

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION AND ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter encompasses phase four of the intervention research model, namely the evaluation and advanced development. This includes selecting an experimental design, collecting and analysing data, replicating the intervention under field conditions and refining the intervention (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:37-39). The analysis, interpretation and discussion of the results are presented in this chapter. The nature of the study lends itself to the joint presentation of the data analysis and the discussion of the findings. This approach enabled the researcher to establish the links between the research processes, the data gathered and the findings in relation to the purpose of the study.

Large amounts of descriptive data were generated through the research process since this study encompassed programme development, programme implementation, pilot testing and the evaluation of programme outcomes within the model of intervention research developed by Rothman and Thomas (1994). For presentation and discussion it was necessary to select data that were particularly relevant to the purpose and objectives of the study.

Evaluation in intervention research is empirical inquiry directed at determining the effects of the intervention, including its effectiveness. Although there is typically some evaluation of aspects of the intervention at most points of the design and development process, the major emphasis is on systematic outcome evaluation in the phase of evaluation and advanced development. As an integral part of the innovation process, evaluation should be redesigned and developed further. Satisfactory results in evaluation generally provide a basis for progressing to the subsequent phase of dissemination (Rothman & Thomas, 1994: 267).

Advanced development presupposes that initial design and pilot testing have been carried out during the intervention and that which has been learned in the earlier trial use is sufficiently

positive to justify the more systematic appraisal of intervention outcomes. Trail use provides occasions for developmental testing in which an innovation is systematically tested, revised or redesigned. Advanced development therefore involves further developmental testing of the intervention. Such testing provides for the replicated use of interventions that do not need to be revised when they are utilised in essentially the same way as they were designed to be used. As the process of development progresses, the practitioner-researcher moves from one innovation to another innovation and from case to case until most of the interventions in the domain of design and development have been implemented successfully without needing major alterations or redesign. If performed appropriately, the additional developmental testing of the intervention should extend the depth of development and thus enhance its developmental validity (Rothman & Thomas 1994:268).

4.2 THE EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

The present study employed a non-probability sampling procedure, namely that the probability of inclusion in the sample would involve the convenience and availability of the participants. Marlow (1993) adds that non-probability sampling has been frequently employed in social work research and in evaluating social work practice. With non-probability sampling, there is limited support for the claim that the sample is representative of the population from which it is drawn (Gabor, 1993; Patton, 1990). However, this was not a major concern of the present study since its aim was to design, develop and improve programme effectiveness in a specific context.

The sample being studied comprised all the Grade 7 learners at a primary school in Mamelodi. There were 40 learners in the only Grade 7 class and their ages varied from approximately 12 to 16 years. The sample was divided in six smaller groups with 5 to 7 learners in each group (consisting of a more or less equal number of girls and boys) to implement the groupwork method. The groupwork method, in keeping with the ecological paradigm (as discussed in Chapter One), has a dual focus, namely on the individual and on society (and is discussed in paragraph 4.5 below).

The participants varied slightly from one subgroup to another (referred to as small groups) and from session to session. Demographic details were noted during the orientation and in the sixth and final session. These details are presented in Table 4.1

TABLE 4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

N = 40

CHARACTERISTICS	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
GENDER:	
Males	18
Females	22
AGES:	
12 years	9
13 years	12
14 years	10
15 years	8
16 years	1

Table 4.1 indicates that the sample consisted of more females than males. In keeping with the objectives of the study, the sample constituted adolescents with an age range from 12-16 years. Of relevance are the adolescent developmental phase and its higher risk of emotional and social problems. Adolescents are increasingly being seen as an appropriate population at risk for primary prevention programmes to enable them to meet the developmental demands of this period, as mentioned in Chapter Two.

As stated in Chapter One, a descriptive design with a quasi-experiment, the one-group pre-test-post-test experiment, was used in this study. The one-group pre-test-post-test design is also referred to as a before-after design because it includes a pre-test of the dependent variable, which can be used as a basis of comparison for the post-test results. The researcher therefore used what Grinnell & Williams (1990:160) refer to as a descriptive pre-test and post-test design. In this study a self-administered pre-test and post-test questionnaire was utilised.

The one-group pre-test design, in which the pre-test (Participant pre-test and post-test questionnaire) (Appendix F) preceded the introduction of the independent variable (the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme) can be used to determine precisely how the independent variable affects a particular group. A post-test (Participant pre-test and post-

test questionnaire) (Appendix F) followed it and could be used to determine precisely how the independent variable affected the Grade 7 learners in a primary school.

To summarise the experiment: The pre-test (questionnaire where learners had to rate their personal and interpersonal life skills on an ordinal scale of 0 to 3) was administered (Appendix F). The Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme was implemented (Appendix E). The post-test (questionnaire where learners had to rate their personal and interpersonal life skills on an ordinal scale of 0 to 3) was administered (Appendix F). There was also a session-by-session evaluation questionnaire to be completed by learners in order to improve the effectiveness of the programme continuously (Appendix G). Lastly, a questionnaire on the evaluation of the programme (usefulness; importance of different modules for participants; methods used; usefulness for personal and interpersonal growth and social competence; most important life skills learnt) was administered (Participant retrospective evaluation questionnaire, Appendix H).

