needs (related to media content and form selected to satisfy information needs).

2.1.4 **The inequalities of access to information**

Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 247) assert that people tend to look for the information that is most accessible to them. September (1993: 76) and Louw (1996: 35-6) talk about "inequalities of access of information" especially in the South African context. The inequality of access to information can be a hindering factor in allowing an individual to operate

with sufficient information. The aspects of information access inequalities identified by Louw (1996: 35-6) are as follows:

- people's ignorance of the existence of information that can help them;
- people's unawareness of the information and advice agencies meant to assist them;
- an inability to understand information in the form in which it is presented (may be because they are not literate in the official language);
- geographical position of information agencies and individual immobility;
- people's inability to put provided information to use (may be because they do not know how).

The latter aspect suggests that it is important for people to realise that they need information so that they can make use of the available information.

According to Levin (1975: 502-13) when an individual seeks information s/he wants to act on a need and wants to make a choice among alternatives. S/he has to make a choice either to use the current available information or to postpone making a choice and acquire more information. The problems that are usually encountered are limitations on the available information and on the number of resources needed to get information. So although an individual is certain that s/he needs information s/he might make decisions based on less information.

Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 247) raise a concern that there may be the problem of an information seeker who lacks awareness of sources and of how to use them. The information needs can be stimulated by what services, sources or facilities are available and this can affect the existing information needs. They view low-income people as having no idea of

where to find information to solve their problems. When information is scattered it is both difficult for an individual and the information supplier to find that information and this limits the person in obtaining that kind of information.

Chelton (1985: 21) summarises that barriers to information access can either be intellectual⁶, interpersonal, physical, financial, geographical, linguistic, or legal and it is the role of the library to ensure intellectual freedom for the public.

2.1.5 Relevance of information

Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 247) have given factors that determine the satisfaction of an information need, that is the quality and quantity of information accessed by an individual.

2.1.5.1 Quantity of information

It is common cause that there is a need for delivering the right amount of information at the right time. On the other hand it is essential to mention that the "information overload" works against the individual because it exceeds the capability of him/her to use it and leads to a person's not being satisfied with the information (Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 247).

Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 249) note that in some instances people are provided with more information than is necessary at the time with the idea that his/her need will be met along the way. This information becomes too

⁶ Snyder (1992: 157) defines intellectual access to information as including the freedom to read, the right to have available information on all subjects and points of views, the right to express ideas, and the right and opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to locate and critically evaluate information. She also includes physical access as that which includes the necessary skill to locate and retrieve information unrestricted by unnecessary regulations: language barriers, age or grade restrictions, labelled collections, inadequate collections, facilities or staff or restricted shelves, access to library loans in electronic information and with no additional fees for information in specific formats.

much for an individual seeker in that it is impossible to search on it or make sense out of it. It exceeds the capacity of the individual to evaluate its usefulness. There is a need for "better rather than more information" (Faibisoff and Ely 1993:284). It is further viewed that the quantity of information on its own will not help to make a decision or help reach consensus, although at the same time insufficient information can lead to a hostile situation (Martin 1989: 107; Handler 1990: 159).

2.1.5.2 Quality of information/service

It has been demonstrated by studies in Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 249) that available information needed on a day-to-day basis for problem solving or decision-making is very low and information services are inadequate. An example is made by Buysse (1996: 261) in his paper that unreliable information is received by youth from their peer groups. He says that the youth do not express the need for additional information because they do not expect that formal sex education in the school will provide them with the range of practical information they might need. He believes that they feel they receive enough information from their peers, which illustrates their need for more knowledgeable and perceptive sources (Krikelas 1983: 73). Handler (1990: 159-60) presents the example of female youth who engage in sexual activity without relevant information. He believes that they may be more at risk of becoming pregnant than their older counterparts because these young people are less knowledgeable about reproduction and contraception and they may not have the cognitive ability to perceive that they are at risk of becoming pregnant if they are sexually active. Because they have less information and do not always perceive the repercussions of their actions, they may be less likely to use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. A study by Mayekiso and Twaise (1993:22) concluded that 60% of black youth they studied reported that they did not believe that the initial sexual encounter could result in

pregnancy. They also found that although 52% of the sampled youth was sexually active and had knowledge about contraceptives, only 12, 3%, were reported to be using contraceptives. It was also reported that 40% of this youth had no knowledge of contraceptives.

2.1.6 User satisfaction

Blom (1983: 5) perceives that one of the criteria for the effectiveness of an information service that has as a major objective meeting the demands of users is user satisfaction. He further stresses that in user satisfaction, the user expresses his/her information needs in terms of his/her wants and these are based on his/her personal preference and the subjective expectations s/he has of an information service. He also notes that the variables that play a role in user satisfaction are those that have to do with the personal attributes of the user, such as his/her background, experience, motivation, abilities and environmental factors that affect the user as a person (Blom 1983: 7). According to Kaniki (1995:15) the question of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of an individual regarding information needs depends on whether the person is information alert or information poor. The person who is aware of the availability of information can use "criteria such as accuracy of information, timeliness of the information, time spent in accessing and using information and other factors." The person who is information poor will be satisfied with the information provider as long as information has been provided and assistance rendered.

2.2 Information sources

According to Krikelās (1983: 71) an information source can be two-fold, that is, information generated by the individual seeker or an outside source that is searched. He states that the seeker-generated source includes memory and personal files and these are the results of the

information gathering process or activity. Another major source of information is external to the seeker and may be approached by going directly to an individual who knows or has a record containing that particular knowledge such as literature. Krikelas (1983: 72) refers to the literature of user studies which maintains that individuals prefer human, that is face-to-face, contact when they use external sources. Bekker and Lategan (1988: 66) and Manaka (1997:33) support this view in that black people, especially in urban areas, use word of mouth or hearsay as their information source. Buysse (1996: 261) raises a concern over the use of peers and impersonal leaflets, especially by youth, as information sources. He claims that the information usually pertains to sex education. Zaaiman, Roux and Rykheer's (1990: 38) concern over the use of verbal information is its inaccuracy and incompleteness. They assert that people are not always honest enough to say they do not know, they give whatever information they possess. They further say that they may even give information that suits their own ends rather than those of the user or seeker.

When the youth are faced with a problem or unfamiliar instance and so on they want information providers that are more orally cultured. Bekker and Lategan (1988: 66-8) and Manaka (1997:32) have identified categories of sources: first is the youth's own experience and their own thoughts, and second family members, friends, relatives and co-workers. This view is also supported by Krikelas (1983: 73) when he says that people tend to go and seek information from people they know and are close to. Kuhl, Jarkon-Horlick and Morrissey (1997: 638-9) in their study found that when young people seek help they depend on their perception of the person who is offering help. They mention that females often go to friends whereas males go to their parents. They discovered that emotionally disturbed youth seek help from friends and non-disturbed youth seek help

from parents. In the case of black people, September (1993: 75) also notes that the general pattern of information seeking in rural and urban disadvantaged communities involves family, friends and neighbours. Manaka (1997: 32) maintains that if an individual belongs to a literate group, well educated or highly sophisticated, their information providers are expanded by using schools, churches, professional associations, libraries and other agencies. Bekker and Lategan (1988: 66-8), Omotoso (1993: 5) and September (1993: 74-5) support the view that black people get information from these listed formal and informal sources. They add sources like pamphlets, magazines, newspapers and so on and claim that they are used in black urban areas and rural areas.

Krikelas (1983:73) lists possible reasons for individuals using certain information sources. He maintains that one of the fundamental reasons for using an information source is its convenience, that is, accessibility. It is also noted that the choice may not always be the best one, but under normal circumstances, convenience overpowers concerns about accuracy. An example has been made that when one makes a decision to seek information in a printed source located in a library, a person is not perceived as a viable provider. This could be caused by the fact that the seeker is embarrassed or desires privacy. Krikelas (1983:73) states that hypothetically every individual prefers to get information from a more knowledgeable and perceptive source. This means that, in the case of individuals being used as sources, the person is known to the seeker or works in an institution that shows the seeker that s/he is knowledgeable and most probably perceptive in this situation, or s/he may seek information from an impersonal source, which is literature (Krikelas 1983: 73).

The systems available to urban disadvantaged communities for information seeking are acknowledged by September (1993: 75) as family, friends, neighbours and unofficial community leaders.

2.3 The youth and their developmental information needs

This section looks at the developmental stages of the youth and their information needs. It also looks at how the education system in South Africa impacts on their information seeking. Finally it explores the possible role of libraries and literature in the lives of these young people.

2.3.1 The concept of youth development

According to Fourie and Kruger (1995:229), the concept of human development refers to growth of a living organism from one stage of life to another over a period of time. They further report that development on one hand is about structural change which is characterised by growth (can be seen through quantitative change in bodily dimensions) and maturity (a qualitative/internal development process). On the other hand, there are functional changes which occur when an individual becomes an emotional, intellectual and social being through development and learning.

Thornburg (in Kruger and Gouws 1994: 229) believes that secondary school pupils are at the adolescent stage of development. Kruger and Gouws (1994: 230) agree that "adolescence is a phase that embodies all earlier stages of development and anticipates all those to come". The secondary school pupils are persons at a stage of physical, psychological, cognitive and affective development. All of these developments contribute to their information needs (Kruger and Gouws 1994: 230).

2.3.1.1 Cognitive development

Cognitive development is linked to all aspects of people's potential to become knowledgeable. It concerns intelligence as a mental form that follows certain rules. These mental forms include totality, transformation and self-regulation. These characterise the organisation of intelligence and different levels of development (Fourie and Kruger 1995: 232). Cognitive development encompasses aspects such as the formal-operational phase, intelligence and its measurement, development of thinking skills and creativity. Youth's cognitive ability is viewed as closely linked to their sensory apprehension, their communication with other people and their general ability to process information (Kruger and Gouws 1994: 9).

Marshall (1975: 18) maintains that youth's increasing self-knowledge enables them to assess their capabilities and attitudes and their personalities. At this stage the youth need information on curriculum-related information and family-related information like domestic violence, child abuse, rape and money matters (Fourie and Kruger 1995: 245-8; Wainer and Weist 1996: 362).

2.3.1.2 Affective development

This stage deals with the inner self of the youth that later describes his or her individuality. Kruger and Gouws (1994: 9) observe that this stage of development includes **emotional** and **personality** development and also the formation of **identity** and **self-concept**. Skinner, Elder and Conger (1992: 261) add that separation from parental authority is another psycho-emotional change. These concepts are concerned with the overall process of becoming a youth. As they are in an affective stage, their capacity to take the views of others and adapt to the social world also grows (Fourie and Kruger 1995: 239). It is asserted that this stage

together with cognitive development play a role in the social development stage of the youth and can also be reflected in their moral reasoning. Zaiman, Roux and Rykheer (1990: 38) say that the youth need information on aspects like family life (such as broken homes), peer pressure and alcohol. Millward (1994: 7) refers to these as information for survival.

2.3.1.3 Social development

In general terms this is a stage when youth experience changes in the way they relate to other people, and the effect of specific people on them (Skinner, Elder and Conger 1992: 261; Kruger and Gouws 1994: 10). The relations that surround their lives and influence them are parents, siblings, teachers, and other adults, peer groups and friends. The problematic and controversial issues that usually arise at this stage are parents' style of exercising discipline or authority, youth's striving for independence, conflict between them and their parents, peer group formation, role division in the peer group, peer group pressure, and conformity. Marshall (1975: 17) and Martin (1989: 106) add that youth test their parents' authority as their way of learning to understand the world around them. They also agree that there seems to be a conflict between what is taught in school and what they see in life.

There is also a question of youth's relations with friends of the same and opposite sex, (Kruger and Gouws 1994: 10). Myburgh and Smith (1990: 157) add that when the youth search for meaning in their lives this involves intimacy with other people. As a result the peer group allows them to experiment individually in diverse areas. Marshall (1975: 17) suggests that the youth seek peer approval and this might change the role of the adult or parent whilst at the same time challenging adult authority in the home, school and at work. It is important for the youth not to be

different from their groups until their individual personality is identifiable. It is also noted that peer approval may cause problems because solidarity is formed with the peer group and authority is challenged.

Myburgh and Smith (1990:157), Mayekiso and Twaise (1993: 21-23), Fourie and Kruger (1995: 239), Olivier (1996:7) and Buysee (1996: 261) found that these young South African people obtain sexual knowledge from the peer group. Mayekiso and Twaise (1993: 22) found that 45,8% of the sample use peers as their source of sexual knowledge. The problem that has been identified is that some parents are embarrassed to discuss sex with their children. This study suggests that some parents lack the necessary information and skill needed to empower their children for responsible sexuality. At this stage of development the youth need information pertaining to family life (in aspects like parental authority, fashion, peer pressure). They also need information on their rights, relationships, sex roles, careers and money matters (Russel 1988: 62; Poston-Anderson and Edwards 1993: 26; Millward 1994: 7-12; Donelson and Nilsen 1997: 88).

2.3.1.4 Normative development

This is believed to be the last stage of the youth's development and a key aspect of their overall development. Kruger and Gouws (1994: 10) believe that "normative development bears on both the conative (will-related) and cognitive aspects of their development and is influenced by their progress towards independence and identity. It is also linked to the moral and religious development of the youth. In this aspect they acquire values and norms that guide them to distinguish between "correct" or "acceptable" and "wrong" or "unacceptable" behaviour by members of their community and cultural groups.

Van Zijl (1987: 144) and Manaka (1997: 34) maintain that the black environment was defined by, amongst other factors, understanding of Christianity which was detrimental to African religion. They believe that when an individual understands or becomes familiar with religion, s/he will be able to relate the information accessed to his/her own experience and then that becomes knowledge.

