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Educators' experiences of the implementation of the life orientation learning area:

An initial investigation

by

Mthokozisi Priscilla Mthembu

MINI-DISSERTATION

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Co-Supervisor: Dr MP Van der Merwe

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Finally I thank the “seriti” in me for awakening the child in me to fully realise the potential that “she” has been blessed with ... SUCCESS!
The study aims to investigate the educators' perceptions of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area in schools. The investigation arose from the fact that Life Orientation is a new learning area introduced in the Foundation and Senior Phase as part of Curriculum 2005. The aim of this learning area is to empower learners in a holistic manner to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation. However, the implementation of the outcomes-based approach as expressed in Curriculum 2005 in general, and in particular in the newly developed Life Orientation learning area, has proved to be complex and resulted in negativity on the side of teachers.

The question addressed in this study is: What are educators' perceptions of and experiences of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area in their schools? The aim for this study is to provide curriculum developers and educational teacher trainers with a clearer picture of the facilitation of the Life Orientation learning area.

The research method used included literature review of the nature and aims of the Life Orientation learning area within the framework of Curriculum 2005. An empirical investigation of teacher's perceptions of the Life Orientation learning area and its implementation was performed using both the qualitative and the quantitative approaches. Respondents were selected from a purposeful sample of schools representing former Model C schools, informal settlement schools as well as township schools.

The following findings from the investigation deserve mention:

- The majority of educators emphasised the need to improve the quality of training in the Life Orientation learning area. The training facilitators need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills, as well as relevant resources and teaching aids to provide effective training for educators.

- Most educators enjoyed teaching Life Orientation as they realised that it focussed on real life issues, coping skills as well as learner development in various aspects (physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual). The aim or purpose of teaching Life Orientation is to provide learners with useful skills to cope with useful skills to cope with life and its challenges, as well as to mould them to adulthood.
• The educators stated that Life Orientation had a positive impact on their learners' attitudes, skills and values.

• Various teaching methods were used by these educators for teaching the Life Orientation learning area. A shortage of teaching resources was reported by the respondents.

Recommendations have been put forward on how the Department of Education can move forward from these findings.
SINOPSIS

Die doel met hierdie studie is om onderwysers se persepsies van en implementering van die Lewensoriëntering leerarea in skole te ondersoek. Die ondersoek het ontstaan uit die feit dat Lewensoriëntering 'n nuwe leerarea is wat in die Grond- en Senior Fases ingevoer is as deel van Kurrikulum 2005. Die doel met hierdie leerarea is om leerders op 'n holistiese manier te bemagtig om betekenisvolle lewens te lei in 'n gemeenskap wat vinnige transformasie vereis. Die implementering van die uitkomsgebaseerde benadering soos uitgedruk in Kurrikulum 2005 in die algemeen, en in die nuutontwikkelde Lewensoriëntering leerarea in die besonder, was ingewikkeld en het geleid tot negatiewiteit aan die kant van die onderwysers.

Die vraag wat in hierdie studie aangespreek word, is: Wat is onderwysers se ervaring van die implementering van die Lewensoriëntering leerarea in hulle skole – en wat is onderwysers se persepsies van hierdie nuwe leerarea? Die motivering vir hierdie studie is verder om kurrikulumontwikkelaars en onderwyseropleiers van 'n duideliker beeld van die fasilitering van die Lewensoriëntering leerarea te voorsien.

Die navorsingsmetodes het 'n literatuurstudie van die aard en doelstellings van die Lewensoriëntering leerarea binne die raamwerk van Kurrikulum 2005 ingesluit. 'n Empiriese ondersoek van onderwysers se persepsies aangaande die Lewensoriëntering leerarea en die implementering daarvan is op 'n kwalitatiewe wyse onderneem deur gebruik te maak van 'n vraelys. Respondente is gekies uit 'n doelgerigte steekproef van skole wat vroeëre Model C-skole, informele beywoonlik skole asook bywoongebied skole insluit.

Die volgende bevindings van die ondersoek is van belang:

- Die meerderheid onderwysers het beklemtoon dat daar 'n behoefte bestaan aan die verbetering van die gehalte van opleiding in die Lewensoriëntering leerarea. Die opleidingsfasiliteerders behoort toegerus te word met die kennis en vaardighede asook relevante hulpbronne en onderrighulpmiddels om doeltreffende opleiding aan onderwysers te verskaf.
Die meeste onderwysers geniet dit om Lewensoriëntering te onderrig aangesien hulle besef dat dit fokus of werklike lewensvraagsrukke, lewensvaardighede, asook die ontwikkeling van leerders in verskeie areas (fisiek, emosioneel, sosiaal, geestelik en intellektueel). Die doel van die onderrig van Lewensoriëntering is om leerders te voorsien van bruikbare vaardighede om die lewe en die uitdaginge daarvan te hanteer, en om hulle te vorm met die oog op volwassenheid.

Die onderwysers was van mening dat Lewensoriëntering 'n positiewe uitwerking op hulle leerders se houdings, vaardighede en waardes het.

Verskeie onderrigmetodes word deur hierdie onderwysers gebruik in die onderrig van die Lewensoriëntering leerarea. 'n Tekort aan onderrighulpronne is deur die respondente gerapporteer.

Op grond van hierdie bevindinge word die Departement van Onderwys aangemoedig om voort te gaan om onderwyers te ondersteun en die uitwerking van die Lewensoriëntering leerarea in skole te moniteer.
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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND, PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH AIM AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 BACKGROUND

"Educational problems which permeated the South African traditional curriculum involved lack of equal access to schools, unequal educational opportunities as well as an irrelevant curriculum " (McDonald & Van der Horst, 1997: 5). The above statement encapsulates the problems that were experienced within the South African schools and the Department of Education. There are two apparent causes for such problems: one, the lack of synergy between education and the knowledge it was supposed to convey to learners, and the skills that these learners were being equipped with to prepare them for "the world in which they would have to exist meaningfully"; and secondly, that education was too academic and lacked in vocationalisation (Landman in Dekker & Lemmer, 1993: 251). The traditional curriculum failed to prepare the learners for the economic and labour force needs of the country in which they were supposed to contribute and participate actively.

Numerous reasons led to the above situation in South Africa. Landman in Dekker and Lemmer (1993: 253) argues that the causes were mainly political and sociological in nature. In an undemocratic country, the educational policies were invariably opposed to a culture of learning which promoted equality, tolerance and respect among its people, thus allowing every human being to develop his or her full potential (McDonald & Van der Horst, 1997: 5).

The traditional curriculum included among other subjects, Career Guidance, which did not achieve what it was designed to achieve. For example, in some schools, the period for Career Guidance was used as a "free period" or as a period for doing other subjects. Career Guidance was also labelled as one of the extra-curricular subjects. This resulted in it being accorded less significant status. As a result of the lack of
attention to Career Guidance in schools, learners completed their matriculation with subjects that would be of little or no value to their career options. This traditional educational system was too structured and prescriptive so that it encouraged factual knowledge and memorization. The processes were also too restricted without adequate stakeholder participation in the decision-making process (Pretorius, 1999: viii).

The traditional curriculum provided learners with little preparation for the world of work. No technical skills such as computer literacy were accommodated in this curriculum (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993: 25). This deprived the nation of the productive youth that could add value to the country's economic well-being. Again, learners were not able to integrate with different groups, particularly the different racial groups, and this posed problems in the working world and in terms of social interaction in general.

A need to link formal and non-formal education from primary education level had to be addressed in order to prepare learners for those skills needed in the business sector (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993: 259-260). Pretorius (1999: 35) also highlights the urgent need for life skills training to be integrated with the formal education provision, as this prepares learners for the real world and their future. Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (2002:158) discuss the significance of life skills education through the teachers' modelling of the relationships between education and the real world in society.

It is against the background given above that the South African Government found it imperative to transform the education of the country by introducing the new Curriculum, which is known as Curriculum 2005.

1.1.1 Curriculum 2005

In order to address some of the above shortcomings in education, the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Review Committees, introduced Curriculum 2005.

"Curriculum 2005 endorses the concept of lifelong learning and the recognition of prior learning experiences for all potential learners" (McDonald & Van der Horst, 1997: 5). In accordance with the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995: 21) also acknowledges that democracy, liberty
and equality are seen as necessary conditions for the full pursuit and enjoyment of lifelong learning. According to Pretorius (1999: 3), quality education includes appropriate curriculum, commitment from both the learner and the educator as well as capacity to deliver continuous improvements to programmes at all levels, without losing sight of the democratic principles.

The principles of freedom, equality, justice and a peaceful society underpin Curriculum 2005 and an outcomes-based approach to education. The fundamental concept of lifelong learning goes beyond the provision of schooling and therefore implies the provision of an "increasing range of learning opportunities, offering learners greater flexibility in choosing what, where, when, how, as well as at what pace they learn." (Pretorius, 1999: 4)

The National Department of Education developed its vision of a different future for South African children and adults through the National Qualifications Framework and the first National Curriculum Statement, Curriculum 2005, which is delivered through the outcomes-based approach. A further analysis of Curriculum 2005 will be given in Chapter 2 of this study.

With Curriculum 2005, as well as the National Revised Curriculum Statement, the Review Committee introduced a focussed life skills approach, which became embedded within the Life Orientation learning area.

1.1.2 From Career Guidance to Life Orientation

Life Orientation focuses on promoting skills, values, knowledge, as well as attitudes of the individual learner as part of the community. Rooth (2000: 26) states that teachers who use Life Orientation appropriately and as an embracing process, rather than as a separate learning area, are more successful in empowering learners to learn more skills which are essential in their real world and life in general. Among these skills are critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, self-awareness, time management and effective communication skills.