As this was a non-probability or non-randomised sampling method, it is recognised that generalisation should be done with caution, as the sample may not necessarily be representative of early adolescents in general. Therefore it should be stated that any significant findings would be significant for this particular group of learners.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

This phase of the intervention research process centred on data collection and involved the development and implementation of the research instruments. Several data-gathering instruments were used to measure the impact that the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme might have had on participants but owing to the limited scope of a mini master's dissertation, the researcher will report on using the self-administered pre-test and post-test questionnaires (Participant pre-test and post-test questionnaire) (Appendix F) as the main method of data collection. Additional to this was the Participant session-by-session evaluation questionnaire (Appendix G) and the Participant retrospective evaluation questionnaire (Appendix H).

4.3.1 Participant pre-test and post-test questionnaire (Appendix F)

The pre-test measures provided a baseline for gauging the changes in participant responses (Pietrzak, Ramler, Renner, Ford & Gilbert, 1990). Furthermore, in keeping with the objectives of the study, the research design helped to ascertain whether minimum standards of programme outcome had been achieved and the extent to which participants changed during their participation in the programme (Marlow, 1993). Fitz-Gibbon and Morris (1987) state that, depending on the nature of the study, the absence of a comparison group for judging outcomes may be problematic. However, these authors add that this design was suitable in studies that focused on monitoring programme implementation. As programme design and implementation were objectives of the study, the design was regarded as appropriate. The choice of design ought to be viewed against the total triangulation of the methodology in this study. This instrument, Participant pre-test and post-test questionnaire, was one of several data-gathering instruments used to measure the impact that the programme might have had on the participants.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections of statements about personal and interpersonal life skills. The participants were asked to read the sentence and put a tick (✓) at the number that showed how they rated their life skills. Therefore the participants had to rate or assess their life skills on an ordinal scale from 0 to 3 (0= no need for improvement; 1= slight need for improvement; 2= moderate need for improvement and 3= much need for improvement). Jordon, Franklin and Corcoran (1993) indicate that self-ratings are helpful because individuals can evaluate their own thoughts, behaviour and feelings accurately, provided that they are self-aware and willing to be truthful. This questionnaire was also in line with guidelines on outcomes-based assessment with the focus on self-assessment (Department of Education, 2002). Some of the statements relate to what Patton (1987) describes as “feeling” questions, which are aimed at understanding the emotional responses of people to their experiences and thoughts. Other statements can be described as experience/behaviour questions, which are aimed at eliciting descriptions of the experiences, behaviours, actions and activities of persons in the face of certain situations. The choice of these statements was in keeping with the views of Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz (1991) who stress the necessity for researchers to be absolutely clear about what specifically they want to measure. In compiling the instrument, the researcher

kept in mind the learning outcomes of the Life Skills Programme. The literature review in Chapter Two was also used as a framework for developing the instrument and also taking into consideration that the learners in outcomes-based education should be able to assess themselves (also compare Morganett, 1994; Division of Mental Health WHO, 1994; Department of Education, 1999). All the items of the questionnaires are learning outcomes as formulated for the themes (sessions) of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme. The researcher views the pre-test as relating to the baseline assessment in outcomes-based education. Baseline assessment is used at the beginning of a new set of learning activities (in this study the Life Skills Programme). Baseline assessment is carried out so as to find out what the learners already know and can demonstrate, so that a decision can be taken on what level of demands should be built into the learning experience plan (Department of Education, 2002).

This instrument was administered individually, in this way giving the facilitator and objective observer a good deal of control in explaining the purposes of the questions and responses. The instrument was tested in terms of its face and content validity among a small random sample of Grade 7 learners attending three primary schools in Pretoria and also during the pilot study. The instrument was then modified in accordance with the problems encountered during its trial use. The Participant pre-test and post-test questionnaire was administered during the orientation session and then a week after the termination of the programme.

4.3.2 Participant session-by-session evaluation questionnaire (Appendix G)

This questionnaire required seven responses from the participants. The questionnaire was made up of the following:

- Four open-ended questions.
- One question requiring a yes/no answer and an explanation of the response.
- Two interval scales.

Data required from this sample were guided by the research questions generated during the conceptual phase of the study, as outlined in Chapter One. All questions related to the participants' experience of the programme and were completed by each participant. Careful

thought and consideration were given to questionnaire construction. According to Bailey (1982:113), the key word in questionnaire construction is "relevance". When constructing questionnaires, researchers should bear in mind the goals of the study as well as the relevance of the question to the individual respondent. Cognisance was also taken of the level of understanding of the participants. Attempts were therefore made to state questions as clearly and as simply as possible and to avoid ambiguities and double-barrelled questions (Marlow, 1993; Patton, 1987). Care was also taken to ensure that the questions were short and that unnecessary questions were avoided.

The use of open-ended questions served specific purposes in this study, as discussed by several authors. Open-ended questions provide a way of collecting qualitative data in which respondents can answer in ways that accurately reflect their views, that is, they are not forced to give an answer which falls in the researcher's categories (Marlow, 1993; Mindel, 1993). This allows respondents to give information freely or give responses that the researcher may not have anticipated (King, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987). In supporting this statement, Ely, et al. (1991:66) add, "open-ended questioning can unearth valuable information that tight questions do not allow". The advantage is that respondents give their own words, thoughts and insights in answering the questions. Marlow (1993) cautions that respondents may be intimidated, threatened or put off by open-ended questions. This limitation was overcome by the facilitator who explained clearly to the participants that the questionnaire was being utilised to measure aspects of the programme, and was not a reflection of the participants' academic abilities. The structured questions included in the instrument was a prerequisite for providing the open-ended explanation that was required.

