



CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Any scientific research involves the application of various methods (also referred to as strategies or approaches) and procedures to create scientific knowledge (Welman and Kuger, 1999:2). The validity of this knowledge largely depends on the manner in which data has been collected, which is the research methodology. Thus, scientific knowledge is obtained through rigorous methods and techniques that in some controllable way correspond to the social world that is being described.

A variety of methods and techniques are available for social research. Some are quantitative, while others are of a qualitative nature. The selection of methods and their application depends on the aims and objectives of the study, the nature of the phenomena being investigated and the underlying theories or expectations of the research. Each strategy offers a particular and unique perspective that illuminates certain aspects of reality more easily; and, produces a type of result better suited for some applications than others. In Public Administration, research consists of a purposeful and systematic investigation of behaviour, processes and techniques in the administration of public institutions in order to describe, explain, and predict certain phenomena pertaining to particular behaviour patterns, processes, and techniques (Botes, 1995:26). Consequently, a qualitative approach, and more specifically a case study approach, was selected to describe and analyse the African Peer Review Mechanism. It is important to recall (as highlighted in chapter I) that the African Peer Review Mechanism is an instrument, the function of which is to monitor the performance of African governments in the areas of political, economic, corporate and socio-economic governance, and to propose remedial action to attain political stability, economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. Furthermore, the need for a comprehensive analysis of the rather complex and unique instrument of the APRM led to the adoption of

the “intrinsic case study” method. In this approach, the case is not selected because it is representative of a larger population; rather the case is studied simply because of its uniqueness (Stake, 1998:88). This chapter reviews the types of research approaches, it discusses in detail the selected research method, and outlines the research design followed to gather, analyse and interpret data for this study. The methodology followed is outlined, taking cognisance of the validity, reliability and ethics of the research process.

RESEARCH APPROACHES

Not all knowledge of the social world is scientific knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired through learning, experience, or self-reflection about phenomena. Mouton calls this “lay knowledge”, which is used to solve daily problems and to gain insight about certain phenomena in the world (Mouton, 2001:138). Knowledge becomes scientific when subjected to systematic and rigorous enquiry. The following are the core features of scientific knowledge:

- Scientific knowledge is obtained by means of systematic observation, which is clearly different from accidental/selective observation.
- Scientific knowledge is obtained in a controlled manner, that is scientific research adheres to a set of rules of inference on which its validity depends.
- The manner in which scientific knowledge is obtained is controlled and replicable. This means that the procedures (arguments, choice of data, collection and analysis of data, interpretation and conclusions, etc.) of scientific research are submitted to the careful and critical evaluation of other members of the scientific community for assessment of their reliability. (Huysamen, 1994:5-6)

Thus, it is the systematic application of the “method” that is central to scientific research. As noted in King, Keohane, and Verba (1994:9),



The field of science is unlimited; its material is endless; every group of natural phenomena, every phase of social life, every stage of past or present development is material for science. The unity of all science consists alone in its method not its material.

In social science research, the main criterion of distinction between research methods is their qualitative versus quantitative nature.

QUALITATIVE VERSUS QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The term *quantitative research* refers to those approaches that strive to formulate laws that apply to populations and which explain the causes of objectively observable and measurable behaviour (Welman and Kruger, 1999:7). *Quantitative* research emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationship between variables not processes. Quantitative researchers take a linear path, and are more likely to use explicit, standardised procedures and a causal explanation (Neuman, 2000:154).

In contrast, the term *qualitative research* is used to describe a set of non-statistical inquiry techniques and processes used to gather data about social phenomena. Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2). According to Creswell (1998:15), qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. There is wide consensus from these definitions that qualitative research is a naturalistic and interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings that people attach to phenomena in their social worlds. Qualitative research is characterised by the following:

- Qualitative research aims at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the meanings that people (research participants)

attach to their social worlds.

