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CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Education is described as a process by which learners are supported, guided and influenced in order to reach higher levels of maturity and general functioning within a specific cultural context (Landman, Killian, Swanepoel & Bodenstein, 1989:25). The teacher in post-apartheid South Africa has the difficult task of educating children and equipping them to cope competently with complex social situations in a rapidly changing society. Hence, the learning area Life Orientation (LO)[1] was introduced to schools by the South African Department of Education to prepare learners for practical life skills that will assist them to respond to challenges and to play an active and responsible role in the economy and in society (LoveLife, 2001:11; Gildenhuys & Orsmond, 1998). The learning area[2] provides the opportunity for the "holistic development" of learners, to reduce their vulnerability and to empower them (Prinsloo, 2007).

The introduction of Outcomes Based Education in South African schools through the medium of Curriculum 2005 necessitated the orientation and training of all serving South African school teachers across the country (Morrow, 2003). Life Orientation was one of the learning areas that were supposed to bring about transformation within Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes Based Education in the General Education and Training (GET) Band (Grades R-9) and in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band (Grades 10-12) (Van Deventer, 2009). Research by Lemmer and Badenhorst (1997:272) has revealed that the traditional (previous) education model in South Africa was out of step with Outcomes Based Education as the approach to teaching and learning. The traditional teaching model was ineffective in terms of the facilitation of learning area content evolving educational needs of learners in South Africa (Smith, 2000:7). Thus, the curriculum

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[1] Life Orientation will appears as LO in parts of this thesis.
[2] Learning area: refers to Life Orientation which is offered to all the grades at schools. A learning area is a field of knowledge, skills and values that has unique features as well as connections with other fields of knowledge and learning areas.

changes affected all teachers by stipulating that teachers should enhance their knowledge, strategies and methods to teach Life Orientation. Further demands were that learning areas such as Life Orientation required teachers to develop new learning content and create innovative methods of teaching.

I am in agreement with Christiaans (2006:2) that Life Orientation, a new learning area in schools, is taught by teachers who often have not received specialised training in the learning area. As a result the teachers do not know how to teach the content of Life Orientation or how to derive the content from the assessment standards[3]. As a Senior Education Specialist (subject advisor) I have discovered that many South African Life Orientation teachers are mystified by the prescribed implementation of Life Orientation programmes. Consequently they pay no attention to the Life Orientation policy, often disregarding the prescribed learning programmes, subject framework, work schedule or lesson plans with activities and designed tasks when preparing their lessons. It has been found that completed lesson plans do not correlate with the prescribed schedules from the Department of Education and assessment activities often do not complement learning activities.

However, there are teachers who have been trained as subject specialists in some of the sub-areas within Life Orientation such as Physical Education, Guidance and Religious Education. In addition, the new amendments brought about by Curriculum 2005 (DoE, 1997b:8&9) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DoE, 2002b:7) for the Senior Phase of the GET band seem to have affected teachers in numerous ways with regard to the implementation of Life Orientation. My personal observations as a Life Orientation subject advisor, gained from the monitoring of and support visits to schools have revealed that teachers generally share common misconceptions and lack a clear understanding of what is expected of them to teach Life Orientation as a learning area. Furthermore, it also seems that teachers find it difficult to accept and adapt to the changed curriculum while others ignore or resist the new curriculum implementation altogether.

As a Senior Education Specialist I had to be aware of my subjectivity and make teachers feel free during the research process. I had to make them comfortable and

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[3] Assessment Standard: - the knowledge, skills and values that learners need to achieve the objectives in each grade.

assured them that nothing was going to jeopardise their anonymity. My role was just to listen to them without any corrections to what they said. It was made clear that I was there as a researcher. I abided by the ethics regulations of both the University of Pretoria and the Department of Education.

The low quality of teacher-training for Life Orientation teachers in South Africa has been documented by researchers such as Christaans (2006:34) and Morrow (2003) in several academic studies on teacher training at schools. These researchers (Christaans, 2006:3; Morrow, 2003) reveal that many teachers are under-trained and lack the experience, knowledge and skills to teach different learning areas, including Life Orientation (DoE, 1997b). In 2005 comments made by Life Orientation teachers during a programme researching the implementation of HIV/AIDS content in Grade 8 and 9 through the learning area Life Orientation were recorded; these comments also indicated that there was a dire need for follow-up training subsequent to the initial training of teachers (Morena, 2004). Arnold (1998:136) expresses the point of view that the effectiveness of any planned curriculum programme depends largely on the extent to which the curriculum is implemented. In the light of the above-mentioned problems that teachers experience I deemed it necessary to investigate how teachers understand, respond to and implement Life Orientation.