Against the background and principles of the new curriculum, this research will investigate how teachers perceive the impact and implementation of Life Orientation
in the classroom context. From the backdrop of life-long learning as well as the evidence
given of the role of Career Guidance in preparing the learners for the world of work,
teachers need to understand the critical role that they play in nurturing every learner to
also internalise the importance of this learning area and its impact on learning. Learners
need to be taught real life skills that will enable them to face the challenges that they will
encounter in their lives. Creativity then needs to be instilled in all learning activities

In October 2002, it was announced that Life Orientation would also be a compulsory
learning area for the Further Education and Training as well as Grade 12 examinations
(The Department of Education of South Africa. Revised National Curriculum Statement:
2002).

This study developed in the context of the introduction of Curriculum 2005, of which Life
Orientation forms a new learning area.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The introduction of Curriculum 2005, which entrenched the introduction of Life
Orientation as a new learning area, came with its own challenges for both the
Department of Education and the educators.

A need to provide educators with support through training could not be ignored. The
research in question was undertaken as an initial probe to investigate the educators’
perceptions about and experiences of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning
area. In order to obtain relevant information, a few questions had to be answered:

• How do educators perceive the implementation of Life Orientation learning area
within their schools?
• How much knowledge and what resources do educators have about Life Orientation?
• How do educators implement Life Orientation within their schools?
• Are there any guidelines for the implementation of Life Orientation programmes in schools?

• How do educators assess the learners on Life Orientation?

The above questions have been designed to provide the researcher with information that will be useful in formulating relevant guidelines for the Life Orientation learning area.

The challenge of this study, therefore, is to investigate and analyse how teachers perceive the context within which Life Orientation is taught in their schools as well as how they implement related programmes in their schools.

The research aim for the study will now be given.

1.3 RESEARCH AIM

In order to form an understanding of the experiences of some educators involved in the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area, the study aims:

- to describe the Life Orientation learning area and position it within the framework of Curriculum 2005 and life skills development in South Africa and abroad in order to create a theoretical framework for the research;
- to investigate the educators' perceptions of the introduction of the Life Orientation learning area in a purposefully selected sample of schools in the Johannesburg area;
- to probe the knowledge, skills and attitude of Life Orientation educators in these schools regarding the learning area and its facilitation in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases (Grades R to Grade 9);
- to gather information on how the Life Orientation learning area is implemented in the junior, intermediate and senior phases of schooling;
- to explore the educators' experiences of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area in their schools;
- to formulate recommendations for policy makers, curriculum developers and educator trainers in terms of the Life Orientation learning area.
1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research Strategy

Having pointed out the research aim and what is to be investigated, this section focuses on the research methodology that will be used to accomplish the desired aim. Smith (1993: 20) defines research methods as the specific means through which problems are investigated. The understanding of the theoretical and empirical approaches that inform the research is critical to the methodology of the study. This research is based on a literature review of relevant policy documents and literature concerning life skills development in schools as well as the Life Orientation learning area in particular.

The study will use a qualitative research approach for the empirical investigation purposes. According to Merriam (1998:7), this approach usually involves fieldwork, which enables the researcher to observe behaviour in its natural setting. The fact that South African schools have learners from diverse cultures and religious beliefs makes this study relevant (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:160). As stated above, the goal of this study is to gain understanding and meaning of teachers' perceptions and the implementation of Life Orientation.

A brief description of the research methods will now be given.

(a) Literature study

Merriam (1998:45) states the significance of the theoretical framework as the key to any form of research. This literature review will provide an orientation relevant to the field under review. The significance of defining concepts, terms and theories useful for the study, in accordance with the discipline or field under review, should not be ambiguous (Merriam, 1998:47). Smith (1993:43) defines concept analysis as significant for every study as it clarifies the meaning of concepts which may be confusing or ambiguous to the reader. This study requires numerous Department of Education publications such as National Education policy documents, the Constitution, outcomes-based education publications, relevant journals, the Revised National Curriculum Statement, Internet articles on life skills in different chosen countries, and
other media for the researcher to gather sufficient understanding of the theoretical framework of this study.

Literature on curriculum and policy formulation in South Africa as well as in other countries will also be reviewed.

(b) Empirical study

An open-ended questionnaire will be designed and a sample of seven schools selected to give their views on the perceptions and implementation of the Life Orientation learning area. These will include two former Model C schools, two township schools and three informal settlement schools. The schools were chosen in order to have a much more representative sample of the context within which this learning area is taught. The data will be analysed based on the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2000). Categories will be derived pertaining to educators' knowledge, skills and attitudes concerning the learning area.

There was a need to gather information from educators at different types of schools in order to determine whether their location and type of school influenced their attitude and perceptions of this learning area.

Questions that will be used in the questionnaire will be carefully designed to enable the researcher to understand the factors that may inform the responses given by the educators. These factors will be biographical information and teachers' personal views about their experiences and perceptions in implementing and facilitating the Life Orientation learning area. The responses will be analysed and findings based on these responses will be provided.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

An understanding of the circumstances that led to the introduction of Curriculum 2005 has been expounded in the first chapter. The research aim, problem statement, as well as the research methodology have been briefly described. An outline of the entire study will now be provided.
Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the Life Orientation learning area and the principles of outcomes-based education based on a relevant literature study. The theoretical framework of Life Orientation is provided.

Chapter 3 explores the research design of the study. This chapter provides the basis on which the research methodology will be applied.

In Chapter 4 a summary of the research findings will be given. This will be based on the empirical study to be conducted at the selected schools.

Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and recommendations of the investigation.

Having provided an overview of the context and research design of this study, the next chapter contains a further discussion of the Life Orientation learning area within the framework of Curriculum 2005.
CHAPTER 2

THE LIFE ORIENTATION LEARNING AREA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review literature study available on the Life Orientation learning area. It will look into aspects of Life Orientation as a learning area and set the platform for the analysis of terminology and the concepts that have a bearing on learning areas in the context of outcomes-based education in South Africa as well as in other countries.

A theoretical framework is the key to any form of research (McMillan, 1993: 112). The literature review will therefore provide an orientation relevant to this investigation by analysing the historical background of Curriculum 2005, a discussion of the field of Life Orientation and its methodology and how this learning area should be implemented. The clarification of words and concepts will help the researcher to understand the research problem better, so that more information can be contextually gathered (Smith, 1993: 42).

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is important to review the historical background of outcomes-based education in order to contextualise Life Orientation and its implementation. The education objectives promoted by Ralph Taylor in the 1950s are closely associated with outcomes-based education in South Africa. Taylor advocated the need for objectives to be set for learning to be effective (McDonald & Van der Horst, 1997: 9). As will be explained, this has a close resemblance to setting outcomes for learners to demonstrate what they can do, which is one of the key features of outcomes-based education.

While other research on education would place emphasis on skills or competencies or on mastery of learning by focussing mostly on teachers, outcomes-based education promoted the integrated approach, which saw the role of teachers as facilitation of learning and promotion of skills, knowledge and values as the focal point for learners.
The learner becomes a proactive individual whose independence and demonstration of outcomes achieved are highly encouraged (McDonald & Van der Host, 1997: 7-14). The history of the emergence of Curriculum 2005 has deeper meaning than the transition to democracy in 1994, but its specific form began to take shape in this context. Curriculum 2005 arose out of a coalition process designed to ensure the integration of education and training through the National Qualification Framework. Curriculum 2005 tried to promote the model aligned to the National Qualifications Framework by linking theory and practice, through its scrutiny of assessment, qualification, competency and skills based framework (Pretorius, 1997: 7). This information was gazetted in the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (http://education.pwv.gov.za/policies).

As has been briefly stated before, the Curriculum 2005 model drew on a variety of ideas in the international arena that were reshaped to suit the local context. Outcomes-based education was adopted as one of the 'main' approaches that had to be used in the delivery of the new curriculum. This curriculum 2005 had to take cognisance of a context of social inequalities and disputes in education within South Africa. According to Spady (Pretorius, 1998: ix), who was instrumental in research and development of outcomes-based education in South Africa; this approach is based on clearly focussing and organising everything in an educational system around what is essential for all learners to be able to perform successfully at the end of their learning experience. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organising curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure that this learning ultimately happens (Spady, 1994).

The implementation of outcomes-based education embodied in Curriculum 2005, is underpinned by elements of redress, access, equity and development, which are relevant to the South African context (Pretorius, 1998: 1).

The outcomes-based approach has not been without its challenges. One of the concerns that has been raised by South Africans is that the model has not worked well in industrial countries that have had sufficient resources and support such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Also, there is uncertainty about guarantees for efficient implementation in South Africa. (McDonald & Van der Horst, 1998: 158). Research into contemporary education in the United
States of America has also revealed that outcomes-based education is not living up to expectations. The language ability of learners, knowledge of international, geography and public literacy on the whole are deficient (Weinberger, 1995:31).

Another challenge, which came about after its implementation in 1997, was the lack of understanding of the terminologies and content in outcomes–based education. This concern resulted in the formation of the Review Committee to improve on the model to make it more effective and user-friendly. The National Curriculum statement was released in April 2002 for Grades R to 9 (National Department of Education Policy).

Despite the challenges, the outcomes-based education model prepares the learner to integrate with a global society equipped to compete with the best in the world. This can be achieved through learners who are familiar with the latest technological developments; who resolve to keep on learning; can solve problems; are creative; can communicate well; have a healthy work ethic; can participate in managerial processes and decision making; can work well in a team and can be unleashed flexibly (Pretorius, 1999, VIII).

Within this broad context, implementation of Curriculum 2005 needs careful planning in the classroom and school situation. For example, whereas traditionally most teachers taught in classrooms with fixed pictures on the walls, desks lined up or whole groups sitting waiting for teachers’ lessons, all of which was not exciting or stimulating, outcomes–based approach implies dramatic changes to practices mentioned above. This involves changes to the sitting arrangements to allow more flexibility for the learners and the educators.

Learners should research and apply knowledge with the classroom turned into challenging sites of groups, who investigate and research information and debate their findings critically.