- Samples are small in scale and are selected purposively on the basis of salient criteria.
- Data collection methods usually involve close contact between the researcher and the participants, which allows for the emergent issues to be explored.
- Data is rich, extensive and detailed.
- Analysis is open to emergent concepts and ideas, which may produce detailed description, identify patterns of association or develop typologies and explanations.
- Results tend to focus on the interpretation of social meaning through representing the social world of research participants. (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:5)

A researcher chooses the qualitative approach, either because the nature of the research questions can best be answered through an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon; or the variables cannot be easily identified. Similarly, qualitative research is appropriate in cases where theories are not available to explain the behaviour of participants or their population of study, or when the researcher needs to present a detailed view of the topic. Qualitative approaches recognise that the issue they are studying has many dimensions and layers, and so they try to portray the issue in its multifaceted form (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:8). Qualitative research encompasses several approaches that are, in some respects, quite different from one another. Yet, all qualitative methods have two things in common: they focus on understanding the phenomena that occur in natural settings; and, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity. The following have proved to be popular and frequently used: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study (Creswell, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Neuman, 2000; Mouton, 2001).



BIOGRAPHY

The term biography refers to the broad genre of biographical writings that includes individual biographies, autobiographies, life histories, and oral histories (Cresswell, 1998:47). This strategy is used to report on and document an individual's life and his or her experience as told to the researcher or found in documents and archival material. The methods of data collection in this strategy are primarily interviews and documents, with a detailed picture of an individual's life being the product of the research (Plummer, 1983:14). The weakness of this approach is that biographers cannot edit out their own biases and values; thus, biographies become gendered class productions reflecting the lives of the writers (Denzin, 1989). Biographical research may be valuable in Public Administration, especially in the area of leadership when, for example, the researcher is attempting to construct the life of a leader and record their leadership qualities and experience and their impact on public institutions processes. However, the biographical approach is limited to the construction of the life story of an individual; thus the method is not appropriate to describe and analyse the APRM.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is an approach that describes the meaning that lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept has for various individuals (Cresswell, 1998:51). Phenomenology studies conscious experience ranging from perception, memory, imagination, thought, emotion, desire, to bodily awareness, and social activity, as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view. In order to understand and interpret the meaning of lived experience of a phenomenon, the researcher must experience these phenomena as the people involved must have experienced them; in other words, the researcher must be able to enter the subject's "life world" or "life setting" and place him/her self in the shoes of the subject (Welman and Kruger, 1999:189). Phenomenological research relies on a variety of methods including participant observation, discussion and long interviews (up to ten



people), as methods of data collections (Cresswell, 1998:55). The objective is to gain rich descriptions of the experience being studied and to be as faithful as possible to the meanings attributed to the experience by the participants. As a social science research method, phenomenology is best suited for research in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and health sciences in general (Cresswell, 1998:52). Thus, this method was rejected. Phenomenology is inappropriate to analyse an instrument, such as the APRM, which humans cannot experience because the objective of this study is not to understand the meaning that individuals give to the APRM as a lived experience.

GROUNDED THEORY

A grounded theory approach is used to generate or discover a theory; an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, that is a theory that explains some action, interaction or process (Cresswell, 1998:56). The grounded theory is concerned exclusively with the generation, rather than the testing of theory (Mark, 1996:214). The major feature of grounded theory is that the researcher develops or generates a theory of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, the research begins with the data and these are used to develop a theory. The theory generated is articulated towards the end of the study, and can take the form of a narrative statement, a visual picture or a series of hypotheses (Cresswell, 1998:56). According to Babbie (2001:284), grounded theory allows the researcher to be scientific and creative at the same time, as long as the researcher follows three guidelines: first, he/she periodically steps back and reviews the data; second he/she maintains an attitude of scepticism; and third, he/she follows the research procedures. Again, this approach was not selected as the purpose of the study is not to develop a theory from the Africa peer review process.

ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is a description and interpretation of a socio-cultural group or system based primarily on observations over a prolonged period of time spent by the researcher in the field. The ethnographer examines the group



observable and learned patterns of behaviour, customs, and ways of life (Creswell, 1998:58). The strategy is typically conducted through participant observation, in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people, or through one-on-one interviews with members of the group. The researcher interprets the behaviour, language, and interactions of the cultural group. The final product is a descriptive, holistic cultural portrait of the group, which results in an empathetic view of the way of life as observed by the ethnographer (Rubi and Babbie, 2001:391). In Public Administration, ethnographic research can be used to answer such questions as those on public service delivery and issues of maintenance and sustainability of services that governments provide to communities. However, it was not deemed as suitable an approach for the present project as the case study approach.