1.2   RATIONALE

Being a Senior Education Specialist for Life Orientation in the Mpumalanga Department of Education, Gert Sibande Region (District), I have noted that teachers were consistently uncertain about the Life Orientation policy. This uncertainty on the part of the teachers was underscored by their stifled responses in response to the implementation of the new Life Orientation curriculum and policy. A preliminary study of the reports from three schools visited for monitoring and support revealed that many teachers were doubtful about the steps they ought to take and did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to implement the Life Orientation curriculum effectively (DoE, 2007:1). The official prescribed time allocation was also not observed since in some schools the number of periods for the teaching of Life Orientation was reduced and given to other "academic" learning areas.

Furthermore, new or inexperienced teachers were selected to teach the "easy" learning areas while other Life Orientation teachers were swapped around during the course of the year. Life Orientation was regarded as an "added on subject" after teachers had been allocated the rest of their workload (Christiaans, 2006:4). For a subject advisor it was a source of great frustration that such negative steps were adopted at schools where teachers did not implement the stipulated national policy of Life Orientation. As a result I found it necessary to investigate the phenomenon in order to create awareness among teachers, the Department of Education, heads of departments and principals regarding the understanding and implementation of Life Orientation in South African schools.

During school visits it became apparent that teachers could not make sense of the variety of roles, activities and influences that they had to shoulder when facilitating Life Orientation content with learners. The morale of some teachers was low and curriculum changes frustrated them (Fullan, 1991). This discontent was also evident when school-based and cluster-based moderations were conducted across the Mpumalanga Province. Due to these problems, many teachers did not appreciate monitoring visits from subject advisors although the school visits included support programmes for the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum.

It was imperative that teachers realised that Life Orientation was a core learning area that aimed to develop a child holistically (DoE, 1997). This learning area intends to prepare children to cope with a variety of social situations in a complex and rapidly changing South African society (DoE, 2001:6). If effective implementation of Life Orientation is undermined, it could increase the learners' vulnerability. It therefore became crucial to study the manner in which teachers understand, respond to and implement the Life Orientation curriculum in schools in order to ensure the well-being of the child.

A preliminary literature review on this topic has revealed that research in respect of education policy and the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum at South African schools is minimal. A few educational studies focus on Outcomes-Based Education (DoE, 2001:3). Life Orientation provides health and physical development content for orientation programmes that prepare learners adequately for the

complex and dynamic life of the 21st century. The learning area comprises religious, socialising- and self-development programmes in conjunction with life- and survival-skills training that Life Orientation teachers have to facilitate with their learners (Mwamwenda, 2004; Republic of South Africa, 2000; White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 2001, 1995 & 1992). This study attempted to close the 'gap' in the literature by investigating secondary school teachers' understanding, response to and implementation of Life Orientation.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The preliminary literature study indicated that teachers do have problems with regard to understanding and implementation of Life Orientation. Teachers found the change from the old Life Orientation curriculum to the new one difficult to accept, understand and implement because they lack the necessary knowledge and skills. The Department of Education has held provincial workshops to train teachers in the implementation of Life Orientation but there is still confusion, misunderstanding and a lack of motivation among teachers to teach the content of the learning area effectively (DoE, 2005 & 2006).

Accordingly, the main research question of this study was defined as, *How do secondary school teachers understand, respond to and implement Life Orientation?*

To provide answers to the main research question the following sub-questions were formulated:

1.   What are the policy, curriculum requirements and components of Life Orientation that need to be addressed?
2.   How are Life Orientation teachers affected by curriculum change?
3.   What is the difference between Life Orientation policy provision and educational practices regarding Life Orientation?

1.4   AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The main aim of the research is to analyse the way in which Life Orientation teachers in the Gert Sibande Region understand, respond to and implement the learning area allocated to them. As researcher I endeavoured to ascertain the

manner in which teachers select the learning area content to be taught to learners. It was also important for me to take cognisance of the relevant documents in respect of the Department of Education policies, curriculum requirements and components of Life Orientation. As a result of the recent changes in terms of the Life Orientation within the South African scenario, it was also of primary concern to the study to consider the impact of such changes upon the teachers allocated to teach the learning area at the schools within the research population. As has already been mentioned, I discovered within my own work as a Senior Education Specialist for Life Orientation that there were discrepancies between the policy provisions of the Department of Education and the educational practices of the teachers of Life Orientation. Hence the final aim necessitated steps to establish the reality of the situation within the course of the research.

To answer the above questions and research question of the study the following aims were formulated.