Wright, Frost and Wisecarver (1993: 560-1) in their paper look at the role that may be played by religion in adolescents in order for them to cope with depression and suicidal ideation. They view factors like family background, unemployment, adolescent use of drugs, and absence of social support as those that attribute to this depression and suicidal ideation. They believe that adolescents' religious beliefs and practice provide personal control against problem behaviour. They found that church attendance and the expression of religious attitudes and beliefs among high school students were related to reduced deviant behaviour and to less problem behaviour in general. They claim that high school students in their study reported prayer as a coping strategy in dealing with problems that they considered insoluble and inevitable. They also believe that although there is a general perception that frequent church attendance is a generic measure of religiousness, people may attend church for various reasons like sense of obligation or social support. They found that church attendance and religion can be a positive force in the lives of these young people. They view that youth are faced with problems such as suicide, teen pregnancy, early alcoholism, illicit drug abuse and HIV/AIDS so they certainly need effective community based programmes. They suggest that these programmes are likely to provide young people with social support and a purpose for living (Wright, Frost and Wisecarver 1993: 560-1).

Birckmayer (1988: 165) believes that the developmental needs of youth can be met only if youth enjoy strong interpersonal relationships. She perceives that because there is an information explosion and increase in the use of technology, their need for relationship with adults escalates because they need them to help make sense of the rapidly changing world around them. She suggests that it is vital that youth must know that they are valued and necessary members of their communities through helping and nurturing others and also having opportunities to be helped and cared for in turn.

2.3.2 Adolescence

According to Kruger and Gouws (1994: 3) youth is a stage between childhood and adulthood and in psychology it is called **adolescence**. Adolescents are defined as those who think they are too old to be children but others think they are too young to be adults (Donelson and Nilsen 1997: 6). Kuhlthau (1986: 48) views adolescence as corresponding to high school grades 10 to 12 and ages 15 through 18. This stage is also predicted to be between 18 and 20 and some authors view it starting before or ending later than that (Kruger and Gouws 1994: 3). According to them, this stage is divided into early, middle and late adolescence. Hodges (1987: 169) refers to some psychologists in the United States who have indicated that adolescence may not occur until ages twenty to twenty-four. Van Zyl Slabbert *et al.* (1994: 13) refers to South African youth as falling between 15 to 30 years of age. There is also the view that it is difficult to determine the end of adolescence because there are fewer changes that occur at the end than at the onset of adolescence in an individual.

Kruger and Gouws (1994: 3) conclude that in social terms adolescence ends when one assumes adult roles like matrimony or parenthood. In

South Africa, adolescence ends when someone becomes an eligible voter and that happens at the age of 18. It also happens when s/he turns 21 and no longer needs parental consent for his/her actions.

Psychologically, adolescence ends when a person attains certainty in his/her identity, when s/he has developed his/her own system of values and norms and can enter into adult relationships based on love and friendship (Thorn in Kruger and Gouws 1994: 3). In some black cultures in South Africa, an individual has to go through certain ritual procedures (such as initiation) to gain social recognition as an adult. According to Donelson and Nilsen (1997: 3) initiation rites are one of the ways communities help youth to see the importance of leaving their childhood behind and taking on the mantle of adulthood. This ritual is strongly applicable to male youth in the population of this study. Russell (1988: 60), De Wit and Van der Veer (in Kruger and Gouws 1994: 3) agree that "the onset of adolescence is a physiological phenomenon while its end is culturally determined" (Kruger and Gouws 1994: 3). This means that even those who do not have traditional rituals to accomplish before their adulthood may have some responsibilities to fulfil before they can be described as adults.

2.3.3 The youth and their information needs

Waddle (1987: 34) is of the view that ages 14-19 have interests and abilities as any group of adults does. She argues they are under a great deal of pressure to get an education, learn to drive, cope with family and personal problems, look their best and become responsible citizens. She states that these young people are involved in school, church, community activities and their personal activities. She classifies their problems as societal (which includes drinking, drugs, smoking, sexuality, pregnancy, suicide and illiteracy) and personal (which includes how they are doing in

school, death of a parent, looks, divorcing parents, how friends treat them, victimisation – domestic and abuse, dying, finding love and finding jobs).

Snyder (1992: 155) confirms that all students need information in order for them to become responsible citizens and adults. She believes that they need information to learn about the world around them, to discover who they are and what they want to become; to help them find the answers to the countless questions and issues they face; to make intelligent decisions among choices. She states that information will help them build the foundation for the lifelong information seeking patterns that will enable them to function effectively in an increasingly complex and changing society. She perceives that when they use information they need knowledge, understanding, appreciation and skill because these are fundamental to a democratic social order as well as to functioning in an information world.

Fourie and Kruger (1995: 226) contend that information needs of pupils can only be described in the context in which they occur. They further suggest that their media needs are the best indication of their "actual and underlying needs". They acknowledge that when establishing the youth's information needs it is better to study their personal characteristics like their basic needs, their needs at their various stages of development, their needs generated by educational and other environmental factors which form part of their daily lives. Their developmental needs and curricular information needs are seen as very bonded especially in an educational situation (Kuthlau 1988 : 51-2; Fourie and Kruger 1995:226). So their personal information needs and information needs in their family and social environments emerge. Their basic human needs are seen as the most primary of the information needs.

Russell (1988: 62) and Donelson and Nilsen (1997: 88) view the youth as being in a unique period of their lives. Denham (1996: 1) adds that the youth have individual needs but they are usually viewed collectively for convenience sake. She further states that they experience emotional turmoil and physical changes and are most influenced by their peers. Walter (1994: 122) suggests that when the youth are experiencing physical development they need to know enough about sex in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies, sexual abuse and sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS. It is physical development coinciding with the growth of ever-changing societies that influences them. Examples are made from countries like the USA where there was a change in the 1950s when the "moral value of work" was given less encouragement. That was believed to have been caused by a "highly productive economy with an oversupply of workers". Contemporary Western society is viewed as having social problems that affect these young people like the issues of threatening global environmental disasters, unemployment, World War III, violence, drugs, sexuality, authority and family, money, independence and so on (Russell 1988: 62 and Donelson and Nilsen 1997: 88).

Donelson and Nilsen (1997: 88) argue that today's youth are not the first group to face difficult decisions but they do have a special set of problems that are unique to their age and to today's world. Edwards and Poston-Anderson (1996: 207) share the opinion that youth seem to have an increased consciousness of time and temporal phenomena which is characterised by a shift from the past and the present to future roles and experiences.

Donelson and Nilsen (1997: 88) have the view that parents, writers and educators are eager to help young people make decisions and one of the ways believed to be appropriate is to provide books that honestly explore

problems and present alternative solutions. Denham (1996:2) points out that information provided to youth must be on a number of wider subject areas, not just on leisure and sport interests.

Martin (1989: 106-109) maintains that the youth need information that can be provided to them in any possible way: either information sources that relate to them and their situations; and/or sources that portray family life in such a way that the youth could see the possibility of a commitment to it that would sustain rather than destroy them.

2.3.4 **Black youth in South Africa**

Seekings (1995: 28) shows the role the media played in defining youth in terms of violence and disorder in South Africa especially between 1990 and 1993. He reports how they were regarded as agents of disorder that would make the country ungovernable if the negotiated transition broke down. There were fears of black "masses" or youth when there were hiccups or breakdown in the negotiation process. These fears concerned order, discipline and reliability and the power of the African National Congress over black youth. Seekings also mentions a news magazine programme of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) called *Network* where youth are referred to as a "lost generation". He says that the youth were always referred to as "a mass of threatening and dangerous youth rather than individuals". Moller (1991: 4-62) picks up on this issue in *Lost generation found: black youth at leisure* suggesting that leisure should have captured the imagination of the lost generation because it either spells hope and opportunity or frustration and regression into crime and violence. She argues that youth centres or clubs should be established in order to develop a new morality amongst youth.

Hlongwane and Basson (1990: 99) state that many black adolescents in South Africa have a negative view of themselves. They believe that such a view is a result of psycho-socio-political factors. These factors can be described as effects of the system of migrant labour which one way or another resulted in family disintegration, racial discrimination and consequent subordination caused by the effects of the apartheid policies of the government. They further believe that changes and disruptions that occur in social, political, educational and psychological spheres for both urban and rural blacks need adjustments for the sake of self-concept development. There are adjustments that are made to new lifestyles because of an increase in urbanisation and the consequent breaking of extended family ties, communities and traditional belief systems that lead to the destabilisation of families and individuals (Burman 1986: 21). Botha and Ackermann (1997: 72) support Hlongwane and Basson's view (1990: 99) that urban life brings about economic pressures and increased demands. These pressures reduce the time that parents can spend nurturing, communicating, nursing and interacting positively with their children. There is also a reduction in the development of a positive view of self through interaction and affirmation in stable, consistent family and community relationships from an early age.

In a study by Olivier (1996: 7) the youth raise concerns expressing the problems they encounter in modern society. They say that it is difficult for them to act responsibly with regard to sexuality. They refer to the pressures of everyday life, lack of job opportunities and they also believe that media misinforms and misleads them. The aspect of sexuality is the one that triggers sex education programmes in South Africa in order to eliminate, among other things, the high rate of teenage pregnancy. De Visser and Le Roux (1996: 98) relate the socio-economic consequences of black teenage pregnancy and motherhood to the country as a whole.

They see fathers abandoning these young teenagers and they become economically dependent on others in their families and are usually forced to interrupt their schooling. It was found that the future of the child does not feature in the plans of the teenage parent. They suggest that the respondents' lack of emotional involvement with their children as reflected in the study may be a recurring factor from their own weak mother-child bond.

There are other major issues that affect South African black youth. These issues are intense inter-generational conflicts, high levels of alcohol and drug abuse, low performance in school and skills training, family violence, rape, poverty and teenage pregnancies, crime, negative employment prospects and relocation of positive role models from townships into higher income areas (Millward 1994: 3). According to Warner and Weist (1996: 362) this is also the case in the United States where violence is growing in the urban areas. They claim that although there is so much violence in the urban areas, only limited attention is given to the psychological impacts of victimisation and to those witnessing violence. They observe that the witness becomes a victim because witnessing a violent act is traumatic.

Millward (1994: 3) holds a similar view that the South African black youth have a problem of experiencing despair and acceptance from their victim image. She identifies problems of elevating crime and endemic violence in all levels of social interaction. This aspect is confirmed by an article from the *Saturday Star* (Young children...1997: 12) which reports that the youth from 14 to 18 years were paid to kill in the rural areas of the Transkei. It is suggested that sometimes these young people are acting out revenge or they have a gun so they have to use it. Wainer and Weist (1996: 362) state that other primary sources of the experience of violence

are domestic violence (such as spousal abuse and child abuse), sexual assault (such as sexual abuse and rape), and community violence (such as shootings, stabbings, burglary and assault). They found the acts of violence commonly experienced by children cause emotional, behavioural and cognitive changes in children and adolescents.

The Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) (Everatt and Orkin 1993: 39) classifies South African youth into three broad categories of "marginalisation" according to dimensions of concern. The first category is attached to a group of youth called "antagonists". These young people are described as those that are politically alienated, racially antagonistic and more hostile to the older generation than average, they tend to disregard the law and most importantly see no positive future for themselves or South Africa. The second category described is seen as more hostile than average and termed "outsiders". These young people come from broken families, and are alienated from their school or work environments or are unemployed. They are described as having a poor self-image. The third category is called "the victims" and those included were abused as children, or are being violently abused by their partners or have had wide exposure to political violence. CASE (1993: 39) suggests programmes containing information on HIV/AIDS, education, employment creation, social context and violence, comparative African experience and others.

Millward (1994: 7) identifies life and survival information as the kind of information needed by the South African youth living in the townships. She finds that black youth rarely indulge in recreational reading but rather read mainly for information. Walter (1994: 113) states that in the United States Afro-Americans also lack organised recreational opportunities and have social services which are abundant but poorly co-ordinated. This is

also the case in South Africa as viewed by Millward (1994: 4-62) who argues that the youth has been deprived of leisure opportunities and that leisure plays a crucial part in their lives.

Handler (1990: 159-167) and Buysse (1996: 104-5) support Myburgh and Anders (1989: 123-4), Hlongwane and Basson (1990: 99-100) in stating that the youth need information on health, sexuality and fashion. Handler (1990) believes that the problem of sexuality leads to a childbearing which affects the entire life experience of a young teenager in a variety of ways: educational achievements and aspirations may be curtailed, her employment potential is lessened and she is at risk of having more children than her older counterparts. Buysse (1996: 98) observes that young people mismatch the knowledge they have and the additional information they need pertaining to issues of health like HIV/AIDS. He suggests that traditional sex education fails to provide the range of practical information needed by young people embarking on sexual experience. Millward (1994: 7) presents issues identified by the youth in South Africa in order of priority as: careers (64%), your rights (45,6%), child abuse and money matters (32,3%), whilst sex, family life, HIV/AIDS, academic stress, health, rape, fashion and drugs rated between 20 and 28,3%. Violence, discrimination, religion, peer pressure, alcohol and homosexuality rated below 20% but above 10% (Millward 1994: 7-12). Zaaiman, Roux and Rykheer (1990: 38) and Bekker and Lategan (1988: 65) are of the opinion that young people need information on how to cope with broken homes and high incidents of crime and alcoholism.

2.3.4.1 Impact of the South African education system on the youth

It has already been mentioned in this paper (under curriculum-related needs) how school-related needs define young people's lives. The researcher looks at the existing method of education in South Africa and

compares it with the new education system introduced in 1997 by the South African National Department of Education called **outcome-based education (OBE)**. The researcher looks at the pros and cons of these two systems and how they impact on the South African youth.

