

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous two chapters aimed at creating a background for this study in investigating the role of the educator as a mediator in the classroom and presenting a legal framework for both mediation and the fundamental rights of learners.

Chapter Two focused on an investigation into what mediation comprises (*cf.* 2.1 & 2.3). It offered a historical glimpse on mediation (*cf.* 2.3; 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.3; 2.3.4; 2.3.5) and focused on mediation in present times (*cf.* 2.3.6). From the literature study, it has become clear that it is the duty of the educator to use mediation effectively also in the English classroom (*cf.* 2.6.1; 2.6.2; 2.6.3). Though, whether mediation occurs in the modern classroom, is an open question which the researcher hopes to find an answer to through her research.

In Chapter Three the focus fell on the applicable law which creates specific obligations related to mediation towards educators. A fundamental rights framework was drawn up to establish learners' fundamental rights in this regard.

Although previous references occur in Chapter One (*cf.* 1.5.2), this chapter will be devoted to a more detailed description of the empirical research design of this thesis with special reference to the strategies of inquiry and data collection methods.

In order to justify the choice of a suitable research design to address the research problem, the researcher had first to identify a suitable research paradigm that guided the subsequent choices made regarding the research design and strategies for data collection.

## 4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

In the opinion of De Vos (2005c:39), the term paradigm originated in linguistics, where it means the various forms that a word can take in some languages according to the declension or conjugation of that word, especially as a model for other similar nouns. MacKenzie and Knipe (2010) mention that the theoretical framework of a research study, as dissimilar from a theory, is sometimes referred to as the paradigm and influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted. It is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research.

In the opinion of Burton and Bartlett (2009:18), a research paradigm describes models of research that reveal a general agreement on the nature of the world and how to investigate it. Within a paradigm there would be a common consensus on the research methods that are appropriate and acceptable for gathering data and also those which are not satisfactory. A paradigm then is a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the purpose of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:18).

Creswell (2009a:6) has chosen to utilize the term *worldview* as meaning a *basic set of beliefs that guide action*. He regards a worldview as a universal orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds. These worldviews are fashioned by the discipline area of the student, the beliefs of advisers and faculty in a student's area, and past experiences.

A pragmatic approach was used in this study. In the opinion of MacKenzie and Knipe (2010:7), the pragmatic paradigm is concerned with:

- consequences of actions;
- being problem-centred;
- mixed models (being qualitative and quantitative);
- being pluralistic (a variety of methods of data collection); and

- having a real-world practice orientation.

Linked to the views of MacKenzie and Knipe (2010:7), Creswell (2009b:10-11) argues that pragmatism provides a philosophical basis for research with the following trends:

- Pragmatism is not devoted to one system of philosophy and reality.
- Individual researchers have a liberty of selection of methods, techniques and procedures of research that best summon their desires and purposes.
- Pragmatists do not perceive the world as a complete unity. Mixed-methods researchers choose many different approaches for collecting and analysing data.
- Certainty is what works at the time. In mixed-methods research, investigators use both quantitative and qualitative data because they work to offer the best understanding of a research problem.
- The pragmatist researchers look to the *what* and *how* to research, based on the proposed consequences – where they want to depart with it. Mixed-methods researchers ought to establish a motive for their mixing, a foundation for the reasons why quantitative and qualitative data must be mixed in the first place.
- Pragmatists concur that research at all times takes place in social, historical, political and other contexts. In this way, mixed-methods studies can comprise a postmodern twist, a theoretical lens that is philosophical of social impartiality and political accomplishments.
- Pragmatists believe in a peripheral world sovereign of the intellect, as well as that lodged in the intellect. Yet, they deem that one has to stop asking questions about authenticity and the laws of nature.
- Thus, for the mixed-methods researcher, pragmatism unfastens the door to manifold methods, dissimilar worldviews and diverse assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis.

MacKenzie and Knipe (2010:6) point out that pragmatism is seen as the paradigm that provides the underlying philosophical structure for mixed-methods research. The pragmatist places the research problem as central and applies all approaches to understanding the problem.

Pragmatists are concerned with applications and resolutions to problems. The researcher of this thesis is of the opinion that optimal teaching and learning does not occur as effectively as it could while English literature is being taught in the classroom. She wishes to develop a programme in which this can be achieved, thus suggesting a solution to a problem.

Furthermore, the researcher decided on a pragmatist approach due to the fact that this paradigm prefers a mixed-methods approach. In this thesis, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather the data. Another aspect that informed the choice was that of wanting to gain a richer, more holistic understanding of classroom situations.

### **4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

It is mainly *the nature of the problem* that manipulates the choice of which data are collected during the research process (Mills, 2007:55). To be able to understand the type of research design used in this study, it is important to distinguish between the three types of designs as distinguished by Creswell (2009a:4):

- Quantitative research: As would be the case in most research, quantitative research engages the routes of gathering, analysing, construing meaning from and reporting the outcome of a study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:28). To Creswell and Plano Clark (2007:28), the defining principle of quantitative research, which sets it apart from qualitative research, is that the former wants to observe how the participants' data fit into existing models, structures or theories. In the end it is about sustaining or discarding existing ideas. In the opinion of Fouché and De Vos (2005:93), researchers involved in quantitative research, frequently have to explore phenomena for which few established models or theories exist.

This type of research is prudent when aiming at testing objective theories by studying the connections that exist among variables. In general these variables can be measured on one or the other instrument, so that numbered data can be analysed by using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2009a:4). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94) point out that quantitative research is used to respond to questions about relationships among measured variables with the rationale of explaining, predicting, and controlling phenomena.

According to Creswell (2009a:46), quantitative research can be described as educational research which is characterized by a researcher who (1) asks precise, narrow questions; (2) gathers quantifiable data from the research participants; (3) analyses the numerical data by using statistics; and (4) carries out the investigation in an impartial, objective way.

- Qualitative research: According to Lichtman (2006:22), qualitative research is an *umbrella* phrase. It is a means that assumes that the researcher gathers, organizes and interprets information (usually in words or in pictures) with his or her eyes and ears as filters. It is a way of doing that often involves in-depth interviews and/or observations of humans in normal and social settings.

In qualitative research, data collection, analysis, interpretation and report writing vary from the traditional, quantitative approaches. Purposeful sampling, collection of open-ended data, analysis of text or pictures, representation of information in figures and tables, and personal interpretation of the findings all notify qualitative procedures (Creswell, 2009a:xxiv). This type of research aspires at exploring and appreciating the significance individuals attribute to a social and/or human problem. Such a researcher makes use of emerging questions and procedures, gathers the data typically in the participant's setting, analyses the data inductively by constructing the analysis from specifics towards general themes, and ends by interpreting the significance of the data (Creswell, 2009a:4). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:94) mention that qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about the multifaceted nature of

phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participants' point of view. Merriam (2009:5) emphasizes that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people understand their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

In this type of research, the researcher (1) relies on the viewpoints of the participants; (2) asks fewer narrow and more general questions; (3) gathers data that mainly comprise of words or written responses from participants; (4) explains and considers these words for possible themes; and (4) carries out the investigation in a subjective, impartial manner (Creswell, 2009a:46).

- Mixed-methods research: In the viewpoint of Leedy and Ormrod (2005:97), a researcher often combines fundamentals of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in what is called a mixed-methods design. Ivankova *et al.* (2007:261) define mixed-methods research as a process for collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more completely. The researcher collects numeric and textual information to respond to the study's research questions.

As pointed out by Creswell (2009b:52), this type of research typically gathers, analyses and mixes both quantitative and qualitative research and methods within a single study in order to value a research problem. The general theory is that using quantitative and qualitative methods together in research would provide a more enhanced appreciation of both the research problem and questions than when using only a single method by itself. This approach is about using the quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination so that by and large the ultimate strength of the study is seen to be more superior than would be the case in either quantitative or qualitative research.

As indicated in 1.5.2, the researcher of this thesis decided on using a mixed-methods design in order to validate findings and recommendations that

followed from evidence found in observations from the classroom practice and literature. The type of mixed-methods design was that of a concurrent triangulation design (*cf.* 1.5.2), as will be described in the paragraphs below. The quantitative component of the mixed-method design was suitable to this study to capture the descriptive nature thereof. The qualitative components of the mixed-methods design used in this research aided in creating a better understanding of the descriptive nature obtained by the quantitative research.

#### **4.3.1 Concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design**

In a triangulation design, the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods in order to best comprehend the phenomenon of interest. It is most appropriate when a researcher wants to collect both types of data at the same time about a single phenomenon in order to compare and contrast the different findings to produce well-validated conclusions (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007:253). Leedy and Ormrod (2005:99) are of the opinion that this approach is especially widespread in mixed-methods designs, in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected to answer a single research question. According to Ivankova and Kawamura (2010:599), concurrent designs with manifold data sources are intensively used in education.

The researcher decided to follow a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design, due to the choice to do quantitative research (questionnaires) and qualitative research (focus group interviews and observations) simultaneously. The thought of involving both quantitative and qualitative research methods is underpinned by aiming at strengthening the findings made by the researcher.

The researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to offer a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this design, the investigator collects both forms of data simultaneously and then integrates the information during interpretation of the overall results (Creswell, 2009b:14-15).

- **Concurrent:** According to Ivankova *et al.* (2007:266), other terms for triangulation have also been used in the mixed-methods literature, terms such as parallel or concurrent, which can lead to less confusion between triangulation as a mixed-methods design and triangulation as a process by

which themes are developed in qualitative research. In Creswell's opinion (2009b:14-15), concurrent mixed-methods are procedures used to converge or merge quantitative and qualitative data in order to offer a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this design, the investigator collects both forms of data at the same time and then amalgamates the information during interpretation of the overall results. In this design, the researcher may entrench one smaller form of data within another larger data collection in order to analyse different types of questions (the qualitative addresses the process while the quantitative, the outcomes).