The instrument also consisted of two interval scales, which listed variables on a continuum from one extreme to the other. At the last question participants had the following instruction: *Please circle on the following scale the number which best describes how useful you thought today's session was in terms of helping you to know and understand...* and then the theme of each session was added. The response categories on the continuum were ordered in equal intervals and assigned numbers (Jordan, et al., 1993). Here again, care was taken to ensure that the scales were simple enough for participants to interpret and to respond to easily. Marlow (1993) highlights the usefulness of these scales: in instances where the

variables are not clear-cut and cannot be contained in one question or item, they may instead be composed of a number of different dimensions or factors. The questionnaire utilised in the present study was also in line with guidelines for outcomes-based assessment with the focus on self-assessment (Department of Education, 2002).

4.3.3 Participant retrospective evaluation questionnaire (Appendix H)

Retrospective evaluation was undertaken a week after the termination of the programme and a day after the post-test. A final evaluation questionnaire was developed to obtain the feelings and opinions of participants about their experiences of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme. A written explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire was included in the instrument, because the participants had a right to know why they were being questioned (King, et al., 1987).

The instrument consisted of eight structured questions and two open-ended questions. A structured question is one that gives the respondents a certain number of categories to respond to as answers (Bailey, 1982; Marlow, 1993; Mindel, 1993). The advantage of structured or closed-ended questions is that the answers are standard and can be compared from person to person, and there is no need for time-consuming coding procedures such as those involved with open-ended questions (Bailey, 1982; Mindel, 1993). Because choices are provided, respondents are less apt to leave certain questions blank or to choose a "do not know" response (Mindel, 1993:230). Respondents are often clearer about the meaning of the question, that is, a respondent who is often unsure about the meaning of the question can often tell from the answer categories what kind of answer is expected (Bailey, 1982).

Structured questions are useful when specific categories are available for measuring the respondents' replies and when there is a clear conceptual framework into which the respondents' replies will logically fit. The purpose of the questionnaire used for this study was to obtain information about the respondents' experiences of the different aspects of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme, that is, the usefulness of the themes of the programme; the most important themes for each learner and also the most important life skills learned, the different methods used, an evaluation of the effectiveness of each theme and whether the learner would recommend this programme for learners in other schools.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

A non-parametric statistical test was utilised for the present study, because the data were measured on an ordinal scale. As non-parametric tests are generally designed for the analysis of nominal or ordinal level data, they are often ideally suited for use in social work research (Weinbach & Grinnell Jr, 1998: 114).

Although the virtues of non-parametric tests have been much debated, those who favour using non-parametric tests argue that they have most of the virtues of traditional parametric tests, without the possible distortions that may arise if assumptions are violated. However, one disadvantage is that non-parametric methods tend to focus exclusively on null hypothesis testing. The goal of model fitting, obtaining confidence intervals and so forth is set aside in favour of tests of significance (Lockhart, 1997:554). This did not prove to be a handicap in the present research study, as hypothesis testing was exactly what the researcher wanted to do. The null hypothesis for the study was: There is no improvement in the participants' pre-test and post-test questionnaire scores. The alternative hypothesis was: There is an improvement in the participants' pre-test and post-test questionnaire scores.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used in this research (Daniel & Terrell, 1995:723; Weinbach & Grinnell Jr, 1998:221-222). This is a well-established non-parametric procedure that is often used for one-sample cases. The test is useful to the behavioural scientist because it enables the researcher to make the judgement of "greater than" between the two values of any pair, as well as between any two "difference scores" arising from any two pairs (Siegel & Castellan, 1988:87). Whereas the sign test uses information only about the direction of the differences within pairs, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test gives more weight to a pair that shows a large difference between the two conditions than to a pair which shows a small difference (Siegel & Castellan, 1988:87; Runyon, Haber & Coleman, 1994:310-311). The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was chosen because the study employed two paired samples and it yielded difference scores, which could be ranked in order of absolute magnitude (Siegel & Castellan, 1988:90). This test determines whether or not the data imply that the population distribution of scaled responses is the same for the group in the before testing as

in the after testing. The differences are ranked according to their absolute values from smallest to largest; and whenever the rank sums for negative and positive differences depart considerably from their expected values, the hypothesis of no difference is rejected. Substantial departures indicate a difference from the expected value and provide evidence that differences exist (Jarrett & Kraft, 1998:607; Lockhart, 1997:555; Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim, 1994:15).

The data obtained from the Participant Session-by-session Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix G) was used as a qualitative method of data collection so as to improve the intervention programme.

To extend the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme (contents and media used), an evaluation questionnaire was compiled by the researcher and completed by the participants (Grade 7 learners/ senior phase learners). A frequency analysis was done on these data, as summarised in Tables 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6.

4.4.1 Findings of the investigation

- **Personal life skills: Participant Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaire, Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1**

Forty participants completed the pre-test and post-test. It should be noted that although the researcher distinguishes between the Personal and Interpersonal sections of the Life Skills Programme, they are inseparable. It is only for scientific reasons that the researcher distinguishes between these sections. The improvement from the pre-test to the post-test scores for the different items was calculated for each learner. The mean improvement scores for the whole group and both genders are given in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1.