CASE STUDY

The research method used to describe, analyse and interpret the APRM is a “case study”. Yin (1994:13) describes the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, and particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. According to Creswell (1998:61), a case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” (bounded by time or place) or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. Babbie (2001:285) notes that there is little consensus on what may constitute a case or a “bounded system”. Indeed, there is often a fine line between the case and its context.

Stake (1998:88-89) distinguishes three types of case study: the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study, and the collective case study.

The *intrinsic case study* is undertaken when the researcher wants a better understanding of that particular case. It is not undertaken because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest. In the context of an *instrumental case study*, the case is of



secondary interest; it plays a supportive role facilitating the understanding of something else, such as an insight into a problem or refinement of a theory. An in-depth analysis of the case is carried out, its contexts scrutinised and its activities detailed. This is done because it helps the researcher to pursue the external interest. The choice of the case is made because it is expected to help understand the initial interest that prompted the research. Stake notes, however, that there is no line separating intrinsic from instrumental study because researchers have several interests that often keep on changing (Stake, 1998:88). Finally, there is the *collective case study*, which extends to the analysis of several cases. The researcher selects multiple cases to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of inquiry, or to build or expand a theory. Therefore, a collective case study is not the study of a collective, but an instrumental study extended to many cases (Stake, 1998:89). The case under study may be a process, activity, event, a period of time, a programme, an individual or multiple individuals.

Despite variation in the methodological orientation to the case, case studies have one thing in common: they are “multi-perspectival” in approach. This means that the researcher analyses the case in its broader context, including aspects such as the historical background, physical setting (political, economic, social, cultural, ethical), and other cases through which the case is recognised (Stake, 1998:90). Case study researchers usually gather data on all these aspects. This is why case study is known as a triangulated research strategy (Stake, 1998).

According to Denzin (1984), triangulation may occur with data, investigators, theories and even methodologies. *Data source triangulation* is used when the researcher looks for similar data in different contexts or sources. *Investigator triangulation* refers to the use of several investigators to examine the same phenomenon. *Theory triangulation* denotes the interpretation of same results by investigators with different viewpoints; and *methodological triangulation* refers to the use of several research approaches, to increase confidence in the interpretation (in Tellis, 1997 at www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-3/tellis2).

[html#denzin/accessed, 10 December 2005](#)).

Furthermore, it is argued that a case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of object to be studied (Stake, 1998:86). This is consistent with the manner in which this study was conducted. This study explores, describes and analyses the African Peer Review Mechanism within the paradigm of a systems approach. The analysis of the APRM is done within its wider socio-political, economic, and cultural environment, which is explained below.

SYSTEMS APPROACH

Systems theory was developed during the 1940s by social scientists using systems analysis to analyse human behaviour in organizations. Systems theory views an organization as a complex set of dynamically intertwined and interconnected elements. The system includes inputs, processes, outputs, feedback loops, negative entropy, and equilibrium among the systemic components and the environment in which the system operates (Jones, and Olson, 1996:119).

In Public Administration, the systems approach is regarded as one of the most valuable tools for the purposes of policy analysis (Cloete and Wissink, 2000:39). Cloete and Wissink notes that the value of the systems model lies in the framework it provides, which describes the relationships between the demands, the political system and the outputs in terms of stabilizing the environment or triggering new demands (Cloete and Wissink, 2000). Below, a simplified figure of the systems model of analysis is illustrated.

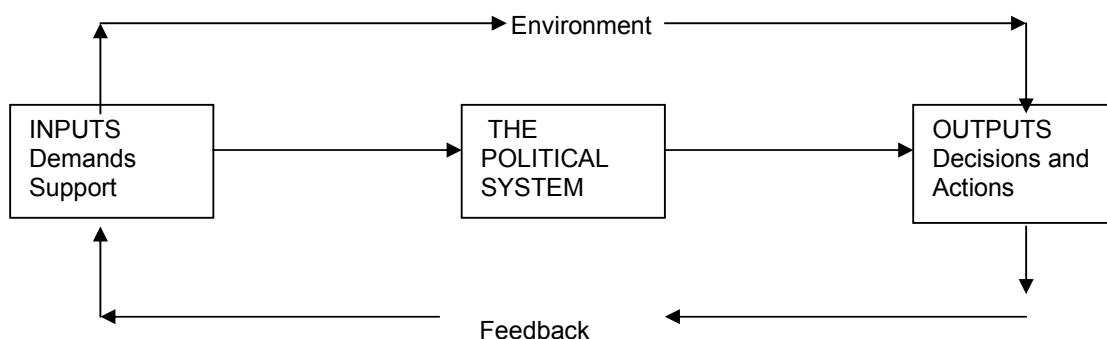


Figure 2.1: A simplified systems model (Adapted from Easton 1965:32)