According to Kruger (1998: 3), the National Department of Education (South Africa. National Department of Education 1997: 19) and Behrens (1995: 260) the old system of education, which is still in place in South Africa especially with the higher grades, is more teacher-centred rather than learner-centred. The new OBE approach, which is not yet fully implemented, enables pupils to play an active role in the teaching-learning process whereby they discover ideas and information for themselves and are discouraged from being passive recipients of information (Kruger 1998: 4). This approach is viewed by Brewer of Australia (in Kruger 1998: 4) as a method which totally abandons the use of chalk and talk and substitutes it with using different kinds of resources which can be found in school libraries. The focus in this new approach is more on problem-solving than on rote learning. This system encourages learners⁷ to discover and learn for themselves. The old South African education system was criticised by authors in other countries like the United States and United Kingdom which also used the content-based method in the past. They report that this system was structured around "a textbook and self-contained classroom" (Cleaver 1987: 29; Noble 1988: 733; Sayed 1998:4). They agree that an OBE or resource-based system shifts from a classroom focus and from the memorising of facts to a co-operative discovery and evaluation of broad and in-depth information. Cleaver (1987: 29) argues that the old system puts learners in a difficult situation because it does not prepare them with skills to cope with their future needs.

The new system promotes use of a range of resources which learners have to identify and locate by themselves (Behrens 1995: 260; Sayed 1998:4). Kruger (1998: 5) agrees with Cleaver (1987: 29) and Noble (1988: 733) that the new system no longer requires students to learn a multitude of facts but rather encourages them to resource their own learning. She believes that students will then become active and independent in their learning. She further observes that the learners are given a chance to explore, seek and create new meaning and knowledge from information. Because this new system is based on the notion of life-long learning for all South Africans, it is more resource-based and shifts from content-based to an outcome-based education (OBE) (Radebe 1998: 41; Kruger 1998: 5). Cleaver (1987: 29) had stated earlier that lifelong learning is necessary for employment and that if a national education system does not prepare the population for the challenges of future jobs high levels of unemployment can result.

Fourie (1996: 205) asserts that when the curriculum changes there is a great diversity of information that will be needed by learners. She further views the encouragement of independent learning as helping the students acquire critical thinking skills that will assist them in competing in the outside world. Markle (1987: 43) states that learning to think critically enables the students to relate to real life situations without actually experiencing consequences. She claims that this gives students an opportunity to think and discuss things without finding themselves in crisis. Marshall (1975: 18) shows the danger of not allowing students to talk and argue by saying that methods of learning used in many schools promote this kind of practice. She notes that talking and arguing are processes that enable students to assert themselves, to deal with their shaky views on a wide range of matters that they experiences. She declares that they

⁷ Learners is the new term for students and/or pupils.

are in a stage where they draw conclusions without justifications and make decisions on a sudden impulse without weighing enough evidence. It is necessary for them to talk so that they can find out the way they think. Radebe (1998: 41) concurs with Markle (1987: 43) that students do not need textbooks as much as a wide range of learning materials relevant to their different range of abilities and their interests.

This new approach promises learners who are active, creative and critical and who can live productive and fulfilling lives. It further encourages teachers or facilitators to design their course to suit their learners in their own schools and also make available resources and materials that will be relevant to their own needs rather than relying totally on a prescribed textbook. The learners are required to demonstrate an ability to collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information. The Education Department has the responsibility to develop and provide learning resource materials to schools (Kruger 1998: 8-9). This resonates well with Taylor's (1989: 38) and Fourie's (1996: 205) call to public libraries to co-operate with schools to provide them with relevant information sources.

Fourie (1996: 205) observes that because the South African curriculum is changing and expanding, there is a need for greater diversity and in-depth information. She maintains that because students will no longer use a single collection of prescribed material, they will have to access a variety of information and sources. And it is time that school, public and media centres, despite their different objectives, co-operate with each other and share resources and work towards a common goal. The common goal of libraries and media centres will be to disseminate information to pupils to satisfy their educational needs.

The role of libraries in satisfying the youth's information needs

According to Krikelas (1983: 73) the youth need help especially from perceptive and knowledgeable sources. They are a nation's resource because of their creativity, energy and intelligence (Flum 1988: 5; Denham 1996: 1). Because they switch between the children's and adult section of the library, they do not fit in to a clearly defined category. Because of this, Hodges (1987: 168) echoes that "libraries that have no designated 'young adult collection' or no services specifically geared to teenagers may be saying that children become adults as soon as they leave the realm of children's services and collection". He urges libraries to take this stage of youth seriously and provide as much information to them as possible especially on matters related to health, finances, child-care and others.

Todd (in Tilke 1987: 654) says that the youth is perceived as disordered and loud whereas libraries are perceived as ordered and quiet places. Somerville (1996: 26) argues that the youth need libraries. She believes that they need the order, the structure they can get, the trust and concern of good librarians, the perspective on a larger world rather than the miserable one in which they may be living. She believes that they need the sequence, the reality of cause and effect, the confidence and self-worth, and the mental and emotional development which literacy could give them because they lack these aspects. She states that libraries have the potential to present alternative lifestyles and better choices. She calls for the support of libraries at a level that would enable them to pursue their essential work.

According to Denham (1996: 1), the central role of the public library is to provide information to meet needs of all people in the community. The needs of the youth are diverse and wide-ranging, so they need literature that will help with information on their needs. Kuhlthau (1988: 51-2) maintains that at the stage of adolescence a most pressing information need is that which is triggered by educational environment. She believes that because these young people are expected to be aware of their needs for information at their stage of life, they can also be aware of the fact that libraries are information sources on their own that can meet their information needs other than those met by their school books.

Because the issue of access to information and ideas is important in these young people's lives, Martin (1989:106) and Taylor (1989: 37) concur with Kuhlthau (1988:52) in stating that public libraries are agencies of information and ideas. They believe that they are vital and pertinent throughout people's lives. Martin (1989) maintains that it is also the responsibility of the youth to appreciate the role of the library and it is possible if they are made to realise it at their tender age. The earlier they are exposed to the library's usefulness, the more it will enable them to have an understanding of its support throughout their entire lives. He maintains that the youth need relevant information, challenging ideas and exposure to the world of possible futures for them. Taylor (1989: 37) congratulates traditional public libraries in that they have played a critical role in bridging a gap between poor students and their access to educational resources and materials.

Beach (1985: 7) identifies censorship as one of the factors that hinder the notion of the importance of libraries because libraries promise free access to information and that is usually disturbed when the information they have is not made available, especially to the youth. He believes that

censorship is a serious threat to the youth's legal right to know and deprives them of works that portray such real life concerns as family conflict, self-image, sex, drugs, physical changes and so on. Martin (1989: 108) appeals to librarians to realise that the youth at times are not as bold as they appear. For example, if a youth is looking for information on a sensitive subject and has to ask a librarian at the front desk and has to leave his/her identification, this is rather intimidating.

According to McDonald (1988: 28) information access to the youth is often restricted either consciously or unconsciously. He says that the cause is adults who think they know what is best for the youth and can make decisions for them. These adult people become a barrier between the youth and information. He is also concerned that services available to the youth are those most beneficial to the interests of adults. There is an assumption about the value of the youth's information needs. The adult's decision-making is based on the assumption that they know what is best for the youth, what is good and bad for them, what information needs they have, and how these information needs could be met.

Mathews, Flum and Whitney (1990: 34) believe that access of youth to information and ideas is essential in "the development of human potential, advancement of civilisation and the continuing enlightenment of self-government". It can also be a powerful catalyst in their lives. They believe that if schools and public libraries can be equipped properly they can make a difference in these young people's lives (Poston-Anderson and Edwards 1993: 25). In a study conducted by Omotoso (1993: 12) it was found that some of the black townships in South Africa have public libraries which are inadequate for the needs of the communities. He also reported that in black townships like Khayelitsha there are no school libraries.

Martin (1989: 107) is concerned about the dangers of ignorance and unawareness of the importance of libraries which can result in cases where the youth get inaccurate information from the streets because it is the only information available. He perceives ignorance as "intellectually harmful and deadening". The problem that faces the youth is that they find themselves in situations where they act on information provided by their peer group. This was proven in a study conducted by Mayekiso and Twaise (1993: 22) where the main source of information used by teenagers was the peer group.

Harmon and Bradburn (1988: 24-6) agree with Martin (1989) that if the librarians in libraries do not intervene, youth are threatened with getting inaccurate information on the streets or never knowing that information exists that could make a positive difference in their lives.

2.5 The role of young adult literature⁸ (fiction)

Youth literature has been identified as one of the sources that play a pertinent and vital role in the lives of the youth. Fiction is seen as a source where youth find satisfaction, it evokes their emotions, problems and dreams and also helps them to find significance in their lives (Rouse 1973: 117).

According to Odland (1985: 3) and Collins (1993: 378-92) the power of literature (fiction) comes in when the youth relate what they read to their real life situations and make sense out of it. Collins (1993: 378-92) in her paper shows the agony of most of the black youth in the United States, that of fighting for daily survival. Both Odland (1985:3) and Collins (1993:

⁸ Donelson and Nilsen (1997: 6) refer to "young adult literature" as anything that readers between approximate ages of 12 and 20 choose to read (as opposed to what they may be coerced to read especially for class assignments).

378-92) believe that fiction is one way young people can make observations and discoveries about themselves and the society in which they live. Fiction can take them to self-discovery and help them with the feeling of alienation and isolation they may experience. Odland (1985: 3-4) declares that literature offers views of the past, joys and dilemmas of the present and speculations about the future. She believes that today's literature for young people describes many phases of contemporary society, including the controversial and problematic aspects of young people's lives (although some books oversimplify complex youth and family issues while others are tasteless and carelessly written with obvious intent to sensationalise). Probst (in Collins 1993: 3821) sees literature as helping youth to self-understanding, understanding the human condition and acting as an agent of change. He pursues the point that if youth can indulge themselves in the process of reading fiction, it can give them reaffirmation of their worlds, modify and refute, which can have an effect on them.

Reading literature is also seen as a personal experience that can help an individual to develop critical thinking skills, sensitivity to others and an articulated set of values and principles (Collins 1993: 378-92). Collins believes that ideal books should reflect reality, a reality that can be different and better. She points out that books can speak to these young people in a more connecting way, reflecting their lives and feelings and their history and culture. The literature confronts them with reality and forces them to revisit their actions and make or reaffirm their decisions. Marshall (1975: 44) advises that youth's taste for literature should be seen as an escape from social linguistic and intellectual limitations, educational deficiencies and emotional uncertainties. He argues that reading is an emotional activity and the emotions are engaged not only in the content of a book but also in the activity of reading it.

Beach (1985: 2) adds that while the youth's vicarious experience of characters' coping with problems is similar to theirs may not help them solve their problems, they are at least exposed to complex characters dealing with ambiguous, difficult problems. It is argued that if, for example, a young adult reads about a character using drugs, that teenager may change his/her attitude regarding drugs or perhaps experiment with drugs. It is argued that readers bring to their reading a relatively well-defined set of attitudes, established by family, school, and other socialising institutions. Because these attitudes are relatively well-defined, it is unlikely that reading one or two books would result in any marked change in beliefs or behaviour.

Russell (1988: 58) suggests that it is essential for young adult librarians and secondary school teachers to have "a wide range of knowledge of young adult literature, the ability to articulate the level of literary merit some of these works attain, and the concomitant ability to delineate the relationship of young adult literature to the critical issues with which adolescents must grapple in their physical, social, and emotional development." He also states that "the evolution of adolescence is a necessary condition for the development of young adult literature".

2.6 Conclusion

Kuhlthau (1986: 49) observed that it is important for young people to become aware of their own need for information. She says that if they never become aware that they have information needs they are not going to be very effective information users later on in their lives. She believes that high school students can become aware of the process of gathering information which involves the evolution of thinking through the information encounter and which is the path from the anomalous state of knowledge to specificity.

Waddle (1987: 34) suggests that the personal and societal problems of youth as discussed above need to be considered in the policy and services developed for the library. Many authors, as discussed above, agree that youth are individuals who are at a stage of physical, cognitive, affective, social, conative and normative development which impacts on their information needs. The common experiences which youth are exposed to at this stage are physical sexual maturity, withdrawal from adult protection, consciousness of self in interactions, re-evaluation of society's values and morals and experimentation. There are other characteristics which youth are unlikely to be aware of as characterising their group which can be described as "healthy and normal". These are loneliness, insecurity, enormous mood swings, extreme psychological vulnerability, need for peer group approval, a need to be argumentative and emotional, (Konopka in Russell 1988: 61).

The youth's needs for competence, achievement, independence and identity characterise their striving for a future and basic to their learning and information needs. Motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, is a factor on its own that triggers an individual to take a certain action towards the fulfilment of a need. The education system in a country must be able to reach the youth and help them throughout their lives. Other resources that are central to their lives are libraries, whether school or public, media centres and literature which is relevant to them and their ever-changing needs. According to Salazar (1994: 32) libraries can become a vehicle to help young people understand their environment and allow them the opportunity to access the community, find their place in it and discover the joy that learning can bring.

2.7

Summary of the chapter

This chapter reviews information, information needs and information sources. It also covers youth and their developmental needs and the information needs of South African youth in particular. It looks at the black youth in South Africa and the role that can be played by libraries in satisfying the information needs of the youth.

Apart from the importance of information it has also been reviewed that people have information needs. In order to be information literate one needs to be able to locate, comprehend and apply information as per requirements of the outcome based education discussed in section 2.3.4.1. It has been reviewed that the majority of black South Africans do not know whether they do have information needs or not and if they do they do not express the need. Another important aspect identified is that South African black people live in a less developed world and spend most of their time in a world that is more developed. So therefore they need information that will enable them to develop more effectively in both worlds.

It has been argued that there is always a motive for an individual to seek information and that occupation, environment and inequalities of access to information are amongst the factors that determine information needs of an individual.