- **Triangulation:** De Vos (2005a:361) describes triangulation as the convergence of multiple perspectives that can present greater confidence that what is being targeted is being accurately captured. Thus the concept of triangulation is sometimes used to delegate a conscious combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology. Creswell (2009a:266) is of the opinion that triangulation is the process of corroborating information from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. The inquirer examines each information source and finds verification to support a theme. This ensures that the study will be truthful because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals or processes. In this way, it encourages the researcher to develop a report that is both precise and credible.

In research terms, the aspiration to use multiple sources of data is referred to as triangulation. It is generally accepted in action research circles that researchers must not rely on any single source of data, interview, observation or instrument (Mills, 2007:56). Mertler (2009:11) states that triangulation is a process of relating manifold sources of data in order to establish their trustworthiness or verification of the consistency of the facts while trying to account for their intrinsic biases. Ultimately, this enables the researcher to try to get a better handle on what is happening in reality and to have greater assurance in research findings.



The triangulation process is carried out by researchers to amplify the validity of their research and it means checking their findings by using several points of reference. In effect, the researcher is approaching the object of the research from as many different angles and perspectives as feasible to gain a greater understanding (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:26).

Jick (as quoted in De Vos, 2005a:362) mentions the following advantages of triangulation:

- It allows researchers to be more confident of their outcomes.
- It can help to uncover the deviant dimension of a phenomenon.
- It may lead to a synthesis of theories.
- Triangulation can serve as the critical test of competing theories.

The utilization of triangulation increases the validity of findings (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:26).

In this research, the researcher's data collection process followed the *timing decision* of concurrent data collection; the *weighting decision* of equivalent proportionality; the *mixing decision* of combining the data during the examination phase; and the *notation decision* of QUAN + QUAL. This implies that both quantitative and qualitative research carried equal weight in this study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:85; cf. 1.5.2). All these decisions that match the concurrent design were aimed at providing a clearer picture of the research problem.

#### **4.3.2 Strategies of inquiry**

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010:274), a researcher weighs the options of which research strategy would best fit the research questions by following a course of action that they call *methodological eclecticism*. This would refer to researchers choosing what they favour from a variety of possibilities – in this case a continuous series of available options, ranging

from choosing only a quantitative or a qualitative strategy, to choosing a multidimensional one.

#### **4.3.2.1 The quantitative component: non-experimental descriptive survey research**

In this study, the researcher made use of non-experimental descriptive survey research (*cf.* 1.5.2). According to Maree and Pietersen (2007b:152), the term *non-experimental* implies that the researcher does not influence any data. Moreover, most researchers choose surveys as their non-experimental research design. Creswell (2009a:12) points out that survey research permits for a numeric description of a population's tendencies, outlooks or beliefs by focusing on a sample of that population.

Non-experimental survey research in the form of a questionnaire was utilized to determine (1) Grade 11 educators' understanding of mediation concepts, and (2) their accommodation of learners' fundamental rights in the English literature classrooms. A non-experimental survey strategy in the form of a questionnaire was administered to determine Grade 11 learners' views on their English educators' role in the classroom, and their understanding of how their fundamental rights are advanced in classes.

The researcher arranged with the principals of the respective schools for permission to administer the questionnaires as a survey method in order to acquire (1) a variety of Grade 11 learners' opinions and beliefs concerning their English educators' role in the classroom and the advancement of their fundamental rights, and (2) to be able to compare educators' responses on the questionnaires with what was recorded during the focus group interviews and the classroom observations (*cf.* 7.4).

#### **4.3.2.2 The qualitative component: phenomenological approach**

As indicated before (*cf.* 1.6.2.1.2), a phenomenological research approach was followed in the qualitative phase of this study. As pointed out by Boeije (2010:8), phenomenological research is an approach of inquiry during which,

among others, the researcher aims at interpreting human experiences and behaviour. Rudestam and Newton (2007:206) argue that phenomenology focuses on how people experience a particular phenomenon and reveals their estimation that phenomenologists explore how individuals construct meanings of the experience and how these individual meanings shape group or cultural meanings.

Understanding the lived experiences of the research participants marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method (Moustakas, in Creswell, 2009a:13), and the procedure involves studying a small number of participants through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. In this process, the researcher brackets or sets aside his/her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (Creswell, 2009b:12-13).

For the completion of this thesis, a phenomenological study was done in that the researcher aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the educator participants' viewpoints and understandings regarding particular aspects of mediation and fundamental rights. The researcher aimed at gaining insight into participants' understanding of what mediation comprises and how it accommodates learners' fundamental rights by (1) observing how educator participants comply with the principles of mediation during teaching; and (2) allowing educator participants to share their understanding of the competences expected from mediators of learning by conducting focus group interviews.

#### **4.3.2.3 Comparative education law design**

As pointed out before (*cf.* 1.5.3), a comparative law perspective was followed in Chapter Three of this thesis, aiming at gaining an educational-juridical perspective on how effectively mediation is applied in the English Literature classroom to advance learners' fundamental rights. At the same time a juridical framework within which these fundamental rights could be placed was suggested.

Van Zyl and Van der Vyver (1982:3-7) regard it to be of significance for students who do research within the field of law to heed, not only the general drift, but also the specific content of the legal documents. In the case of Chapter Three of this thesis, the researcher aimed at looking at how specific legal documents and laws provide an ordered framework that could give direction to advancing learners' fundamental rights by educators who fulfil their roles as mediators in the classroom.

Kleyn and Viljoen (2007:44) point out the practical worth of taking cognizance of the different sources of law, such as the Constitution (1996) / relevant laws (84 of 1996; 27 of 1996) / subordinate legislation (SA, 2000; SA, 2007), since they supply law students, not only with the key to unlocking *the content of the law*, but also with *the authority for any legal argument*.

As pointed out by Venter *et al.* (1990:211), comparative law is a distinctive jurisprudential research approach which is intent on achieving innovative appreciation and understanding of the topic that is scrutinized. Normally the new perspective becomes feasible when similarities and differences are pointed out.

In the case of this research, the novel educational-judicial perspective on advancing learners' fundamental rights by applying mediation effectively in classrooms was made possible by indicating similarities and differences as they occur between the various relevant sources of law and the research participants' viewpoints. Towards the culmination of the process, this researcher hopes to have achieved a fresh understanding and new information on implementing mediation to advance learners' fundamental rights in South African classrooms.

#### **4.3.2.4 Research participants**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:101), research participants must not be told the nature of the study to be conducted and given the option of either participating or not participating. They must rather be told that, if they consent to participate, they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

#### **4.3.2.4.1 Quantitative sampling**

Purposeful samples are comprised of people based on a particular characteristic (Van der Stoep & Johnston, 2009:187). The reason why the researcher chose to focus on English literature, was that it was an obvious choice, since the researcher is an English educator. The researcher of this thesis chose English subject educators and Grade 11 learners to complete the questionnaires (*cf.* 1.6.2.2). The reason for choosing Grade 11 learners was due to the fact that it is not feasible to use Grade 12 learners in view of the fact that they are preparing for their final academic year at secondary school and their year is too demanding to fit a study such as this one into learners and educators' schedules. Lower grades were not chosen due to the focus being on Teaching and Learning in literature classes and literature assessment does not receive the same prominence in Grades 8-10 (*cf.* 1.2, 1.6.2.1; 1.6.2.2).

The objective was to investigate whether mediation is applied during the literature periods of the research participants or not.

#### **4.3.2.4.2 Qualitative sampling**

For the qualitative research of this study, the researcher decided to follow a purposeful sampling approach. According to Van der Stoep and Johnston (2009:187), purposeful samples are comprised of people based on a particular quality. The educators were chosen as a purposeful sample due to their teaching of English as a second language at the selected schools (*cf.* 1.6.2.1; 1.6.2.3). After the focus group interviews, educator participants were consulted as to who would volunteer to take part in inviting the researcher and her co-worker into their Grade 11 English literature classrooms for the observation component of the qualitative phase of the research (*cf.* 1.6.2.3).

In total, four schools (three town schools and one township school) were involved in this research that was conducted in the Fezile Dabi district of the Free State Department of Education (*cf.* 1.6.3). The reason for choosing this district, was that the researcher was teaching there and the research could be conducted easily. All Grade 11s of the relevant schools were involved in

answering the questionnaires. The 17 Grade 11 English educators at these schools were invited to complete the educator questionnaires as participants. Of the participants who participated in the focus group interviews, two willing educator participants were identified to participate in the classroom observation phase of the research. Observations were done during the English literature classes (*cf.* 1.6.2.5).

#### **4.4 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010:274-275) mention the fact that, at a certain point, a mixed-methods researcher needs *to go vertical* in order to establish which strategies of inquiry would be best to deal with the research matter that has been acknowledged. Such a researcher then becomes a *methodological connoisseur*, involving both knowledge and intuition in the process of selecting strategies of inquiry.

Creswell (2009a:161) describes the data collection instrument as a research instrument which is used to compute, examine or report data. It could be a test, questionnaire, tally sheet, log, observational checklist and inventory or assessment instrument.

The researcher of this thesis chose questionnaires, focus group interviews and observations as her methods for gathering the necessary data.

##### **4.4.1 Quantitative research: questionnaires**

In Delport's opinion (2005:166), a questionnaire is a set of questions on a form which is completed by the participant in respect of a research task.