Certain key policy aspects such as critical outcomes have to be taken into consideration as the teacher prepares for the lesson. Learning areas should also not be seen in isolation but each lesson should be designed so that the learner sees relationships between different aspects.
Covey (1994:187) clearly explains the significance of the development of techniques and skills that enable us to become independent, so that we will in turn be able to become interdependent. If this is not promoted through the education system, no meaningful growth will take place.

Thus, Life Orientation should be used as a core learning area which creates a platform for both educators and learners to practice outcomes-based approaches to learning through the development of skills.

2.3 LIFE SKILLS AND THE LIFE ORIENTATION LEARNING AREA

2.3.1 Definition of Life Skills

It is important to understand the connection between Life Skills as a concept and Life Orientation as a learning area that is offered in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases. Through formalised programmes offered within the Life Orientation learning area, the learner can gradually develop life skills that will equip him or her with the skills to cope in life. Learners have to be made aware of how to prepare themselves for life during their developmental years at school. In the foundation phase, for example, Life Orientation forms one of the basic learning areas where issues such as HIV/AIDS, abuse, health promotion, the environment, human rights, developing self-concept and physical development are taught. In the intermediate and senior phases Life Orientation becomes the formal learning area that focuses on the specific themes related to life skills education (Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9: 2002). The outcomes and the assessment of these life skills becomes more focussed and oriented at a higher and deeper level in line with the developmental needs of the learners. Life Orientation becomes the vehicle through which life skills education is enhanced at different levels or phases of learning. The views of a number of authors on life skills will now be given.

Rooth (1995: 6) defines Life skills as the competencies needed for successful living and learning. They are also coping skills, which enhance the quality of life. This leads to meaningful interaction between people and the environment. Life skills enable people to perform tasks in all areas of human development.
Nelson-Jones (1991, 11) states that the word "skill" means proficiency, competence and expertise in some activity. This proficiency or competence is demonstrated through implementing a number of choices that result or lead to the desired objective. Life skills entail making personally responsible choices, hence their reference as self-help skills (Rooth, 2002: 9).

Nelson-Jones (1991: 13) also states that life skills are conducive to mental wellness. This is because they involve thoughts and feelings. Life skills can also be defined as processes since they involve development and transformation. Attitudes, knowledge and skills all contribute towards the development of specific life skills.

Although life skills education should be taught as early as in the primary or foundation phase, it is a fact that this kind of education is a process that is learned from birth within our own homes. Hopson and Scally in Nelson-Jones (1991: 13) mention education, work, home, leisure and community as relating to human functioning. Furthermore, they express seven other categories or areas of human functioning. These are feelings, thinking, relationships, study, work, leisure and health, which all encompass life skills education.

From the definitions above, it is clear that life skills education enables individuals to communicate effectively and to be tolerant towards others. The ability to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is another useful and relevant practice among human beings which is made possible by the inculcation of values, norms and attitudes. The foundation of these values, norms and attitude is the home.

2.3.2 The Life Orientation learning area

According to Kruger (1998: 13) Life Orientation is central to the holistic unfolding of the learners caring for their intellectual, physical, personal, social, spiritual and emotional growth as well as the way these facets work together. It enhances the practice of positive values, attitudes, behaviour and skills in the individual and community.
Life Orientation is one of the eight learning areas that have been implemented by the Department of Education through Curriculum 2005. The subject is fundamentally concerned with empowering learners to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation (Pretorius, 1998: 35). Inherent in this learning area is the promotion of a relationship of understanding, love and trust to encourage learners and educators to form a special partnership. Without such a relationship between the educators and the learners, between the educators and the principals, and among learners and educators, there can be no optimal learning.

The environment at school should therefore reflect real life challenges and provide opportunities for learners to become principle-centred and disciplined. It should also enable them to solve problems through critical thinking skills.

2.3.3 Critical Cross-field Outcomes

The Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 outlines some of the important terminology that will help inform this study and clarify concepts that are critical to this study.

The critical outcomes are fundamental in describing how life orientation forms an important part of the curriculum as most of the outcomes are derived from the Constitution. More importantly these outcomes describe the kind of citizen the education and training system should aim to create. The outcomes envisage learners who should demonstrate all the attributes that are promoted by Life Orientation (Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2001: 8).

Some of the relevant critical outcomes that learners should be able to identify with are to:

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community;
- organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and language skills in various modes;
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

Without teachers who are well supported to facilitate Life Orientation effectively, these critical outcomes may not be realised. In addition to these, there are developmental outcomes, which envisages learners who are able to:

- reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
- participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national, and global communities;
- be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- explore education and career opportunities;
- develop entrepreneurial opportunities (Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2001: 8).

The significance of this new curriculum is that it leads to balanced individuals who are able to co-operate and work together to achieve their optimal goals in life.

2.3.4 Specific Outcomes

Learning Area Statements and specific outcomes identify the goals, expectations and outcomes to be achieved through related learning outcomes and assessment standards:

- The learner is able to make informed decisions regarding an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities and show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.

- The learner is able to use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his/her world.
• The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in activities that promote movement and physical development.

• The learner is able to make informed decisions about further studies and career choices.

After specific outcomes have been identified the educator has to determine how the outcomes will be achieved. This process can be implemented through designing assessment tools as well as relevant assessment criteria to verify whether learners have achieved the desired outcomes.

2.3.5 Assessment

According to McDonald and Van der Horst (1997: 170), assessment is a strategy used for measuring knowledge, behaviour, performance, values or attitudes. Without assessment, there can be little or no evaluation of the degree to which an activity has taken place. In Life Orientation assessment is defined as a process of gathering valid and reliable information about the performance of the learner on an on-going basis. This is done against clear criteria or outcomes. These learning criteria and outcomes should be clearly defined for all learners beforehand.

Within an outcomes-based framework the most suitable assessment methods that accommodate divergent contextual factors, should provide indications of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner, and ensure that learners integrate and apply knowledge and skills. Assessment should also help learners to make judgements about their own performance, set goals for their progress and initiate further learning. In Life Orientation, this happens continually through involving learners in projects, assignments, group tasks, individual worksheets, etc. All these activities, including tests, should form part of the learners' progress (Discussion Document Curriculum 2005:1997).

The noticeable aspect of assessment in this context is that learners are not measured against other learners but against their own performance. The baseline assessment provides the necessary information on each learner's potential as it is conducted at the beginning of each phase. The information gathered during the diagnostic
assessment also provides more support to both the learners and the educators as it leads to useful and professional guidance and support. Formative and summative forms of assessment are also significant in providing a more holistic information that improves both learning and teaching (Department of Education Curriculum 2005 Assessment Guidelines Life Orientation Senior Phase: 5-11).

Assessment should thus be viewed as an essential aspect in assessing learners' lives, choices, as well as the decisions they take with an aim of reviewing whether their values, beliefs and attitudes are improving. Assessment becomes an integrated aspect of the learning process rather than a separate activity that is implemented after the completion of the syllabus.

Eisner (1999: 58) adds that there is an urgent need to change attitudes towards performance assessment, which is conceptualised around open-ended individual performance, without losing sight of world-class competencies. A view of continuous assessment is raised in that the destination of all learners should be limitless in terms of standards. The critical factor for assessment should be based on what each learner can accomplish beyond the classroom.

2.3.6 Learning programme

A Learning programme is a structured and systematic arrangement of activities that promotes the attainment of learning outcomes and assessment standards for the phase. These specify work schedules that provide the pace and order of these activities each year as well as examples of lesson plans to be implemented in any given period. The learning programmes must ensure that learning outcomes and assessment standards are effectively tracked and that each learning area is allocated its prescribed time and emphasis (Kruger, 1998:117). The emphasis is placed on diagnostic and on-going assessment (Pretorius, 1998: 82 – 83).
The development of a programme should take some of the following guidelines into consideration:

- integration within and across learning areas;
- assessment;
- barriers to learning;
- resources and support;
- planning and organisation.

Life Orientation as a learning area would also be organised through learning programmes, which would be units that deal with specific themes that the educator intends to facilitate on. These learning programmes would be the means through which the Life Orientation curriculum would be implemented and assessed.

2.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LIFE ORIENTATION LEARNING AREA

2.4.1 Implementation of Life Orientation in other countries

A growing need for curricular initiatives reflecting a new approach to civics and good citizenship education among major Western democracies led to reviews of the content based on government policies. Examples of such countries are the United States, England and Australia (Naval, Murray Print & Ruud Veldhuis, 2002:107-110). The aim for such an education was to preserve democratic principles by encouraging youth participation in democratic processes. Other countries in which educational reforms have been implemented are Ireland, Taiwan, Spain and Korea. In all cases this took place through the school curriculum.

Norrel, 2002:97 states that education and in particular, the curriculum was used to spread the principles of colonialism and sovereignty during the British colonial era. Schools were used to produce agents with values and norms appropriate to the society’s ideology. In the same way, outcomes-based education and Life Orientation in particular, is aimed at producing learners who will be able to contribute significantly towards the country’s economy and its political and cultural dispensation.
In Trinidad and Tobago (Norrel, 2002: 103), the curriculum was designed to promote colonial supremacy and a sense of dependence for the learners in these countries. The minds of the colonised had to be contained in line with the colonisers' vision and the social order would be maintained. The South African educational dispensation was aimed at producing independent and liberated citizens in line with its democracy.

The need to strengthen national identity, democratic citizenship values, understanding the rule of law in global terms and the judiciary all have great value for the socio-economic development of different countries. The European Union together with the European Council and the United Nations Organization have had to develop papers on the need for interdependence, democracy, equality of opportunity and world peace. The cross-curricular themes adopted in the countries above resemble the South African outcomes-based education entrenched in the new curriculum.

In the United States of America, Australia and the United Kingdom, Life Orientation is seen as forming part of environmental education, health education, career education and guidance, understanding of the world of work (economic and industrial understanding), civics, maintenance of the democracies in colonized countries, as well as social development.