The Grade 7 learners (girls/females, boys/males and total group) had an overall gain in the points they scored, an improvement ranging between 0 and 3 points. The total increase in all the items of the Personal Life Skills Programme was highly significant (as indicated by the signed-rank test of Wilcoxon) for the girls, boys and total group ($p \leq 0,01$). The girls showed a greater improvement in their personal life skills than the boys. The following 3 items of the

Personal Life Skills Programme indicated the greatest improvement for the girls: Knowing myself (Item 1); Knowing my actions and acknowledging the importance of my feelings (Items 4 and 9) and My feelings (Item 2). The items indicating the lowest improvement (although still highly significant) were: Need to build positive attitudes toward myself (Item 11) and To influence what happens to me (Item 12) (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1).

The following three items of the Personal Life Skills Programme indicated the highest improvement for the boys: Knowing myself (Item 1); Knowing my actions (Item 4) and Sharing personal information (Item 8). The items indicating the lowest improvement (although still highly significant) were: Awareness of my wants and wishes (Item 7), and To influence what happens to me (Item 12) (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1).

As regards the total group, the following three items of the Personal Life Skills Programme indicated the highest improvement: Knowing myself (Item 1); Knowing my actions (Item 4) and Knowing my thinking (Item 3) (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1). The following two items showed the lowest improvement (although still highly significant): Need to build positive attitudes toward myself (Item 11); and To influence what happens to me (Item 12) (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1).

TABLE 4.2: PERSONAL LIFE SKILLS: MEAN IMPROVEMENT SCORES

Item			
	Female	Male	Total
1: Knowing myself	2,06	1,91	1,97
2: My feelings	1,83	1,32	1,55
3: My thinking	1,72	1,55	1,63
4: My actions	2,00	1,73	1,85
5: My likes and dislikes	1,44	1,59	1,53
6: My characteristics	1,50	1,50	1,50
7: My wants and wishes	1,61	0,77	1,15
8: Sharing information	1,39	1,64	1,53
9: Acknowledge feelings	2,00	1,09	1,50
10: Personal capabilities	1,67	1,45	1,55
11: Positive attitudes	1,06	1,09	1,08
12: Influence me	1,28	1,00	1,13
13: Contribute in ways	1,61	1,14	1,35
14: Feel needed	1,56	1,09	1,30
15: Needs, rights, responsibilities	1,72	1,32	1,50
16: Take responsibility	1,39	1,32	1,35
17: Improve self-concept	1,67	1,41	1,53
18: Express feelings	1,28	1,27	1,28

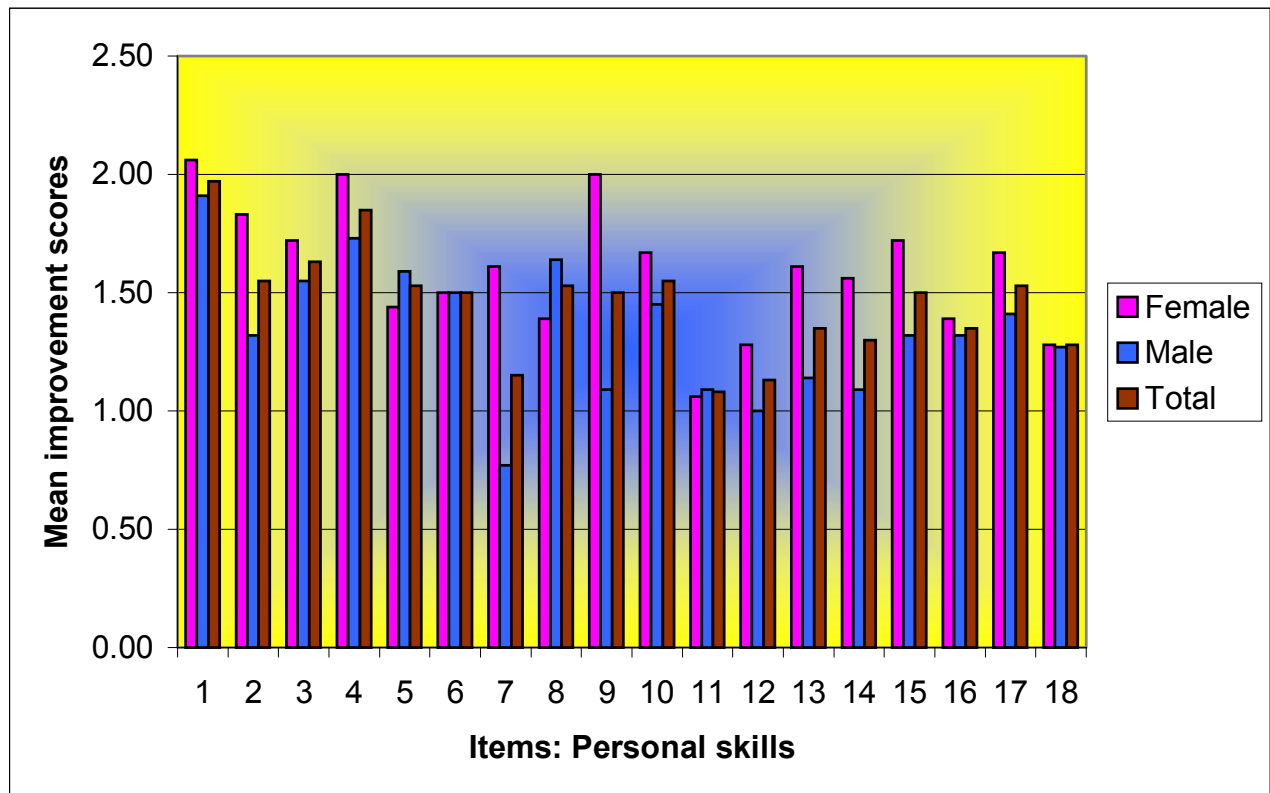


FIGURE 4.1 PERSONAL LIFE SKILLS: FEMALES, MALES AND TOTAL GROUP

- **Interpersonal life skills: Participant Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaire, Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2**