Information sources that are mostly used in black urban areas are those easily accessible such as family members, relatives and friends and these are claimed to be inaccurate and informal especially the information from hearsay or word of mouth.

The youth has been seen as individuals who are faced with emotional, cognitive, affective and social problems and South African youth was no exception as discussed under section 2.3.4. The role of libraries and young adult literature in satisfying the wide range of information needs of youth had been seen by many authors as a positive role towards developing the youth. Because the information needs of individuals were observed as changing according to some environmental factors, relevant methods were used in the next chapter to explore the information needs of the high school students in the Mdantsane township.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study and discusses the population, sampling, the data collection and the data analysis procedures.

3.1 Research methods used in the study

3.1.1 The literature search and review

The literature search is an important component of research in the field of social sciences. According to Van Dalen (1979: 80), the literature search acquaints the researcher with the related field and keeps him/her abreast of the work being done in the field. It also gears the researcher to “attack” the research problem, as put by Leedy (1993: 87). Van Dalen (1979: 80) acknowledges that the more the researcher knows about the peripheral investigations germane to his/her own study, the more knowledgeable his/her approach to particular problems.

The exploratory nature of the study motivated the researcher to explore extensively South African and international literature in English. The information collected covered the:

- information needs of youth and/or adolescence (black youth in particular)
- developmental needs of youth (adolescents)
- factors that influence youth and their information needs

- information sources and /or providers used by youth to access information
- impact of education on youth
- role of libraries and literature in meeting needs of youth

3.1.2. The survey method

Bless and Higson-Smith (1995: 44) view the **survey method** as a collection of information on a wide range of cases, each case being investigated only regarding a particular aspect under consideration as opposed to the detailed and thorough investigation of a limited range of cases in a case study. Babbie (1995: 257) claims that it is the best method to collect original data for describing a population too large to observe. The size of the population made the survey suitable for the present study. Babbie (1995: 276) concurs that the survey method is economical because of the large amount of data that can be collected within a specific period of time.

3.2 The population

There were **32** high schools in Mdantsane Township which was divided into **17** sections called **units** or **zones**. In all these high schools there were **23 770** high school students. This was the overall population from which the sample was drawn. The overall number of Grade 11 (Std 9) students in these 32 high schools was 4 290. The total number of Std 9s or Grade 11 students in the sampled high schools was 779.

3.3 Sample

Of the 32 high schools situated at Mdantsane township, the five high schools from Unit 1 or Zone 1 were chosen. From these schools the sample was drawn. The total number of Grade 11 students in the sampled schools was 779 of which 15% (117) was drawn. These schools

were Buchule Technical, Khulani Commercial, David Mama, Mzomhle, and Sikhulule High Schools. The characteristics and advantages of these Zone 1 schools were that they attracted different students from different zones because they offered different specialisations in different subject fields. For example, one school specialised in Commercial subjects, one in Technical and Mechanical subjects and the other three offer General, Commercial and Science subjects simultaneously. The reasons for the selection of these schools from one unit was that the schools in the township were extremely dispersed, the research was being done under severe financial constraints and, most of all, the research had a limited time span.

High schools in this area catered for grades 8 to 12. Grade 12 was excluded because the research was conducted at a crucial time when Grade 12 students were writing their external final examinations. The researcher was interested in surveying the highest grade in these schools so Grade 11 was used instead. The reason for the researcher choosing Grade 11 students is supported by Piaget (1971:123,148) in his stages of cognitive development. At formal operational stage, Piaget believes that this is a stage during which adolescents "through inductive reasoning" systematise their ideas and deal critically with their own thinking. This enables them to construct theories about ideas. He argues that adolescents can test these theories logically and scientifically and are able to discover truth through deductive reasoning and formalised thought process. He believes that "the complexity of problems that the individual can handle increases substantially during these years (Piaget 1971: 148).

The relevance of Piaget's theories in this research was that these students were likely to have the potential to express their views unaided and articulate their responses without being prompted or helped. They

could also be expected to articulate responses to questions about their experiences in finding information and solving their problems. They could be expected to make independent choices and to find answers on their own.

3.3.1 Sampling procedure

The stratified random sampling procedure was used and it was useful in that equal samples could be drawn from each school. In this study 15% of the 779 total was used to obtain a sample size of 117. In order to make sure that the population was not skewed or biased because of inequality and under-representativeness of the selected schools, an equalisation process was used as termed by Leedy (1993: 209), that is, 15% of target population was selected from each school.

3.4 Instrument used

3.4.1 The questionnaire

According to Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 243) methodologies used in social science research and specifically to determine information needs are tools and techniques like questionnaires, interviews, diaries, observation and analysis of existing data. A questionnaire was employed in this study. The formation of the questionnaire was based on the works of Emans and Patyk (1967: 63), Millward (1994: 11) and Kaniki's instrument (1995: 17-8) which was used to investigate information needs more generally but revealed related findings about school-based information needs. Categories presented in the closed questions were based on information derived from the literature. Although questionnaires are criticised for failing to reveal users' unique experience especially if the format of the questionnaire is standardised (Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 243), on the other hand, these authors agree with Kempson (1995: 41) that questionnaire surveys are a commonly used research method and that it is the most

useful method to produce quantifiable data. Leedy (1993:187) alleges that “sometimes data lie buried within minds or within attitudes, feelings or reactions of people”. To bring out these, there is a need to devise a tool to probe below the surface. He believes that “ a commonplace instrument for observing data beyond the physical reach of the observer is the questionnaire.”

Because the persons who were to be surveyed were able to read and had the knowledge to answer the questions they would be able to complete the questionnaires individually. Therefore, self-administered questionnaires were used for the study, as recommended by Guy *et al* (1987: 243) and Kaniki (1999:197). According to Babbie (1995: 258), the strengths of using self-administered questionnaires can be summarised as follows: economy, speed, lack of interviewer bias, possibility of anonymity and privacy to encourage more candid responses on sensitive issues. These strengths were considered highly desirable for the current study.

3.4.1.1 **Structure of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire comprised closed questions to provide quantitative information and open-ended questions which allowed probing (for qualitative data). The questionnaire was divided into two sections one for biographical details, that is, questions one to four, and the second for information needs, purposes for needing information and sources used for information, questions five to 16.

The first section, that is, questions one to four, focused on getting the biographical data about each student needed to inform the study, that is data relating to gender, age, where the respondent lived and the category of subjects or respondent’s field of specialisation.

The second category of questions, that is, questions five to sixteen were aimed at determining information needs and sources the respondents used or accessed to get information and how often they experienced a need for information and/or attempted to find information. In this category they were asked to rate their information providers/sources and subjects on which they would like information according to their level of importance.

3.5 Pre-testing the instrument

Pre-testing the instrument is recommended by authors like Bless and Higson-Smith (1995: 43). The reasons for the pre-testing are, amongst others, to test the validity and accuracy of the instrument and also to determine the respondent's likely responses to the actual survey when it is implemented. The testing of the validity of the instrument helps to review the formulation of questions for relevance, clarity, simplicity and other aspects like the questions linking to the research questions and theoretical framework of the study as a whole. Pre-testing the instrument seemed particularly important in this study for refining the relevance and clarity of the questions asked. The population who participated in the pre-test process were high school students in Grade 11 and 12 from Zanozuko High School outside Mdantsane township. These students were chosen because they were not going to be part of the sampled population. Ten questionnaires were distributed to these students. The pre-test took place on 4 August 1998.

Minor changes were made to the questionnaire in line with the observations made at the pre-testing stage. Some questions were broken into two or more questions allowing the respondent more options or to obtain greater clarity on the question. A few items of the questionnaire were re-worded. ✓

3.6

Implementation of the survey

The researcher obtained permission to conduct the survey from the principals or heads of the schools that were sampled. This was facilitated by a letter from the Department of Information Studies at the University of Natal confirming that the researcher was a student there (see Appendix A). In this process the dates on which the survey would be conducted were confirmed. The time chosen to conduct the survey proved a difficult one as students were preparing for their final examinations. Arrangements to administer the survey were made so that the required students were available on those days.

On the days of the survey, the principal or a teacher who was assigned by the principal assembled students in a class. The researcher was introduced to them. A questionnaire was put on a table and explanation was provided before the students answered it. Then any student who got hold of the questionnaire answered it.

3.7

Data Analysis

The researcher designed simple coding sheets to analyse the data. Each school had its own coding sheet for its data. The coding was done manually. The responses were coded according to categories and frequencies and percentages were calculated. The data generated from closed questions was grouped and percentages were calculated. The data generated from open-ended questions was grouped using content analysis. According to Nassimbeni (1988: 245-8) content analysis is a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. Central to content analysis are inference, unitising and categorising data. This process is done by defining information-bearing units, separating them along their boundaries and identifying them for analysis. The data is then organised

into categories to provide inferential or descriptive information about the situation from which the units are derived. Those groups are then organised into categories and presented in a tabular form. Again frequencies and percentages are calculated.

3.8 Evaluation of the method used

The self-administered questionnaire was a suitable method for collecting data. It gave the respondents the opportunity to answer the questionnaire candidly and anonymously. The fact that the researcher belonged to the respondents' age group (that is, under 25) appeared to make them more comfortable and willing to participate. The data generated was relatively easy to analyse and this was time-effective.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The study explored the information needs of the youth in the Mdantsane township by reviewing related literature both local and international. The introductory chapter comprised of background to the study with objectives outlined and operational definitions provided and what it set to achieve. This was achieved through the use of personal interviews and review of previous studies.

The review of related literature was an important component of the research and helped the researcher to understand the problem more clearly and to maintain the focus on the challenges and goals of the present study. The aspects relevant to the present study such as importance of information, information needs and factors surrounding these information needs in South Africa and internationally were reviewed. The chapter also covered youth and their developmental needs, black youth in South Africa and the role of libraries in satisfying the information needs of the youth.

The exploratory nature of the study allowed the researcher to use literature, personal interviews and self-administered questionnaires as an appropriate way to obtain information. The survey method was used because of the size of the population and required sample. There were 32 high schools, that is 23 770 students, from which to draw the sample. Five high schools were selected and a sample of 117 students was drawn using stratified random sampling. A self-administered questionnaire was used as a method of data collection. Coding sheets were used to analyse the data and the data generated from close-ended questionnaires was transcribed into frequencies and percentages. Data from open questions was analysed using content analysis.

The use of the methods above made it possible for the researcher to attain the data and information to be presented in the following chapters.

3.10

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter describes and justifies the choice of research methods employed in the study including the data collection instrument. It also reviews the population and procedures used to draw the sample. Implementation of the survey, data analysis and evaluation of the method used are discussed.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore the information needs of high school students with a view to achieving specific objectives. These objectives could be outlined as follows: to establish the information needs of the youth, to find out their purpose for needing information, to identify their information providers or the sources available to them and to make recommendations regarding providing a service to meet the information needs established.

All the **117** students from the five high schools which were surveyed responded. Hence a response rate of 100% was achieved. The responses on specific issues which were addressed in the questionnaire are reported below.

The data is presented under the heading of biographical data and data on information needs which includes the purpose of a need for information and the sources accessed and used to get information. Percentages are rounded off to the decimal point.

4.1 Biographical data

Of the entire **117** respondents **68** (58%) of them were **females** and **49** (42 %) were **males**. The classification of their **age** was as follows: **97** (83%) were between **ages 15 and 20**; and **20** (17%) were **21 years and over**. Regarding their subject packages: **50** (43%) were doing

commercial subjects; 34 (29%) respondents were doing **general subjects; 25 (21%)** were doing **science; four (3%)** were doing **mechanical subjects;** and of the **four (3%)** listed under **other,** three were doing **technical** subjects and one doing **woodworking.**

4.2

The students and their information needs

On the issue of whether the respondents **ever experience a need for information, 108 (92%)** reported that they **do** experience a need for information; **seven (6%)** reported that they **do not** experience a need for information; whilst **two (2%)** said that they **do not know** if they ever experienced that need.

Of the **108** who reported that **they do experience a need for information, 54 (50%)** responded that they **always** experienced the need for information; **32 (30%)** said that they **rarely** experienced a need for information; **22 (20%)** reported that they **sometimes** experience a need for information; not surprisingly, none of them reported **never.**

The respondents who replied positively were asked **whether they ever attempt to find information they need.** Of the **108** respondents, **59 (55%)** responded negatively, whilst **49 (45%)** of them claimed that **they do attempt to find information.**

Those respondents who responded that **they do not attempt to find information** were **asked to explain why they do not attempt to find information.** They gave **different reasons for not attempting to find information.** Some reported that they were afraid to talk to their parents about their problems, others said they did not know where to look for information and that they did not understand what they read because they had no experience of reading. Others reported that they had no idea

where to start to look for information and that there were no libraries nearby and others reported that they were struggling financially so they could not go anywhere to look for information. Others reported that because their problems were personal, they used their girlfriends or boyfriends, that is, their peers' perceptions. Other reasons given were that there was no reason to look for information because their parents chose careers for them which were already followed by their brothers and sisters; and that, because they had experienced many things before, they used their own past experiences.

Again a follow-up question to the **49** (45%) respondents who responded positively on whether they **do attempt to find the information**, **38** (78%) of them reported that **they get the information they need**, whilst **11** (22%) reported **negatively** to the question.

Of the **38** who **get the information they need**, **13** (34%) of them said that they **always** got the information they needed; **14** (37%) reported that they **rarely** got the information; **9** (24%) responded that they got the information **sometimes**; whilst **2** (5%) reported that they **never** got the information they needed.

4.2.1 Purpose of the need for information

Table 1 presents data on **purpose of a need for information** for the **108** respondents who reported that they did experience a need for information. The data is presented starting with the highest number of frequencies.