According to Willemse (2009:15), the foundation of statistical analysis will be the data obtained in response to questions. To be successful, a questionnaire needs both a rational structure and well thought-out questions (*cf.* 1.6.2.3).

##### **Type of questionnaire**

The researcher decided to make use of the group administration technique to administer the questionnaires. According to Maree and Pietersen

(2007a:157), this method of administering questionnaires is used most often. It involves that the researcher waits while a whole group of participants complete questionnaires. In this study, the researcher arranged beforehand with the principals of the four schools to conduct the questionnaires at a time suitable for all. At all schools, the principals explained that it would be difficult to get all Grade 11 learners together at once to complete the questionnaires. However, they had offered to make arrangements with the English educators to administer the questionnaires at a suitable time.

Maree and Pietersen (2007a:157) point out the advantages of using the group administration method in conducting questionnaires:

- Many participants may be able to complete the questionnaire in a short time.
- Test administrators will be able to verify questionnaires for precision.
- This method is inexpensive and uncomplicated.
- Participants may be reached across great distances.
- The interviewer can support with matters in the questionnaires which are unclear.

Despite the advantages, the researcher also experienced false promises made at schools. At two of the four schools, the questionnaires were not completed in a month's time. This resulted in the researcher making alternative arrangements so that she could administer the questionnaires after the learners had written a creative writing examination paper. Knowing about this experienced obstacle, Maree and Pietersen (2007a:157) also warn against the following disadvantages of group administration of questionnaires:

- When diverse administrators manage the tests, this could lead the way to dissimilar responses.
- The primary researcher has restricted power over what happens in the field.

- The circumstances in which the questionnaire is managed cannot be controlled by the primary researcher.
- Expenditures could be quite high when using standardized tests.

### **Appearance of a questionnaire**

According to Cohen and Manion (1995:96), the appearance of the questionnaire is vital: it must look straightforward and attractive. A large questionnaire with plenty of space for questions and answers is encouraging to participants. Furthermore, clarity of wording and simplicity of design are vital elements when designing a questionnaire. Clear instructions were provided to guide participants. Attention was given to the arrangement of the contents of the questionnaire so that it maximizes co-operation (Cohen & Manion, 1995:96).

### **Question sequence**

Guided by Willemse (2009:15), the researcher divided the questionnaire into different parts:

- Administrative part: date, name and address
- Classification part: race, gender and age
- Subject matter of inquiry

### **Question wording**

Cohen and Manion (1995:93) remind the reader that leading questions – those are questions which are worded in such a way as to suggest to participants that there is only one adequate answer – should be avoided. Schmuck (1997:53) mentions that researchers should remember that every individual statement in the questionnaire should only focus on one item.

In line with the guidelines of Willemse (2009:16-17), the wording met the following criteria:



- Clear closed questions were phrased to evade misapprehension.
- Questions were short, uncomplicated and to the point.
- Questions were not too many – there were altogether 43 questions in the learner questionnaire and 44 questions in the educator questionnaire. According to Maree and Pietersen (2007a:159), a structured questionnaire should not contain more than 100 to 120 items.
- No calculations were expected in questions.
- The participant was not led to exact answers.
- Questions were not phrased persuasively.
- Questions were not insulting or uncomfortable to the participant.
- As closed questions were used, a selection of answers was given.
- Confidentiality was assured – participants were notified before the commencement of the questions in the questionnaire that the researcher respected their privacy and that anonymity should be crucial of importance when completing the questionnaires.

### **Types of questions used**

- Closed questions: The participant is given a succession of possible answers from which one must be chosen. This approach makes it easy to record the required information and reduces bias (Willemse, 2009:17). Borg and Gall (1989:428) emphasize that closed form questions entail that the question permits only certain responses – such as a multiple-choice question.

The researcher made use of closed questions, using a four-point Likert scale to indicate possible answers (*cf.* 1.6.2.3). As pointed out by Maree and Pietersen (2007a:167), a Likert scale begins with a statement and then asks individuals to respond on an Agree-Disagree continuum. The

Likert scale typically ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The researcher of this thesis found a four-point Likert scale suitable since she wanted to calculate the participants' responses to each item of the questionnaire.

- Open-ended questions: These questions permit participants to give their own opinion in their own words and to express any thoughts that they feel are appropriate to the question (Willemse, 2009:17). Schmuck (1997:53) warns that open-ended questions' disadvantages ought to be kept in mind. He mentions that some responses are ambiguous and the analysis of this type of questions is time-consuming. No open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire, partly due to the fact that the researcher was not interested in participants' explanations and partly because she was not trying determine their understanding of the items. She was interested in determining their responses to specific characteristics of mediation and advancing learners' fundamental rights in English literature classrooms.

### **Structure of the questionnaire**

According to Willemse (2009:15), the structure of a questionnaire should ensure that there is a flow from question to question. Cohen and Manion (1995:97) remark that putting ticks in boxes by way of answering a questionnaire is known to most participants, whereas requests to encircle pre-coded numbers can be a source of uncertainty and error. They also mention that the repetition of instructions is as necessary as the clarity, inambiguity of the instructions and their attractive display. Welman *et al.* (2005:174) mention that when designing a questionnaire, the concepts and variables involved and the relationships being investigated – possibly in the structure of hypotheses, theories, models or evaluative frameworks – should be clear and should guide the questionnaire design process.

The questionnaires comprised of three sections:

- Section A: Biographical information of learners and educators involving aspects such as gender, age and position.
- Section B: This section collected responses relating to mediation and the application thereof in the English literature classroom (*cf.* Chapter Two).
- Section C: This final section of the questionnaires explored whether or not fundamental rights were respected and advanced in these classrooms (*cf.* Chapter Three).

The term *survey* refers to a communal group of quantitative data collection techniques that involve the administration of a set of questions or statements to a sample of people. Surveys that are administered in written form, where the researcher asks the participants to answer a sequence of questions or respond to a series of statements and then to return their responses to the researcher, are known specifically as questionnaires (Mertler, 2009:117).

Burton and Bartlett (2009:75) are of the opinion that a questionnaire is merely a list of questions that participants can answer. It is a functional method if carefully planned for gathering responses from a large number of people relatively quickly. As such, questionnaires may be seen as a useful way of obtaining quantitative data, especially since they permit the researcher to collect large amounts of data in a relatively short amount of time (Mills, 2007:67).

At the same time, Burton and Bartlett (2009:78-79) remind the reader that researchers should not disregard how important the appearance of the questionnaire, ethical issues and design and placement of questions are.

Mills (2007:67) recommends that the researcher attend to the following when developing and presenting questionnaires:

- Carefully proofread questionnaires prior to sending them out.
- Avoid a slack presentation – make the survey attractive.

- Avoid a lengthy questionnaire.
- Do not ask unnecessary questions.
- Use structured items with a variety of responses.

Burton and Bartlett (2009:82) name the following important aspects considering questionnaires:

### **Strengths of questionnaires**

- It is feasible to gather large amounts of data relatively quickly.
- Responses to certain questions can easily be compared between individuals or groups.
- Data can be expressed statistically.
- The research may enable overall statements to be made.

### **Weaknesses of questionnaires**

- Questions about difficult issues are complicated to compose and participants may find it difficult to place their responses to specific categories.
- The short responses often fail to reflect the varying depth or complexity of people's feelings.
- It is the researcher who sets the agenda of questionnaires, not the participant. The questionnaires may create certain attitudes.

It was expected that the questionnaire would take learners no longer than 20 minutes to complete. All Grade 11 learners at each of the four schools were asked to complete their questionnaires prior to their English examination (preferably Paper 3 which involves creative writing). By making this arrangement, it was ensured that as many participants as possible were involved in the study and no tuition time was used in this regard.

The researcher arranged with the principals of the respective schools for permission to administer the questionnaires.

### **Suitability of using the questionnaire as research instrument for this study**

Questionnaires were appropriate as research instruments for this study for they assisted in eliciting responses that related to specific attitudes, perceptions or perspectives.

The participants were Grade 11 learners and English educators. The questionnaires were specifically aimed towards their English literature teaching and learning. Similar questions were just phrased differently to suit learners and educators.

#### **4.4.1.1 Pilot study**

To Leedy and Ormrod (2005:192), conducting a pilot study is one of the twelve guidelines they offer researchers when creating a questionnaire, since the pilot study will assist in determining whether the various items are difficult to understand. In this way a researcher would be able to change/edit questionnaire items where necessary before the actual research is conducted. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2000:305) are of the opinion that the aim of a pilot test is to refine the questionnaire so that the participants will experience no problems in answering the questions and the researcher will have no problems in recording the data. Using a pilot test will also permit a researcher to obtain some assessment of the questions' validity and the likely reliability of the data that will be collected.

It is by aiming at the validity and reliability of their measuring instruments that researchers can, to a certain extent, manage the degree to which they gain new knowledge of the scrutinized occurrences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:27).

In the opinion of Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:52), the researcher must begin to identify imperfections by piloting or testing a questionnaire with a few chosen people in order to establish their clarity. Piloting also aids in

eliminating ambiguous questions, as well as in generating useful feedback on the structure and flow of the intended interview.

As indicated before in Chapter One, aspects of reliability and validity will be addressed below, while at the same time reporting the results of the pilot study that was conducted at the beginning of this research plan.

The pilot study of this thesis was conducted at one secondary school in the Fezile Dabi district. The piloted school was not included in the actual sample that was used in conducting the research, as advised by Kanjee (2007:490).