The improvement from the pre-test to the post-test scores for the different items was calculated for each learner. The mean improvement scores for the whole group and each gender are given in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2. The Grade 7 learners (girls/females, boys/males and total group) had an overall gain in points, an improvement ranging between 0 and 3 points. The total increase in all the items of the Interpersonal Life Skills Programme was highly significant (as indicated by the signed-rank test of Wilcoxon) for the girls, boys and total group ($p \leq 0,01$). The girls indicated more improvement on their interpersonal life skills than the boys. The following three items of the Interpersonal Life Skills Programme indicated the highest improvement for the girls: To know how to date and develop relationships with the opposite sex (Item 24); Know how to start and develop relationships (Items 22 and 23) and To know and understand my school and To know and understand my friends (Items 20 and

21). The item with the lowest improvement (although still highly significant) was: To know where I can go for help/guidance/counselling (Item 37) (see Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2).

The following three items of the Interpersonal Life Skills Programme indicated the highest improvement for the boys: To be able to be a good speaker (Item 31); Developing relationships (Item 23); and To know and understand my family and To know and understand our rainbow nation (Items 19 and 27). The items indicating the lowest improvement (although still highly significant) were: To know how to date and develop relationships with the opposite sex (Item 24) and To know how can I contribute to developing my school and community (Item 26) (see Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2).

As regards the total group, the following three items of the Interpersonal Life Skills Programme indicated the highest improvement: Developing relationships and To be able to be a good speaker (Items 23 and 31); Starting to build relationships (Item 22) and To know and understand my school (Item 20). The following item had the lowest improvement (although still highly significant): To know how can I contribute to developing my school and community (Item 26) (see Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2).

TABLE 4.3 INTERPERSONAL LIFE SKILLS: MEAN IMPROVEMENT SCORES

Item			
	Female	Male	Total
19: My family	1,72	1,59	1,65
20: My school	1,89	1,55	1,70
21: My friends	1,89	1,41	1,63
22: Starting relationships	1,94	1,55	1,72
23: Developing relationships	1,94	1,68	1,80
24: Dating and opposite gender	2,33	1,14	1,67
25: My community	1,89	1,36	1,60
26: Contribute: School and Community	1,44	1,18	1,30
27: Rainbow nation	1,56	1,59	1,58
28: Differences in people	1,44	1,50	1,47
29: Effective communication	1,78	1,32	1,53
30: Listener	1,56	1,32	1,42
31: Speaker	1,89	1,73	1,80
32: Solve problems	1,72	1,36	1,53
33: Share, communicate, trust people	1,50	1,36	1,42
34: Managing conflict	1,44	1,36	1,40
35: Managing anger	1,72	1,41	1,55
36: Death and grieving	1,67	1,45	1,55
37: Guidance /counselling	1,33	1,36	1,35