Table 1: Purpose of need for information: (n=108)

Purpose	Frequency of responses	Percentage
Self-education	86	80%
School purposes	79	73%
Solving a problem	56	52%
Keep up to date with news (local and international)	45	42%
Reaching a decision	32	30%
Recreation/leisure	22	20%
Answering a question	11	10%
Other (sport, politics, health, conflict)	11	10%

**Due to multiple responses/choices the number of frequencies exceeds the total number of respondents.*

On the issue of **purpose of need for information**, **self-education** as a broad purpose dominated as it was identified **86** (80%) times, followed by **school purposes** generally which was mentioned **79** (73%) times, whilst **solving a specific problem** (usually personal) was identified **56** (52%) times followed by **keeping up to date with news (local and international)** which was mentioned **45** (42%) times; **reaching a decision** (personal, family related and career-oriented) was identified **32** (30%) times, whilst **recreation** was mentioned **22** (20%) times and **answering a specific question** (personal such as helping a friend or a family member, a concern or social conversation) and the category **other** was mentioned **11** (10%) times and respondents specified sport, politics, health, conflict.

Table 2 below illustrates **ratings of purpose of need for information** in detail and also provides the range of ratings between the first and the last number. The choice of more than one category was possible. In the rating scale first number represents most important and last number represents least important. These ratings will be shown in accordance

with the highest number rated as most important with the last numbers rating least important. The first three ratings will be used in the discussion below.

Table 2: Rating of purpose of searching for information (1=most important; last number=least important) : n=108

Purpose	Rating
Self-education	1=54; 2=27; 3=05
Solving a problem	1=39; 2=12; 3=02; 4=03
School purposes	1=37; 2=34; 3=06; 4=02
Reaching a decision	1=23; 2=08; 3=01
Keep up to date with news (local and international)	1=09; 2=19; 3=12; 4=05
Answering a question	1=08; 2=02; 3=01
Recreation/leisure	1=07; 2=06; 3=07; 4=02
Other (sport, politics, health, conflict)	1=05; 2=03; 3=01; 5=02

To determine the **degree of importance** of each purpose (item 12 in the questionnaire), on the basis of ratings 1 to 3, **self-education** dominated again as it was identified **86** times on those levels. Again it was followed by **school purposes** which was identified **77** times followed by **solving a problem** which appeared **53** times. **Keep up to date with news (local and international)** was identified **40** times followed by **reaching a decision** which appeared **32** times **Recreation** and **answering a question** were identified **20** times and **11** times respectively. Those identified under **other** (as shown in Table 1 and 2) appeared **nine** times on levels 1 to 3.

4.2.2 Sources and providers of information

The responses in **Table 3** present data on **sources which the respondents access or use to get information**. The data is presented in order of decreasing frequency.

Table 3: Sources of information – access or use (n=108)

Source	Frequency of responses	Percentage
Magazine	70	65%
Newspaper	58	54%
Teacher	56	52%
Parent	54	50%
Books	50	46%
Friend	48	44%
Television	31	29%
Self	29	27%
Social worker	27	25%
Sibling (brother/sister)	22	20%
Church	22	20%
Radio	19	18%
Relative	15	14%
Novels	15	14%
Past experience	14	13%
Community leader	10	9%
Police	06	6%
Priest	06	6%
Library	01	1%
Other	08	7%

**Due to multiple responses/choices the number of frequencies exceeds the total number of respondents.*

Regarding **sources which they use or access to get information**, **magazine** dominated the list with **70** (65%) counts, followed by **newspaper** which was identified **58** (54%) times; **teacher** appeared **56** (52%) times; **parent** was identified **54** (50%) times, whilst **books** were mentioned **50** (46%) times, followed by **friend** which was identified **48** (44%) times; **television** and **self** were identified **31** (29%) and **29** (27%) times respectively, followed by **social worker** which appeared **27** (25%) times; **siblings** and **church** were identified **22** (20%) times, followed by **radio**, **relatives** and **novels** with **19** (18%) and **15** (14%) frequencies respectively; **past experience** appeared **14** (13%) times followed by **community leader** with **10** (9%) counts, whilst **police** and **priest** were

identified *six* (6%) times respectively; **library** only appeared **once** and **other** (doctor, career advisor and career guide) appeared *eight* (7%).

Table 4 below illustrates in detail **rating of the sources which the respondents access or use to get information**. In the rating scale first number represents most important and last number represents least important. The choice of more than one category was possible. These ratings are shown in accordance with the highest number rated as most important with lowest rating showing least important. The first three ratings will be used in the discussion below.

Table 4: Rating of source of information according to the degree of importance (1=most important; last number=least important): n=108

Source	Rating
Parent	1=34; 2=12; 3=06; 4=02
Teacher	1=26; 2=16; 3=06; 4=04; 5=03; 6=01
Magazine	1=25; 2=15; 3=16; 4=08; 5=05; 6=01
Friend	1=17; 2=11; 3=07; 4=06; 5=03; 7=02; 8=02
Newspaper	1=12; 2=14; 3=15; 4=11; 5=04; 6=02
Social worker	1=10; 2=10; 3=03; 4=01; 5=01; 6=01; 7=01
Self	1=12; 2=09; 3=06; 4=02
Books	1=06; 2=20; 3=15; 4=04; 5=05
Church	1=06; 2=06; 3=08; 4=02
Sibling (brother/sister)	1=05; 2=07; 3=05; 4=02; 5=01; 6=01; 7=01
Relative	1=04; 2=04; 3=01; 4=04; 5=01; 6=01
Television	1=04; 2=09; 3=12; 4=03; 5=03
Radio	1=03; 2=07; 3=08; 5=01
Novels	1=02; 2=04; 3=02; 4=04; 5=03
Past experience	1=02; 2=05; 3=07
Library	1=01
Priest	1=01; 3=03; 4=02
Community leader	2=02; 3=04; 5=04
Police	2=02; 3=02; 8=02
Other	1=03; 2=01; 3=02; 4=02

Regarding the degree of importance on the ratings 1 to 3 magazine and parent dominated as they appeared 56 and 52 times between ratings 1, 2 and 3 out of the 70 and 54 times they were identified respectively. On the same basis (rating 1 to 3) teacher was identified 48 times out of the same scale of 1, 2 and 3 of the 56 times it was identified, followed by newspaper and books which each appeared 41 times, whilst friend as an important source was identified 35 times. Self and television appeared close by 27 and 25, followed by social worker which appeared 23 times out of 27, whilst church and radio were identified 20 and 18 times respectively. Siblings was identified 17 times on the same scale, whilst past experience appeared 14 times followed by relatives and novels which were identified nine times and eight times respectively. Community leader was identified six times. Police and priest had equal number of frequencies as per scale, that is four times followed by library which appeared once and under other (see page 75) all six were identified as most important sources on the scale of 1 to 3.

4.2.3 Subjects about which youth would like to obtain information

Table 5 below presents subjects about which respondents would like to obtain information. All respondents answered this question. These responses are listed from the highest number of frequencies to the smallest number.

Table 5: Subjects about which youth would like to obtain information (n=117)

Subjects	Frequency of responses	Percentage
School work	79	68%
Career	65	56%
Family life	52	44%
Your rights	51	44%
Health	49	42%
Money matters	38	32%
Child Abuse	35	30%
Religion	30	26%
Sex	20	17%
Politics	18	15%
Violence	17	15%
Fashion	17	15%
Rape	15	13%
Alcohol	15	13%
Homosexuality	14	12%
Drugs	12	10%
Peer pressure	11	9%
Others	06	5%

**Due to multiple responses/choices the number of frequencies exceeds the total number of respondents.*

In relation to **subjects about which youth would like to obtain information**, of the 117 respondents (total sample), **79** (68%) of them chose **school-work** as the subject on which they would like to get information. **Careers** was chosen by **65** (56%) respondents, followed by **family life** which was identified **52** (44%) times; **your rights** followed closely with **51** (44%); whilst **health** was identified **49** (42%) times; **money matters** appeared **38** (32%) times and **child abuse** followed with **35** (32%); **religion** was identified **30** (26%) times and **sex** appeared **20** (17%) times; **politics** followed with **18** (15%); **fashion** and **violence** appeared equally **17** (15%) times; **alcohol** and **rape** both followed by appearing **15** (13%) times; **homosexuality** was identified **14** (12%) times; whilst **drugs** preceded **peer pressure** by appearing **12** (10%) and **11**

(9%) times respectively; last was the option **other** (sport, technology) with **six**.

Table 6 below shows the different **ratings on subjects about which youth would like to obtain information** in detail. The first number represents most important and the last number represents least important. The choice of more than one category was possible. These ratings are shown in accordance with the highest number rated as most important with lowest rating showing least important. The first three ratings will be used in the discussion below.

Table 6: Rating of the subjects according to the degree of importance (1 represents “most important”; last number = last important): **n=117**

Subject	Rating
Careers	1=29; 2=19; 3=08; 4=05; 6=01; 7=01; 8=02
School work	1=21; 2=20; 3=14; 4=09; 5=10; 6=05
Your rights	1=19; 2=16; 3=09; 4=03; 5=02; 7=02
Family life	1=15; 2=10; 3=08; 4=06; 5=07; 6=02; 7=01; 8=01; 9=01; 10=01
Child abuse	1=08; 2=05; 3=07; 4=04; 5=03; 6=05; 7=02; 8=01
Health	1=06; 2=10; 3=15; 4=04; 5=06; 6=03; 7=03; 9=02
Money matters	1=05; 2=06; 3=08; 4=04; 5=06; 6=06; 7=01; 8=01; 9=01
Religion	1=05; 2=07; 3=06; 4=03; 5=02; 6=02; 7=03; 9=01; 10=01
Alcohol	1=02; 2=04; 3=01; 4=04; 9=03; 12=01
Sex	1=02; 2=02; 3=01; 4=04; 5=02; 6=03; 7=02; 8=01; 9=02; 11=01
Violence	1=01; 2=03; 3=01; 4=02; 5=03; 7=05; 11=02
Fashion	2=02; 3=01; 4=05; 5=02; 6=02; 7=02; 8=01; 10=02
Homosexuality	2=02; 3=02; 5=05; 6=02; 7=01; 8=02
Politics	2=02; 3=03; 4=05; 5=02; 6=03; 7=01; 9=02
Rape	2=01; 3=04; 4=03; 6=01; 8=04; 9=01; 10=01
Drugs	2=01; 3=02; 4=02; 5=02; 6=02; 8=03
Peer pressure	2=01; 3=02; 4=02; 5=01; 6=03; 7=02
Other	1=03; 2=02; 3=01

To determine **degree of importance** of each subject, on a **rating scale** of 1 to 3 **career** dominated as it was identified 56 times between ratings of 1, 2 and 3 out of the 65 number of frequencies. It was followed by **schoolwork**, which achieved 55 out of the 79 times it was identified. **Your rights** preceded **family life** this time by appearing 44 times on the same scale of 1 to 3, whilst the latter (**family life**) appeared 33 times. **Health** appeared 31 times followed by **child abuse** which was identified 20 times as most important subject about which the respondents would like to obtain information. On the same scale of 1 to 3, **money matters** and **religion** followed by appearing 19 times and 18 times out of 38 and 30 respectively. **Alcohol** was identified **seven** times out of 15 times it was identified and **sex, violence, politics and rape** were identified **five** times, whilst **homosexuality** followed suit by appearing **four** times on the same scale. **Drugs, fashion and peer pressure** had **three** frequencies followed by subjects under **other** (see page 78) where they all appeared **six** times on the same scale of 1 to 3.

4.3 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

All the respondents who were surveyed responded and the majority of them, that is 83%, were between ages 15-20 and 27% were 21 years and over. The category of their subjects was broad with 43% of them doing commercial subjects, 29% doing general subjects (such as history and geography), 21% doing science subjects and 3% doing mechanical and technical subjects.

It was found that the youth had information needs and that a majority experienced a need for information. It was reported that although they had information needs, a small majority did not make attempts to find the information for various reasons which included lack of resources and availability of information. It was found that some of those who attempted

to find information did not get the information they needed. The study revealed that the youth needed information for various purposes in which self-education dominated followed by school purposes, problem-solving, keeping up-to-date with local and international news and reaching a decision. Recreation or leisure came lowest in the list. Regarding the information sources, parents, teachers, friends and books rated as the most important sources of information. Career, school work, rights, family life, child abuse, health, money matters, child abuse and religion were identified as the most important subjects about which the youth would like to obtain information.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an interpretation of the data from the survey in the light of the discussion and arguments presented in the review of related literature. It provides a summary of findings and recommendations. The purpose of the study was to explore the information needs of youth and this was to be achieved by establishing their information needs and purposes for needing information by identifying available information providers or sources and then making recommendations regarding provision by the planners of the new library in Mdantsane according to the information needs identified.

5.1 The age of the respondents

In relation to the **age** of the respondents in the study, the majority, **97** (83%) fell into the categories **15-20 years** with **20** (17%) of the respondents being **21 years** or older.

Many authors (such as Van Zyl Slabbert *et al* 1994: 13; Hodges 1987: 169) have argued about the age within which youth or adolescence falls. On the same issue of age, it was found that 17% of the respondents fell outside the criteria determining youth as defined by some authors (Kuhlthau 1986: 48; Kruger and Gouws 1994: 3). However, Hodges (1987: 169) states that it has been found by a study in the United States that it is possible that an adolescence stage does not occur until the ages

20 to 24. Botha and Ackermann (1997:73) also argue that it is difficult to correlate educational level with ages in the case of black disadvantaged students because of their socio-political-economic background which for various reasons often results in slow progress through the schooling system or late entry into it.

Adolescence in black society, especially for male youth, is perceived to be when an individual has to perform a certain ritual before s/he can be promoted to adulthood. The researcher suggests that although such youth are over 21, they still fall under their parents' authority and their decisions are still influenced by their families because they usually live with them.