The pilot study was significant in identifying defects in the questionnaire and these were changed accordingly. The final questionnaires were discussed with the professional statistician at the Vaal Campus of the North-West University, to ensure that the data would not be problematic when being analysed.

### **Reliability**

According to Mertler (2009:126), reliability is an indispensable characteristic of quantitative data. If a test is administered repeatedly under indistinguishable circumstances, but different results are obtained each time, one will conclude that the test is unreliable. If, however, similar results are obtained each time the test is administered, the results will be considered to be reliable and, therefore, potentially useful for research purposes.

In the first place, as pointed out by Burton and Bartlett (2009:24), reliability describes the level to which one can repeat a research instrument or method, therefore it is seen as an appraisal of the stability of any method. In the second place, the reliability of a measure refers to the degree to which participants will respond to it in the same way again and again (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:24). Mills (2007:94) describes reliability as the degree to which a test measures what it is measuring without fail.

To state it differently, the more dependable or reliable the method for gathering the data, the more likely it becomes that the method would give

comparable results in successive administrations. On the other hand, an untrustworthy measure would propose dissimilar results each time it is administered. Yet, researchers ought to note that a high level in the reliability of a data collection instrument does not guarantee its accuracy (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:25-26).

Reliability points to the constancy with which an instrument provides an explicit outcome when the unit that is being calculated has not been altered at all (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:29).

When a number of items are formulated to measure a certain construct, there should be a high level of similarity among them since they are supposed to measure one common construct. A measure of this degree of similarity is an indication of the internal consistency (or reliability) of the instrument. The coefficient that is used to measure the internal reliability of an instrument is called the Cronbach alpha coefficient and is based on the inter-item correlations (Akbaba, 2006:183). If the objects are strongly correlated with one another, their internal consistency is high and the alpha coefficient will be close to one (Pietersen & Maree, 2007a:216). The interpretation of the Cronbach alpha of this study was directed by the range of 0.6-0.9, as proposed by Simon (2008). For the sake of the inter-item correlations, the parameter range as put forward by Clark and Watson (1995:316) was accepted: 0.15-0.5.

In this study, a pilot study was conducted where Cronbach alpha and inter-item correlations were calculated for the questionnaire items to determine the reliability of the questionnaires. Similar calculations were made for the actual study as well. These results are shown in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.1: Pilot study Cronbach alpha/inter-item correlations**

	Cronbach alpha		Inter-item correlations	
	Learners n=116	Educators n=4	Learners n=116	Educators n=4
<b>Section B</b>	0.815	0.941	0.181	0.472
<b>Section C</b>	0.733	0.900	0.146	0.360

Derived from these calculated values, all four Cronbach alphas were satisfactory and signified that they met the terms of reliability criteria, since they fell within the suggested range of 0.6-0.9 (Simon, 2008). All four inter-item correlations were also satisfactory and signified that they fell within the suggested average range of 0.15-0.5 (Clark & Watson, 1995:316).

Based on the statistics shown in Table 4.1 for the learners, their Section B Cronbach alpha guided the researcher to (1) replace two items by new questions (B16 & B18) and (2) re-word/simplify six items (B8, B13, B15, B17, B19 & B20) in order to work towards stronger internal consistency between questionnaire items. The Section C Cronbach alpha guided the researcher to (1) delete one item and replace it with a new question (C8) and (2) personalize all 16 items for the sake of the learners.

Based on the statistics shown in Table 4.1 for the educators, their Section C Cronbach alpha guided the researcher of this thesis to (1) replace the same item, as was the case with learners, by a new question (C8) and (2) re-word one item (C16) in order to work towards a stronger internal consistency.



**Table 4.2: Actual study Cronbach alpha/inter-item correlations**

	Cronbach alpha		Inter-item correlations	
	Learners n=298	Educators n=17	Learners n=298	Educators n=17
<b>Section B</b>	0.897	0.899	0.303	0.309
<b>Section C</b>	0.802	0.742	0.203	0.152

Based on the calculated Cronbach alpha and inter-item correlations for the actual study of this research, all four Cronbach alphas were satisfactory and signified that they met the terms of reliability criteria since they fell inside the range of 0.6-0.9 (Simon, 2008). Moreover, the inter-item correlations fell between the 0.15-0.5 parameters that would indicate that all items related coherently with one another in the questionnaires (Clark & Watson, 1995:316).

## **Validity**

### ***Validity of the quantitative research design***

Although several authors depict validity as referring to the extent to which the research instrument measures that which it intends measuring (Mills, 2007:95; Pietersen & Maree, 2007a:216; Mertler, 2009:125), McMillan (2008:144) underlines the more present-day definition which pays attention to the degree to which conclusions are appropriate and significant.

According to Burton and Bartlett (2009:25), determining validity plays a momentous role in determining which would be the most fitting research method for a specific study. The term validity refers to the *truthfulness, correctness or accuracy* of the research data, implying that for the results of a research study to be considered truthful, the research instrument should measure what the researcher maintains it is measuring. In other words, an

indicator is convincing to the extent that it empirically stands for the notion it claims to measure.

Creswell (2009a:169) is of the opinion that the participants' scores from a valid measuring instrument add up, are significant and permit researchers who study the responses of a scientifically representative sample to come to sound conclusions that could be generalized to the population in some instances.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:134), validity refers to the degree to which systematic explanations of occurrences agree with reality and the extent of the frankness of findings and conclusions.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:134) point out the following types of validity for quantitative research designs:

- **Statistical conclusion validity:** This type of validity refers to the appropriate use of statistical tests to establish whether purported relationships are a reflection of actual relationships (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:134). The researcher made use of the statistical consultancy services of the North-West University to ensure appropriate statistical validity.
- **Internal validity:** This validity type refers to the degree to which the claim of changes in the independent variable causing changes in the dependent variable is correct (Van der Stoep & Johnston, 2009:106). Internal validity could not be guaranteed and was a limitation in the context of this study.
- **Construct validity:** Van der Stoep and Johnston (2009:106) mention that this type of validity refers to the level to which the measure is on target to measure the construct being studied. There was no existing questionnaire that measured the same constructs that the researcher of this thesis did, therefore she made use of experts in the field to verify whether her questionnaires measured the constructs in question. Construct validity of the two questionnaires were supported by the fact

that although the questionnaires focused on different sections, as a whole they both dealt with aspects being considered vital to the research topic.

- External validity: This type of validity refers to the generalizability of the results and conclusions to other people and localities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:134; Rudestam & Newton, 2007:113). External elements were purposively included to make the study more applicable to everyday life. Knowing that the educational system and everything surrounding and accompanying it cannot stand independently from external factors, this type of validity was considered essential to be sufficiently incorporated in this study. The researcher acknowledges the fact that the sample was not randomized and posed a limitation to the study in terms of the generalizability of the research findings.

### ***Validity of the questionnaire***

During the process of this research, the researcher took special note of the following types of validity in the design of the questionnaire:

- Content validity: This type of validity is the extent to which the sample of test items represents the content that the test is designed to measure. Content validity is concerned with the counterpart between the content of your course and the test you are using (Borg & Gall, 1989:251). To guarantee the content validity of an instrument, the researcher usually presents an interim version to specialists in the field of research for their comments before finalizing the instrument (Pietersen & Maree, 2007a:217). For this study, the researcher consulted her promoter and co-promoter. The researcher compiled the preliminary questionnaires and requested the promoter and co-promoter – who were both well acquainted with the field of study – to observe the content and comment on whether they felt it applied to what was being tested in equal proportions. The content validity of the two questionnaires was supported by the fact that the questionnaire items were constructed according to the definition of each section.

- Face validity: This points to the degree to which an instrument *looks* applicable, indicating if the instrument is measuring what it intends to measure (Pietersen & Maree, 2007a:217). This type of validity can easily be confused with content validity. However, face validity refers to the evaluator's appraisal of what the content and the test measure (Borg & Gall, 1989:251). Borg and Gall (1989:256) also mention that face validity is concerned with the degree to which a test *appears* to measure what it professes to measure, whereas the other forms of test validity *provide evidence* that the test measures what it purports to measure. The promoter and co-promoter ensured that the researcher tested what was supposed to be tested.
- Construct validity: This type of validity is essential for consistency and has to do with how well the unit/s included in the instrument is/are measured by diverse groups of related items (Pietersen & Maree, 2007a:217). Borg and Gall (1989:255) emphasize that construct validity is the degree to which a particular test can be shown to measure a hypothetical construct, in other words, a theoretical construction about the nature of human behaviour. The researcher used her two promoters to verify whether her questionnaire items were focused on the constructs on which the research focused.

#### **4.4.2 Qualitative research: focus groups and observations**

As pointed out earlier in Chapter One (*cf.* 1.6.2), the researcher of this thesis chose to include focus group interviews and observations as data-gathering methods for the qualitative component of the research.

##### **4.4.2.1 Focus group interviews**

A focus group interview is the process of collecting data through interviews with an assemblage of people, typically four to six. The researcher asks a small number of general questions and elicits responses from all individuals in the group. Focus groups are advantageous when the interface among

interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and cooperative with one another (Creswell, 2009a:226).

According to Mertler (2009:108), an alternative to observing people is to ask those questions directly. This can be accomplished in quite a few ways. Interviews are conversations between the educator-researcher and participants in the study in which the educator poses questions to the participant. Interviews can be conducted with individuals or with groups. Lichtman (2006:129) points out that the reason for using focus groups is to gather information from participants about the topic of interest.

As indicated before, conducting focus groups is really supportive when the researcher needs to save time and such groups often provide sound data because people are frequently more at home when they communicate in a small group, as opposed to having to talk to the researcher individually (Mertler, 2009:110).