(Rosen, 1999: 20) also argues that in the United States in particular, it is imperative that civic education should be taught in every grade, every day by teachers who understand the importance of civic education in the lives of their students. The similarities in the way civic education was implemented as policy and the way Life Orientation was implemented in South Africa cannot be over emphasised. Both were formulated against the background of promoting democracy and good citizenship. Therefore one can already draw some comparisons and similarities with other countries so as to assess the value that Life Orientation can bring to South African learners.

"But there is also the informal elementary school civics curriculum-activities during the school day that reinforce lessons taught in the formal curriculum such as minority rights, respect for property, respect and tolerance for the ideas of others, compromise, caring about the well-being of others, etc. Practised often enough, these lessons in good citizenship become good habits. As stated earlier "it is increasingly important in
a democratic classroom to focus on skills required for informed, effective, and responsible participation in the political and civil society. These skills include those needed to interact and work cooperatively with others, which is also a way to build coalitions, to teach students the importance of being informed and being resourceful through different media, and to manage conflict in a fair and peaceful manner (Rosen, 1999: 21). From this argument it is obvious that there are similarities in what informed the formulation of both the South African and the United States' curriculum policies.

The prevailing conflict between the United States and the Middle East may be cited as an example of inadequate dialogue and conflict resolution strategies among some members of the public that could be addressed through civics among the youth. Many similar examples, such as the Soweto Uprisings that took place in South Africa in 1976, deserve mention.

Jim Burke in Hall (1992: 60-61) also states the need for Career Guidance and Counselling in preparing learners for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. This component of life skills should be phased into the national curriculum and should become the responsibility of all educators. Again here, it is interesting to note that the emphasis on ensuring that learners know themselves better, are informed of education, training and career opportunities, manage change effectively, develop work ethics, are involved in environmental awareness, education, and good citizenship has been given in the policy formulation in the United Kingdom. Similarly, the implementation of Life Orientation in South Africa carries the same emphasis, which may be an indication on the extent and scope of research that was conducted for a curriculum that would be modified to suit the country's specific needs.

In summary the integration of vocational and academic education has been applied with considerable success in many schools in the United States as well as in other countries. The success of policy implementation in South Africa is still being reviewed and this is done through the revisions and continued debates that have since resulted in new curriculum statements being published.
2.4.2 Implementation of Life Orientation in South African schools

The achievement of the educational goals of the Life Orientation learning area is measured through the specific outcomes of this learning area. Learners are required to demonstrate skills, attitudes and values that uphold human rights, respect for others, beliefs, improving relationships and promotion of a healthy and balanced lifestyle. They also need to practice life and decision-making skills, which will enable them to set goals to best use their potential and talents.

Life orientation as outlined in the National Policy Document (October 1997) entails understanding individual uniqueness, human relationships and the interdependence of political, economic facets of communities and countries, positive values, human rights and learners' potential. Each learner and educator has a right to be different without having to be intimidated. Respect in terms of self as well as respect for others is one of the core values that needs to be brought to the fore without prejudice.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002: 26) highlights the following values and attitudes regarding Life Orientation: health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and movement, and orientation in the world of work. It is important to discuss the outcomes envisaged within these broad categories.

(a) Health Promotion

Health promotion involves the learners' ability to take full responsibility and take sound decisions on his/her personal, community and environmental health. An educator has to support the learner appropriately in achieving good health (Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2002:26).

Learning should be aimed at ensuring that learners have information of different levels about health related matters such as healthy eating habits and types of food, sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases, how these can be prevented, or caring for people with such ailments. First Aid Education, tuberculosis, cholera and hygiene, are some of the supporting learning programmes that would be valuable. These topics are necessary as they are real life oriented and may affect each learner.
(b) Social Development

The learner is expected to demonstrate Social Development through sound interaction with fellow learners and with the educators as well as his/her family members and neighbours, irrespective of their culture or religion. This involves practical application of conflict management, leadership styles, interdependence and human relationships.

(c) Personal Development

Personal development acquisition is demonstrated by the learners' ability to respond effectively to life's challenges. He or she will be able to make sound decisions or even to solve problems encountered. The role of the educator in such a situation is to prepare learners for potential life challenges and problem-solving skills in line with each learner's needs and levels of development. Every individual needs to have a vision or destination as well as a set of principles that directs him or her in life (Covey, 1995: 101). Guidance from teachers and parents with the qualities desired is significant in Life Orientation.

(d) Physical Development and Movement

This component involves the learner's ability to participate in activities such as sports and physical education. This involves the integration of the different aspects of the body such as the mind, the co-ordination of parts of the body as well as the spiritual aspect. Learners need to be actively involved in sports that suit their physical abilities. Their intellectual skills are utilised through coaching sessions as they calculate and use opportunities meaningfully. They also learn how to protect themselves against injury.

Werts, (2000: Vol.5 no.1) relates a story of a boy with a special talent in football and how his parents went out of their way to find him a school that would suit him best as well as enable him to use his talent optimally. But the question that needs to be answered is whether children with special needs do receive similar acceptance and support in our educational system. Educators facilitate this outcome among their learners through providing the necessary opportunities and resources for such activities. Failure to do so results in learning that is incomplete and mainly academic.
(e) Orientation to the World of Work

In the past this was referred to as School Guidance or Career Guidance. It was offered as a challenging part of the curriculum with the involvement of the community or the business sector, which provided relevant information and realistic contexts for the learners for them to make informed decisions about further study and careers of their choice. A good relationship between schools and the community had to be maintained. Such businesses had to also communicate with schools to share their expertise and to provide work experience to learners (Lemmer & Drekker, 1993).

With the new curriculum, learning areas should still not be regarded as separate compartments of learning. The different learning areas should be treated as interconnected and interdependent so that learning occurs across the curriculum, thus reflecting their inter-relatedness in life. There is a continued need to engage communities and the private sectors in educational matters so that what learners are taught is applicable to life in general. Therefore, learning programmes should be carefully selected from Grade R to Grade 9 (Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2002: 10).

The implementation of Life Orientation is therefore based on these five components. Each programme should ensure that it addresses the other components so as to have an integrated learning programme. The educator should see the link for example, between health promotion and developing a learner who is able to live well with others (social development) and infuse this in the materials that is being developed.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In summary the literature review has provided some information about the relationship between Life Skills and Life Orientation. An analysis of concepts that form part of the implementation of Life Orientation has also been provided. The implementation of Life Orientation was also reviewed from the South African as well as international perspectives.

In Chapter three, the research design of the study will be described.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide the research design. The underlying reasons that gave rise to the study emanate from the recent changes made in the education system, which ultimately gave rise to Curriculum 2005. In this context, Life Orientation became one of the critical learning areas which was introduced. This was due to the fact that, among other reasons, the Government wanted to transform South African society through reviving life skills and creating standards through the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The need to shift from traditional ways of teaching became a necessity. The study is therefore an initial investigation into the educators' perceptions of the implementation of Life Orientation within their schools.

3.2 RESEARCH RATIONALE

The main purpose of this research is to:

- gather information on the teachers' views about Life Orientation and the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area in their schools; and
- document the findings objectively in order to provide guidelines and recommendations for use by the Department of Education.

The study is undertaken from the educational and psychological perspectives. The general perception about the implementation of Life Orientation is that the educators are not adequately equipped to face the challenges brought about by the process of transformation taking place in education.
Another general assumption is that township school educators need more training and support than former Model C school teachers. This implies that the latter are better equipped to deliver or implement Life Orientation learning area in their schools. The educators in township and informal settlement schools may then need to be provided with skills to ensure that their role is enriched.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

For this study, both the numerical and descriptive data will be collected. The data in the form of a questionnaire, consists of both open-ended questions as well as the numerical type of questions.

The approaches that will be appropriate will therefore be both the quantitative and qualitative ones (Sprinthall, et al. 1990:101-102). A questionnaire as well as unstructured interviews will be used as the research instruments.

The researcher will visit the teachers in their schools in order to explain the purpose of the questionnaires in relation to the study. The questionnaires will elucidate information in the presence of the researcher. One of the arguments cited about questionnaires is that can be a useful strategy for gathering perceptions, beliefs and practices of a sample (McMillan 2000: 253). This is appropriate for this study as one of the aims of the study revolves around educators' perceptions about and implementation of Life Orientation.

Open-ended questionnaires are usually used in this type of research. The researcher has to be cautious of reliability in conducting a qualitative research and therefore the strategy used beforehand by the researcher was to ensure that at least enough time was given to respondents to engage with the questions and to think critically about them. In addition, Merriam (1998: 149) reiterates the holistic use of observation and the use of documents to understand the phenomena under study clearly and in this regard educators were further given enough background information to understand why they had to engage in the exercise. The participants in this case are the teachers/educators at the primary school level between level one and nine. It therefore relates to a closed study of the phenomena and how it is understood.
3.3.1 The questionnaire

Data will be gathered using a questionnaire consisting of both the biographical data as well as open-ended questions. The background that informs the questionnaire should be clearly communicated in writing to the schools as well as to the educators that participate in the study to prevent any misinterpretation or ambiguity. The researcher may unfortunately, in some cases, realise that the respondents had misunderstood the questionnaire at a later stage, through the responses they provide. As a result, Erickson (1986) in Stake (1995:9) states the possibility of a change in research questions during the research. This highlights the significance of interpretation by the researcher. Such interpretation results in drawing up certain conclusions by the researcher, which are also referred to as assertions (Stake: 1995, 9).

The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first part requires the respondents to provide biographical information such as:

- Gender
- Grade
- Class size
- Teaching experience
- Qualifications
- Availability of policy documents

The above variables were chosen in order to enable the researcher to have a broader understanding of other related factors that may influence the educators' perceptions of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area in their schools.

Section two requires the educators to provide open-ended information about their perceptions of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area. The variables chosen comprise of the following:

- Methodology of teaching the Life Orientation learning area.
- Planning for the Life Orientation learning area within the school.
- Aim or purpose of the Life Orientation learning area.
• How the aim or purpose of the Life Orientation learning area is realised in the school or class.
• Assessment of the learning outcomes of the Life Orientation learning area.
• Value of the Life Orientation learning area for learners.
• Training of educators to teach Life Orientation.