- To establish the state of play within formal policy components regarding Life Orientation in schools.
- To determine how teachers conceptualise and implement Life Orientation policy and curriculum in schools.
- To determine the stance of teachers in relation to their understanding and practices regarding Life Orientation compared to what was formally required by policy.

1.5   BACKGROUND

1.5.1   LIFE ORIENTATION AS A COMPULSORY LEARNING AREA

At the launching of the Macro Plan (2006) for education in South Africa, the Minister of Education stated that Life Orientation as one of the fundamental subject areas[4] for learners (DoE, 2003). Life Orientation is a compulsory learning area that is taught to all learners. Life Orientation is a compulsory learning area with one-hour periods allocated; this amounts to eight percent of the total tuition hours (National Curriculum Statement Overview English Policy, 2002).

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[4] Fundamental learning areas – the key subject areas that develop the learners spiritually, socially, psychologically and personally.

1.5.2 THE PURPOSE OF LIFE ORIENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

My experience coincides with that of Prinsloo (2007) in respect of Life Orientation (LO), the South African Department of Education expects teachers to prepare learners holistically for a complex and dynamic life in the 21st century (Prinsloo, 2007). Life Orientation, as a learning area, is concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners. The Life Orientation curriculum is therefore structured to guide and prepare learners for life and its many possibilities where learners must be able to respond positively to social demands and personal, psychological and neuro-cognitive tasks (DoE, 2003). Under the guidance of competent teachers the curriculum aims to optimise the life chances of the child physically, intellectually, personally, emotionally and socially (DoE, 2003:3). Life Orientation in schools stresses the fact that learners should understand diversity among human beings against the background of problematic socio-economic circumstances and deprived pedagogical situations.

As a consequence Life Orientation is supposed to enable the learner to make informed decisions about personal, community and environmental health issues within his or her particular society. The learning area is designed to equip learners with positive social relationships and teach learners how to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to respect the rights of others, to achieve and extend their personal potential to promote physical development and to develop a positive orientation towards study and work (DoE, 2005:5). In the South African context sexuality education programmes should also be embedded in Life Orientation. Schools often fail to implement the LO policy or deliver the prescribed programmes as required by the Department of Education. Since teachers must recognise the importance of Life Orientation and take it seriously, schools must not allocate Life Orientation to a teacher who sets a bad example and who is often absent from school.

1.6 IMPLEMENTING LIFE ORIENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

According to the National Policy for Life Orientation (DoE, 2002b) teachers need to be subject specialist in order to ensure that they are able to address the knowledge,

skills, values and attitudes embedded in the learning outcomes (DoE, 2002b). The teaching content of Life Orientation is prescribed in the assessment standards of the learning outcomes but teachers need to derive it from the assessment standards in order to achieve the learning outcomes. According to Rogan (2000:118), schools in South Africa differ from one another in many respects. Of primary importance to this study was the fact that there were differences in the professional background and educational levels of teachers in rural, township and urban areas. Similarly, in some schools Life Orientation was contextually based and focused while in other schools it was not taken seriously. The National Curriculum Statement on Life Orientation presents the learning outcomes and the assessment standards to be achieved in each grade, and these in particular were also implemented differently at schools. Research by Van Deventer & Van Niekerk (2009) revealed that some teachers were not qualified to present Life Orientation. Teachers appeared to interpret the focus areas differently and did not uniformly teach South African learners the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that would empower them to cope with the challenges of life. Furthermore, Prinsloo (2007) as well as Van Deventer (2009) indicated that the socio-economic circumstances, cultural backgrounds and differences of learners in the school system presented many challenges to both curriculum developers and the schools that must implement programmes.

Of significance to this study was that within the framework provided by the Department of Education in South Africa, life skills education had become an integral component of the teaching of Life Orientation. Research by Van Deventer & Van Niekerk (2009), Junge, Manglallan & Raskauskas (2003:166), Rooth (2000:6) and Du Toit, Nienaber, Nienaber, Hammes-Kirsten, Kirsten, Claassens, Du Plessis & Wissing (1997:2) revealed that life skills consist of non-academic abilities, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours necessary for successful living and learning that enhanced the quality of life and prevent dysfunctional behaviour. The sub-standard teaching of Life Orientation and life skills in schools left many children in South Africa at risk, especially those in biological families, reconstituted families, foster homes and safe houses a well as street children. These learners might be taught defective life skills that prevented them from enjoying well-balanced social lives in their communities (Richter, Brookes, Shisana, Simbayi & Desmond, 2004).