However, Mertler (2009:111) warns that it is important to ensure that all participants are given an opportunity to speak and to share his/her viewpoint during the focus group interview itself. This is important since one or two participants can be inclined to take over the discussion and the researcher should therefore take responsibility for monitoring the discussion in order to stop participants from dominating others.

According to Lichtman (2006:130), the following issues are important when conducting focus group interviews:

- Deciding on the size of the group: In Lichtman's opinion (2006:13), a recommended size is not exceeding 10 participants. Greeff (2005:305) is of the opinion that focus groups usually include six to ten participants. She mentions that smaller groups (four to six people) are preferable when the participants have a great deal to share about a topic. The researcher of this thesis chose to include five educators for the first interview, another five for the second interview and three educators for the last interview, because not all interviewees turned up for the appointment made in advance.

- Deciding on the number of groups: it is not important to interview a large number of groups (Lichtman, 2006:130). The number of focus group meetings needed for a particular study is variable and depends on the research aims or idea of the study. In general, the goal is to have only as many groups as are required to provide a trustworthy answer to the research question. The crucial concern is not the quantity of data, but rather the richness of data; not the total counts, but the detailed descriptions (Greeff, 2005:306). In this research, the researcher conducted three focus group interviews. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:292), a researcher should try to have from three to five focus groups.
- Deciding on the composition of groups: the key consideration is that the participants have familiarity or expertise with regard to the topic (Lichtman, 2006:130). Greeff (2005:304) emphasizes that focus groups rely on purposive sampling. Usually the purpose of focus groups is to describe how certain people feel or think about something – people who have certain things in common. In this research, all participants who took part in the focus group interviews were English subject educators.
- Deciding on the role of moderator: it is helpful to have a co-moderator because he or she can help to keep the flow going and make sure all group members contribute (Lichtman, 2006:130). Greeff (2005:307) supports this by stating that it might be functional to consider a facilitating team consisting of the facilitator and an assistant facilitator. The facilitator is primarily concerned with directing the discussion and keeping the conversation flowing and an assistant may assist the facilitator in handling disruptions and acting as backup to the taped communication. The researcher acted as facilitator in all three focus group interviews. The promoter and co-promoter of this study acted as her assistants to enhance the reliability of the findings.
- Locating facilities: it is important to request a quiet and private space (Lichtman, 2006:130). Greeff (2005:209) argues that focus groups

should be held in a comfortable, non-threatening setting, because sessions can last from one to three hours and the comfort of participants is thus crucial. For all focus group interviews, a conference room at each school was used to conduct the interviews. The interviews were scheduled for an hour after school which suited the participants best. Each interview lasted an hour.

- Transcribing and recording: voice recognition software may be used (Lichtman, 2006:130). If possible, and if consent is obtained, the researcher should record interviews on tape or video. A tape recorder allows a much fuller record than notes taken during the interview (Greeff, 2005:298). The assistant facilitator took detailed field notes during the focus group session. After the group interview, the facilitator compiled field notes. Both parties discussed their notes after each focus group. In each interview, the researcher used a tape recorder to record the responses.
- Saturation of data: According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:294), one cannot hope to observe everything; neither can one record everything one observes. Just as one's observations symbolize a *de facto* sample of all potential observations, one's notes signify a sample of one's observations. Rather than recording a random sample of one's observations, one ought to record at least the most important ones. It is thus imperative that the researcher was prepared in advance to know exactly what she was looking for so that all the observed aspects could be woven together when analysing the data. Data saturation was obtained and no additional interviews were needed.

Interviews are classified as being structured, semi-structured or open-ended. Structured focus group interviews were conducted in this study. The reason for choosing a structured interview was to ensure that the same questions were posed to all participants. A structured interview entails that the researcher begins with an interview guide consisting of a specific set of predetermined questions. Those questions – and only those questions – are asked of each person being interviewed. This is typically done for the sake of

consistency (Mertler, 2009:109). According to Burton and Bartlett (2009:85), researchers will follow a set format asking fixed questions in a structured interview. It is essential that the researcher should note certain non-verbal responses that can help to illuminate answers further.

Based on Burton and Bartlett (2009:87), the researcher acknowledged the following considerations when the interviews were conducted:

- The quality and nature of questioning: as an interviewer one needs to be lucid about what views/experiences one wants of the participant and one must ensure that all the key areas are covered in the interview. The researcher of this thesis compiled a list of all the questions beforehand. The types of questions covered a variety of issues within the thesis.
- Listening skills: interviewers should not allow themselves to become distracted and should use verbal and facial signs to indicate attention in the responses. Both the interviewer and assistant were focused upon showing interest in the responses from the interviewees.
- Body language: interviewers should consider their own seating positions and those of the interviewee(s) and try to implement an appropriate body position, namely, open rather than closed. Being comfortable was an important aspect during the interviews. It was important to inquire whether the interviewees were still comfortable – literally and figuratively. Openness contributed to everyone feeling at ease during the focus groups.
- Setting and atmosphere: as the interviewer it is usual to set up the interview and thus to have control over the setting and atmosphere. Consideration needs to be given to the timing of interviews, vicinity in which it takes place and whether there will be refreshments. These things are important as they may make a significant difference to how an interviewee will respond. In the case of the research of this thesis, the researcher who was also the interviewer scheduled a time that suited all the participants. They all preferred the interview to be conducted at their



schools. A quiet place, a conference room, was chosen for each interview. Refreshments were supplied.

- Appropriate conduct of the interviewer: the interviewee needs to be treated in a suitable manner in order to elicit relevant information. The following aspects should also be taken into consideration when conducting the interview (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:87):
  - ✓ Recording interview data: one of the most imperative decisions to be made by a researcher is how to record the data. The researcher decided to tape record all interviews.
  - ✓ Making notes during the interview: there are many advantages of taking notes during an interview, for example, not having to write up the interview when one comes to the analysis. Field notes were taken by the facilitator and assistant (*cf.* 1.6.2.3; 4.4.2.2). The notes were compared afterwards. The field notes comprised of 11 questions asked to the group, as well as recording their demographic details. The facilitator and assistant recorded as many responses as possible and were also focused upon expressive movements from individuals, which included facial expressions, posture and bodily movements. It was considered important to pin expressive movements down on paper, for the simple reason that it is impossible to trace this on the recorded data (*cf.* Appendix J). In the end, the researcher compared the notes to the literature review and the other research methods used in this study to draw comparisons or to identify discrepancies.
  - ✓ Recording: some researchers prefer to record interviews, as this allows them to concentrate upon the interviewee and their responses. One advantage with recordings is that you can play them back later. The recordings done by the facilitator were played back and the field notes were used to add additional responses or expressions that were missed during the interview.

- ✓ Remembering and writing up later: there is frequently not an opportunity to make detailed notes or record conversations as they happen. The alternative is to write rough notes down as soon as possible afterwards. When comparing the notes taken during the interview, the facilitator and assistant compared their notes and made supplementary notes on important aspects such as body language portrayed by the interviewees.

Creswell (2009a:226) mentions that focus group interviews are functional when the time to collect information is limited and individuals are hesitant to provide information.

The focus group interviews that the researcher of this thesis conducted with the participating educators took an hour each. There were three focus groups comprising Grade 11 English educators. All the interviews took place in English and were tape-recorded.

### **Strengths of focus groups**

One way to think of a focus group is as a group interview where you are trying to gather shared understanding from several individuals, as well as to get views from specific people (Mills, 2007:65).

A focus group is in essence a group interview. What distinguishes focus group interviewing from interviewing a single individual is that the group interaction can trigger thoughts and ideas among participants which do not emerge during an individual interview. Babbie and Mouton (2001:292) mention that the main benefit of focus groups in contrast to participant observation is the prospect to observe a large amount of interface on a topic in a limited period of time based on the researcher's ability to assemble and direct focus groups.

A significant advantage of conducting focus group interviews instead of individual interviews is the time that the researcher saves. While Lichtman (2006:12) suggests interviewing 6-10 people in one hour in a focus group, Creswell (2009a:226) indicates a focus group as consisting, on average, of 4-

6 people. Mertler (2009:110) is of the opinion that a focus group must be no larger than 10-12 people and that this type of interview generally lasts between one and two hours.

Motivation for choosing focus group interviews as part of this study can be found in the fact that one of the greatest advantages of focus group interviews is that participants are able to add onto one another's remarks, thus offering a more detailed perspective, not always achievable when conducting individual interviews. Unpredicted remarks and new viewpoints can also be explored effortlessly within the focus group (Nieuwenhuis, 2007c:90), which would enhance the value of this study.

### **Weaknesses of focus groups**

When conducting a focus group interview, the interviewer needs to encourage all the participants to talk and take their turns talking. A focus group can be challenging for the interviewer who lacks control over the interview conversation. When interviews are audio-taped, the transcriptionist may have difficulty in discriminating among voices of individuals in the group.

Unfortunately, focus group interviews can be fairly costly and require researchers who are skilled in group process. Bias may also be a problem. Passive participants may be influenced by active ones (Greeff, 2005:312). According to Nieuwenhuis (2007c:91), the information composed during focus group interviews may be biased through group processes such as ascendancy of the discussions by the more outspoken individuals, groupthink and the complexity of assessing the viewpoints of less assertive participants. To overcome this, the interviewer's job is both to promote discussion and to maintain focus. Babbie and Mouton (2001:292) warn that the matter of control can serve as a disadvantage of focus group interviews, as such interviews are in some sense unnatural social settings. The researcher facilitated the conversation for the entire group rather than for one or two individuals, as well as the group procedure, doing her best to set everyone at ease and focussed.