These were chosen because they would help the researcher formulate a better assessment of the respondents' opinions.

The questionnaire will then form the basis for the collection and analysis of data. See Appendix A.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

A sample frame is the actual list of units from which the sample is selected. The study's sample is derived from seven schools whose respondents are selected according to the learning area that they facilitate. The schools are all in the Johannesburg area. The distribution was chosen for the following reasons.

The researcher deliberately chose to focus on the Grade One to Nine educators, as the population with the aim of investigating the implementation of Life Orientation in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases.

The rationale for choice of Grades One to Nine was based on the fact that these levels of education form the basis for child development.

Two primary schools from the Kensington area representing two former Model C schools, two township primary schools situated in Soweto and three primary schools situated in the informal settlement area in the East Rand were chosen.

The rationale behind the selection was to ensure a random sample of schools situated in different areas around Johannesburg and to establish whether the location of these schools in the suburban, township and the informal settlement area had any effect in influencing the educators' perceptions.
Before visiting the schools, there was a need to communicate with the Principals or Heads Of Departments that made it possible for them to allow the educators to complete the questionnaire. The researcher's observation was that teachers do not enjoy completing forms generally. Some of them could not hide their unwillingness to participate in the project. They stated that they only hoped it would enable them to be provided with the training they so desperately needed. There are however, those teachers who are very keen to get the results, which they believe will lead to positive steps being taken to support them further in their task. However, the above on its own, may need further research in future, as it may just be an assumption. People were generally cooperative and often pleased to help the researcher, unless they had had a bad experience with similar research.

Silver (1999:21) states the significance of research and the need for follow up activities that should influence the practice. This, according to Silver, could result in the transfer of skills on research to the teachers.

Sprinthall and others (1991:101) state the need for using both the written descriptions from respondents as well as from public documents related to the case studied as qualitative approaches to data collection. The above-mentioned authors also argue that the same instrument used to collect data may consist of both the numerical and descriptive sections. This is also true of the questionnaire used in this study (see Appendix 1) since from the responses the attitudes of people can be assessed.

3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity form part of all research. These two categories involve the practice of ethics. In qualitative research, the research should maintain the scientific standards by ensuring that the views should be those of the participants rather than the researcher's.

The process of data collection, sampling, and analysis of findings should be ethically developed based on reality (Merriam,1998: 202). To ensure internal reliability and validity the researcher may need to assume that his or her results would be the same even if they were undertaken later as well as through member checks, long-term
observation and with peer examination (Merriam, 1998: 204). This would be made easier with the researcher declaring his or her own assumptions prior to the research.

In quantitative research, reliability is the extent to which research findings can be replicated with the same respondents within similar circumstances. Reliability therefore refers to the extent to which different researchers will discover the same phenomena as well as to which researchers and participants agree about the description of the phenomena (Unisa, Research in Education B.Ed. Study Guide, 1993: 96).

In qualitative research it should be noted that the instrument or tool is the researcher him/herself and is not a scientific tool. The understanding and relationship that takes place between the researcher and the participant, play an important role in the design and the collection as well as interpretation of data (Unisa, Research in Education B.Ed. Study Guide, 1993: 96).

This refers to whether meanings, categories and interpretations of the researcher reflect reality, and whether the pattern that emerges is real or has limitations due to data gathering, whether the situation was distorted or not during the findings.

In this study, the researcher did not change the information which was given by the respondents to suit her thinking but simply tried to gain insight and meaning from such data. The researcher also selected a sample of educators who are directly involved in the facilitation of the learning area. This was an attempt at ensuring that the responses received were relevant and valid.

3.6 RESEARCHER'S COMPETENCY

Qualified and professional supervisors will mentor the researcher. The researcher has the necessary knowledge and understanding of ethical measures that should be borne in mind when conducting the study. The exclusion of the names of the schools as well as the educators' identity in the questionnaires are examples of such ethical issues.
The issue of anonymity usually becomes problematic but each researcher has to stick to the written promise of non-disclosure. Merriam (1998: 213) states that such problems may occur if the investigator-participant relationship is not strong enough. The researcher did not have to know the participants beforehand since the selection criteria informed the choice of schools to be selected. This dispels any possibility of misrepresenting the findings of the study.

A relationship of understanding and trust needs to be encouraged between the researcher and the participants. To maximise co-operation between these two parties, there is a need to ensure that the teachers are clearly informed about the need to carry out the research. In this way misconceptions that could otherwise arise, can be minimised or dealt with beforehand. The relationship of trust was established first with the principals of the schools who immediately saw a need for the study as it might contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning in schools. The educators also saw value in participating in the research due to a detailed explanation of the rationale for the study.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the rationale for the study and highlighted the design as well as the research methods that will be used. The sample that will be used in the study was introduced and the rationale behind the choice of this sample was given.

Methods of data collection were also provided and specific variables that formed part of the study were described.

Chapter Four will provide actual research process and data analyses.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to gather information from educators in Grades One to Nine about their perceptions and experiences of the Life Orientation learning area, as well as on how this learning area is currently implemented.

It was indicated in the previous chapters that the tools used for data collection are the literature study and questionnaires.

In this chapter data collected through the questionnaire will be discussed and analysed. The coding and categorisation of the data based on the respondents’ responses will be provided.

4.1.1 Data analysis process

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire and this will be discussed and analysed in this chapter. Life Orientation educators in former Model C Schools, informal settlement and township schools completed this questionnaire. The process of data collection took place as follows:

Responses (raw data) from seven schools were collected and later collated. The numbers of respondents were as follows:
TABLE 1: Distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
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<td>S4</td>
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<td>S5</td>
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<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaire was divided into two sections with Section 1 focusing on the biographical data as well as a few open-ended questions, while Section 2 consisted of mainly open-ended types of questions.

4.1.2 Data coding

In this study on the educators' perceptions of the implementation of Life Orientation in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases, the following codes will be used. Examples of how data was coded will be given in the analysis of open-ended questions.

TABLE 2: Data coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>School 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1R1</td>
<td>School 1 Respondent 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 THE EDUCATORS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The qualitative research method was used as it was deemed appropriate in that it would provide insight to the researcher about the educators' perceptions of and the implementation of Life Orientation or lack thereof. Le Compte (1993:158) states that the most common categories of data collection used by qualitative researchers are observation, interviews, questionnaires and content or document analysis. One questionnaire was designed for all the participants in this study. The researcher was interested in determining the experience of the thirty-nine educators from the seven selected schools of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area and the basis on which the responses were made.

4.3 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

The rationale for the choice and selection of biographical categories has already been described in the previous chapter. This information was obtained through questions 1 to 6. Questions about the educators' teaching experience, gender, grades in which they taught Life Orientation as well as the class size and their highest level of education were asked. Biographical data was also collected through some scaled responses in which respondents recorded their responses to given statement by selecting an answer on a scale of 1 to 5.

In the next section the researcher will give an analysis of the responses per category of the questions on biographical data.

4.3.1 Types of Schools

It is important to analyse the sample according to the schools from which the respondents came. The following table gives a summary:
TABLE 3: Types of schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF SCHOOLS</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former-model C</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal settlement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher selected 2 former Model C schools, 2 township schools and three informal settlement schools.

4.3.2 Teaching Experience

The respondents were asked to indicate their teaching experiences based on groupings shown in table 2:

TABLE 4: How many years have you been teaching? (Question 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING EXPERIENCE (YEARS)</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EDUCATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 years plus</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table the following can be deduced:

Twelve teachers fell in the eleven to fifteen (11-15+) years of teaching experiences. These by deduction are the teachers who seem to have made teaching their profession. The next group falls under the (6-10) years of teaching category and these are teachers who may explore other opportunities and leave the industry and the last group is in the category (0-5) years teaching experience which may be a relatively young group.
4.3.3 Gender

4.3.3.1 What is your gender? (Question 2)

The majority of the 39 respondents were females (thirty-four). The remaining five respondents were male. This should be understood within the context that the majority of educators in the primary schools are female rather than male and this trend seems to be case to this day.

4.3.4 Grades taught

4.3.4.1 In what grades do you teach Life Orientation? (Question 3)

This question was asked in order to get an idea about the involvement the educators had in teaching Life Orientation. The findings were as follows:

The respondents taught various grades ranging from Grade 1 to Grade 9. This question did not provide any insight with regard to the quality of the actual teaching. It was interesting to note that out of 39 respondents, only 2 of them taught Life Orientation in two different Grades and the majority taught Life Orientation in one grade only. The impact of this finding together with the implications of class size could form part of the deductions drawn about the teachers' perceptions of and implementation of the learning area in the classroom.

4.3.5 Class Size

Another biographical aspect investigated was the number of students each educator taught per class.
TABLE 5: How many learners do you have in your class? (Question 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS ENROLMENT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TEACHERS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TEACHERS AS PERCENTAGE OF CLASS SIZE</th>
<th>ANALYSIS PER NUMBER OF TEACHERS BY SCHOOL TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45+</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>61.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>38.47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above analysis, the two former model C schools had the least number of learners per class. The majority of educators had the highest enrolment of between thirty-six and forty-five learners and above per class. These respondents taught in the township as well as the informal settlement schools.

4.3.6 Position held by Educators

The respondents were asked to state their positions in the respective schools and these ranged from educators, who formed the majority, to Heads of Departments as well as the Deputy Principal and Principals.

The table below serves as confirmation of the above.

TABLE 6: What is your current position? (Question 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIONS</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>84.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.O.Ds, Principals,</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep. Principals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About 15% of the respondents occupied senior positions while the rest were educators. The other striking observation was that within the schools, only 3% of the respondents did not officially teach Life Orientation. These stated that they were interested in formally being appointed in these positions. The direct involvement of the Deputy Principals and in some cases, the Principals as educators of the Life Orientation learning area is indicative of a positive step towards according the subject its rightful status in education.

