

CHAPTER 3

INTERVENTION RESEARCH: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Designing and implementing a life skills programme is only part of a larger developmental process. It is equally important to secure long-term support and resources for life skills education, and to engage, from the outset, all of the education support services and potential community services that would have a role to play in the process of life skills programme development. Implementing a life skills programme will require the introduction of facilitation methods and strategies that may be new to social workers, and the success of the programme will depend largely on the availability of in-service training, as well as efforts to include training in participatory learning methods and strategies at universities.

Chapter 1 mentions that the current study is intervention research and that the phases and selected activities of intervention design and development (D&D) according to Rothman and Thomas (1994:25-43) are used. One important aim of intervention research is to create the means to improve the health and well-being of community life. Figure 3.1 outlines critical operations or activities in each phase of the intervention research process and is followed by a discussion of how this was applied to the present study. Although the phases are outlined vertically, they often merge in practice as the investigator responds to opportunities and challenges in the shifting context of applied research. Each phase has distinctive activities that need to be carried out in order to complete the work of that phase. Although performed in a stepwise sequence, some or many of the activities associated with each phase continue after the introduction of the next phase. Phases 1 to 4 will be discussed in this chapter and will conclude by presenting an outline of the themes covered in the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme. In order to give the reader a holistic perspective of Rothman and Thomas's (1994) intervention research, Phases 5 and 6 will be briefly discussed in this chapter, and in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