#### 4.4.2.2 Observations

Nieuwenhuis (2007c:83) mentions that observation is the systematic process of recording behavioural patterns of participants in research, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with any of them. In the opinion of Schmuck (1997:54), observations (*cf.* 1.5.2) involve conscientiously watching and systematically recording what is seen and heard. According to Cohen and Manion (1995:106), the rationale of observational study is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit, with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs.

Mertler (2009:107) feels that observations, as a means of collecting qualitative data, entail carefully watching and systematically recording what one sees and/or hears going on in a particular setting. Observations can be exceptionally useful in certain situations where other forms of data collection simply will not work, such as when educators want to check for learners' nonverbal reactions to something that is occurring in the classroom.

Observations that involve observing humans in natural settings assist the researcher in understanding the intricacy of human behaviour and interrelationships among groups (Lichtman, 2006:139). Cohen and Manion (1995:109) mention that the best illustration of the non-participant observer role is perhaps the case of the researcher sitting at the back of a classroom coding up every three seconds the verbal exchanges between educator and learners by means of a structured set of observational categories. Creswell (2009a:163) agrees with this statement and adds that one can examine behaviour and record scores on a checklist or scoring sheet. The advantage of this form of data is that one can recognize an individual's actual behaviour, rather than simply record his/her views or perceptions.

According to Mills (2007:58), participant observation is undertaken with at least two purposes in mind:

- To observe the activities, people and physical aspects of a situation

- To engage in activities that are appropriate to a given situation and which provide useful information

Creswell (2009a:221) is of the opinion that an observation is the procedure of gathering open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site, but also calls attention to the fact that observations have both advantages and disadvantages. A few advantages include: the opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting, to study genuine behaviour and to study individuals. In the context of this research, access sites did not pose a problem and good rapport was established with all participants.

Lichtman (2006:140) mentions that researchers should consider the following issues when doing observations:

- Decide who is to be studied and in what situations: this aspect is imperative to consider before observing a group. In this study, it was decided that only Grade 11 learners will be observed during their English literature periods (*cf.* 1.2; 1.5.2; 4.3).
- Formal groups, informal groups or occasional groups: it was important to observe formal groups such as found during a normal English period.
- Gaining access: proper arrangement with the school principal was made before each interview in order to assure that permission to enter the school premises and eventually the English classroom was given. Each of the two educators' classes was observed thrice during their literature periods. Permission was asked from each school principal and educator beforehand. The first observation was announced so that the specific educator could prepare herself and be put at ease as to how the observations would take place. The remaining two observations at each school were unannounced to ensure reliable results.

- What to study: it is obvious that researchers should gain sound knowledge about what they are looking for during an observation.
- Frequency and length of time: each group was observed thrice – the first time was announced and the other two visits were unexpected. Announcing the first observation was aimed at reassuring the educators that the observations were non-threatening. Each observation lasted the length of the period.
- The researcher's role as observer: the researcher acted in her capacity as participant observer. According to Merriam (2009:124), this term assures that the researcher's observer activities – which are known to the group – are subordinate to the researcher's role as participant.

Nieuwenhuis (2007c:84) feels that an observer needs to define the purpose and focus of the observation so that he knows exactly what to observe.

Doing observations requires first-rate listening skills and vigilant attention to visual detail. It also requires supervision of issues such as the potential deception by people being observed and the initial awkwardness of being an outsider without initial personal support in a setting (Creswell, 2009a:222).

The written records of observers are frequently referred to as field notes (Mills, 2007:59). Creswell (2009a:224) defines field notes as the data recorded during an observation. He says field notes are text or words that are recorded by the researcher during an observation in a qualitative study.

Field notes are written observations of what one perceives taking place in the classroom. It can sometimes be overwhelming to try and record everything that one sees, particularly when trying to determine what is important and what is not. As one observes and records what one sees, one will undoubtedly begin to focus on things that are interesting or imperative (Mertler, 2009:107). Unfortunately, the observer cannot physically record everything that is happening during an observational episode (Mills, 2007:59).

The researcher of this thesis decided to use running records as a data-recording method. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007c:85), the most important part of observation is recording the data. He mentions that anecdotal records are short descriptions of fundamental actions observed capturing key phrases or words, and should be objective with no self-reflective notes.

Burton and Bartlett (2009:117) discuss the following strengths and weaknesses of observations:

**Strengths of observations:**

- It is possible to see how people behave in natural situations. It can easily be seen if the subjects in the observation act as they say they do.
- Large amounts of data can be gathered in a short time.
- Observations can bring certain practices and behaviours to the attention of the researchers of which they had not been previously aware.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:295) also mention the following advantages of an observation:

- It forces the observer to familiarize him/herself with the topic.
- It permits previously unseen or ignored aspects to be seen.
- People's actions are most likely more telling than their vocal accounts and observing these is priceless.
- It is inconspicuous and when conspicuous, the result wears off within a reasonable time.

**Weaknesses of observations:**

- Gaining access to situations that would be useful to observe can prove complex. The researcher of this thesis did not experience difficulty in

gaining access to any of the schools where the observations were conducted.

- It is difficult to observe and record at the same time. Schmuck (1997:56) also points out that the data collectors might have to wait a long time before seeing what they seek to observe. A selected number of predetermined criteria enabled the researcher to record observations with ease.
- Sometimes it is complicated to categorize behaviour into the predetermined codes on the schedules. With the help of the two promoters, the schedule that was designed proved helpful, and made categorization simpler, as desired behaviours were made explicit in the predetermined criteria.
- The observer may affect the situation. Schmuck (1997:55) emphasizes that the data collector's presence can alter the participant's behaviour. The researcher of this thesis and her observer sat right at the back of each class and did not influence any of the interaction that took place during teaching.
- There are ethical issues of observing people if they do not know that they are being observed, therefore educators and learners were informed that two of the three observations would be unannounced.
- It is also perilous for an observer not to intervene if they feel it is warranted by events. Neither the facilitator nor her assistant ever intervened.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:295) mention that, to combat certain obstacles in observations, the observer simply needs to take sketchy notes (words and phrases) in order to keep abreast of what is happening. It is also mentioned that observers should be aware of the ethical issue of becoming involved. No researcher deceives his/her subjects exclusively for the sake of deception. It is rather done in the belief that the data will then be more valid and reliable,



that the subjects will be more natural and truthful if they do not know the researcher is doing the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:296).

Structured observations were used in this study, since the researcher had determined in advance which principles of mediation should be looked for (Nieuwenhuis, 2007c:85), also referred to as *pre-ordinate observation* by Cohen *et al.* (2007:397). Moreover, the researcher adhered to fulfilling a passive role so that, especially, confidentiality and faith did not become tainted (Nieuwenhuis, 2007c:84).

Strydom (2005:282) warns that researchers are sometimes tempted to focus on observation and participation, and abandon report writing. He emphasizes that it is an oversight and besides writing the formal responses to the measuring instrument, researchers should constantly make notes on their own feelings, speculations and perceptions.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2007c:85), it is also imperative to note that there are four types of observation used in qualitative research:

- Complete observer: the researcher acts as non-participant observer, observing the situation from an outsider perspective.
- Observer as participant: the researcher gets into the situation, focusing mainly on his role as observer. The researcher remains uninvolved.
- Participant as observer: the researcher becomes part of the research process, working with the participants in the situation in order to design and develop intervention strategies. The researcher observes from an insider perspective.
- Complete participant: the researcher gets completely involved in the setting, to such an extent that those being observed, are unaware that they are objects of the observation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007c:85).

The researcher acted in her capacity as complete observer. This entailed that she became a participant in the situation that was being observed.

The researcher made use of a co-observer who was knowledgeable in the field of fundamental rights and mediation, to increase reliability. Reflective field notes were also kept (McMillan, 2008:280; *cf.* 1.6.2.3) concerning non-verbal behaviour within the natural, normal classroom setting while the educator was in action during each literature lesson.

#### **4.5 QUALITY CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITATIVE STUDY**

For the qualitative component of this research to be credible, the researcher used the following strategies as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:100), Mertens (2010:256-259) and Lincoln and Guba (in De Vos, 2005b:346):

- **Credibility:** this is an alternative to internal validity. The objective is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in a manner to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. Merriam (2009:213) emphasizes that credibility deals with the question of how research findings match reality. The researcher of this thesis made sure that what she wanted to test was reflected in her interview schedule and checklist for both focus group interviews and observations.
- Babbie and Mouton (2001:277) point out that credibility is achieved through the following procedures:
  - ✓ Prolonged engagement: more than one observation was done to enrich data.
  - ✓ Persistent observation: the researcher's observations included looking for evidence that supported the application of mediation as well as for evidence not supporting mediated learning.
  - ✓ Triangulation: the data obtained by the questionnaires were triangulated with the data obtained by the observations and focus group interviews.

- ✓ Referential adequacy: in order to support the findings obtained by the questionnaires and the observations, the verbatim transcripts of the focus group interviews were used to substantiate the findings.
- ✓ Peer debriefing: the research findings were shared with two experts in the field to confirm whether the findings could be regarded as reliable.
- Transferability: this is a proposed substitute to external validity. Triangulating multiple sources of data can be used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research in question. Transferability is thus concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2009:223). Guba and Lincoln (as quoted in Babbie & Mouton, 2001:277) discuss the following two strategies for transferability:
  - ✓ Thick description: the researcher collected adequately detailed descriptions of data, by means of questionnaires, focus group interviews and observations, with sufficient detail and precision, to permit judgments about transferability to be made by the reader.
  - ✓ Purposive sampling: the researcher provided sufficient biographical information regarding the research participants which would make it possible to generalize the findings to participants with similar characteristics.

