

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methods

There are two types of research, namely qualitative and quantitative methods, however for the purpose of this research the researcher focused on the qualitative research method. Greenstein (2003) states that the qualitative research method usually involves the collection and analysis of in-depth information on a smaller group of respondents. It is based upon the need to understand human and social interactions from the perspectives of insiders and participants in the interaction. The purpose of using this approach was to find in-depth information based on experiential views of the respondents about their experiences with LRAD projects, and the extent to which it reflects Agri-BEE vision. This provided a rich contextual perspective which may not be gained from using a quantitative research method.

Qualitative research also helped the researcher to understand the world-view of the respondents, because it recognises that in any social context it is possible that people may occupy different socially constructed realities (Greenstein 2003). For instance, in this research different informants were interviewed, namely officials from Department of Land Affairs, Department of Agriculture, beneficiaries of the SLAG project, farm workers and NGO officials. The researcher discovered that key informants occupy differently constructed realities about the success of LRAD, BEE and Agri-BEE in achieving the goals of land redistribution. Furthermore this approach enabled the researcher to appreciate the fact that Calcom beneficiaries cannot have homogenous interests, since what emerged in this study is that some beneficiaries are interested in off-farm activities more than they are in on farm ones.

3.2 The case study approach

A case study approach is an important tool for unearthing intricate dynamics of the case under study (De Vaus 1991). For instance in this research project the researcher was aware that insights gained from beneficiaries of the project and officials of the

Department of Agriculture and land affairs will probably differ, and when taken together will provide a much fuller, more complex understanding of the whole than would the perspective provided by any particular element of the case study.

Case study designs rely less on comparing cases than on exhaustive analysis of individual cases and then on comparing cases (*ibid.*). The aim is to exhaust contextual information about a case so that one will have a context within which to understand causal processes. However De Vaus (1991) states that even though the researcher uses a case study that entails a single case, and then on comparing cases, the researcher will have to look at his findings in light of other researchers' findings who deal with more or less similar issues that are raised by the study that the researcher intends to undertake. If similar results are found in repeated case studies, or predictable differences in results are found for particular case studies in the study, then greater confidence in the findings of the case study will develop. This will be done in the full discussion of the case study where the researcher compares the findings at Calcom with the findings from a study commissioned by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 2003 titled, 'Integrated Rural and Regional Development: case studies in three provinces. In particular the Manamead farm in Limpopo will be utilized for the purpose of analysing the Calcom case study.

3.2.1 Basic discussion of the Calcom case study

The aim of this section is to reflect on approaches used to extrapolate data for this study: coupled with that is an attempt to show how some of the researcher's initial plans were adapted in order to fit into the context of the study. Paramount changes that were made, were in relation to the framework of the study; in other words how to frame the study in a way that will ensure that one deduces maximum information from the respondents. Particularly this is so on philosophical concerns of the study, such as the conceptual link between LRAD, BEE and Agri- BEE, where it was noted from the proposal that answers to these conceptual issues will not be readily available, especially from the beneficiary's side.

This conclusion was reached after preliminary interviews conducted on the farm revealed that beneficiaries were not exposed to these abstracts prior to the inception of the study. Therefore instead of emphasising these abstract terms, the researcher had to allow practical issues of livelihood to take precedence. However, these philosophical concerns were not neglected, as they were captured in the initial phase of the interviews, which were conducted with key informants. This background information was crucial as it was used as a lense for capturing Agri-BEE and BEE concerns from Calcom respondents. In short during the analysis stage, abstract philosophical concerns of this study such as the link between LRAD, Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment and Agri-BEE were linked with day to day experiences of beneficiaries through the background information that was captured from the interviews conducted with key informants.

A further attempt at analysing preliminary findings of the study led the researcher to conduct a comparison between the Calcom case study and other LRAD projects. This included linking the findings of this research with other case studies like the Manamead case study in Limpopo. The findings of this study reveal that while there are stark differences between Calcom and other LRAD projects, some overlaps do exist.

3.3 Limitations of the Study

One of the specific challenges facing the Calcom case study is the high level of illiteracy amongst beneficiaries, which presented itself as a constraint for this study, as the researcher had to adapt and omit some of the conceptual questions that could have been useful for the purpose of this study. This was done after realising that there was little if any effort from officials of the relevant departments in informing beneficiaries about the latest developments in the agricultural sector which saw Agri-BEE becoming a permanent feature. This did not come as a surprise, since most officials interviewed in this study also seemed to be less knowledgeable about these philosophical issues. Therefore absence of responses in this regard was treated as a finding on its own, showing that most of these actors were not even aware of these philosophical underpinnings.