4.3.7 Qualifications

Another category that educators had to respond to was their level of qualifications. These were also separated into the categories provided in Table 6:

**TABLE 7: What is your highest level of education? (Question 6)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALIFICATIONS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EDUCATORS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's Diploma</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. D. + F.E.D</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Ed. + T.D</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents had basic teacher training qualification in the form of a Teachers' Diploma. One third of the respondents had Postgraduate qualifications ranging from Bachelor of Education to Masters' Degrees in Education.

The above questions were mainly quantifiable in nature. Still, the information provided might have a bearing on the conclusions that will be made.
4.4 POLICY DOCUMENTS

This question was meant to ascertain whether the respondents had access to relevant educational policy documents. The responses were as follows:

TABLE 8: Does your school have a copy of the policy documents concerning the Life Orientation learning area? (Question 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY DOCUMENTS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EDUCATORS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>84.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>15.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the respondents stated that they had the policy document at their schools. However, there were a few respondents who responded negatively. Schools 2, 3, and 6 had respondents giving contrasting information; and school 6 having only one respondent who said his or her school did have the policy document.

On the same question, there were some discrepancies. School 1 had one respondent giving a negative response. The same applied to School 3 with three educators having the document and the other three not aware of such a document. The same case applies to Schools 4 and 6. This information reflects possible lack of sharing of information among the educators within the same schools. Thus, the fact that the majority of educators indicated that they had a copy of the policy documents may not necessarily mean that they all have access to these documents.

The following questions formed part of Section 1 although they consisted of items that were not biographic in nature. Three of the four questions from 7 to 10 consisted of both a scaled part as well as the open-ended type of responses.
4.5 TRAINING IN LIFE ORIENTATION

4.5.1 Have you received any training on facilitating Life Orientation? (Question 8)

This question was used to determine whether or not the respondents had received formal training on Life Orientation. Twenty seven respondents confirmed that they had received training in Life Orientation. In the following questions more data was gathered on the training received.

4.5.2 Number of Training Days

The respondents were required to provide information about how much training was received.

TABLE 9: How many days did you receive training? (Question 8a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF DAYS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EDUCATORS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>48.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the analysis, about half of the educators were clear about the duration of training they had received while the other half did not specify. This makes it difficult to arrive at some conclusions on this issue.

There were at some points irregularities which might imply different perceptions on what training really achieved, where from the same schools, various respondents would give different responses on the number of days that training was provided.
How would you rate the quality of the Life Orientation training you received? (Question 8 c)

The respondents were not satisfied with the quality of training that they received in Life Orientation. However most of them confirmed that they had been trained. Only 12 of the 39 respondents had not received any training on Life Orientation.

Scaled questions were based on how the educators would rate the quality of training on Life Orientation and on this basis had to justify their ratings.

Table 11. How would you rate the quality of training?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING FROM NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EDUCATORS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the questionnaire the respondents were asked to rate the quality of training received. The discussion that follows is drawn from the responses provided by different respondents.

From the above analysis it can be concluded that the majority of respondents (59%) and (31%) respectively were dissatisfied with the quality of training that they received.

The following are categories that respondents raised comments on: teaching experience, trainers' facilitation skills and resources.
4.5.3 Institution/ trainers who provided training

The respondents had to indicate the people or institutions that offered them training. The responses are shown in the following table:

**TABLE 10: Who trained you in Life Orientation? (Question 8b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION/ TRAINER</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EDUCATORS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District &amp; Gauteng Department of Education</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Heads of Departments at School,</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private institutions &amp; Teachers' Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty nine out of thirty nine of respondents above acknowledged that they had received training from the Gauteng Department and District Officers.

It is evident that the Heads of Departments contributed to the training, but private institutions also played a role. The schools within the Gauteng Department of Education also mentioned that they also received private training. Ten teachers did not respond as expected since they stated “not applicable,” “unknown” and “unsure”.

4.5.4 Quality of training

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of training received on a scale from 1 – 5 as shown in the table:
Some of the respondents cited that the quality of training was marred by the fact that trainers who were conducting training workshops had limited teaching experience. These are examples of some of their responses:

S2R3: “Trainers had little or no teaching experience and facilitators depended entirely on educators.”
S1R4: “Trainers had little teaching experience and were only interested in promoting policy.”

Some of the respondents argued that the quality of training was also affected by the fact that trainers had insufficient facilitation skills and this affected their understanding of the content and approaches they were meant to use. The following are examples of the responses they gave:

S2R6: “Trainers had little or no training skills. They depended on the educators.”
S2R6: “The rating is very low because of insufficient training”

The respondents also complained of the lack of teaching aids and resources and cited this as a reason for poor quality of training that they received. Some of the responses are given below:

S4R5: “The trainers did not supply teaching aids for training.”
S3R3: “School needs media equipment for lessons.”

They also argued that time for workshops was limited and that most of the training was conducted at awkward times. These are some of their responses:

S2R1: “Workshops must be conducted during school hours and not during holidays.”
S2R6: “Very low because of insufficient training”

Others felt that they had not been empowered because they do not have enough knowledge of the learning area while others had negative attitude towards training.
4.6 ENJOYMENT OF AND ATTITUDE TO TEACHING LIFE ORIENTATION

I enjoy teaching the Life Orientation learning area (Question 9)

Respondents had to rate the degree to which they enjoyed teaching Life Orientation. The responses on the reasons for the enjoying the learning area focused on aspects such as: real life issues, learners' academic development, religious and moral development of learners.

Table 12: I enjoy teaching Life Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING FROM NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF EDUCATORS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 81%, 43% and 38% respectively, which forms the bulk of the respondents enjoyed teaching Life Orientation.

Educators were then asked to explain their ratings. Most of the respondents based the reason for enjoying teaching Life Orientation on the fact that it allowed learners to contextualise what they were learning about. It also allowed for learner development both emotionally and morally.

Some of the examples of their responses are given below:

S1R6: "I find the subject relevant and applicable to the learner’s everyday life. Real life situations enable me to know learners' concerns and worries."
S1R4: "I enjoy the growth in learners when they apply the skills in real life."
With regard to learner development most of the educators felt that learners managed to enhance their coping skills and self-confidence. According to the respondents:

S1R5: “Learners are able to express their feelings freely.”
S1R1: “Learners are able to participate actively in class and to share different experiences they encounter in life.”

It is worth noting that most respondents described the value of Life Orientation as playing a major role in teaching learners about morality, values and Religious Education. These are some of the responses on this aspect:

S6R1: “It helps learners to know God, culture and values.”
S6R3: “It helps learners to have morals, values and to know God.”

The exact statements from the respondents are given below:

S1R6: “I find the subject relevant and applicable to the learner’s everyday life. Real life situations enable me to know learners’ concerns and worries.”
S1R4: “I enjoy the growth in learners when they apply the skills in real life.”
S1R1: “Learners are more open than before to share personal experiences.”

On the issue of attitude that Life Orientation has created for learners, most respondents were positive that it had enhanced the development of learners and that the learning area had made learners more assertive and confident. Some responses were:

S3R4: “It helps learners to develop their confidence and self image.”
S1R4: “Goal setting has made positive changes and this led to positive attitude by learners.”

Some educators found Life Orientation relating to moral education and Religious Education. They felt that it provided a valuable opportunity for parental support by the educators. These are some of their responses:

S6R3: “It helps learners to have morals, values and to know God.”
S6R1: “It helps learners to know God, culture and values.”
In essence educators again focussed on how Life Orientation addressed real life issues and issues around learners' physical and moral development.

The next section will focus on investigative data analysis and it will be more qualitative than Section 1.

However there were issues that some educators felt were morally inappropriate as topics to be discussed in class. These were usually topics surrounding sex. An example of such a comment is expressed below:

S2R4: “I do not enjoy teaching Life Orientation as I hate talking about sex to learners.”

4.7 IMPLEMENTATION OF AND PERCEPTIONS OF LIFE ORIENTATION

Implementation of the Life Orientation learning area

The previous section dealt mainly with quantifiable data and was more numerical in nature. Section 2 of the questionnaire was concerned with the qualitative data concerning the respondents' perceptions of Life Orientation and its implementation. Questions required the respondents to respond in their own words without any limitations. The manner in which they responded indicated their understanding and interpretation of the questions, as well as their opinions elicited by the question.

The eight questions in this section were designed to provide the researcher with insight into the respondents' experiences of Life Orientation and its implementation.

These questions required responses on the following:

• How the respondents teach Life Orientation;
• How the respondents plan Life Orientation lessons;
• What the educators regard as the aim of Life Orientation;
• How the aim of Life Orientation is realised;
• How the respondents assess the learning outcomes of Life Orientation;
• What is the value of Life Orientation; and
• The respondents' own views regarding the Life Orientation learning area;
The researcher had to analyse the data according to categories that emerged from the respondents' responses to each question and this was then clustered according to the number of educators who responded from the seven schools. The main categories addressed were based on:

- Teaching Methodology;
- Planning of Life Orientation;
- Purpose / Aim of teaching Life Orientation;
- Assessment of Life Orientation; and
- Value and worth of Life Orientation.

These categories will be analysed below.

**4.7.1 METHODOLOGY**

**How do you teach Life Orientation? (Question 1)**

The respondents were asked to explain how they taught Life Orientation in their classes. The responses touched on matters such as context or real life issues, learner-centred approach, classroom climate, various methods used and there were a few that were not sure or were vague about methodology.

Educators cited that they related what they taught to things that happen in life so that learners can easily understand what is being taught.

A few examples of the responses are given below.

S7R6: "We bring objects in class which are relevant to the lesson, such as robots and other road signs for road safety lessons."

S1R5: "For Nature Conservation theme, I make learners do their picket cards and slogans about littering and to make the school and community aware."

S5R5: "No answer is really wrong. We integrate lessons and most of the answers come from learners."