5.2 Information needs

5.2.1 The need for information

On the issue of a need for information, the majority, that is, **108 (92%)** respondents reported that **they do experience a need for information.**

This high response rate is an important factor in the information studies field because there is a perception that blacks in general do not know whether or not they have information needs (Manaka 1997: 37). In this case only **two (2%)** respondents gave such an answer. Apart from the responses given above, Noble (1990: 52) and Snyder (1992:155) are supported by Nehnevajsa (in Faibisoff and Ely19993: 241) in stating that all students need information. Dervin (1983: 173) suggests that the questions people have about the situations they are in constitute their information needs. Noble (1990: 52) contends that young people have a great need for information, thus, information packaging and presentation are important. She asserts that libraries should engage themselves in

networking to increase their value for the young people in their communities.

Louw (1996: 35-6) argues that it is important for people to realize and acknowledge that they have information needs so that they can make use of the available information. Cleaver (1987:29) also believes that if students are to become information users it is imperative for them to think and identify the role and value of information. Tsebe (1985: 241 and Rohde (1986: 60) see information as a valuable commodity in the development of an individual and the nation as a whole. Kuhlthau (1987:22), Cleaver (1987: 29) and Walter (1994: 112) concur that information helps in the day to day activities like making sense of situations, making decisions and solving problems. It is thus important for the youth to have access to this information for which the clear majority in the study expressed a need. Line (1996:85) predicts that there will be new prospects offered by information technologies. He observes that these new possibilities will create new needs especially regarding lifelong learning.

The researcher, thus, concludes it is likely that seven (6%) respondents who reported that **they do not experience a need for information** may have done so because they were not aware of their need or it is difficult for them to identify that a need for information existed, as suggested by Rohde (1986:52) and Devadason and Lingam (1997: 41), in short that some people do not know or cannot articulate their own needs.

On the issue of **a need for information**, 54 (50%) of the respondents reported that they **always** experienced this need for information.

Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 248) and Devadason and Lingam (1997: 42) refer to the type of work or occupation of an individual as a factor. Kaniki (1995:15) found that the school-related information needs of students dominated and this could be caused by the fact that attending school is one of the major activities in their lives. Faibisoff and Ely (1993:248) remind us that information needs change as the different problems prevail and a new need emerges as the old one fades. Krikelas (1983: 68) argues that individuals have needs that recur regularly. He states that this is because people form strategies to meet these needs. He also adds that information needs grow logically out of previous needs.

It was found in the study that **32** (30%) of the respondents reported that they **rarely** experience this need for information, whilst **22** (20%) of them reported that they **sometimes** experience it. Hence some flux as well as commonalities can be expected in the nature of information needs experienced.

Although the researcher believes that it is possible that students always need information that is school or curricular-related, she concludes that they have other needs that are personal, family related and so on. The point is supported by Kaniki (1995: 15) that although the school-related needs of the students dominated, there were problems relating to information needs other than their school related ones. The responses of **rarely** and **sometimes** also depended on whether the information is immediate or deferred. These young people may want immediate information when they are faced with crisis situations or information to understand a situation or coping with a worry or solving a problem (Krikelas 1983:66; Manaka 19997: 32).

Based on the above discussion, this study concludes that black youth need a variety of information and that there is much to be done for students to meet their information needs other than their school-related needs. Even the new South African outcomes-based curriculum calls for a greater diversity of, and in-depth, information. The role that can be played by libraries is through co-operation and sharing of resources between schools and public libraries in order for the students to be able meet their needs. It can also be argued that even those who identified themselves as not in need for information were mistaken as they were not aware of their need for information. It is the responsibility of organizations, whether private or public, to help the youth by providing information which will not only help them but also develop their communities.

5.2.2 The motive to find information

In relation to the **attempts made by respondents to find information** based on their experience of the need for information, the number of respondents who **made an attempt to find the needed information** totalled **49 (45%)**, whilst the majority of respondents, **59 (55%)** reported negatively that they had not attempted to find it.

Some respondents gave **reasons for not attempting to find information**. Reasons given were that they did not know where to look for information, that there were no libraries nearby and those available were far away and meant incurring transportation costs; that they had no experience of reading and that they did not understand what they read. It was also confirmed by a low response in the use of the **library** by these students where only **one** respondent reported that s/he **used a library as an information provider**. The response level was not surprising in view of the paucity of libraries in the area.

Of the respondents, 11 (23%) **did not get the information they need** although they attempted to find it. The reasons for not getting the information they needed may strengthen the case of those who did not attempt to find information. It is also notable that only 13 (34%) respondents reported that they **always** got the information, whilst 14 (37%) and 9 (24%) reported getting the information **rarely** and **sometimes** respectively. Two (5%) of the respondents reported that they **never** got the information they needed. The researcher has noted that although some respondents who reported that **they did not seek information** seemed demotivated, their attitude was understandable when those **who did attempt** to find information ended up **not getting the information** they needed.

The reasons why the majority of the respondents, 59 (55%) reported that **they did not make attempts to find information** can be attributed to various factors. These factors can be motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), lack of resources, availability of information and so on (Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 247, September 1993: 76, Fourie and Kruger 1995: 227 and Louw 1996:35-6). It is important for an individual to realize how much s/he needs the information because it has already been mentioned that an information need exists only in the mind of an individual who experiences that particular need (Manaka 1997: 32). It is also viewed that the best person to define the importance of satisfying the need is the actual person who feels the need for information. Then there must be a motivation for an individual to take a certain action in order to satisfy his/her need. Fourie and Kruger (1995: 227) assert that there is an instinct that lies inside an individual that intrinsically motivates him/her to seek information. They further claim that when an individual seeks information it can be towards a clearly defined goal, such as making a decision, solving a problem or performing an action. The argument that can be followed is

that an individual can be motivated sufficiently even though sometimes the resource or the information s/he needs is inaccessible (Chelton 1985: 1, Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 247, September 1993:76 and Louw 1996:35-6).

Firstly the reason for not seeking information given by some respondents, that there are no libraries nearby, presents and supports the problem of lack of library facilities raised in the motivation for the present study. This point is confirmed by Omotoso's findings (1993: 12) that those urban black townships in South Africa that have public libraries have services which are inadequate for the needs of their communities. The Mdantsane Township has been one of those urban black areas that has never had the opportunity of having a library, even an inadequate one. They will not have a public library until the new one becomes operational. Addo (1999: 55) presents statistics on the number of school libraries in the Eastern Cape. He shows that out of 5 880 schools only 433 schools have libraries and 1 351 electricity.

Fourie (1998: 20-1) identifies some of the factors that work against the development of a reading habit, especially among leisure reading teenagers. She notes lack of reading skills, negative attitudes towards reading, lack of interest, economic environment, cultural factors, complexity of reading matter in the second language and wrong educational method used in promoting leisure reading. She notes that many young South Africans have to master English as a second language to be able to read for recreational and informational purposes and this is caused by the lack of reading material in their mother tongue. This is what Chelton (1985:1) refers to as a language barrier in accessing information. The reasons given by respondents for not accessing information reflect the true realities of their environments.

Although the need for people to acknowledge the importance of information has been discussed extensively, it is evident from the discussion above that it is not only the problem of people not knowing the importance of information but also location of the information by an individual user, accessibility of information and its availability to youth. The researcher suggests that information users should be equipped with the skills to locate, collect, analyze and critically evaluate information by themselves. Rader (1992: 121) supports the importance of the need for bibliographic instruction especially to students. He says that students must learn to analyze their information needs and plan their strategies to gather and use information. He views conceptual skills such as the ability to think critically, identify and obtain sources and successfully apply the information to problem-solving as necessities. He believes that librarian-instructors need to teach information gathering skills to students as part of an intellectual decision-making process. He states that students who receive bibliographic instruction ask better reference questions and write better research papers. It is also advisable that information technology skills be taught so that these young people are able to search for information themselves using wider and broader subject terms of the search. The failure to do this can impact, firstly, on the introduction of **outcomes-based education** (OBE) because it is impossible for librarians to keep up with the demands of the young users in both their curricular and extra-curricular related needs. Secondly, Sayed (1998:7) notes that in South African tertiary institutions it is assumed that learners are homogeneous and that they are all equal when they enter these institutions, and their previous disadvantaged experiences are ignored. The crux of the matter is that these learners expect to be given "correct answers" and specific texts and are threatened by the different points of view of the lecturer (Sayed 1998: 12). In his study he found that black students rely on institutions for access to computers and that they are the

main people that need help and training in various aspects of computer-related information literacy skills and competencies. They need help to explore the global information experience from professional and experienced providers of information.

5.2.3 The purpose of the need for information

5.2.3.1 Self education

The researcher has observed that self-education was chosen as one of the major reasons for the respondents needing information. It was reported **86** (80%) times as dominant and also reported as **most important** in the ratings. It has also been noted that although the students' lives were described as school-oriented and their needs mainly defined in that context, they did need information other than their school or curricular-related information.

The researcher believes that one of the needs that emerge in the youth at their stage of life is that of developmental needs. The youth find themselves in situations in which they have to understand themselves, who they are, and the world around them, as stated by Snyder (1992: 155). Kuhlthau (1988: 51-2) asserts that these are the needs that emerge on the way to adulthood. Millward's (1994: 7) research supports the finding that the highest responses regarding the purpose of the information needed were for **self-education**. Urban youth need information which she identifies as "life and survival information". She argues that the kind of information they need most is that which informs them more adequately about their lives.

It is saddening that students feel library media centers have no role to play in providing information for their life concerns (Poston-Anderson and Edwards 1993: 30). This perception limits their motives to look for

information and their understanding of the formal information sources and providers such as libraries. Brewis, Gericke and Kruger (1994: 5) agree that people need to develop their own identity, to strengthen self-respect and personal relationships. People also read for certain information and knowledge related to everyday activities such as occupations and hobbies.

Based on the above argument and discussion, it is clear that self-education is the central point in the lives of the youth especially regarding their development. Public libraries, school media centers, parents and teachers are urged to come together and provide relevant information and advice to the youth to help them through this crucial stage. They need to know about things that affect their personal lives like sexual matters, attitudes towards sex, pregnancy and the roles that youth are supposed to play. Attempts to prevent pregnancy should be made through counselling services. Because these young people leave school after pregnancy, there should be provision of child-care facilities at schools for them, as suggested by De Visser and Le Roux (1996: 105).

5.2.3.2 School purposes

The respondents saw school purposes among the important purposes for which they needed information with **79** (73%) frequencies. It was also the second most important item on the ratings (1-3).

On the relevant subject of information needs, the students were asked to identify **subjects about which youth would like to obtain information.** **School-work** was rated as the dominating subject and as the **second most important** on the rating scale of 1 to 3.

The researcher is not surprised to find this enormous response regarding **school purpose and schoolwork** because nothing better describes students' environment than their schooling (Faibisoff and Ely 1993: 246). Denham (1996: 2) confirms that their lives are mostly spent around school environments. Kuthlau (1988: 51-2) and Fourie and Kruger (1995: 226) argue that students' developmental needs and curricular information needs are bonded especially in an education situation in which they are on their way to adulthood. It is therefore not surprising that **self-education** and **school-purposes** and **school-work** rated highest as the most important purposes. Kuthlau (1988: 52) maintains that a most pressing information need of adolescents is that which is triggered by education and environment.

Apart from the high rating of school-related needs of students, Fourie (1995: 135) found that more than half of the public libraries (59.1%) reported that they were not always able to assist secondary school students in finding information. They reported that this problem was due to factors such as high demand for information on related or similar topics at one time; a lack of suitable materials in stock; topics that were too detailed; and scarcity of published material on the subjects or topics. Fourie and Kruger (1994: 101) found that students use a library for borrowing and photocopying school work.

Based on this, the researcher agrees with the above author (Fourie 1995: 135) that communication is needed between subject teachers, media teachers, librarians and pupils about the topics assigned and sources available. This is possible if teachers group the students according to topics allocated to them, with the material allocated on short-term loans, on reserves and overnight loans. The librarians felt that formal

communication from teachers about forthcoming assignments would be an advantage and would save a lot of time (Fourie 1995: 135).

5.2.3.3 Recreation or leisure

The rating of **leisure or recreation** by **22** (20%) as the least important purpose of information needs requires attention. On a related issue, **novels** as an information source were also rated low, by only **15** (14%).

In a journal *Library Trends*, Flum (1988: 5) observes that there are few communities with youth centres, programmes and commissions. He argues that the youth are given little recognition whereas they have a strong need to spend time with their peers and time away from the adults. Hence they are mostly on the streets because there is a lack of other places where they would prefer to be. Brewis, Gericke and Kruger (1994: 7-8) identify reading for pleasure as another “form of play and free activity outside ordinary life.” The reading of fiction is seen as one of the ways of reading for pleasure. They assert that the reading of fiction is like dreaming because it takes the reader to other worlds and provides a deeper pleasure than watching television or going to a theatre. It contains information which assists the individual in making sense of the world. Reading can relieve tension, and, for example, reading a horror novel can in many ways be an optimistic experience. They say it is the reader’s mind’s way of coping with everyday problems, stress and real life traumas. In Fourie and Kruger’s study (1994: 101) there is a decline of borrowing books for recreation in the higher levels as compared to junior secondary school phase. The Department of National Heritage (1995: 7-9) observes that the decline in reading is caused by television, video games and media hype. They advise libraries to promote activities that compete for attention and this supports the study’s finding regarding recreational leisure needs. Amey (1985: 46) finds that 91% of Canadian adolescents

read books other than their school work and that social class is a determining factor.