Fullan (1991:117) indicates that "Schools are culture systems of human relationships, traditions, ideas, attitudes and ways of doing things." According to Schwartz and Cavener (1994) Life Orientation was part of a school system for it did not only have to do with teachers' beliefs about Life Orientation and the teaching and learning of the learning area but also includes the beliefs of administrators, learners and parents as part of the community that shapes the learners. Teachers had to be adequately trained to understand the content, aims, outcomes and didactic methods of Life Orientation programmes. Prinsloo (2007) states that a factor that was not taken into account during the conceptual stages of the Life Orientation curriculum development from Curriculum 2005, is the character and moral standards of the teachers appointed to teach Life Orientation. Accordingly, in my research, I needed to establish whether Life Orientation teachers were considered as appropriate role players when teaching Life Orientation (Lemmer & Badenhorst, 1997:291).

Despite the differences in the perception of Life Orientation as a learning area at the schools in Mpumalanga, several lessons could be learnt about the implementation of Life Orientation by revising what the learning area entails, rather than blaming the design and delivery of Life Orientation content. The Life Orientation curriculum includes the structure, organisation, balance, and presentation of the content in the classroom (National Research Council, 1996). Many critics (Christiaans, 2006:12) believed that the lack of the successful implementation of Life Orientation can be attributed to the inadequate number of training workshops for teachers and unproductive implementation plans. For implementation to be successful, all affected classroom teachers must be involved in all implementation stages, including the following:

- Building awareness and a vision of the reform changes
- Designing a developing curriculum
- Implementing new curricula and instructional practice in the classroom
- Reflecting upon practice
- Refining the implementation process and continuing to learn to grow (Cook, 2000).

The challenges of Life Orientation as a learning area are not limited to adding new content, but include teaching the learning area content within an outcomes- based education approach. The latter approach to curriculum implementation in all learning areas in schools is based on the assumption that all learners can learn; hence it forms the foundation of the South African school curriculum. The approach indicates that teaching and learning are driven by the outcomes displayed by learners at the end of the educational experience (DoE, 1997b:20). The outcomes-based approach spells out the outcomes to be achieved in the process of learning through the assessment standards for each learning outcome and for a specific grade (DoE, 2002a:10&11; DoE, 2003:12&13). The assessment standards showed progression for different grades at school, but teachers did not take note of the extent to which the material could be tested, or determine the appropriateness of activities for different grades (Bennie & Newstead, 1999:5). My observations as a subject advisor showed that some secondary school teachers still taught according to the syllabus that was provided in the first version of the post-apartheid curriculum statement which was provided prior to Curriculum 2005. The new curriculum for Life Orientation in South Africa contains different methods in the Outcomes Based Education approach, such as incorporating cooperative learning and group work. The curriculum encourages experiential learning for learners who should be active in the learning process (Kleve, 2007:85). However, it was often found that the implementation of Outcomes Based Education approach was ineffective because teachers were not educated nor trained to implement these active-learning techniques.

1.7   COMPLICATIONS AFFECTING THE INTENDED OUTCOMES

Major factors preventing the achievement of the intended outcomes include the high degree of dependency on the textbook, the high turnover of staff moving from one school to another and the lack of articulation between new staff and those leaving the school. At many schools there was often little communication between the outgoing and incoming staff, especially between the initial outgoing teacher who was the subject teacher, and the subject coordinator. As a result the curriculum presents a challenge to teachers' understanding of Life Orientation and requires that they expand their teaching strategies. Obstacles to curriculum implementation

include the nature of official curriculum documents together with learning area content, knowledge and skills.

Difficulties regarding the implementation of Life Orientation arise from teachers' beliefs or underlying ideology, diverse perspectives on curriculum implementation, teacher's "residual ideologies", rigid scheduling of time and the perception that the learning area is new (Van Deventer, 2009). It might also be that school principals did not promote the successful implementation of Life Orientation. The failure of teachers to recognise and understand the school's role in the process of curriculum change sometimes led to a lack of implementation (Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992). Learner and parental expectations, institutional arrangements, time restrictions, large classes, heavy teaching loads, a lack of professional development and a lack of professional support also had an impact on curriculum implementation (Jessica, Thomas & Beaudoin, 2002:2). A challenge for teachers and learners in respect of the curriculum was the need to explore new topics as well as to tackle all the other demands created by curriculum change. This additional challenge was of particular concern in the light of the limited training provided for teachers in terms of the implementation of the changed curriculum (Bennie & Newstead, 1999:5).

1.8   CURRICULUM CHANGE IN SCHOOLS

Michael Fullan (2001:51) categorizes change into three phases:

1.   The initiation phase, including the decision to embrace the change and the process that generates meaning confusion, commitment or alienation.
2.   The implementation phase, which includes the initial attempt to put change in motion and includes the decision to embrace change. The ideas are then put into motion or practice. The teachers' response to policy implementation as part of change depends on the knowledge and skills they have, the District support from the Department of Education, and communication between the Department of Education authorities and teachers with regard to change.
3.   Institutionalization which refers to the complete embracement of the change by the school or district.