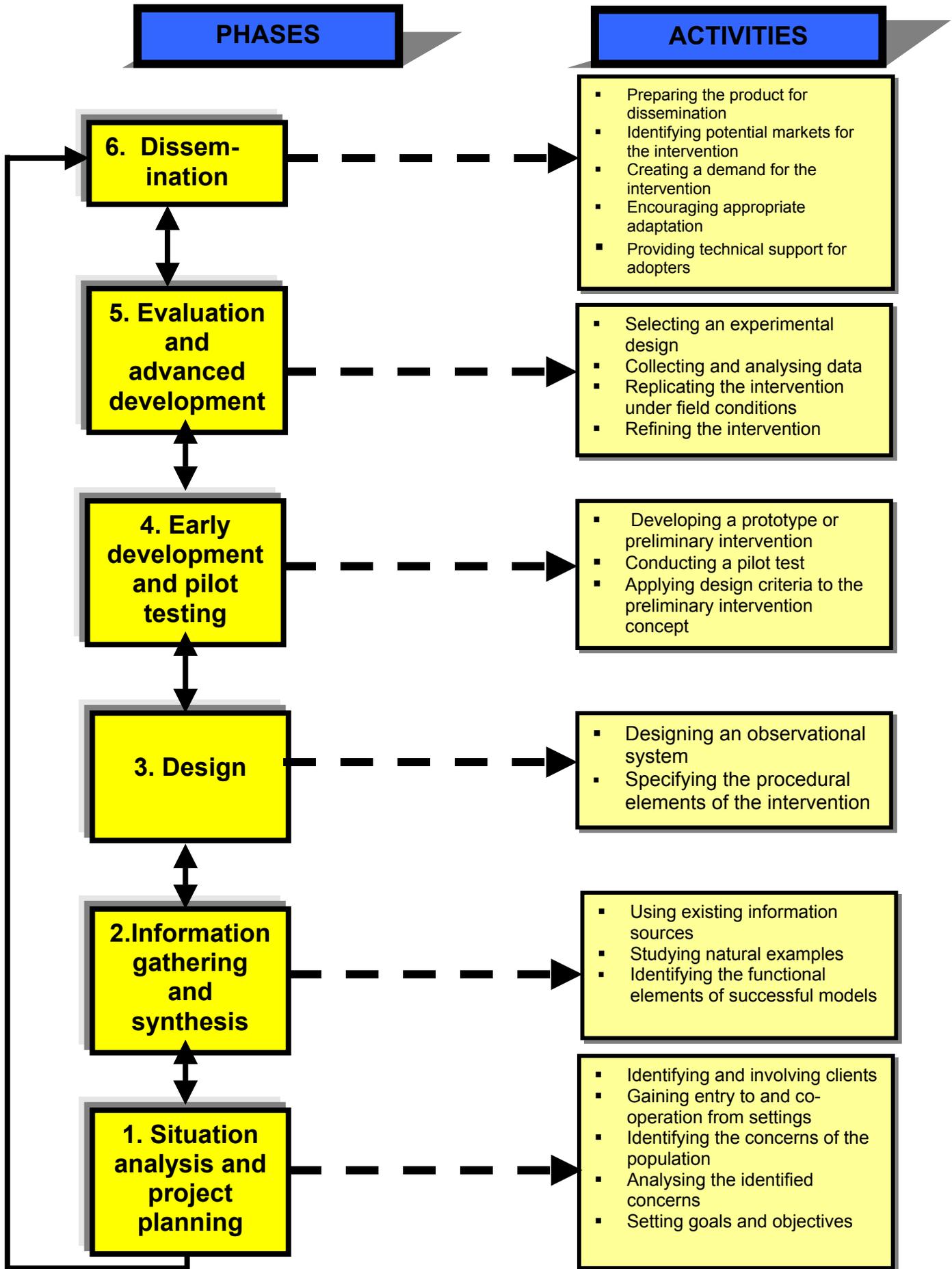


FIGURE 3.1: PHASES AND ACTIVITIES OF INTERVENTION RESEARCH

(Adapted from Rothman & Thomas, 1994:28)

3.2 PHASE 1: SITUATION ANALYSIS AND PROJECT PLANNING

Rothman and Thomas (1994:25-43) start intervention research, namely the Design and Development Process, with problem analysis and project planning. In view of the developmental perspective of this study, the researcher preferred to reformulate this phase into Situation Analysis and Project Planning. The several activities critical to the phase and how they were implemented in the study will be discussed next. Each activity involves collaboration between the researcher and clients, helping to gain the co-operation and support necessary for conducting the intervention research.

Curriculum 2005 is the new education curriculum that is driving education transformation in South Africa (Department of Education, 1997). Curriculum 2005 is an outcomes-based curriculum and everyone who is involved in school services and school support services is expected to have the knowledge and skills to implement the outcomes-based approach.

Life skills education is a fundamental division of the Learning Area Life Orientation. Life Orientation is fundamental in empowering learners to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation. It is an integral part of education, training and development. It is central to the holistic unfolding of the learners, caring for their intellectual, physical, personal, social, spiritual and emotional growth, and for the way these facets work together. It locates its vision of individual growth in the quest for a free, democratic and stable society, for quality of life in the community and for a productive economy (Department of Education, 1997:LO-2).

3.2.1 Identifying and involving principal, teachers and learners at the primary school

The University of Pretoria is involved in several community service projects at primary and secondary schools in Mamelodi, a township near Pretoria. The principal of a primary school in Mamelodi East and the teacher responsible for the Learning Area: Life Orientation requested the Faculties of Education and Humanities at University of Pretoria to assist and support them with the needs and problems they encountered in the school and community. In collaboration with the teachers involved, the researcher identified the specific target and goal of the

intervention, namely to develop and implement a personal and interpersonal life skills programme for Grade 7 learners in the senior phase of a traditionally African school, and to evaluate whether participation in the life skills programme leads to personal growth (self-empowerment) and social competence and thus contributes to the optimal social functioning of children in the classroom, school, family and community (capacity building).

3.2.2 Gaining entry to and co-operation from the primary school

The researcher formed a collaborative relationship with representatives of the school (principal, school governing board and teachers) by involving them in analysing the school's situation, identifying their and the learners' learning needs, planning the project and implementing selected interventions. Rothman and Thomas (1994:29) state that collaboration helps provide a sense of ownership of the investigation and by working together with those who can facilitate access, researchers gain the co-operation and support they need for conducting intervention research. As a sign of courtesy and commitment, a letter was sent to the principal of the school (see Appendix A); the school guidance teacher, who is also the teacher responsible for the Learning Area (Life Orientation) (see Appendix B) and the parents of the learners to gain their permission and consent (see Appendix C).

3.2.3 Identifying the concerns of the school personnel and learners

The personnel of the primary school first identified a need for a life skills programme. The researcher used formal and informal contacts (meetings) with the personnel of the primary school in order to identify their concerns. The researcher consulted the key informants, such as the members of the school governing board and professionals from the education support services in the district. During meetings with the principal and teachers, Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 1997) for the Learning Area, Life Orientation was used as a guideline and compared with the list of topics or themes identified by the teachers. These themes were not in any particular order nor were they prioritised. A decision was made to compile a questionnaire to determine the needs of Grade 7 learners for life skills education (Appendix D). Grade 7 learners were requested to indicate the topics or themes they would be interested in or that were most needed for learners in their school. Then they were

requested to rank twelve themes in the order of importance that the themes had for each of them. They were also invited to add any other themes (not listed) of importance to them.