Apart from the above facts showing the importance of reading for pleasure, Millward (1994: 7) agrees with these findings that the youth rarely indulge in recreational reading but rather read for information purposes. On the other hand a study on white high school youth in an article "*Why do high school students read*" suggested otherwise with recreational reading ranking highest on the motives for reading (Emans and Patyk 1993: 60). Fourie (1998: 20-1) alleges that teenagers prefer to engage in social activities with their peers than be by themselves in such solitary activities as reading. She also notes that teenagers are faced with heavy workloads at school and are often involved in socializing with their peers, sports activities and part-time jobs because they want to improve their financial situations at home. They do not have time to engross themselves in a book. Other factors that she identifies are lack of motivation to read because of factors such as culture where the oral tradition dominates and the reading culture has not yet developed (Coetzee 1983: 67). Fourie (1998: 20-1) alleges that the educational system has also played a role in that it influences the teenagers to see reading as a "subject" matter rather than a "pleasurable" activity. Moller (1991: 4-62) agrees with Fourie (1998: 20) that that social environment has an effect on teenagers' attitudes to the use of leisure. Fourie (1998: 21) perceives that they are likely to remain at the level common to their community unless they further their education.

In order to address the question of leisure among the urban black teenagers, Moller (1991-62) in her study calls for the development of leisure centres, youth clubs for the youth so they can spend their quality time there when they are not at school. Salazar (1994: 33) suggests that

one of the important things that libraries can offer young people is an educational environment that is not only at school. They must show them that the library is not only related to reading and school assignments, but is a leisure place to enjoy time and a place to have fun (Kuthlau 1986 : 50).

The researcher recommends that the youth involve themselves in reading, sport and drama at an early age. It is thus that in their later years when these are fully developed that they will have a broad spectrum to choose from in identifying themselves with what is best for them. The researcher also thinks that through reading the youth will be able to develop an interest in writing poetry and novels. Through reading they can transform reading into a love of acting and activities like speech development. In order for the librarians to empower youth, they need certain qualities like determination, energy, and a passionate belief in youth, patience and courage. Libraries need to have a broad vision that will help youth to understand their rights by listening to their concerns, giving them opportunity to express themselves and participate. By doing this youth will know that they are appreciated, respected and are given the support and the opportunity they need.

5.2.3.4 Reaching a decision and problem-solving

Reaching a decision as one of the purposes that **students need information** for had **32** (30%) responses and came **fifth** as an **important purpose** on a rating scale of 1 to 3. The researcher also believes that solving a problem, which also rated highly at **56** (52%) in the **purpose of the need for information** is one of the important needs for information.

Manaka (1997: 32) suggests that an individual sees his/her problem in different dimensions, like coping with a worry, decision making, solving a

problem, understanding a situation, just a concern, and so on. Rohde (1986: 54) adds that individuals may want information, instruction, to reduce uncertainty or gain relief from a situation, reaffirm reality, or find companionship or social support. Cleaver (1987: 29) and Walter (1994: 112) assert that people need information in decision-making and problem-solving. Devadason and Lingam (1997: 42) allege that decisions affect the entire lives of an individual. These decisions are made at home, at school, personally, and so on. They view these decisions as leading to disputes between students and their parents, their teachers and amongst themselves (Kruger and Gouws 1994: 10). Dervin (1983: 154) and Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 249) support the view that the use of information for decision-making about day-to-day activities is very low and information services are inadequate. Botha and Ackermann (1997: 74) agree that less information is given on the process of career exploration, collecting and processing information and decision-making.

The researcher concludes that the statistics regarding the responses show that a number of students are not aware of the role that is played by information on decision making. The decisions that they make do not only affect their lives but also their societal values. They need information to make informed decisions about their careers, dating, sex, social habits, health and personal concerns. The category **career** was rated as second highest regarding subjects about which the youth would like information (in Table 5), **65** (56%) and as the top **most important subject** on which students need information (Table 6) which was in line with the 64% of career information needed in Millward's (1994: 7) study. A study by Botha and Ackerman (1997: 74) finds that more than 50% of Xhosa-speaking adolescents are not involved in career exploration and decision making processes. Naidoo (1999) argues that there is a need for career information for learners. He says they need to become aware of the

occupational world in order to make informed decisions related to their career choices. He suggests career information resource centres rather than learners seeking information in the form of visits to tertiary institutions, meeting with specialists or professionals, career workshops and pamphlets. Regarding career guidance, Ntshangase (1995: 98) argues that guidance programmes should be established and that different demands of adolescents be accommodated. He states that a guidance syllabus should be set up and linked to social and cultural backgrounds and environmental circumstances of the pupils rather than being Western-oriented. He says that integration of African cultural values, beliefs and Western-oriented approaches should be established. He suggests that guidance teachers should be helped to organise workshops, lectures and meetings with other guidance teachers to establish effective communication and facilitate understanding and sharing of ideas. Botha and Ackermann (1997: 74) suggest that effective career development programmes are needed in both primary and secondary schools. They suggest that effective career counselling should be aimed at enhancing the student's self-knowledge as a foundation for future career developmental tasks and not as an immediate and specific career choice. Botha and Ackermann (1997: 74) suggest that effective career development programmes are needed in both primary and secondary schools. They suggest that effective career counselling should be aimed at enhancing the student's self-knowledge as a foundation for future career developmental tasks and not as an immediate and specific career choice.

Other problems relating to **decision making** and **problem-solving** are sex, dating and health concerns such as HIV/AIDS which have been identified by many authors like Hlongwane and Basson (1990: 39), Handler (1990: 60), Mayekiso and Twaie (1993:23), Millward (1994: 7-

12), Olivier (1996: 5-8) and Buysse (1996: 270). **Health** and **sex** were identified **49** (42%) and **20** (17%) times respectively as **subjects on which respondents would like information** and these responses rate higher than in Millward's (1994:7) findings. On aspects like sexuality, Mayekiso and Twaise (1993:23) and Olivier (1996: 7-8) suggest that there should be advanced sex education for students and openness about sex from parents. Handler (1990: 60) states that the youth have a problem of matching the knowledge about health concerns like HIV/AIDS with having enough information about it. He therefore advises that proper information be available to youth from sources other than their peers.

The researcher agrees with Faibisoff and Ely (1993: 249) and other authors who suggest that information needs to be provided to the youth, their parents and the informal sources they approach for information so that they can be provided with informed advice and be able to reach informed decisions. Youth need to be provided with literature and formal sources that help them through this process. DeHart and Bleeker (1988: 307) pinpoint possible programmes that libraries can develop for problem-solving. They see public relations programmes for youth as important. The librarians are also urged to combine reference and reader advisory functions. They advise that libraries can assist young adults to identify and analyze hypothetical (real) problems, the discernment of information needs and the formulation of strategies to process information. This programme is seen as important when dealing with HIV/AIDS cases where students and parents may want to isolate an HIV/AIDS victim from their school. A structured discussion and analysis of the problem through using library resources could help them learn information management skills, the process of applying information to solving personal problems and the importance of the role played by effective communication.

It is suggested that youth should be provided with diverse and critical information especially on aspects pertaining to their health and life. It has also been identified as common that youth are provided with career information as an urgent need, not as something that they are able to develop gradually over a period of time. It is proper that career information must be provided to youth in advance so that they are able to make decisions as they develop as to which direction they want to take. The researcher also recommends that career information be updated so that it reflects current trends and what is on the market.

5.2.3.5 Keeping up-to-date with news

Forty-five (42%) respondents chose **keeping up-to-date with local and international news** as a **purpose to need information** and made it the **fourth important purpose**.

In order for people, especially the youth, to get the news, they **access or use** predominantly **newspapers** and **television** and partly **magazines** as their sources of information. **Magazines** were rated highest by **67 (62%)** responses as the major source used or accessed by the youth for information. A study in Brewis, Gericke and Kruger (1994: 11) concludes that magazines are popular in that some involve popular romance with themes which include stabilization of the individual's personal life by traditional cultural morality such as finding a lasting relationship and a satisfactory family life. They claim that magazines reaffirm a person's values and convictions, trials and tribulations, and help one to make sense of the world. One gains pleasure, satisfaction, entertainment and information from reading them. **Newspapers** appeared second, **58 (54%)** times and television featured seventh, **31 (29%)** times. The researcher agrees with Brewis, Gericke and Kruger (1994: 12) that although magazines can be used or accessed for news they can also be used for

leisure, self-education, school purposes, solving a problem and reaching a decision.

Brewis, Gericke and Kruger (1994: 5) agree that people need practical information like news. They need information on local, national and international news. It is true that students lack money to buy magazines and that newspapers can be expensive for them and also can be outdated by the time they read them. It also happens that at the time news is broadcast on the television they are expected to be reading and doing their homework. It is time for schools and public libraries to intervene in this type of information provision.

The researcher suggests that libraries can provide newspaper cuttings relevant to the students in the form of a file that can be updated every day or week as seen suitable. They can provide electronic access to information on the internet because many newspapers are made available on it. The schools and libraries can subscribe or seek donations to magazines and newspapers or seek internet links. This multi-dimensional information provision will help school and public libraries to cope with the needs of the students, such as life-skills information as included in the outcomes-based education programme.

5.3 Information sources

5.3.1 Informal sources and providers

Parent was rated the most important **source of information** by the respondents, **54** (50%), followed by **friend** with **48** (44%), whilst **self** had **29** (27%) responses and **siblings** and **relatives** appeared **22** (20%) and **15** (13%) times respectively. **Past experience** which appeared **14** (13%) times also formed part of the **informal sources**. This means that about

30% of the sources used by the students were informal with more than half of them rated above half, of the identified sources, as important.

Based on the study, informal sources are sources used or accessed by the respondents like parents, friend, self, siblings, relatives and past experience. These sources are referred to by Bekker and Lategan (1988: 64) and Manaka (1997: 32) as more orally cultured and are used mainly by people in black urban areas. Krikelas (1983: 71) refers to an information source where the user has generated information using memory or personal files. Dervin (1983: 174), Bekker and Lategan (1988: 64), September (1993: 75) and Manaka (1997: 32) agree that people use their own experience to provide information for themselves and their second most used category is friends, family members and relatives. Krikelas (1983: 72) alleges that user studies reveal that individuals prefer human contact to external sources, hence many authors find that youth use peers as their information providers because of easy accessibility (Mayekiso and Twaise 1993: 23; Olivier 1996: 7; Buysse 1996: 261). Kuhl *et al* (1996: 638-9) find that it is mostly the emotionally disturbed youth who seek comfort from friends. It has also been found that although many respondents identified parents as their major source of information, other studies on black adolescents found that parents do not discuss sexuality with their youth. This has been seen as a cultural problem. Zaaiman, Roux and Rykheer (1990: 38) are concerned over the inaccuracy and incompleteness of information youth gets. They are concerned that people tend not to admit that they do not know and they give what suits their needs and not those of the user or seeker. Krikelas (1983: 72) argues that most of the time people do not consider the accuracy of the information but its convenience. Harmon and Bradburn (1988:24-6) and Martin (1989:107) are also concerned about the threatening situation where youth are getting inaccurate information from

the streets or never know the existence of inaccurate information. They advise that librarians and libraries must intervene in showing youth the importance of libraries so youth can get accurate information from knowledgeable sources and not from the streets. Youth tend to use this street information because they think it is the only information available.

The researcher concludes that the informal sources used by these students can give erroneous information. The reasons may be that they are more tuned to oral culture and the problems experienced by the youth today are more complex and require more relevant information. Parents need to be informed of problems encountered by their children.

Workshops and classes need to be organized to update them on the problems at the forefront of the child's experience and to offer them ways of arriving at the solutions. Schools or public libraries can organize these workshops and/or classes. The students need to be encouraged to read to their parents so that they can develop a bond between them which will contribute to the openness of both parties.

5.3.2 Formal sources and providers

Teacher, books, television are identified as information providers and sources mostly used by respondents. **Teacher** rated the **most used information source** with **56** (52%) and came third as **the most important source** on a rating scale of 1 to 3. **Books** were identified 50 (46%) times, followed by **television** and **social worker**, **31**(29%) and **27** (25%) counts respectively. **Radio** and **police** appeared **19** (18%) and **6** (6%) times.

Dervin (1983: 158) states that people are not interested in using formal information sources as is also seen in the study. Myburgh and Smith (1990: 10-2) confirm the findings of the study that black students use

teachers as their information sources more than their other counterparts, whilst white students use their parents mostly. The ratings of the use of media by students are rather low. In a study by Fourie (1990: 303), it is revealed that **reading** by adolescents declined after the introduction of **television** but returned to normal after the novelty of television had worn off. He claims that the cinema and **radio** which once served informational and entertainment needs now serve more social functions. It has also been found that the increase in **television** viewing and frequent use of records and audio cassettes (and now the addition of compact discs) have contributed to a further decline in **radio** listening, as seen in the lowest ratings in the study. He adds that the less time spent in viewing television can be attributed not only to increasing school work but to social obligations such as sports activities (especially on week-ends), listening to music, going to cinemas and talking to friends. It was found that there was an increase in the reading of magazines and books and that this impacted on television viewing. Dervin (1983: 158) argues that media especially television is used as the major information source and that the use of books, newspapers and magazines as information sources is very low. Amey (1985: 45-8) views printed material as more used by adolescents than non-printed resources. The use of the **social worker** is supported by Manaka (1997: 32) who states that when an individual belongs to a literate group, s/he expands his/her information providers by using professional advice from schools, professional agencies and associations, and so on. Dervin (1983: 158) adds that the use of formal information groups is on a subset of situations where other attempts have failed and outside forces are pressuring them.

5.3.3 Other information sources and providers

Surprising responses were those regarding **churches** and **priest**. Although only **28** (26%) respondents chose these two **information**

sources and/or providers, the researcher found it to be a positive note on the coping skills of youth, because of the view by Wright, Frost and Wisecarver (1993: 561) that churches play important role in social support and that tends to be positively related to physical and psychological well-being. Thus it provides a wide variety of stable, predictable relationships that are beneficial especially among adolescents.