In policy analysis, the basic questions raised by a systems approach are: how do environmental factors affect the character of the political system? How do characteristics of the political system affect the process of policy-making and the content of public policies? How do environmental factors affect the outcome of the policy process? How effective is the feedback process? Thus, the systems approach allows an understanding of a phenomenon in its broader context.

The systems approach allowed this present study to examine the case of the African Peer Review Mechanism in its wider system, that is, in the African governance system and in the international system. Aspects such as the influence of the international environment (mainly donors and multilateral development agencies), the African (continental) perspectives and national views on the APRM were scrutinised. Furthermore, the systems approach was used to analyse the dynamics of interactions between the process of the APRM and its environment. Briefly, the systems approach helped to explore the APRM in its wider system, which is made up of many subsystems including regional, national and international as well as economic, social, cultural, and political influences and interactions with the mechanism. Using a systems approach, a clear description of the APRM emerged: how it operates, the responses from its environment and how they affect its effectiveness. Proposals for improving the APRM are also developed in a systems approach context.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is defined as “a plan” or blueprint of how the researcher intends to conduct his/her research” (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:74). The researcher designs a frame of guidelines and instructions that show who is subject to research, how to get information from informants, and all procedures to collect and analyse data. Conventionally, the research design is made of these key components: research question, what data to collect, data collection methods, and data analysis (Yin, 1994). The research design is therefore a full proof of how one has conducted the research and arrived at

the conclusions.

The research design serves several purposes. First, it suggests the necessary information the researcher needs to gather to provide answers to the research question. Secondly, the research design outlines the analytical procedures one needs to use when analyzing the data. Thirdly, and most importantly, the research design helps the researcher to eliminate or at least minimise as much bias as possible (Guy, Edgley, Arafat and Allen, 1987:94). However, it should be noted that unlike in quantitative research where a mechanistic process must be followed, in qualitative research, the researcher has the flexibility to revise the research design appropriately for the purposes of the research. These revisions and reconsiderations must take place according to explicit procedures consistent with the rules of inference in the objective of ensuring validity (King, et al. 1994:12). Thus, the research design prevents both internal and external factors from interfering with research processes, and consequently ensures the validity and reliability of research findings and the acceptability of the research in the discipline in which it is rooted. This study closely follows the plan designed by Yin (1994) for case study's design. Yin proposed five main components of a case study research:

- A study's questions
- Its propositions (if any)
- Its unit(s) of analysis
- The logic linking the data to the propositions
- The criteria for interpreting the findings. (Yin, 1994:20)

This study attempts to respond to the question: "To what extent can the APRM address the political governance issues in Africa?" This research question can be best answered only through an in-depth exploration and analysis of the mechanism itself. Thus, this study is an intrinsic case study. The study focuses on the APRM as a unit of analysis because it is new and unique as an instrument of governance in Africa. Thus, the intrinsic value of



the APRM (expected contribution of the APRM to good governance in Africa) drew the researcher towards focusing on the instrument itself in order to determine its capacity and challenges. The propositions are detailed in Chapter 1 together with the logic linking the propositions and data collected during the literature review. The criteria for interpreting the findings are explained in the following steps, which outline data collection process and data analysis.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Creswell (1998: 110) sees data collection as a circle of a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering information to answer research questions. It involves locating the site or individual(s) to study, gaining access and establishing rapport so that participants will be willing to provide information, determining strategy for purposeful sampling of site or individual(s) and determining the rationale for the selected site or individual. After deciding on the site or people, the researcher needs to choose the appropriate data collection approaches, which range from e-mail messages to interviews, observations, documents and so on. Considering potentially difficult issues on the field is also important. The process ends with the storage data. However, the most important rule for all data collection is to report how the data was created and acquired (King, et al. 1994:51). This implies a detailed presentation of techniques and procedures of data collection.