3.2.4 Analysing identified needs (problems)

The researcher and guardian teacher for Grade 7 analysed the curriculum for Life Orientation (Department of Education, 1997), and the themes listed by the personnel of the primary school. A frequency analysis was done on the needs assessment questionnaire for Grade 7 learners (n=40). According to the frequency analysis, the following themes were identified as the most important for the Grade 7 learners:

- ❑ Myself /me (Personal)
- ❑ My family and me
- ❑ My friends and school
- ❑ My community and me
- ❑ Effective communication
- ❑ Dating, relationships and sex education
- ❑ Problem solving (stress / crisis management)
- ❑ Conflict resolution (anger management)
- ❑ Understanding conflict, violence. Abuse and peace (peace-making skills)
- ❑ Dealing with divorce in the family
- ❑ Death: Grieving and growing
- ❑ Dealing with alcohol and drugs

3.2.5 Setting critical and specific outcomes

It is generally agreed that when learning takes place, learners acquire skills, attitudes, and knowledge of concepts or processes that they did not have previously. These end products of the learning process are called "outcomes". When people decide before learning takes place what these end products must be, and then write them down as statements to develop learning programmes, the system is "outcomes-based".

There are different levels of outcomes. Outcome statements can be specific or general. Obviously the more specific an outcome statement is, the easier it is to determine if a learner

has attained it or not. However, if all the outcome statements were defined in great detail, a holistic sense of capability would be lost. Therefore the school social worker should have a sound knowledge of outcomes-based education, critical and specific outcomes.

There are seven **Critical Outcomes**. These express the intended results of Education and Training as a whole and are therefore the broadest outcomes. SAQA (the South African Qualifications Authority) approved and adopted the following outcomes after much discussion and debate:

1. Identify and solve problems in which responses show that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
2. Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community.
3. Organise and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
5. Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems in which problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation (Department of Education, 1997).

In addition, it was agreed that all learners should become aware of the importance of the following:

- Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
- Participating as a responsible citizen in the life of local, national and global communities.
- Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Exploring education and career opportunities.
- Developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

The Critical Outcomes (7 plus the added 5, i.e. 12) should guide classroom methodology, the selection of content and the rationales for teaching and learning. This implies that the social worker should also use the Critical Outcomes as ultimate guidelines for the design and development of a life skills programme.

Specific outcomes have been derived from the Learning Areas. They refer to the specification of what learners are able to do at the end of a learning experience. This includes skills, knowledge and values that inform the demonstration of the achievement of an outcome or a set of outcomes. In each Learning Area, for example, and more specifically in relation to the current study of Life Orientation, it was found that a set of specific outcomes described what learners would be able to do at all levels of learning (Department of Education, 1997:21). According to the policy document for the Senior Phase (Grades 7 to 9), learning programme designers will be allowed to select and cluster certain outcomes for inclusion in learning programmes. Explanatory notes follow certain specific outcomes. These notes are included to assist the reader to understand the purpose and intention of the outcome (Department of Education, 1997:21-22). Assessment criteria are also briefly mentioned and should be taken into consideration when assessing the learners and also the effectiveness of a programme.

The following specific outcomes (SO), explanatory notes and assessment criteria were also used for designing and implementing the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme for Grade 7 learners:

- SO1: Understand and accept themselves as unique and worthwhile human beings.
 - Life Orientation is instrumental in promoting a meaningful lifestyle for each learner. This specific outcome aims at developing respect for the self, which includes a positive self-concept and self-actualisation. This will be attained by –
 - promoting the individual's own worth, dignity and rights as a unique individual;
 - examining how the physical and social environment affect personal development and growth;
 - exploring the role of social, cultural and national perspectives in shaping personal attitudes and values; and
 - understanding the integrated nature of the whole person.
 - Assessment criteria: The learners should demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which their own cultural traditions have shaped them; demonstrate an appreciation of their own uniqueness and that of others; display objective assessments of their abilities and attitudes; and demonstrate an analysis of the integrated nature of the whole person (Department of Education, 1997:LO-7-8).
- SO2: Use skills and display attitudes and values that improve relationships in family,

groups and community.

Assessment criteria: They should demonstrate a critical analysis of various relationships in families, friends and groups; and of the qualities of relationships and communication (Department of Education, 1997:LO-9).