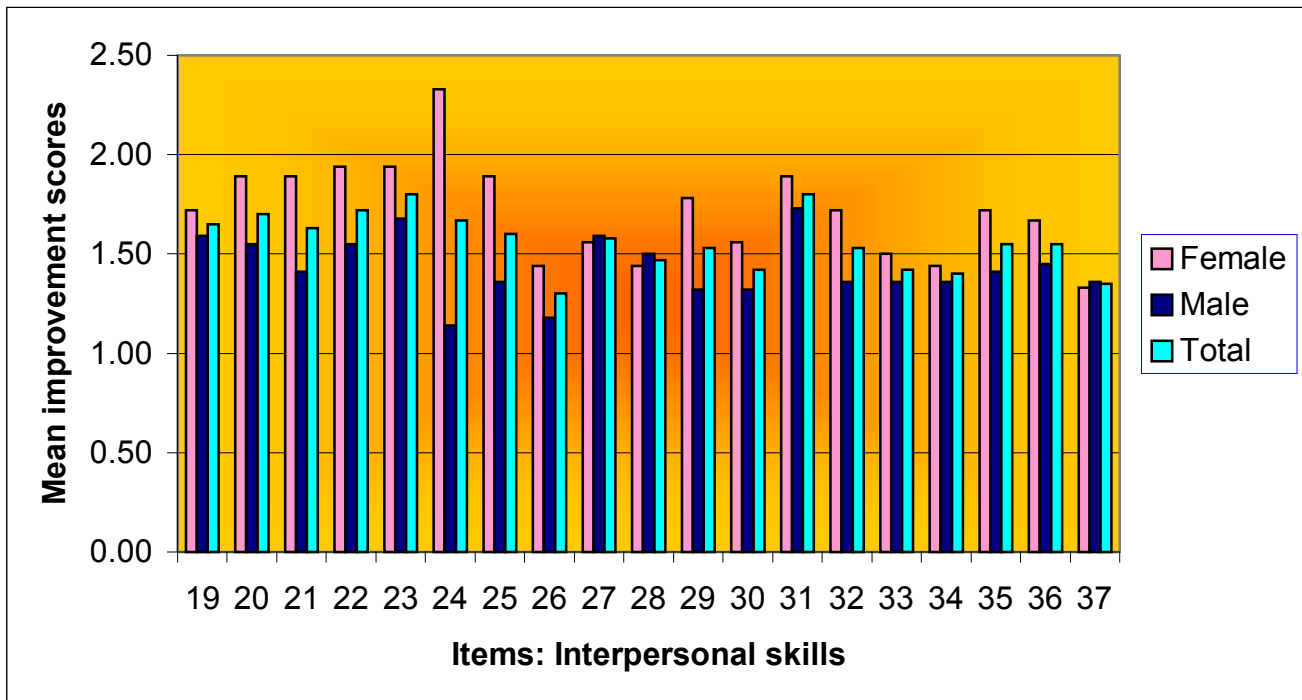


FIGURE 4.2 INTERPERSONAL LIFE SKILLS: FEMALES, MALES AND TOTAL GROUP

□ **Participants' retrospective evaluation questionnaire, Tables 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6.**

This section provides an analysis and discussion of the data obtained from the questionnaires, which assessed participants' retrospective evaluation of all the sessions (the whole programme) (Appendix H) and of the total group (females and males together). The purpose was to obtain the participants' overall impressions and recommendations regarding the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme. These findings were compared with the findings of the session-by-session evaluations. Supplementary data were also obtained from the evaluation reports given by the objective observer and the guidance teacher. Their reports were submitted after the completion of the programme. As advocated by Bryman (1990), Cheetham, Fuller, McIvor and Petch (1992), Harrison (1994) and Patton (1987), an analysis of information derived from different sources allowed for checks across the data gathered and enhanced the validity of the findings.

Table 4.4 provides a summary of the extent to which the themes used during programme implementation were useful to the participants.

TABLE 4.4: USEFULNESS OF THEMES FOR PARTICIPANTS (N=40)

THEMES	RESPONSES			
	YES	%	NO	%
1. Me (Self-knowledge)	39	98	1	2
2. My family and me	33	83	7	17
3. My school, friends and me	33	83	7	17
4. Dating and relationships with opposite sex	23	58	17	42
5. My community and me	37	93	3	7
6. Needs, rights and responsibilities	33	83	7	17
7. Rainbow nation, first impressions and stereotyping	32	80	8	20
8. Effective communication	34	85	6	15
9. Problem solving	31	78	9	22
10. Conflict and conflict resolution	29	73	11	27
11. Death: Grieving and growing	27	68	13	32
12. Where can I go for help?	32	80	8	20

Table 4.4 indicates that 98% of the participants stated that Theme One of the programme: Developing self-awareness and self-knowledge (personality, thoughts, feelings, behaviour, capabilities, self-concept) was the most useful to them (Theme 1). These responses indicated that the overall learning outcomes of the programme were achieved. These data are congruent with the data obtained from the pre-test and post test (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.1). Regarding Theme 5: My community and me, 93% of the learners indicated that the session was useful to them. From the findings shown in Table 4.4, 85% of the learners indicated that Theme 8: Effective communication, was useful to them. As regards Themes 2 (My family and me); 3 (Me, my school and friends) and 6 (Needs, rights and responsibilities), 83% of the participants indicated that these themes or sessions were useful to them. These data are congruent with the data obtained from the participants' session-by-session evaluations and were further confirmed by the objective observer's and guidance teacher's observations and reports. These responses indicated that the overall learning outcomes of the programme were achieved.

In response to the question asking the participants to select the six themes that were most important to them, they indicated the following in order of priority: Self-knowledge; Me and my family; Me and my school and friends; Effective communication; Rainbow nation, first impressions and stereotyping; and Needs, rights and responsibilities.

Table 4.5 provides a summary of the extent to which the methods or media of facilitation used during the programme implementation were useful to the participants.

TABLE 4.5: USEFULNESS OF FACILITATION METHODS FOR PARTICIPANTS
(N=40)

METHODS USED	YES	%	NO	%
1. General discussions	29	73	11	17
2. Group discussions	29	73	11	17
3. Role playing	21	53	19	47
4. Drama	28	70	12	30
5. Exercises in workbook	26	60	14	40
6. Case study	22	55	18	45
7. Music and movement	24	60	16	40
8. Drawings	24	60	16	40
9. Clay	28	70	12	30
10. Seeds	22	55	18	45
11. Pictures from magazines, news papers and handouts	29	73	11	17
12. Pictures and notes/ handouts for own books (pasting)	28	70	12	30
13. Making posters for the classroom	28	70	12	30
14. Sensory activities (taste, smell, see, hear, touch)	26	60	14	40

Table 4.5 indicates that the use of general discussions in the large group, discussions in the small or sub-groups (5 to 7 learners) and pictures selected from magazines, newspapers and handouts about the theme (session) as facilitation methods, received the greatest support from the participants (73% for **Items 1, 2 and 11**). Seventy per cent of the participants indicated that they also supported the following methods or media of facilitation used during the implementation of the programme: Drama; the use of clay to make objects (for example build their own school or community); Pictures and notes (worksheets) for their workbook and the making of posters for the classroom (**Items 4, 9, 12 and 13**). The participants indicated a lower preference for role playing (Item 3 = 53%) and the use of different seeds to create pictures (Item 10 = 55%).

Table 4.6 on page 104 outlines the participants' responses to the question about the ways in which the programme helped and supported them. The categories listed formed the basic outcomes of the programme.