As stated, this study seeks to understand the challenges of the new development plan for Africa (NEPAD) by focusing on the governance monitoring mechanism “APRM”. In a qualitative case study, the exploration and description of the case take place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, which involve multiples sources of information such as observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, and documents and reports (Creswell, 1998:62) as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case. This has been referred to as “triangulation”.

Stake (1998:96) defines triangulation as the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or



interpretation. He further notes that given the fact that no observations or interpretations can be perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves to clarify the meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen. Through triangulation, the researcher minimises the limitations associated with one method or the specific application of it; thus, triangulation offers the prospect of enhanced confidence of findings. Yin (1994:80) identifies six sources of information:

- Documentation,
- Archival records,
- Interviews,
- Direct observation,
- Participant observation, and
- Physical artefacts.

All the sources have advantages and weaknesses as captured in the table below. Thus, a case study research should use as many sources as are relevant to the study.

Table 2.1: Types of Sources of Evidence

Source of data	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	Stable/ repeated review Unobtrusive/ exist prior to case study Exact/ names etc. Broad coverage/ extended time span	Retrievability is difficult Biased selectivity Reporting bias/ reflects author bias Access/ may be blocked
Archival records	Same as above Precise and quantitative	Same as above Privacy might limit access
Interviews	Targeted/ focuses on case study topic Insightful/ provides perceived causal inferences	Bias due to poor questions Response bias Incomplete recollection Reflexivity/ interviewee expresses what interviewer wants to hear
Direct observation	Reality/ covers events in real time Contextual/ covers event context	Time-consuming Selectivity/ might miss facts Reflexivity/ observer's presence might cause change
Participant observation	Same as above Insightful into interpersonal behaviour	Same as above Bias due to investigator's actions
Physical artefacts	Insightful into cultural features Insightful into technical operations	Selectivity Availability

Source: Yin (1994:80)



To analyse the APRM and answer the research question, this study used documentation, archival records and interviews.

DOCUMENTARY SEARCH

Documentary information is important in a case study because it supports and argues evidence from other sources. This type of information can be obtained from various sources – letters, memoranda, and other communiqués, agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, administrative documents (proposals, progress reports, and other internal documents, formal studies done on the same case (cases), newspapers, and other articles appearing in the mass media (Yin, 1994).

The documentation search was used from primary and secondary sources. Primary data refers to new information collected by the researcher for the study, whereas, “secondary data” is the information from already published sources (McNabb, 2004:90). Primary data collection might mean conducting a survey with a questionnaire, personal interviews, content analysis of published documents or conducting an experiment. Secondary data can be found from various publications in libraries, on the Internet, or among other sources. Primary data was obtained from content analysis of official documents on the African Peer Review Mechanism.

1. Official documents on the African Peer Review Mechanism

- The New Partnership for Africa’s Development, October 2001
- Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance (AHG/235 (XXXVIII) Annex I)
- African Peer Review Mechanism Base Document (AHG/235 (XXXVIII) Annex II)
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the African Peer Review Mechanism (NEPAD/HSGIC/03-2003/APRM/MOU)
- Objectives, Standards, Criteria, and Indicators for the African Peer



Review Mechanism (NEPAD/HSGIC/03-2003/APRM/Guideline/OSCI)

- African Peer Review Mechanism Organisation and Process (NEPAD/HSGIC/03-2003/APRM/Guideline/O&P)
- Memorandum of Understanding on Technical Assessments and the Country Review Visit (NEPAD/HSGIC/03-2003/APRM/Guideline/Outline).
- Guidelines for Countries to Prepare for and to Participate in the African Peer Review Mechanism (NEPAD/APRM/Panel3/Guidelines/11-2003/Doc8)
- Country Self-Assessment for the African Peer Review Mechanism (Master Questionnaire) October, 2004.
- All communiqués issued by the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee of NEPAD and the APR Forum in relation to the African Peer Review Mechanism
- Constitutive Act of the African Union, Act of 2000

2. Scholarly Literature and Newspapers

This consists of relevant published materials found in libraries and on the Internet on governance and leadership, and on African governance in particular. These sources specifically include scholarly published materials on the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), as well as information from newspapers and articles from the mass media about the above-mentioned institutions and their operations.