- SO3: Respect the rights of people to hold personal beliefs and values.

Assessment criteria: Learners should demonstrate a knowledge of and respect for people's rights to hold different beliefs and values; illustrate the interaction between value and belief systems; demonstrate a comprehension of the relationship between national unity and cultural diversity in South Africa; evaluate the role of values and beliefs in socialisation (Department of Education, 1997:LO-10).

- SO4: Demonstrate value and respect for human rights as reflected in *Ubuntu* and other philosophies.

These Specific Outcomes are based on the conviction that a strong human rights culture should form the basis of South African society in general and the educational environment in particular. Therefore, these Specific Outcomes seek to develop an understanding of the principles of a respect for human rights and their relevance to life. They are aimed at developing in learners the values, consciousness and competencies that are required for effective participation as responsible citizens of a democratic society.

Assessment criteria: Learners display evidence of human rights, values and practices; analyse the history of the struggle for human rights; display and practise an understanding of the relationships between rights and responsibilities; analyse the practice of *Ubuntu*, in the context of South African diversity; appraise the work of individuals, groups, private and public institutions with regard to human rights (Department of Education, 1997:LO-11-12).

- SO5: Practise acquired life and decision-making skills.

The development and acquisition of life skills form the essence of Life Orientation. Learners have to be equipped with, understand and be able to use life skills. The development of information-gathering strategies should form part of this facet. Life skills *per se* are taught and learned, although the learner is expected to use these skills on a wider basis, especially in coping with real-life situations. The acquisition of knowledge and skills that can balance risk and safety in the individual's experiences, environment and

social relationships are crucial to this facet.

Assessment criteria: Learners demonstrate the ability to take responsibility for themselves and others; demonstrate the acceptance of responsibility for their own choices in terms of personal and community well-being; demonstrate the responsibility to promote safety awareness, the management of life changes, stress management and conflict resolution; display the effective accessing and use of resources (Department of Education, 1997:LO-13).

- SO6: Assess career and other opportunities and set goals that will enable learners to make the best use of their potential and talents.

It has become imperative for education and the world of work to co-operate closely in order to prepare the learners adequately for their future working lives and lifelong learning prospects.

Assessment criteria: Learners demonstrate an ability to research the resources for career opportunities; analyse the requirements for careers and opportunities; evaluate first-hand experience in the workplace; demonstrate career planning and career-pathing processes and procedures; demonstrate the ability to present themselves; demonstrate an understanding that career choices are informed by personal and cultural values; identify role models; demonstrate a knowledge of their own skills, ability, interests and personality; display job-seeking skills (Department of Education, 1997:LO-14-15).

- SO7: Demonstrate the values and attitudes necessary for a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Assessment criteria: Learners appraise various lifestyles in terms of a healthy and balanced approach; demonstrate knowledge and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and Aids; demonstrate that they can set goals for a healthy and balanced lifestyle (Department of Education, 1997:LO-16-17).

- SO8: Evaluate and participate in activities that demonstrate effective human movement and development.

There can be no doubt that South Africa's prosperity depends upon the health and well-being of its population, especially as there is ample evidence that there are significant social and health-related problems among our people. Many of these problems are associated with the lifestyles that individuals adopt, particularly

regarding diet, physical activity, alcohol and substance abuse, sexual activity and a number of other high-risk behaviours.

All learners should be provided with a sound knowledge of the benefits of healthy living and a safe way of living (Department of Education, 1997:LO-5-6).

Assessment criteria: Learners should demonstrate an appraisal of movement concepts and movement skills; demonstrate that they possess a repertoire of movements that involve manipulation and object control; demonstrate the recognition of strengths and development needs (Department of Education, 1997:LO-18-19).

The Critical Outcomes (CO=12) and Specific Outcomes (SO=8) should guide the methodology used for implementing the life skills programme, the selection of content and the rationale for facilitating learning in the life skills programme. The assessment criteria should be taken into consideration when assessing the effectiveness of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme.

3.3 PHASE 2: INFORMATION GATHERING AND SYNTHESIS

Rothman and Thomas (1994:31-32) state that when planning an intervention research project, it is essential to discover what others have done to understand and address the problem. The key activities of this phase are: using the existing information sources, studying natural examples and identifying the functional elements of successful models. Chapter 2 of this study gives an explanation of the execution of activities in this phase. Although the activities are not specifically named as those of Rothman and Thomas (1994:32-33), they were used as a framework in the compilation of Chapter Two. Extensive reviews were done of the literature on life skills education and training and the learner in the senior phase (adolescent) in the General Education and Training (GET) band. The model of Edna Rooth (1997) for Life Skills Education with the components facilitation, groupwork, experiential learning and continuity, was used as the foundation for the current study.