In this study, the researcher made use of triangulation. Some characteristics of this sample could perhaps be an indication of what to expect in other samples. Only one school district was included in this study, the aim not being to transfer: follow-up studies could take care of such an objective. To confirm the findings from the qualitative side of the study, she regularly compared the findings from the quantitative study to assure that the instruments tested what they were supposed to test.

- Dependability: this is an alternative to reliability. The researcher attempts to report on changing conditions concerning the phenomenon

that was chosen for study, as well as to report on changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting. The researcher indicated the link between fundamental rights and mediation by using three different methods in collecting data for this study (De Vos, 2005b:346). Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) point out that an inquisition must also provide its audience with verification that, if it were to be repeated with the same or similar participants in an equivalent context, its findings would be similar. The researcher included an audit trail of her observations as well as the focus group interviews, as evidence of how she derived her findings.

- Confirmability: Babbie and Mouton (2001:278) add that confirmability implies the extent to which the findings are the result of the focus of the inquest and not of the biases of the researcher. The researcher of this thesis has added verbatim transcripts as an appendix (cf. Appendix J) to validate her interpretations.

The researcher also had to consider her role as instrument during the data collection.

As pointed out earlier in Chapter One (cf. 1.6.2.6), the researcher needed to reflect on having been the instrument of data collection during the qualitative component of her research, as her involvement is recognized by the qualitative research methodology that she followed (Willig, 2008:13).

Bearing in mind that a researcher's situatedness could influence the interpretation of phenomena and encourage compromise, this researcher took special note of the following two guiding principles:

- Take cognizance of one's own assumptions at the commencement of the research and avoid clouding of interpretation (Merriam, 2009:25)
- The researcher therefore shared her assumptions upfront: The researcher made the following assumptions: (1) Most educators would understand the concept mediator of learning. (2) Most educators would understand which skills or competences are expected from mediators

of learning. (3) Most educators would not comply with these skills or competences in practice. (4) Learners would not have a clear understanding of the educators' roles in the classroom. (5) The fundamental rights of learners would not be advanced in the classrooms. Most of these assumptions were not confirmed in the study, as it was proven that most educators were not familiar with the concept mediator, nevertheless applying mediation and advancing learners' fundamental rights in their classrooms.

Moreover, the researcher applied *critical self-reflection* (Merriam, 2009:229) by checking whether she remained focused on the heart of the participants' understandings, whether the data sets were handled as equivalent in importance to the research, and whether all the available angles had been included in looking at and evaluating the data sets. In all of these aspects, the researcher remained aware of personal assumptions that could influence the analysis of the data.

In this regard, the researcher of this thesis also gave effect to the three tactics that are added to the role of the researcher by Merriam (2009:26) and that were mentioned earlier in Chapter One; *cf.* 1.6.2.6): *phenomenological reduction*, as she often went back to the spirit of the participants' understandings; *horizontalization*, as she made sure that the different data sets were regarded as equally important; and *imaginative variation*, as this researcher verified that she had looked at the data from diverse viewpoints, just as one would walk right around a fountain in order to see it from all possible directions.

These steps empowered the researcher to form a collaborative partnership with the participants in order to collect and analyse data arising from the research.

#### **4.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

By itself, data cannot tell you much. When collected and used correctly, data and the statistics calculated from them can help one to understand situations in order to evaluate one's options and make informed decisions (Willemse,

2009:3). While this thesis focused on the combined method of data collection, namely quantitative and qualitative methods, it focused on the pragmatist approach (cf. 1.6.1).

#### **4.6.1 Quantitative data analysis methods/procedures**

According to Kruger *et al.* (2005:218), data analysis in the quantitative paradigm does not in itself provide answers to research questions. Answers are found by means of the interpretation of the data and the results. To interpret is to elucidate and to find meaning. Analysis means the categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions. The purpose of analysis is to lessen data to an intelligible and interpretable form so that the relations of research problems can be studied and tested, and conclusions can be drawn (Kruger *et al.*, 2005:218).

The data for this study was analysed by using the statistical package SPSS. SPSS stands for *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*. A professional statistician of the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, was approached for aid in the analysis and interpretation of data collected from the questionnaires. Frequencies, means and percentages were computed and were scheduled in tabular and graphic form.

#### **4.6.2 Descriptive statistics**

By means of descriptive statistics, data were organized and summarized to encourage an understanding of the data characteristics (Pietersen & Maree, 2007b:195).

This section presents the reactions obtained from the educators and learners for each of the sections in the questionnaire. Each section focused on a particular construct in relation to mediation and fundamental rights. Although the learner and educator questionnaires focused on similar issues, the questions were phrased differently to suit the relevant group.

The data for the responses were summarized with frequencies and percentages. Graphical depictions will provide the function of visually

highlighting the prominent characteristics that radiated from the responses (Pietersen & Maree, 2007b:185).

In this thesis, the researcher relied on frequencies and percentages to summarize and organize the data.

#### **4.6.3 Inferential statistics**

Inferential statistics were not used because the group of educator participants was too small. Comparisons between learners and educators could therefore not be made.

#### **4.6.4 Qualitative data analysis methods/procedures**

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:97) are of the opinion that qualitative researchers assemble interpretive data and try to capture the complexity of the phenomenon that is being studied. They use a more personal, literary style, and they often include the participant's own language and perspectives. Best and Khan (2003:259) are of the opinion that the first step in analysing qualitative research involves organizing the data and the method of organizing the data will vary depending on the research strategy and data collection techniques. Once the data have been organized, the researcher moves to the second stage in data analysis, namely description. The relatable aspects of the study – including the setting, the individuals being studied, the purpose of activities examined and the viewpoints of participants – should be described by the researcher.

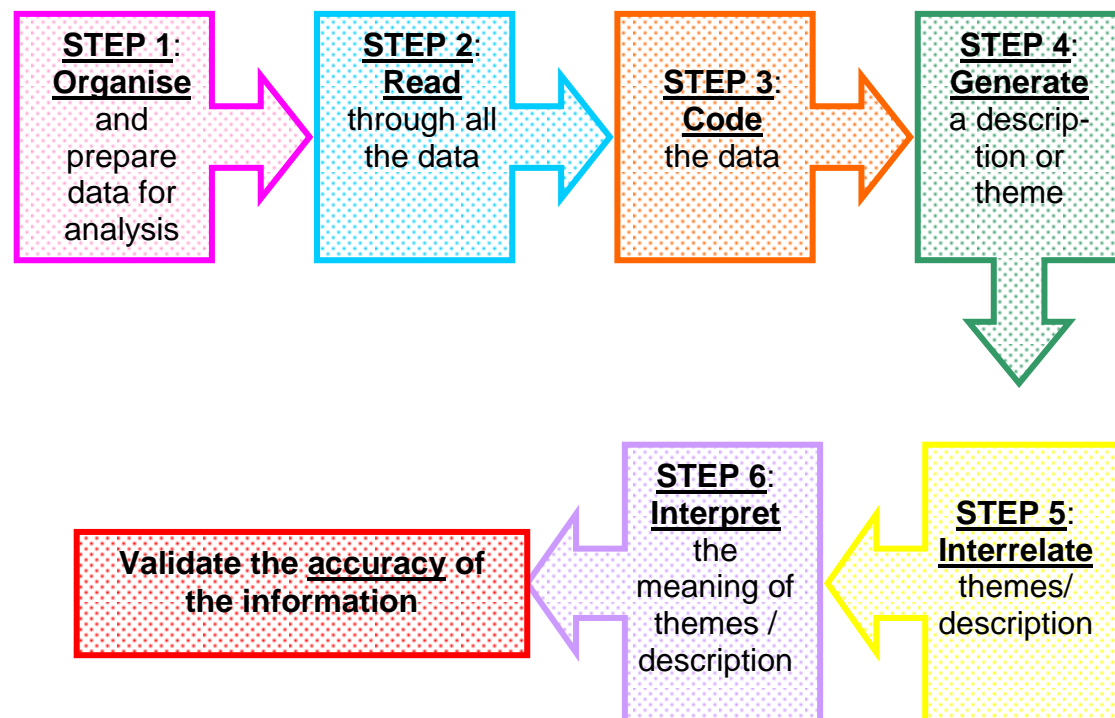
For the purpose of this thesis, focus group interviews were conducted with English educators. The three focus group interviews involved educators from four secondary schools in the Fezile Dabi district of the Free State Department of Education (*cf.* 4.3).

#### **Interviews**

To analyse the qualitative data, the researcher had to do a content analysis. Both deductive and inductive data analysis strategies were used for this purpose. According to Maree and van der Westhuizen (2007:37), researchers

using the positivist paradigm are more likely to use deductive data analysis, whilst research involving the interpretive paradigm mostly prefers inductive data analysis, which help to identify the multiple realities potentially present in the data. In realizing that there is no one *right* way to analyse data, the researcher decided to use both these strategies to interpret the data.

The researcher of this thesis decided to analyse the qualitative data according to the six steps suggested by Creswell (2009b:185). The following diagram graphically points out each of these followed steps:



**Figure 4.1: Data analysis – qualitative research (Creswell, 2009a:185)**

### Observations

The researcher also undertook a total of six observations at two secondary schools. Three observations at each school – one announced and the other two unannounced – were part of the qualitative research for this study.