ARCHIVAL RECORDS

Archival records are useful in some case studies since they include service records, maps, charts, lists of names, survey data, and even personal records, such as diaries (Yin, 1994:81). Archival records are important in this



study. One of the assumptions of this study links the effectiveness of the APRM with the financial and human capacity of the APR Secretariats both at national and continental level. This implies reviewers with high expertise and adequate financial resources to carry out the peer review. This type of information was obtained from archival records: records of staff and experts engaged in the peer review process and records of financial resources involved. Any information in the archives of the APRM, relevant to an understanding of the operations of the mechanism have been used.

INTERVIEWS

Yin argues that the most important source of case study information is the interview, because most case studies are about human affairs, and human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of people (Yin, 1994:84). A qualitative interview is an interaction, a conversation between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words and in a particular order (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:289). In a qualitative interview, the researcher/interviewer can pursue specific information, and dig it out; or he/she may decide to explore the many domains of the unknown terrain. In the latter perspective, the interviewer wanders along with the informants, and asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

There are different forms of interviews: structured, open-ended and semi-structured. However, interviews in case study are often of an “open ended nature”, in which respondents can provide facts about the case as well as their opinions. The following are steps that are generally used in interview design:

- identify interviewees based on the purposeful sampling;
- determine what type of interview is practical and will produce the most useful information to answer the research questions (focus group, one-

to one or telephone interviews);

- choose adequate recording procedures;
- design the interview protocol (an aid-memoir to help ask relevant questions and remain in the context of the topic being researched),
- determine the place for conducting the interview;
- Obtain consensus from the interviewee to participate in the study. (Yin, 1994:85)

SAMPLING AND SELECTING INFORMANTS

The most critical aspect in the interview process of data collection is to determine where the interview data is going to come from, that is to decide on who will provide the information needed to answer the research questions, which in research is referred to as *sampling*. The first step in sampling is to define clearly the “*population*”. The population refers to an ensemble of objects, phenomena, events, processes or individuals, which have similar characteristics of interest for the research. The second step consists of drawing the sample from the population. The sample must be representative, in other words, it must reflect the image of the population (Mouton, 1996:135). The vital objective of sampling is to obtain generalizations pertaining to a population.

However, as asserted by outstanding researchers in the field of qualitative case studies, case study research is not sampling research (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1998). Case study research is the study of the particular, which does not subscribe to “statistical generalization”. Rather, what is critical in the case study is the unit of analysis (Tellis, 1997) the examination of which must be holistic. Thus, the primary criterion for the researcher when selecting respondents is the opportunity to learn about the case as opposed to the generalization of the observations to a wider population (Stake, 1998:102).

Unstructured, informal interviews were used to increase the number of



sources of information, and thus expand the depth of data collection and the reliability of the findings. Interviews were not about collecting information from active players of the APRM, in particular the Eminent Personalities who provide the leadership to the mechanism, but about getting additional technical views from officials engaged in the APRM process. This approach to interview was chosen because of the newness of the mechanism and its political character which calls for confidentiality of most of its information.

As already mentioned, some of the key players were interviewed to provide operational information otherwise not found in official documentation used for this research. At the APR Secretariat in Midrand, South Africa, the Coordinator of the “Democracy and Political Governance” Review was, for instance, interviewed, because the thematic thrust coincides with the focus of this study, and to give insights about the APR Secretariat. Other interviewees include the Executive Director of NEPAD, the Head of APRM processes, and the Communication and Sensitisation Officer in the NEPAD/APRM in Rwanda in November 2004. It is important to recall that Rwanda and Ghana are the only countries that started the peer review process in June 2004. APRM’ officials in Rwanda were selected for interview simply because this was financially convenient. The interviews in Rwanda were carried out during November 2004. The three main research questions outlined in Chapter 1 were the guiding questions for interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study (Yin, 1994:90). The analysis and interpretation of qualitative data begins with bringing the raw data into some level of order, otherwise the researcher will be inundated with unrelated information that makes logical interpretation impossible. McNabb (2004:367) proposes a six-step procedure for analysing qualitative case study data.