3.4 PHASE 3: DESIGN

The phases of design, early development and pilot testing are intertwined and the activities are difficult to separate. According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:33-34), two products result from intervention research:

- The research data that may demonstrate relationships between the intervention and the behaviours or outcomes that define the problem of interest
- The intervention which may include a strategy, technique or programme; informational or training materials; environmental design variables; motivational system; a new or modified policy; or other procedures.

In this study the researcher at one level designed an intervention, the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme for Grade 7 learners, and on another level designed the model and tools to implement the programme.

The two important activities during this phase are –

- designing an observational system; and
- specifying the procedural elements of the intervention (Rothman & Thomas, 1994:34-36).

The main goal of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme is formulated in Chapter One. Critical and Specific Outcomes have been formulated above in this chapter. In the pilot study and main study, an independent observer from education support services made direct observations. The trained observer attended all the sessions of the pilot study and main study. The researcher designed a questionnaire for learners for self-monitoring and self-reporting (Appendix G: Participant session-by-session evaluation). Each learner completed this questionnaire after each session.

The life skills programme for the pilot study was implemented over two weeks for ten one-hourly sessions held once a day.

To summarise the design and development of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme, the researcher had to take the following into consideration:

- Extensive reviews of the literature on life skills education and training and the learner in the senior phase (adolescent) in the General Education and Training (GET) band
- The model of Edna Rooth (1997) for Life Skills Education consisting of the components facilitation, groupwork, experiential learning and continuity
- Promoting the vision of Curriculum 2005 and enabling social workers to implement the principles of outcomes-based education easily and effectively in a range of situations
- The need to meet the specific requirements of Curriculum 2005 as the major area of concern in outcomes-based education: Critical Outcomes, Specific Outcomes and assessment criteria. Although the performance indicators and range statements are not discussed in this study owing to the limited scope of a mini dissertation, they were used as a framework and guideline for the design and development of the programme.

3.5 PHASE 4: EARLY DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT TESTING

According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:36-37) a primitive design is evolved to a form that can be evaluated under field conditions during the phase of early development and pilot testing. This phase includes the important activities of developing a prototype or preliminary intervention, conducting a pilot test and applying design criteria to the preliminary intervention concept. Rothman and Thomas (1994:36) state: *“Pilot tests are implemented in settings convenient for the researchers and somewhat similar to ones in which the intervention will be used.”*

The preliminary intervention procedures are selected and specified at this stage of the design process. In the current study, a pilot study was conducted by designing and applying a prototype of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme to a group of eight Grade 7 learners. These Grade 7 learners were not part of the sample for the main study. The groupwork method, in keeping with the ecological paradigm, was used in the implementation of the programme. Learners had a workbook in which to do written activities and paste handouts. A pre-test (questionnaire) and post-test (questionnaire) were designed and administered to the learners. The learners, teachers and objective observer were interviewed

about the design of the programme, the model used and the learners' workbooks. Where shortcomings were found in the programme and questionnaires, they were adapted or redesigned. Feedback from the initial pilot test suggested that the programme showed some effects with supportive transactions, but might be shortened and simplified to meet the time demands and learning outcomes of the learners.

After conducting the early development of the life skills programme and the pilot study, 12 relevant themes were identified that should be included in the final programme:

- ❑ Developing self-awareness, self-knowledge of self and sensory contact (SELF)
- ❑ My family and me
- ❑ My school and me
- ❑ Dating, interpersonal relationships and HIV/AIDS education
- ❑ My community and me
- ❑ Needs, rights and responsibilities
- ❑ Rainbow nation, first impressions and stereotyping
- ❑ Effective communication
- ❑ Problem solving
- ❑ Conflict resolution
- ❑ Death: Grieving and growing
- ❑ Where do I go for help /counselling?

In addition to the fact that the programme should meet the specific requirements of Curriculum 2005 (Critical Outcomes, Specific Outcomes and assessment criteria), there are two important mechanisms for implementing the programme:

- ❑ Phase organisers. These help to highlight areas of importance and encourage a holistic approach. They cut across learning areas and reflect the critical outcomes. All learning programmes should represent learning activities from all five of the phase organisers. These phase organisers are: Communication; Personal Development and Empowerment; Culture and Society; Environment; and Economy and Development.
- ❑ Programme organisers. These are subsets of phase organisers. Phase organisers are too broad and generic to be used for designing learning programmes. So, for each phase organiser, there may be several different programme organisers. This helps to focus on the key areas of content and concepts that a learning programme will cover.