Most respondents used progressive approaches that are in line with outcomes-based education such as group work as well as using learner experiences as the basis for the lessons.
S6R5: "I involve learners to brainstorm around the theme and group them for activities."
S7R3: "Learners talk about their experiences in discussions."

Additional comments were that learners needed a conducive climate that would motivate them to learn and that they as educators tried to create this atmosphere in the classroom.

S5R2: "I first motivate them to be free, open and comfortable."

It was clear from the responses that the majority of educators tried to use a variety of methods to teach Life Orientation. These range from giving learners creative projects to work on in groups or as individuals, to dramatisation and group discussions on various topics.

S1R4: "Various methods such as discussion, group activities, panels."
S7R3: "We start by discussing before we start to learn new information."

Some were however vague on the question of methodology and they gave a range of responses.

S4R1: "...using three activities a day, method, tool and technique..."
S2R6: "Using a policy document but do not go deep in it."

In conclusion group facilitation was the most popularly used method and educators showed that they have a reasonable understanding of how Life Orientation should be taught.

4.7.2 PLANNING OF LIFE ORIENTATION

How is the planning of Life Orientation done? (Question 2)

The respondents were asked to provide information on ways they used for preparing for Life Orientation lessons.

The vast majority of respondents responded with clear understanding of this category. Their responses indicate that the planning of Life Orientation takes place in teams rather than individually. Educators felt that planning was done in teams.
S1R3: "It is done by the committee or persons belonging to that phase HOD/ deputy and advisors."

S2R1: "It is done by ourselves and the HOD and Deputy."

There were however educators that gave different answers. These are cited below:

Unsure: S2R3: "The planning I am not sure about it because I had never been in training."

Parents: S2R2: "By parents as they are the ones who determine what should be taught."

The majority confirmed their knowledge about the process involved in planning Life Orientation lessons.

In conclusion the information on planning did not necessarily provide much insight into the quality and effectiveness of the planning sessions.

4.7.3 AIM, PURPOSE, REALISATION AND VALUE OF LIFE ORIENTATION

The findings were based on the questions that were aimed at ascertaining the following issues:

- Aim and purpose of Life orientation (Question 3)
  - Educators felt that the aim and purpose were to enhance the development of learners in totality. Half of the educators felt that this aspect was one of the critical aspects of teaching Life Orientation.

- Realisation of Life Orientation (Question 4 & 5)
  - Realisation of Life Orientation was achieved through assessment which is a critical tool in understanding the value and realisation of any learning activity in life. In this questionnaire, the respondents were asked to demonstrate how they assess the impact of Life Orientation among their learners.

- Value and worth of teaching Life Orientation (Question 6 & Question 7)
  - Educators felt that the value of Life Orientation was to mould learners into responsible and confident adults.
Clustering was based on finding that educators had similar issues to talk about on the questions that have been grouped together below. These questions have bearing on whether Life Orientation should be taught in schools. Questions were meant to get the respondents' understanding of the significance of Life Orientation learning area.

The categories that were derived from the responses were based on the issues that educators felt had an impact on learners. These were learner development, coping skills, religious and moral issues, integration into society and real life issues.

The categories were common in all responses from the questions clustered:

S3R3: “Prepare learners for adulthood.”
S1R3: “To teach learners skills to cope in life and a sense of values.”
S1R5: “To ensure learners gain necessary skills, knowledge and values to contribute to their success.”

The aim was to channel learners towards different skills and careers and to build positive attitudes.

S4R2: “It channels learners to accept who they are.”
S7R5: “To a very large extent...doctors, nurses, policemen are invited to motivate them.”
S5R3: “Learners have developed positive relationships.”

Some responses on the value of Life Orientation were:

S2R5: “Learners are being taught how to be responsible.”
S2R6: “Learners are being moulded and know more about life.”
S4R1: “Life Orientation develops creativity and confidence.”

One of the aims of Life Orientation was cited as to help learners cope with life and its problems and challenges. Quotes from few of the respondents are given:

S5R5: “Learners to be prepared and know about issues such as respect, pregnancy, HIV issues.”
S4R2: “It prepares learners to face and challenge problems they will encounter in future.”
Coping skills were also necessary for learners to deal with the challenges and problems they face in their lives. Respondents also mentioned these:

S2R4: “Because most of our learners are abused daily.”
S5R1: “Learners are able to know how to avoid drugs and different forms of abuse.”
S4R1: “Develops learners’ creativity and confidence.”
S1R3: “To become confident and cope in life.”
S5R1: “It helps learners to solve problems at home.”

Educators felt that Life Orientation helps learners to have values to enable them to integrate into society and to be tolerant and understanding of the various cultural groups.

S5R1: “It helps learners to respect and accept other cultural groups.”
S6R2: “To enable learners to value this life and people around them.”
S3R4: “To equip learners to be successful members of the society.”
S7R3: “It has improved learners’ attention to things around them.”
S6R5: “Most learners interact well with educators and other learners.”
S3R5: “To guide learners to be more tolerant towards others.”

Some of the respondents’ approach to Life Orientation was that it helped the learners to deal with religious and moral issues, which are in some cases generally not addressed by the parents at home. It should be noted that even where these aspects were dealt with at home, the educators felt positive about their contribution in moral and religious education. The quotes below are examples:

S6R4: “To help learners to grow in fear of God.”
S6R1: “To develop learners in totality, physically, and mostly spiritually.”
S6R5: “To promote reverence for God to prevail in our school.”
S6R4: “To cater for learners that are deprived in religious matters by the parents.”
S6R5: “It is the only learning area that develops emotive and spiritual part of a child.”

Comments that stood out in the whole research were that Life Orientation was critical in helping learners address issues on life skills, which are the skills that are very important for learners.
These skills enable learners to manage their lives efficiently and to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing them in order to address them. This ability is a transfer of life skills education to real life circumstances. Life Orientation learning is also has to be assessed and this aspect will be discussed below.

4.7.4 ASSESSMENT

How do you assess the learning of Life Orientation?

Respondents felt that assessment was conducted in different approaches ranging from tests to self-assessment.

S6R1: “By giving tests.”
S6R2: “By a test, observation.”
S6R4: “Tests and continuous assessment.”
S7R7: “Oral questions, tests and continuous assessment.”
S6R5: “Observation, peer assessment, group, individual.”
S3R5: “Self, group.”
S3R4: “Self, educator,”

It is evident that the educators use various forms of assessment. Group or peer assessment was most popular among the respondents. The majority of educators mentioned that continuous assessment formed an important aspect of the implementation of Life Orientation.

These were categorised under tests and continuous assessment, peer/group observation and self-assessment.
4.8 OTHER COMMENTS

Any other comments on the Life Orientation learning area. (Question 8)

The last question was aimed at obtaining information from the educators concerning matters that have not been touched on in the questionnaire. The educators commented on matters pertaining to the themes addressed in the Life Orientation learning area, attitudes toward the learning area as well as practical matters like training and resources.

Educators raised concerns about the way in which themes like religion and HIV/AIDS are treated in the Life Orientation learning area:

S6R4: “Different religions should be taught in schools.”
S3R3: “Sensitive issues such as Aids should be handled with care giving learners freedom.”

Additional comments on the positive attitudes of teachers towards this learning area were also added:

S7R7: “Best thing ever.”
S3R1: “It forms the basis for life long learning.”
S7R4: “Life Orientation is an extension of lessons at home, parents run away from discussing facts of life.”
S5R2: “Learners are not staying with their parents.”

Some practical concerns and recommendations of educators were also raised concerning training and resources.

S3R6: “More training and workshops.”
S7R4: “More knowledge on how Life Orientation is taught.”
S3R3: “Schools need media equipment for lessons.”
S7R2: “More resources to assist learners and educators.”

These educators gave various arguments on how this learning area could be enhanced. Nine of these felt they needed better and adequate training on this learning area, while three of them felt strongly about the need to increase the
duration of these workshops in order for them to be effective. Two of the respondents raised concerns about the lack of resources in facilitating Life Orientation.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter contained a discussion of the research findings based on the raw data, which were presented above. An analysis was provided for different categories. Evidence of raw data and different properties formed were also provided and these were based on the questionnaire.

In Chapter 5 a final summary of the research findings and recommendations will be discussed based on these findings.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research was undertaken to investigate the educators' perceptions and implementation of the Life Orientation learning area within their schools. The reason for this investigation arose from the South African Department of Education's introduction of a New Curriculum that followed the new political dispensation in the country in 1994. Curriculum 2005, as it became known, came with new changes with regard to the structure and the content of the learning areas.

The changes were based on the National Qualifications Framework, which introduced the implementation of Outcomes Based Education. This change also saw the recommendation to introduce Life Skills education as a significant learning area within the foundation phase (Grades R to 3), and Life Orientation from Grades 4 to 9. The National Department of Education was faced with a challenge to ensure that the New Educational Policy incorporated the training of educators to enable them to implement the New Curriculum within the outcomes based approach.

The main objective of the new Curriculum was to ensure equal access to education for all South African citizens regardless of their race, colour or creed.

The specific research aims and objectives of this study were:

- To describe the Life Orientation learning area and its position within the framework of Curriculum 2005 and life skills development in South Africa and abroad.

- To investigate the educators' perceptions of the introduction of the Life Orientation learning area in the selected schools in the Johannesburg area.
• To explore the knowledge, skills and attitudes of Life Orientation educators in these schools regarding the learning area and how it is facilitated in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases.

• To formulate recommendations for policy makers, curriculum developers and trainers on Life Orientation.

• To examine the educators' experiences of the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area in the schools.

The literature study in Chapter Two centred around the Life Orientation learning area as part of Curriculum 2005. In addition to the above, the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995:21) was used to ensure that the researcher understood the source of the need for introducing such a curriculum. Approaches of teaching Life Orientation were also studied from the point of view of countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and Korea.