Creswell (2009a:299) mentions that, when analysing the data gathered for a qualitative study, the researcher must transcribe and analyse the data while they are still fresh. Preliminary coding can be very useful. The researcher was precise in following this rule and transcribed and analysed the data on the



same day that it was gathered. It was essential not only to transcribe the responses while they were still fresh in her memory, but also to pin down other vital aspects, such as body language, withheld responses, late-coming of participants and having overwhelming emotion when responding to certain questions (*cf.* Appendix I).

## **4.7 ETHICAL ASPECTS**

### **4.7.1 Ethical issues in the research problem**

According to Creswell (2009b:88), throughout the identification of the research problem, it is imperative to identify a problem that will benefit individuals being studied, one that will be evocative for others, in addition to the researcher. The researcher identified the lack of applying mediation in English classrooms as a barrier to optimal learning of literature. With mediation being documented also in the Norms and Standards for Educators (27 of 1996), she discovered the possibility of combining the two fields of study – that of Education Law and Teaching/Learning – in her research. She developed the urge to investigate this matter as occurring in English literature lessons. She aimed at developing a learning programme after the research had been done in order to improve mediation and to acknowledge learners' fundamental rights in the classroom.

### **4.7.2 Ethical issues in the purpose and questions**

In developing the purpose statement and questions for a study, proposal developers have to communicate the purpose of the study that will be illustrated to the participants (Creswell, 2009b:88). The researcher of this study communicated the purpose of the study to each school principal and focus group before the research was conducted. Ethical clearance to conduct the research was obtained in the following ways:

- Her promoter, Prof. Elda de Waal, and co-promoter, Prof. M.M Grösser, received ethical clearance for their research projects that included their post graduate students from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (*cf.* Appendix A).

- Clearance to conduct the research in the Fezile Dabi district was obtained from the Free State Department of Education (*cf.* Appendix C).

### **4.7.3 Ethical issues in data collection**

In gathering data, researchers must respect the participants and the locations for research. Participants should not be put at jeopardy and susceptible populations must be respected (Creswell, 2009a:89). In the data collection process, the researcher focused on having as little disruption as possible at schools participating in the study. Locations were reserved at a time available and interviews were scheduled for a time convenient to all participants.

- **Informed consent:** it is usual to seek the permission of those involved in the research. This sounds easier to obtain than it sometimes really is. It necessitates a consideration of who actually needs to give approval, whether this needs to be recorded, and the understandings of the participants concerning the nature of the research and their ability to withdraw from it if they so decide even after initially giving consent. The researcher included a cover page to each questionnaire on which each participant was requested to give consent before participating in the research (*cf.* Appendices E; F).
- **Confidentiality and privacy:** usually confidentiality relating to any information given and the privacy of the participants is assured by the researcher through a promise of anonymity. The researcher needs to think about how identifiable individuals are or are likely to be in the findings. Participants were requested to stay anonymous when answering the questionnaires and responding to questions asked in the focus group interviews (*cf.* Appendices E; F).
- **Honesty and openness:** while not wishing their presence to influence the behaviour of the participants excessively, researchers need to consider how open they can make the research process.
- **Avoiding harm:** This involves an assessment of any harm that the research may cause. It is imperative that a researcher should be

considered able to conduct the research in a way that does not cause undue stress, harm or inconvenience to students.

- For research conducted through an institution, such as a school system, approval for conducting the research should be obtained from the institution before any data are collected: permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Free State Department of Education, as well as from each school principal. Ethical clearance was obtained (*cf.* Appendices B; C; D).

#### **4.7.4 Ethical issues in data analysis and interpretation**

In Creswell's view (2009a:91), the researcher needs to remember that data, once analysed, must be kept for a reasonable period of time (5-10 years). Researchers must also provide an accurate account of the information when data is being interpreted. As done during her Master's degree, the researcher of this study is aware of the fact that the analysed data needs to be kept for at least five years. Her promoter, Prof. Elda de Waal, will keep the data locked away safely in her office.

- The investigator has a responsibility to consider possible misinterpretations and misuses of the research: the researcher made sure that the two promoters have seen the questions well in advance to make certain that no ambiguity occurs. She also needed to ensure that no misinterpretations took place, such as when conducting the interviews.

#### **4.7.5 Ethical issues in writing and disseminating the research**

Creswell (2009a:92) mentions that ethical issues do not stop with data collection and analysis. He warns that the researcher should guard against bias against persons because of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic groups, or age. He warns that researchers should prevent falsifying, inventing findings or suppressing findings to meet the needs of the study. The researcher tried to be constantly aware of the risk of biasing and remembered

that data interpretation should be handled with care and be kept as true as possible to add value to the study.

- Access to findings: it is an important principle that any final report or submission of findings is presented to the participants or is at least made available to them.
- The investigator should provide participants with the opportunity to receive the results of the study in which they are participating: feedback was given to all parties involved. The Free State Department of Education was forwarded a copy of this thesis.

The term *ethics* comes from the Greek word, *ethos*, meaning *character*. Ethics is concerned with perspectives on right and appropriate conduct (Burton & Bartlett, 2009:30).

All researchers must be aware of and attend to the ethical considerations related to their studies. In research, the ends do not justify the means, and researchers must not put their need to carry out their study above their responsibility to preserve the well-being of the study participants (Mills, 2007:103).

According to Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007:41) Burton and Bartlett (2009:32-34) and Creswell (2009a:92), the researcher of this thesis abided by the following key aspects when conducting the study:

Welman *et al.* (2005:182) discuss four other important ethical issues that were observed by the researcher of this thesis:

- Competence: a researcher should not embark on research involving the use of skills in which he/she has not been adequately trained. This researcher had completed a Masters (Education Law) successfully and was competent in handling a PhD study.
- Literature review: any research should be preceded by a thorough review of the literature to ensure that the proposed research has not

already been done elsewhere. A title search had already been conducted with the help of Ms Martie Esterhuizen.

- **Plagiarism:** the use of others' data or ideas without due acknowledgement and permission where appropriate. Therefore this researcher took special care to re-word and re-phrase information while at the same time referencing frequently according to the NWU requirements. Each chapter was also put through the Turnitin system.
- **Falsification of results:** the falsification of research results or the misleading reporting of results is clearly unethical. The researcher and the analyst from the Statistical Services kept score that the questionnaires, especially, had been completed fairly.

## **4.8 FEEDBACK ON RESEARCH CHALLENGES THAT WERE FORESEEN**

### **4.8.1 Quantitative research**

The researcher had foreseen difficulty in getting back all questionnaires. Schools were reluctant to participate. Some schools managed the questionnaires ineffectively although there was thorough communication with the principals beforehand. The researcher often contacted the school principals to emphasize the importance of getting back all the questionnaires. Another surprise was that not all participants (including educators) fully completed the questionnaires. However, this formed a small percentage of participants and did not compromise the collection of the data.

### **4.8.2 Qualitative research**

The first hurdle that the researcher experienced in relation to the focus group interviews was to get an appointment with all relevant educators. At the start of the interviews, not all educators were active participants in the interviews. The interviewer, however, made sure that she got them to participate well in the end. Although making appointments that suited all participants, there were still some of them who did not honour these appointments. However, these

incidences were in the minority. The researcher decided to continue with the focus group interviews, as most participants had made the effort to show up for the appointment. The researcher also ensured that, even though some participants did not turn up, the total number of participants was still sufficient for conducting a focus group interview. A challenge that the researcher had to face was that not all participants showed up for the focus group interviews, although they were requested in advance to do so.

#### **4.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter set out the methods for collecting data. The study involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in an investigation into a mediational approach in the English classroom, as well as the advancement of fundamental rights of learners.

This chapter started off with an introduction to the chapter (*cf.* 4.1). Thereafter the researcher gave guidance as to the research paradigm in which she revealed that she would be following a pragmatist approach in her study (*cf.* 4.2). The research design was discussed (*cf.* 4.3). The researcher stated that she was following a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design in her study. In the part on strategies of inquiry (*cf.* 4.3.2), it was revealed that the quantitative component will be focusing on description (*cf.* 4.3.2.1) while a phenomenological approach would be followed in the qualitative component (*cf.* 4.3.2.2). Brief mention was made of the comparative education law design (*cf.* 4.3.2.3) that would be followed, which comprised that learners' fundamental rights were established. The method of choosing the research participants was revealed, namely purposive sampling (*cf.* 4.3.2.4), and thereafter the researcher made known how she planned and constructed her closed four-point Likert scale questionnaires, involving options such as *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree* or *strongly disagree* as used in the quantitative research (*cf.* 4.4.1).

The pilot study and the data thereof was mentioned (*cf.* 4.4.2) and the actual study was then focused on (*cf.* 4.4.3). At both of these study references, the researcher referred to reliability and validity and the application thereof.

Internal validity, external validity, statistical conclusion reliability and validity were considered (*cf.* 4.4.1.1). The researcher then focused on the qualitative side of her research (*cf.* 4.4.2) that included focus group interviews (*cf.* 4.4.2.1) and observations (*cf.* 4.4.2.2). Concerning both of these methods, the researcher not only indicated how it was used in her study, but also showed the advantages and disadvantages of each. The role of the researcher was looked at (*cf.* 4.5), as well as how data analysis was conducted and interpreted (*cf.* 4.6). Quantitative (*cf.* 4.6.1) and qualitative (*cf.* 4.6.4) data were referred to. Only descriptive procedures were used (*cf.* 4.6.2) for the quantitative data. The researcher paid attention to ethical considerations (*cf.* 4.7) and gave feedback on the research challenges that she had foreseen (*cf.* 4.8).

The researcher will pay attention to analysing and interpreting the data in the next chapter, Chapter Five.