Given these limitations, the researcher had to use languages that the respondents were comfortable with. This added another dimension: of translating the interview schedule from English to African languages that respondents preferred. While this approach was helpful in accommodating interviewees, a trade-off resulted since some questions did not come out the way the researcher intended.

To further establish a good rapport with the beneficiaries of the Calcom case study, the researcher spent three days on the farm before moving to Barberton, where he spent two weeks of the fieldwork. This move was not simple logistically, therefore one had to rely on the beneficiaries' transport in order to get into the farm early for fieldwork. The opportunity to travel with beneficiaries in their transport allowed the researcher to conduct informal discussions with them. These informal discussions not only enabled the researcher to extrapolate data, but also helped establish a rapport with the respondents. The researcher found informal discussions with beneficiaries more informative than formal in-depth interviews that were conducted on the farm, since beneficiaries became more relaxed, trusting and willing to talk about issues that they would not normally reveal during formal interviews conducted with them on the farm.

The problem with interviewing individual beneficiaries on the farm was suspicion. According to Robson (2002) this mistrust is caused by the extent to which participant observers affect the situation under observation. As an outsider to the community, there is bound to be mistrust, and to overcome that, the researcher ought to be detached which is what the researcher did. However, whether one takes an observer role on a very detached or very involved role, or something in between, there are related methodological and ethical problems (*ibid.*). Hence when beneficiaries saw the researcher discussing with other individuals, they expressed reservations that the researcher was taking sides. This culminated in a serious conflict between beneficiaries, which left the researcher caught up in the middle of group dynamics. The situation was sometimes tense and prevented some beneficiaries from opening up, thinking that I would sell them short to their rivals. However, when the researcher spoke to them collectively in the taxi they were less suspicious since the conversations were transparent and relaxed.

To test the accuracy of the information provided by beneficiaries and officials responsible for the farm, one had to examine primary sources such as the farm's business plan. However this was not a linear process, as the researcher's attempt to get hold of the farm business plan was met with gate-keeping from DLA officials, which resulted in one having to write a letter of approval to DLA offices. According to Greenstein (2005: 64) gate keepers are people who have control over who is allowed and who is not. These are usually parties who have vested interests either in the issues at stake or in the well-being of the potential respondents, such as superintended. In the case of this study it can be assumed that the Director General (Miss Mampho Malgas) in the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs delayed the researcher's access to the business plan in order to protect Calcom respondents. However, the process of verifying whether the intentions of the researcher were genuine delayed the director's response, since the researcher only got the letter of acceptance towards the end of the fieldwork which made the process of verification for the researcher difficult at the beginning of the fieldwork.

3.3.1 The limitation of the methodology

The methodology used in this study allows the researcher to draw in-depth knowledge of the case under observation. However it is limiting to use one case, as it does not accrue one the right to generalize the findings. Instead, contextual factors constrain the ability to confidently assume that the findings of this research could be the same as those that are found in the entire country. This placed a huge burden on the researcher to read the findings of other researchers who researched more or less similar concerns in other provinces. For instance a national survey on the impact of land redistribution conducted by Hall, Lahiff and Cousins in 2003 proved useful in accomplishing this pursuit, interestingly the findings of their study reveal more or less similar trends identified by these studies. These findings show that lack of pos-settlement support, fiscal limitations, failure to get access to credits by emerging farmers, and the market-led land redistribution are a source of frustration for these emerging black commercial farmers. These forces also compromise the sustainability of their farming project, thus resulting in the failure of the current land policy to reform the agrarian institutions in this country.

This study however went beyond identifying trends responsible for the failure to reform agrarian institutions through invoking policy instruments jointly provided by LRAD, BEE and Agri- BEE in order to accelerate land acquisition by black individuals. This study treated these instruments as an impetus that could be used effectively to transform the agrarian economy, provided knowledge of how these three government machineries are linked is well understood by both policy implementers and beneficiaries. As a result this study argued that the consonance that exists between LRAD objectives and broader objectives of Agri-BEE could prove useful for the emergence of black commercial farmers if it is understood well in practice as it is in policy documents.

3.3.2 Sampling strategy

This research method used was qualitative in nature, which required one to use non-probability sampling strategy, specifically the purposive sampling strategy which is defined by the researcher clearly stating the characteristics required from the participants. For example, mostly black women were selected as participants due to the nature of the research being based on the concept of BEE. This research project considered characteristics such as gender and race in order to assess the success of black economic empowerment in the agricultural sector. To be specific the researcher required a sample of black female beneficiaries of Agri-BEE and a few other black males because they are also part and parcel of the designated group. However one had to make sure that the sample mirrors characteristics of the entire population. Hence the researcher selected a case study which is made up of a sample of 13 black females and 6 black males from amongst the beneficiaries of a commercial farming project called Calcom PTY in Barbeton, Mpumalanga, who form part of the designated group for LRAD, BBBEE and Agri-BEE. As an LRAD project, Calcom has the potential of heralding the broader objectives, vision, and aspirations of BBBEE and Agri-BEE, hence Calcom was chosen for a case study.