The majority of the responses indicated that the overall outcomes of the programme were achieved, since the participants indicated that the various aspects of the programme were beneficial for them. Table 4.6 reflects that the learners had learned to become good listeners which means that they had learned to listen to other group members in the large and small groups. There was a 100% affirmative response to the question (**Item 18**: To be able to be a good listener). A cross-check with the responses to the Participant Session-by-session

Questionnaire indicated that they had learned the importance of considering different points of view and listening to both sides of an issue in a given situation. To quote one participant: *“The most useful part of today’s session was learning to listen to both sides of something before you make comments because you might say bad things before, and realise that you were wrong.”* The overall high response rate to this question may perhaps be attributed to the facilitator’s preparedness and willingness to engage participants continuously in the programme.

The majority of the participants (95%) indicated that the programme had helped them to gain a better knowledge of the history and heritage of their school (Item 11). Table 4.6 indicates that 93% of the participants felt that the following items in the programme had helped them: To build positive attitudes towards myself (Item 6); To know and understand my family (Item 10); To know and understand my community (Item 14); and To develop friendships through communication (Item 17).

Table 4.6 reflects that 28% of the participants had learned how to date and build relationships with the opposite sex; 42% thought they had not learned how and 30% of the participants were unsure (Item 13). The data provided here are congruent with the data obtained from the Pre-test and Post-test Questionnaire, the participants’ session-by-session evaluations and also the responses reflected in Table 4.4 where 58% of the learners indicated in what way the theme or session had been useful to them (Item 4).

A 95% affirmative response was obtained to the question on whether the participants thought that other learners would benefit from programmes of this nature. This response clearly reflected the positive attitudes of participants toward the programme and their feelings that they had benefited from the participation.

Of the learners, 88 per cent (N=35) indicated in response to Question 7 that they had learned during the implementation of the programme what personal and interpersonal life skills entailed.

As regards the question on what were the most important life skills that the participants had learned, they indicated the following in order of priority: Rainbow nation, first impressions and stereotyping; Effective communication; and Needs, rights and responsibilities.

TABLE 4.6: WAYS IN WHICH THE PROGRAMME HELPED PARTICIPANTS (N=40)

LESSONS LEARNED	YES	%	NO	%	NOT SURE	%
ME (Personal)						
1. To know and understand myself (feelings, thinking, behaviour)	35	88	2	5	3	7
2. To know my personal capabilities	26	65	12	30	2	5
3. To personally grow during the programme	27	68	8	20	5	12
4. To gain feelings of self-worth	27	68	5	12	8	20
5. To better / improve my self-concept	31	78	4	10	5	12
6. To build positive attitudes towards myself	37	93	1	2	2	5
7. To contribute in meaningful ways and I am genuinely needed	25	63	6	15	9	22
8. To influence what happens to me	33	83	4	10	3	7
9. To take responsibility for myself	30	75	4	10	6	15
OTHER PEOPLE (INTERPERSONAL)						
10. To know and understand my family	37	93	1	2	2	5
11. To know and understand my school	38	95	0	0	2	5
12. To know and understand my friends	34	89	1	2	3	8
13. To know and understand dating and relations with the opposite sex	11	28	17	42	12	30
14. To know and understand my community	37	93	2	5	1	2
15. To know and understand our rainbow nation, first impressions and stereotyping	33	83	2	5	5	12
16. To appreciate differences in people	31	78	5	12	4	10
17. To develop friendships through communication	37	93	2	5	1	2
18. To be able to be a good listener	40	100	0	0	0	0
19. To be able to give an "I message"	32	80	4	10	4	10
20. To understand the importance of communication in problem solving	32	80	4	10	4	10
21. To be able to share, communicate, listen and trust other people (co-operation)	33	83	3	7	4	10
22. To handle problem solving more confidently	28	70	7	18	2	12
23. To understand the importance of communication in resolving conflicts	32	80	3	7	5	13
24. To be able to use the steps in conflict resolution and handle it with confidence	28	70	5	12	7	18
25. To be able to understand the meaning of death and grieving	31	78	5	12	4	10
26. To know and understand the stages of grief	32	80	4	10	4	10
27. To be able to deal with a grieving person	28	70	6	15	6	15
28. To know where I could go for help when in need	36	90	0	0	4	10

4.4.2 Discussion of the results

The study was designed to test the hypothesis that Grade 7 learners who participated in an intervention programme would exhibit more personal growth (personal life skills) and social competence and thus contributes to the optimal social functioning of the learners in the classroom, school, family and community (interpersonal life skills). The findings of the investigation indicated that the null hypothesis should be rejected because the improvement in the pre-test post-test questionnaire scores was highly significant (all items = p value $\leq 0,01$). Therefore, the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme had a statistically highly significant effect on the personal and interpersonal life skills development of the Grade 7 learners in the senior phase of the General Education and Training Band in this particular primary school.

These findings were consistent with the information obtained from the participants' retrospective evaluation of the programme and the participants' session-by-session evaluations. However, caution should be exercised in generalising the findings and conclusions from the statistical tests to a wider population. The first exposure of the learners or participants to the first life skills programme ever presented at their school might have influenced their responses. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, there was no control or comparison group against which to judge the outcomes of the programme. Furthermore, the nature of the study may have introduced a bias toward what the participants regarded as favourable. They may have developed positive responses in accordance with perceived expectations. It should be noted that the participants had been involved in a needs assessment regarding life skills and they identified the priority of the themes. The learners therefore took ownership of the programme. In this way, one of the basic community development principles, namely getting the community involved and let them take ownership of the programme, could be explained and illustrated.