Step 1: Organise the data

Step 2: Generate categories, themes and patterns

Step 3: Code the data

Step 4: Apply the ideas, themes, and categories to data

Step 5: Search for alternatives explanations

Step 6: Write and present the report.

McNabb (2004) notes that data analysis does not always follow the above logical sequence. Some activities may occur at the same time. In short, the researcher must organise data to make sense out of it. Because a case study involves an in-depth analysis using multiple sources of data collection, this may produce a lot of information that is unmanageable. Thus, it is important to organise data into a set of relevant categories, which may be based on key themes of the research. The next step is interpreting the patterns and connections that emerge after organising data. The final step in the process is that of producing a comprehensive narrative of the case, in which the connections between key concepts and study objectives are addressed (McNabb, 2004:367). This study follows the McNabb analytical procedure. The research questions constitute the major themes followed to analyse, organise and report all data collected on the African Peer Review Mechanism.

ETHICS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Issues of ethics, reliability and validity are important, because they provide the basis for assessing the objectivity and credibility of the research. In practice, enhancing objectivity and credibility is a concrete activity, which involves efforts to assure the accuracy and inclusiveness of recordings that the research is based on as well as efforts to test the truthfulness of the analytical claims that are being made about those recordings (Perakyla, 2004:283).



ETHICS

Research *ethics* refers to the application of moral standards to decisions made in planning, conducting and reporting the results of research studies (McNabb, 2004:55). The fundamental ethical standards involved are those that focus on what is right and what is wrong. The literature identifies four practical ethical principles that must be respected in research: *truthfulness, thoroughness, objectivity, and relevance* (McNabb, 2004:55-56). This study has tried to remain faithful to these principles.

The truthfulness principle means that it is unethical for researchers to purposefully lie, deceive or in any way employ fraud. Deliberately misrepresenting the purpose of the study, not informing the informants of possible dangers of participation are some examples of research that fails the truthfulness principle (McNabb, 2004:55).

The thoroughness principle means being methodologically thorough by following all the steps in a study. Furthermore, remaining methodologically thorough means that all the results and findings will be reported – good news and bad (Mitchell, 1998:312).

The objectivity principle refers to the need for the researcher to remain objective and impartial throughout all aspects of the study (McNabb, 2004:56). The researcher should never allow his or her personal feelings or biases to intrude into the design of the study, the selection of informants, asking questions, or interpreting the results.

The principle of relevance refers to the usefulness of the research. The research should never be frivolous, or done because the researcher wants to punish the people or groups involved in subject organisation (McNabb, 2004:56).

VALIDITY

In conventional usage, the term validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under



consideration (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:122). The *validity* of research findings concerns the interpretation of observations: whether or not the researcher is calling what is measured by the right name (Kirk and Miller, 1986:69; Silverman, 2001:232). As already mentioned, to substantiate the validity of the findings, this study triangulated the sources of information, involving documentation, archival records, and interviews.

RELIABILITY

Kirk and Miller (1986:20) define *reliability* as the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research. In qualitative case study, the objective of reliability of research findings is to make sure that if another investigator follows exactly the same procedures and conducts the same case study should arrive at the same findings and conclusions (Yin, 1994:36). Silverman (2001:227) points out that checking the reliability of qualitative research is also closely related to assuring the quality of field notes and guaranteeing the public access to the process of their production. Therefore, the types of instruments used to collect data are critical to ensure whether or not there was maximum inclusiveness of recorded data. To enhance the reliability of this study, a well-detailed research design was developed at the outset of the study, which contains, among other things, research questions and the methodology followed in collecting and analysing data.

CONCLUSION

This chapter reviews the various methods and techniques applicable for qualitative research in social science. Each of these approaches has its unique way of inquiry involving specific procedures, which makes it more appropriate for some issues than others. A case study strategy was used to develop an in-depth analysis of the African Peer Review Mechanism. The holistic analysis of the APRM is done within its wider system, which is the African governance system, in particular, and the global environment, which affects it. Thus, the Easton's systems model was used as an analytic paradigm to guide the case study. Multiple sources of information, including



documentation, interviews and archival records were used to produce as much reliable research data as possible. The methodology followed proved to be adequate to answer the research questions and make scientifically relevant recommendations, which aim to improve the effectiveness of the APRM.