3.3.3 Data collecting method

To gather data on respondents' opinion about the effectiveness of the link between Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment, LRAD, and Agri-BEE, the researcher used unstructured in depth interviews. According to Greenstein (2003), unstructured or in-depth interviews are a flexible way of encouraging respondents to share their thoughts on a particular issue. The researcher's role is to be as unobtrusive as possible-to introduce a theme or topic and then let the respondent develop his or her own ideas (*ibid.*).

Therefore conducting in-depth interviews with beneficiaries of Agri-BEE afforded the researcher an opportunity of exploring how the respondents experience empowerment, for instance one was interested in whether or not they think they are in charge of their destiny as emerging commercial farmers. One of the advantages of conducting interviews is that they allow the researcher to observe interviewees' reactions while answering sensitive questions about the nuances of black economic empowerment. Moreover in-depth interviews afford participants an opportunity to express themselves fully on issues that they would not openly reveal in focus group interviews (Greenstein 2003). As a result the researcher was able to conduct 30 interviews (see Appendix 1).

3.3.4 Key Informant Technique

In-depth interviews were utilised when interviewing experts from the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, since one interviewed eight government officials, and two academics experts on land reform. The rationale behind using in-depth interviews is that they will enable the researcher to extrapolate rich insights and knowledge that experts possess on the issue of Agri BEE (*ibid.*). Furthermore, nineteen beneficiaries from the Calcom project were interviewed, including one intern from the Tshwane University of Technology, to assist with her knowledge of agriculture and farming.

Participant observation method was used when the researcher conducted fieldwork at the Calcom farm, since it enabled the researcher to watch events as they occur in their natural setting (Greenstein 2003). Furthermore participant observation allows the researcher to place greater emphasis on depth as opposed to breadth, observing the details, subtleties,

complexity and interconnectedness of the setting. However its limitation is that, when participants are aware that they are observed, they can turn to modify their behaviour, therefore impinging on the research findings (Dalton 2001). Dalton further asserts that participant observation is time consuming, hence it can impinge on the researcher's time because one has to first familiarise oneself with the participant's culture.

The method is also used when it is assumed that there are possibilities that participants may disguise certain aspects of their culture or certain events, and pattern interactions (Greenstein 2003). The above occurs since the researcher is normally viewed as an outsider to the community, which is something that one cannot avoid completely since one really is an outsider. However through participating in some of the activities that the participants engage in, one can modify the effect of being an outsider. For instance participating in meetings, training workshops and farming activities can be one way of winning participant's trust, as was the case in this research where the researcher stayed on the farm and used the very same transport as the beneficiaries.

Furthermore an analysis of documents found in government offices, library sources, and Internet sources, in particular credible sources from the South African Department of Land Affairs website, were utilized in order to trace latest statistics that reveal the progress made by LRAD in fulfilling the aspiration of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment.

3.3.5 Ethical Issues

Regardless of the research design, social research should conform to four broad ethical principles, namely voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, no harm to participants, and informed consent (Kimmel 1988; Homan 1991 as cited in de Vaus 2001).

When applied to this research one finds all the above principles quite useful, since one required beneficiaries to comment about how they see the project being managed. The researcher discovered that informants were skeptical to divulge some of the sensitive

issues that surround the management of the Calcom project. The above is said against the background of the criminal case that is currently being investigated about allegations of corruption against some project leaders. Therefore the researcher told respondents that interviews were voluntary and if they did not feel comfortable with answering some of the questions, they had the right either not to answer or withdraw from the interview.

Moreover some interviewees felt uncomfortable when the researcher used their names in the project, with the fear of loosing their stake on the project. Hence it was the researcher's responsibility to assure those interviewees that their names would not be divulged to respect any fears that they might have. As opposed to jeopardising the respondents' trust, the researcher made up names or symbols like interviewee X to protect respondents who felt very strong about anonymity.

However one thinks that all the above-mentioned fears were actually dealt with by how the researcher introduced his research to participants. For instance one had to be upfront with the participants about the purpose of the research, which helped in terms of informing the participants about the research so that they participated having been fully warned about issues that would be raised during the interview. The above-mentioned approach was used in a way that encouraged participants to say whether they would want to be part and parcel of the study or not. A similar approach was used when interviewing the respondents from the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs. The next section is a reflection of the data and subsequent analysis that was generated using the methods desired herein.