Efforts to secure the interests of parents by requesting their co-operation and support may have contributed to the positive attitude that the participants had towards the programme. This is consistent with the experiences of Sathiparsad (1997), Delva-Taui'iili (1995) and Whittington and Morgan (1990) who found that family support and awareness of a programme secured their ongoing involvement. Commitment to the programme may have

been further reinforced by the fact that the programme was sanctioned by the principal, school governing body and teachers at the school, and that the programme also formed part of the Learning Area: Life Orientation.

4.5 REPLICATING THE INTERVENTION UNDER FIELD CONDITIONS

The Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme in this study was implemented over twelve sessions lasting about one-and-a-half hours each, held twice weekly over a period of six weeks. In addition there were three other sessions: two orientation sessions at the beginning and a termination session at the end of the programme. As suggested by Corey and Corey (1992), time was set aside at the end of each session to enable participants to complete the evaluation questionnaires. It should be noted that during the termination session (session 15), the facilitator engaged the participants in the process of summarising and reflecting on the lessons they had learned during the previous sessions, followed by the overall evaluation of the programme. As mentioned above, the programme was implemented in a large group (40 learners in the classroom), which was divided into 6 smaller groups consisting of 5 to 7 learners. The researcher considered the groupwork method as the appropriate method because it was in keeping with the ecological paradigm (discussed in Chapter One). The researcher used the definition of groupwork given by Thackeray, et al.,(1994:73) as a frame of reference because a personal and interpersonal life skills programme was implemented: *“...a method of working with people in groups for the enhancement of social functioning and for the achievement of socially desirable goals. Groupwork is based on the knowledge of people’s needs for each other and their interdependence. Groupwork is a method of reducing or eliminating roadblocks to social interaction and for accomplishing socially desirable purposes”*.

In keeping with this definition, Drower (1993) stresses the need to use groups to address the connection between the individual and the social context. Breton (cited in Drower, 1993) draws attention to the fact that coping and finding fulfilment in a changing world requires awareness that one's own self-interest is linked to the welfare of the larger ecological system.

The value base of groupwork is of special significance in South Africa. Values of co-operation, non-discrimination, individual initiative, self-determination and mutual decision-making are key

ingredients to successful human relations (Drower, 1993). In this study, the group itself constituted a context for understanding human relations, respecting diversity, enhancing communication and solving problems. In commenting on the adolescent phase, Sewpaul (1993) argues that empowerment is essential for individual growth and development and to contribute to heightened feelings of self-esteem, efficacy and control. Empowerment involves consciousness-raising through constructive dialogue and praxis. The small group context provides opportunities for such dialogue. As pointed out by Sewpaul (1993), consciousness-raising through dialogue does not necessarily resolve all conflict or produce group consensus, but it does enhance participation and mutual respect, which are the basic objectives of any group process.

Drawing on the work of Wodarski, Sancho (1994) argues that a group context allows adolescents to practise their skills with several partners, to provide feedback and encouragement to one another and to learn from a variety of peer models. The strength of the group learning approach lies in its ability to capitalise on peer influence and peer reinforcement, which are potent variables in the acquisition, alteration and maintenance of behaviour. Furthermore, knowledge imparted in a group context is more likely to come under the control of group norms and beliefs, thus increasing the likelihood that such information will be generalised to other settings (Sancho, 1994).

Groupwork as method was therefore considered relevant and enlightening because social workers are used to working with small group contexts (8-12 participants, according to Corey & Corey 1992:319-320). Moreover in the school context it is expected that the social worker will include all learners in the classroom and the number of learners may vary from 28–50. These learners could be divided into smaller groups and the groupwork method could be implemented as illustrated by this study.

The Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme was implemented according to the outline given in Table 3.1 (on page 82). The programme was continuously improved by analysing the data from the evaluation questionnaires. The observations made by the guidance teacher and the objective observer were used to provide the researcher with a holistic view of the evaluation and advanced development of the intervention research model.

In this study, observation merely served to confirm or refute the data obtained by the simultaneous use of other data-gathering methods.

4.6 REFINING THE INTERVENTION

Rothman and Thomas (1994:39) state that errors are instructive and that the results of full field-testing can be used for resolving any problems with the measurement system and intervention. Adaptations to the language, content and intervention methods may produce desired behavioural changes and outcomes for the full range of intended beneficiaries. Repeated tinkering with the intervention helps to ensure that the programme will reliably produce the intended effects. In this study these activities were implemented but there is always room for development and improvement.

The items in the pre-test post-test questionnaire, which were ranked the lowest for significance, should be linked to the themes of the sessions, and be adjusted and improved in the Interpersonal section of the Life Skills Programme.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 presented the implementation of Phase Five of the intervention research model: Evaluation and Advanced Development (Rothman & Thomas, 1994). The activities discussed in this chapter were: the experimental design, data collection by means of three instruments (questionnaires); data analysis; replicating the intervention under field conditions; and refining the intervention. The research findings and the discussion and interpretation of the data were presented. Data gathered from different sources were presented and discussed. The patterns that emerged from the data confirmed the important issues raised in the literature regarding the development, implementation and evaluation of the Life Skills Programme. Having analysed, interpreted and discussed the data, the final chapter will focus on consolidating the major findings of the study, drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on these findings.