Programme organisers also link all 8 learning areas (Department of Education, 1997:25-31).

In the present study the learning area is Life Orientation, the phase organiser is Personal Development and Empowerment and the programme organiser is Personal and Interpersonal Development.

The Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme is presented in Appendix E. Table 3.1 (on page 83) outlines the themes covered in the programme. Various sources were used as a framework for compiling the programme and the researcher endeavoured to improve it and add innovative ideas by consulting, after each session, the guidance teacher and the objective observer, and also by examining the evaluation questionnaire completed by the learners after each session (Appendix G).

3.6 PHASE 5: EVALUATION AND ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT

Rothman and Thomas (1994:37) believe that the use of pilot tests and field replications to test and refine the intervention distinguishes intervention research from programme evaluation. There are four major operations or activities in the evaluation and advanced development phase: selecting an experimental design, collecting and analysing data, replicating the intervention under field conditions and refining the intervention (Rothman & Thomas 1994:37-39).

The evaluation and advanced development as well as the major operations will be discussed in the next chapter because of their importance to the present study.

TABLE 3.1: OUTLINE OF THE PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

Phase organisers: Personal Development and Empowerment	
Programme organiser: Personal and Interpersonal Development	
Programme presenter:	
Guidance teacher:	
Objective observer:	
Learners: Grade 7	
Duration: ±15 Sessions, ± 1½ hour per session (Tuesdays and Wednesdays 12:00 - 13:30)	
GOAL: PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	
Session	THEME
Session: Introduction	Building relationships. Questionnaire on needs assessment for learners.
Session: Introduction	Pre-test: Baseline assessment: Questionnaire for participants/learners Programme orientation; Knowledge of the South African context and why we want to develop our life skills; Building relationships
Session 1	Life skills Developing self-awareness, self-knowledge and sensory contact (SELF)
Session 2	My family and me
Session 3	My school, friends and me
Session 4	Dating and interpersonal relationships
Session 5	My community and me
Session 6	Needs, rights and responsibilities
Session 7	Rainbow nation, first impressions and stereotyping
Session 8	Effective communication
Session 9	Problem solving
Session 10	Conflict resolution
Session 11	Death: Grieving and growing
Session 12	Where do I go for help /counselling?
Final session	Evaluation of the programme. Post-test: Questionnaire for participants/learners Week after termination: Evaluation

3.7 PHASE 6: DISSEMINATION

After the intervention (in this study the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme) has been field-tested and evaluated, it is ready to be disseminated to schools and community organisations and other target audiences. The following activities make the process of dissemination and adaptation more successful:

- Preparing the product for dissemination
- Identifying potential markets for the intervention
- Creating a demand for the intervention
- Encouraging appropriate adaptation
- Providing technical support for adopters (Rothman & Thomas 1994:39-43).

Phase 6 of the intervention research process will be discussed in the final chapter of the study.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the model of intervention research proposed by Rothman and Thomas (1994). The model attempts to enhance the understanding of community and school conditions and in particular, the effectiveness of interventions intended to improve them. It is an interactive model, assuming a dynamic interplay between clients, researchers and the eventual purchasers and users of interventions. Collaboration between researchers and clients in all phases – from identifying community problems to adapting the innovation in context – helps to assure more effective products in the intervention research paradigm.

In Chapter 3 the following phases and activities in this study were discussed:

- Situation analysis and project planning
 - Identifying and involving the principal, school governing board, teachers and learners at the primary school
 - Gaining entry to and co-operation from the primary school
 - Identifying the concerns of the school personnel and learners
 - Analysing the identified needs

- Setting critical and specific outcomes
- Information gathering and synthesis: These refer to the activities described in Chapter 2 and used as foundation the model of Edna Rooth (1997) Life Skills Education.
- Design, early development and pilot testing of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme: The preliminary intervention procedures were tested in practice on a group of eight Grade 7 learners, using the groupwork method in keeping with the ecological paradigm in the implementation of the programme.

The next chapter gives specific details of the experimental design, the data collection and data analysis. The focus is on the evaluation and advanced development of the Personal and Interpersonal Life Skills Programme.