Under **subjects about which youth would like to obtain information**, **30** (26%) respondents identified religion as their area of interest and it was rated eighth by **18** respondents as important on the rating scale of 1 to 3. There were other information providers that were listed like career guidance teacher and /or career advisor by **five** respondents.

In Omotoso's (1993: 24) study the black urban youth identified religion as their hobby and area of interest. Kruger and Gouws (1994: 10) also state that religion forms part of the youth's normative development. They perceive religious development in the youth as a way to acquire values and norms that guide them to distinguish between "correct" or "acceptable", "wrong" or "unacceptable" behavior by members of their community. Manaka (1997: 34) agrees that religion is one of the factors that describe the black environment. Wright, Frost and Wisecarver (1993: 560-1) believe that religion helps adolescents to cope with their depression and suicidal ideation. They report that church attendance and perception on religion is a positive force in the lives of the young people when they are faced with problems such as suicide, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and so on. Everatt and Orkin of CASE (1993: 8) also recommend churches as having a major role to play in programmes that aim at reaching youth especially females.

The researcher agrees with Wright, Frost and Wisecarver (1993: 560-1) that the youth need programmes that provide them with social support and a purpose for living. They need to be brought up in church, not just to be churchgoers but to identify themselves with specific roles in the church. The priests and pastors of the church need to be involved in the information provision process for the youth and be given a role to play especially with life and survival information, coping skills and even career programmes. Therefore the library needs to form a relationship with the church and its ministers to provide information in a way that is suitable for them to fulfil youth's information needs.

5.4 Subjects about which the youth would like to obtain information

Apart from **careers** and **school work** which have already been discussed under sections 5.2.3.4 and 5.2.3.2 as the most important subjects, the respondents identified their **rights, family life, child abuse, health and money matters** among the main **subjects about which they would like to obtain information** with frequencies of between **51 (44%)** and **38 (32%)**. **Alcohol, sex, violence, fashion, politics and rape** were identified between **20 (17%)** and **15 (13%)** times. **Homosexuality, drugs and peer pressure** were rated lowest between **14 (12%)** and **11 (9%)**. Alcohol, sex, violence, drugs and rape, amongst others, have been identified as rife in black townships and it is thus baffling that they were not raised by the youth as most important subjects. This could be due to the fact that they find it difficult to be open about those issues.

This study shows a slight change in the prioritization of information needs of the youth since the study by Moller (1991:28). Their problems are more career-oriented, family or socially based and personal. Braungart and Braungart (1995: 77), Olivier (1996:7), De Visser and Le Roux (1996: 98) support the finding that one of the pressures of everyday life for the youth

is the lack of job opportunities, socio-economic factors and career opportunities. In a study by Hlongwane and Basson (1990: 39), they identify health, sexuality and fashion in the top list whereas in this study only health appears amongst the higher priorities. The findings of this study relate more closely to Millward's (1994: 7) findings which were obtained in Johannesburg as opposed to Moller's (1991: 28) findings in Durban where teenage pregnancy, unemployment, education and training, political conflict, housing, inadequate leisure facilities, crime and physical safety rated between 65% and 15%.

The findings show that the youth need information other than their school-related information. They need information to survive and to support their families. Zaaiman, Roux and Rykheer (1990:38) stated that these young people need information to cope with broken homes and high incidence of crime and alcoholism. They need information on small-business projects and hints on saving money. Their families rely on them because they are the most literate group. One of the major needs for information amongst African youth is related to economic pressure which was identified as 66% in a study by Everatt and Orkin for CASE. In addition Everatt and Orkin (1993: 12) identified economic pressure (66%) as one of the reasons African youth stop education. These young people need information on their rights at home, at school, as citizens and in their communities. Myburgh and Smith (1990: 157) and Brickmayer (1988: 165) believe in strong interpersonal relationships between adults and youth. They argue that they need their families to help them fit into their societies, in the information explosion and the use of technology and the rapidly changing world around them.

The researcher concludes that although the youth have identified their need for information other than their school-related ones, they have not

responded as well as expected to crucial aspects like health, rape, violence, sex, and drugs as expected. It is vital for libraries to educate people about their rights to speak especially about abuse, rape and HIV/AIDS. The researcher believes that youth are easily misguided either by their boy or girlfriends or friends generally concerning the use of protection against sexually transmitted diseases. At this stage they need their parents and other primary group associations like the church to endorse moral values, parental love, guidance and support.

5.5

CONCLUSION

This study, through the use of identified methods, has found that the youth do have information needs other than their school-related ones. These needs for information include amongst others self-education, solving a problem, keeping up-to-date with news and reaching a decision. Information on school-work, career, family life, rights and health dominated subjects on information needed. The study also found that youth use informal sources more often than formal sources. The informal information providers and/or sources they use are parents, friends, self, past experiences, relatives and siblings. The formal sources they use most are teachers, books, magazines, newspapers and social worker. Based on the above findings, the researcher concludes that libraries need to promote both media usage and various forms of printed and audio-visual materials. They also need to provide less formal settings in order to accommodate the viewing of television time with friends. The libraries should promote teenagers' reading, viewing and listening abilities by selecting television programmes like literacy programmes and books that relate to their age. In order for the library to attract young users, the latest media and reading material should be included in the library stock or there is a possibility of the library being abandoned or rejected by the youth.

Based on the above findings, recommendations are made in the next section.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS

The following recommendations emerge from the study:

- The library needs to join forces with other organisations, government or commissions and educate people about that most basic resource, information.
- There is an urgent need for information searching skills in the youth. These skills are needed to locate, collect, analyze, critically evaluate and use information, including information from electronic sources.
- The library has to provide information on youth's educational, social, family-related and personal needs. This is what we can term an "inside-job" whereas the library is required to adopt programmes that will help youth with the aforementioned needs. Because this is the first library in the township, there is a need to promote the importance of a library amongst the population at large so that the parents, teachers and communities help the library assist with the problems experienced by youth.
- Because the library will be dealing with a large number of youth, they need to share resources and co-operate with other surrounding libraries (high school, technical and technikon) in order to meet the diverse and ever-changing needs of youth.
- Communication amongst teachers, librarians and pupils is a top priority at present.
- Promotion of leisure activities by libraries will enable students to see reading as an enjoyable activity and also develop other potential skills.

- Parents, teachers and youth need to be involved in the information process because they are used as a viable source. They need to share information that will enable youth to make accurate, informed decisions. Programmes set up need to include all of them so that they can learn to trust, respect and learn from each other and in times of troubles share their experiences openly. This can also be done by the provision of literature that touches on these aspects of their lives.
- Libraries need to promote media usage and other forms of printed and audio-visual materials. Most important is the need to provide less formal settings and viewed programmes should include literacy programmes.
- Youth's information needs are determined by their developmental period. During this period they need not separate themselves from their beliefs and community values, hence the relationship with the church is important. Church programmes with the help of the library will guide and nurture the youth.
- The library needs to provide counselling and help groups with consultations on financial, legal, social and personal aspects. Students volunteers, social workers and unemployed teachers can help.

5.7

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There are issues and aspects raised in the research that need to be taken up but due to the limitations of the study they cannot be discussed at length. These aspects include the following:

- ✓ The site of the study provides an ideal one for an impact study once the library has been in operation for, say, a year. This present study provides the baseline data. It would be instructive to draw on Wyley's (1997) research in this endeavour.

- ✓ Regarding the role of information in youth development and communities discussed extensively in the study some people do not know if they have information needs. A study needs to be conducted on the impact of information on young people's lives. This needs to include information searching skills, information evaluation and use.
- ✓ The impact of the various information sources and/or information providers on youth needs to be investigated.
It has been shown that information sources and/or information providers play a central role in the lives of the youth. It has also been identified that some of these information providers can be categorized as informal sources. It is vital to show how this affects the lives of youth in terms of stability, reliability and consistency in problem-solving and decision making. The parent has been identified as an important source but at the same time parents are not fulfilling that responsibility especially in subjects like sex. Parents need to be informed and educated so that they can be viable sources and become open with their children.
- ✓ The role of teachers in information provision requires investigation. It has been documented that teachers, especially the ones in black schools, do not use libraries as an information source. Their role in promoting libraries to their students is questionable. There is a need for teachers to identify the library as a central information provider so that students can follow suit.
- ✓ There is a need to look closely at outcomes-based education and the role that parent, teacher, library and student has to play in improving its success so that each benefits from the process. This will help

information provision to become an enjoyable exercise for everyone thereby promoting a bond amongst the providers and sources.

- ✓ The library's co-operation with other community organisations like churches should be addressed in a study. The church has been identified many times as a powerful organisation that can be used to impact on people's lives especially black youth. The library can strengthen its relations with churches in order to uplift, from grassroots, the community values and individual persona (self-identity). This can eliminate escalating problems like rape, sex at earlier ages, AIDS, drugs and others.

- ✓ A study surveying more generally the information needs of unemployed, employed, handicapped, school-going youth and convicted youth more generally is needed.

5.8

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The study set out to explore the information needs of high school students in the Mdantsane township based on the view that high school students have other information needs other than their school-related ones. This was to be achieved by establishing their information needs and purposes for needing information by identifying the existing information providers and sources.

It is also argued in the study that information is an asset that improves human potential. The study also stipulates factors that affect information needs of individuals like occupation, information sources available to satisfy the need and environmental factors such as social, socio-political-economic and decision-making factors and curriculum-related needs were also included. The youth and their developmental needs were reviewed in

the sense that they are at a certain stage of development with intellectual, emotional and social qualities which develop in different ways and at different times of life. It was also imperative to explore widely on black youth in South Africa, to look for commonalities and their problems and how the present education system impacts on them. A major role played by libraries in satisfying youth's information needs was looked at critically.

This final chapter interpreted the data found in the survey under the headings: age of respondents; information needs which include the need for information, the motive to find information and the purpose of the need for information and lastly, information sources and providers which are classified as informal, formal and other sources or providers and integrated it with the information gathered from the literature. The conclusion is followed by recommendations and suggestions for further research.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

BULELWA RUBUSHE (962115872) is a registered Masters student in this Department for the year 1998. Any assistance that she receives relating to her research will be greatly appreciated.

PROFESSOR A M KANIKI
Head
Department of Information Studies

2338 N.U. 1
Mdantsane Township
5219

10 November 1998

Dear Student

I am a Masters student registered in the Department of Information Studies at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am conducting a survey for my Masters thesis and I am therefore requesting you to respond the questions which are aimed at establishing your information needs. The findings of the study will be very useful in the planning of a library which is going to be built in Mdantsane township. I request you to answer the questions honestly and I assure you that your responses will be kept confidential.

Your co-operation will be most appreciated.

Yours sincerely



B. Rubushe (Miss)

Questionnaire

An exploratory study of the information needs of secondary school students in Mdantsane township, Eastern Cape.

A. Biographical Data

Please put a cross on the relevant box.

1.

Male	Female
------	--------

2. How old are you?

15yrs and below	16 – 20 yrs	21 yrs and above
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3. In which unit do you live?
(e.g N.U. 1, N.U. 2, etc).....

4. In what category do your subjects fall?

General	Commercial	Science	Mechanical	Other (specify).....
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B. Information needs

5. Do you ever experience a need for information?

Yes	No	Don't know
-----	----	------------

6. If YES to 5 above, how often do you experience this need for information?

Always	Rarely	Sometimes	Never
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7. If YES, do you attempt to find the information you need?

Yes	No
-----	----

8. If NO to 7 above, explain why.....
.....
.....

9. If you do attempt to find the information you need, do you get the information?

Yes	No
-----	----

10. If yes to 9 above, how often do you get the information you need?

Always	Rarely	Sometimes	Never
--------	--------	-----------	-------

11. What is the purpose of your need for information? (Put an "x" in the relevant box – you may choose more than one)

Recreation/leisure	
Self-education	
School purposes	
Keep up to date with news (local, national & international)	
Reaching a decision	
Answering a question	
Solving a problem	
Other (specify).....	

12. Rate the purpose(s) of your need for information in 11 above according to degree of importance (1 representing = most important; last number = least important)

Recreational/leisure	
Self-education	
School purposes	
Keeping up to date with news (local, national & international)	
Reaching a decision	
Answering a question	
Solving a problem	
Other (selected in 11)	

13. Which of the following sources do you access to get information? (Put an "x" in relevant boxes- you may choose more than one).

Self		Newspaper	
Past experience		Magazine	
Parent		Priest	
Sibling (brother/sister)		Police	
Friend		Television	
Relative		Radio	
Social worker		Community leader	
Teacher		Church	
Novels		Library	
Books		Other(specify).....	

14. Rate the sources selected in 13 above according to the degree of usefulness (1=most useful; last number = least useful).

Self		Newspaper	
Past experience		Magazine	
Parent		Priest	
Sibling (brother/sister)		Police	
Friend		Television	
Relative		Radio	
Social worker		Community leader	
Teacher		Church	
Novels		Library	
Books		Other(specify).....	

15. On which subjects would you like to get information (Put an X in the relevant box -- you may choose more than one).

Your rights	Sex	Religion	
Drugs	Rape	Violence	
Alcohol	Health	Child abuse	
Family life	Homosexuality	School work	
Peer pressure	Politics	Money matters	
Careers	Fashions	Other (specify).....	

16. Rate the subjects indicated in 15 above according to degree of importance (1=most important; last number = least important).

Your rights	Sex	Religion	
Drugs	Rape	Violence	
Alcohol	Health	Child abuse	
Family life	Homosexuality	School work	
Peer pressure	Politics	Money matters	
Careers	Fashion	Other (specified above).....	

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation in answering these questions.