The empirical investigation focussed on the teacher's perceptions of the implementation of Life Orientation in the foundation, intermediate and senior phases. Against this background the researcher decided to identify respondents from schools in the Johannesburg area as these schools were diverse and representative of township, informal settlement and former Model C schools.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

An initial probe on perceptions about Life Orientation was studied through a literature review. The following summarises the findings about what Life Orientation aims to achieve in a classroom situation.

5.2.1 Life Orientation

The Life Orientation learning area was analysed from the life skills perspective. Life skills are defined as those skills that are essential for meaningful learning and living. The skills that were deemed necessary to empower every learner to become an independent critical thinker equipped with real life problem-solving skills, include
decision-making skills, self-awareness, communication skills, time management, leadership skills, relationships and tolerance.

Life Orientation is aimed at empowering learners to believe in themselves, take control of their lives, cope with life's challenges, feel confident and in charge of their lives, achieve the best they can and be involved in social transformation taking place in their lives. For successful implementation of the programme educators need skills.

In the following paragraphs the discussions will focus on significant findings from the empirical investigation.

5.2.2 Educators' perceptions concerning training of educators in the Life Orientation learning area

It was evident that although some training had taken place in schools, not all educators had been trained. There was inconsistency in the responses with regard to the period of training among educators of the same school. These disparities raise questions on the validity of such activities. It was clear that the Gauteng Department of Education had provided most of the training and that private training providers were also used.

About half of the educators were not satisfied with the quality of training they received. Numerous reasons for their dissatisfaction were provided. In addition to trainers' inadequate teaching experience, some educators stated that some trainers had insufficient facilitating skills. Lack of teaching aids was also cited as a negative contributory factor to the insufficient training that some of the educators received.

Other aspects that were raised included the small classrooms, the time at which these training sessions were held, as well as the fact that the time was inadequate. A suggestion by educators, that more time was needed for the training was made. Few educators were not even sure that they understood the Life Orientation learning area.
5.2.3 Availability of policy documents

It was found that the majority of educators had knowledge of the availability of policy documents on Life Orientation. Few educators from the same schools were not aware of such documents. This could be an indication that there may be inadequate communication of information among the educators in the schools. The majority of the respondents in one of the schools in the townships were unaware of such a policy document.

5.2.4 Educators’ perceptions concerning the aim, purpose and value of Life Orientation

Educators stated that the Life Orientation learning area enhanced learners' development and their ability to deal with real life problems, acceptance of others as well as enhancing their moral and religious aspirations. The Life Orientation learning area provides learners with coping skills and self-confidence.

The majority of educators confirmed that Life Orientation brought about positive changes in their learners as the learning area was presumed to be relevant to the learners' real life issues and circumstances. Other educators emphasised the significance of Life Orientation as an area that supports the study on values, attitudes, norms, morality and religious study.

Educators cited that the aim and purpose of teaching life orientation was to develop learners that were confident and responsible adults. This would be achieved by helping learners to cope with life and to address those issues that they do not easily talk about with their parents at home. Problems such as drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS could not be ignored.

The value of Life Orientation was in helping learners to develop skills and attitudes that are in line with outcomes-based education that ensures that learners are able to understand one another and what motivates others. This would help them develop attitudes based on tolerance, respect and empathy.
Respondents also felt that learners developed positive attitudes and opened up when discussing personal problems and sexual issues.

5.2.5 Educators' perceptions concerning teaching Life Orientation in schools

The majority of educators were aware of their facilitative role and of the significance of learner-centred approaches in education. They used various progressive methods such as group facilitation, peer work, role-play, dramatisation, brainstorming as well as discussion and worksheets. They were aware of setting an appropriate classroom context for their lessons. Methodology was also linked to real life issues and creativity of learners was encouraged. This shows that educators had a fair understanding of the outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning.

The planning of Life Orientation at school level was mainly a group activity, which was implemented at phase level and grade level. This was evident from the majority of the respondents' responses when data was analysed. Heads of Department and Deputy Principals were sometimes involved in the planning.

Assessment is a process of gathering valid and reliable information about the learners' performance on an ongoing basis. Thus in this study, it is validated through the use of clear assessment criteria to ascertain whether outcomes have been achieved.

The majority of educators used continuous assessment to evaluate their learners' progress. However, they were aware of various methods such as self-assessment, observation, involving learners in projects, assignments and in formal and informal assessment. Some of the educators stated that the learners' application of knowledge in other projects was a demonstration of their abilities and the fact that such responses were made available, indicates their understanding of the methods used.

5.3 SUMMARY

Life Orientation has the potential to develop future citizens who will be able to display responsible citizenship in our country. Since the Republic of South Africa is a
multicultural society, there is a need to ensure that the youth are encouraged to be tolerant to each other’s diversity. The other attributes, which Life Orientation seeks to address through its curriculum, include:

- Positive self-concept and self-awareness;
- Ability to make sound and responsible decisions in life;
- Ability to deal with various problems and resolve them;
- Co-operation rather than competition;
- Positive attitudes and moral values; and
- Good communication skills and sound relationships.

It is imperative for educators of Life Skills and the Life Orientation learning area to understand that their own perceptions and attitude to this learning area would be of major significance to the successful implementation of Life Orientation. This understanding would lead to an integrated approach within the entire school.

The educators’ ability to ensure that Life Orientation should be taught as an integrated component and across the different fields is also a critical fact. This requires creativity and resourcefulness from the educators and learners. The educators need to bear in mind the fact that learners are unique individuals who should respect each other despite differences. Life Orientation themes should be integrated to focus on health promotion, social development, personal development and movement as well as the orientation of learners to the world of work (Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9: 26). It should not be seen as a forum for teaching only religious education.

In the investigation it became clear, however, that educators in the sample schools perceive that the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area is not always effective, although they do recognise the purpose and value of the learning area. Some recommendations to address these shortcomings will be offered in the conclusion.
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher's recommendations are based on the findings from the investigation above.

The National Department of Education should be commended for its bold step of introducing the Life Orientation learning area as part of the curriculum from the primary phase of education to Grade 9. However, the following recommendations still need to be taken cognisance of:

- The learning area has to be extended to Grade 12, to equip all learners with the attitudes, values and norms that will promote good interpersonal skills and respect.
- Training in the Life Orientation learning area should be made compulsory at teacher training levels so that adequate training can be ensured.
- The facilitators (educators) already in the field should be given adequate support through training. This training should be in line with the required unit standards and be recognised accordingly.
- The National Department of Education should set standards for quality assurance for all the private Life Orientation trainers as well as their own facilitators.
- Each school should be supplied with the policy document and educators will have to actively engage with this document.
- The Department of Education should ensure that there are adequate resources for effective facilitation of the Life Orientation learning area in schools.
- The foundation and intermediate phases form the foundation of character building and the introduction of the Life Orientation Programme at this level of development is critical.

5.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

A lot of issues around the training and development of educators on Life Orientation have revealed that the quality of training is not quite satisfactory. Much as the respondents did indicate some of the reasons why they felt training on the Life Orientation are was inadequate, the aim and scope of this study did not allow for further research on the causes of such responses from a majority of respondents.
It would be valuable if further research were to be conducted to find out from the various institutions and stakeholders involved in Education and Training what the reasons are that could have prompted such strong responses from sample educators.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study will, hopefully, serve as a useful tool for both educators and the Department of Education practitioners that are involved in the planning and implementation of Life Orientation.

It has become evident that as the foundation, intermediate and senior phases form the foundation of character building, the introduction of the Life Orientation Programme at this level of development is critical.

From the study it has become clear also, that trainers need to have experience in facilitating skills in order to have a positive impact on the educators. If they lack such skills, they fail to demonstrate effectively to the educators, how they should facilitate Life Orientation learning area.

Finally, skills training on Life Orientation should enable educators to play a facilitative role by engaging learners to work independently and to participate in all activities so that they can analyse and critically evaluate information they receive.
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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1

GENERAL INFORMATION

Directions: Please indicate the information relevant to your situation with an X in the appropriate box.

1. How many years have you been teaching?
   - 0 – 2
   - 3 – 5
   - 6 – 10
   - 11-15
   - More than 15

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

3. What grades do you teach Life Orientation?

4. How many learners do you have in your classes?
   - Less than 15
   - 16 – 25
   - 26 – 35
   - 36 – 45
   - More than 45

5. What is your current position?
   - Educator
   - Head of Department
   - Deputy Principal
   - Principal
   - Other (please specify): .................................
6. What is your highest level of education?

☐ Teacher’s Diploma
☐ Teacher’s Diploma and Further Education Diploma
☐ Bachelor’s Degree
☐ Bachelor’s Degree and Teacher’s Diploma
☐ Postgraduate Qualification

7. Does your school have a copy of the policy documents concerning the Life Orientation learning area?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

   Have you received a copy of these policy documents?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Have you received any training to teach Life Orientation?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

8. (a) If your answer is YES above, how many days did you receive training?

8. (b) Who trained you in Life Orientation?

8. (c) On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the quality of the Life Orientation training you received?

   Very poor ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ Exceptional
9. I enjoy teaching the Life Orientation learning area.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Explain your rating in 9:

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SECTION 2: IMPLEMENTATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE LIFE ORIENTATION LEARNING AREA

Please describe your own situation in terms of the following questions:

1. How do you teach the Life Orientation learning area? (Give a brief description of a typical lesson in your class.)

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2. How is the planning of the Life Orientation learning area done in your school? By which persons?

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3. What do you regard as the main aim or purpose of the Life Orientation learning area?

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4. To what extent is this aim of the Life Orientation learning area realized in your class/school? Explain.

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5. How do you assess the learning outcomes of Life Orientation in your classes?

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6. What is the value of the Life Orientation learning area for your learners?

7. Do you think that Life Orientation is a learning area that should be taught in schools? Give reasons for your answer.

8. Any other comments on the Life Orientation learning area?
9. If required, we would like to conduct an interview with the Life Orientation teachers at your school. Will you be willing to participate?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.