Curriculum change at school level includes teacher change, curricular change, systems change as well as innovation and reform in respect of the learning area. Teacher change refers to the personal adaptation of an individual teacher, including his or her social, emotional or cognitive growth. Teachers perceive change in both positive and negative ways and change may increase confusion and unpredictability (Evans, 1996:34). Educational change may be less a question of dogmatic resistance and bad intentions and more a question of the difficulties related to planning and coordinating a multi-level social process (Fullan, 2001:69). The movement towards change may prove not to be linear but erratic, since the forces of change and resistance interact contrapuntally (Lortie, 1975:219). Change entails abandoning all familiar routines and relationships and may be accompanied by profound feelings of loss and uncertainty (Hargreaves, 2004:288). Teachers sometimes resist change and find it testing their individual psychological processes which include the personal energy that is needed to embrace the phenomenon (Hargreaves, 2004:288).

Change cannot be evidenced from the date when a policy was voted in but rather it must be conceived of as a process in which people actually put policy into practice. Hence, policy and practice are not two distinct phenomena but rather extensions of each other. Within the realm of management and organisation development, specialists apply "change" literature to educational contexts. In this context, Schofield (1995) summarises the school change literature as follows:

- "Change is an uncertain, contradictory and never-ending process that cannot be planned or imposed.
- Change can be encouraged, directed or retarded by the combination of different conditions.
- To facilitate school cultural change, it is necessary to develop trust and openness among educators, learners, management and departmental representatives.
- Effective in-service training is a part of whole school's change programmes but the whole school's change programmes should include school infra-structural, youth and governance structural development.
- School change is enhanced when teachers are allowed to develop their own professional development programmes" (Schofield, 1995).

1.9 META-THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Inquiries about teachers should be studied within the school context to understand the nature of the reality of human beings and their world (Mouton, 1996:16). Teachers and learners in South Africa come from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. As a consequence teachers are supposed to assist in developing the learners in totality by promoting the latter's spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development. Teachers prepare learners at school level for the opportunities and experiences of adult life beyond the boundaries of the school (DoE, 2004).

1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A given theoretical framework was used during this research to guide empirical inquiry, because it provided a system for explicit explanations of the empirical phenomenon, its scope and how the phenomenon ought to be analyzed. The Structural Curriculum Theory aided the process to ascertain the importance of the way in which teachers understand and implement the established curriculum and policy. A detailed discussion of the Structural Curriculum Theory is presented in Chapter 3.

1.11 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.11.1 TEACHER

The Universal Dictionary (1987:492) defines a teacher as someone who is trained in teaching within the school situation. This also includes the principal, deputy principal, head of department and learning area or class teachers. *Teacher* is a noun which means "instructor, coach, tutor, guide, professor, trainer, lecturer, mentor, educator and a pedagogue" (Collins, 2005). A teacher is referred to as an adult with knowledge and insight in order to help learners to become independent and socially responsible. A teacher is also someone who takes the responsibility of leading learners to adulthood and who is expected to know more than the one who is led. This study explores whether teachers have the knowledge, skills and insight to organise, frame and classify the learning area content to be taught to learners

within a specific grade. Every learner is entitled to be taught by a teacher with the necessary knowledge, training, competence and commitment to teach well (Bush & West-Burnham, 1994:199). For the purpose of this study the definition of Fraser, Loubser and Van Rooy (1990) is applicable.

1.11.2 SECONDARY SCHOOL

A secondary school usually consists of learners from Grade Eight (8) to Grade Twelve (12). Learners are approximately eleven (11) to eighteen (18) years of age. The learner enters secondary school as a child, becomes a pre-pubescent and leaves it as a youth. Physical growth is phenomenal and sexual maturity is attained. Cognitive development includes new dimensions of abstract thought and a self-concept is arrived at when the learner leaves the secondary school at the age of eighteen years (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1993:204-205). This study explores how Life Orientation teachers prepare lesson activities according to the developmental level of learners.

1.11.3 UNDERSTAND

To "understand" is to know or realise how a fact, process or situation works, especially through learning or experience. This word has a number of meanings that are interpersonal as well as intellectual. The Oxford English Dictionary states that the verb *understands* means to "apprehend the meaning or importance of an idea." On the other hand, *understanding* means to "comprehend, get, take in, perceive, grasp, know, see, follow, recognise, be aware of, get to the bottom of, show compassion to, gather, conclude, be informed and draw the inference" (Collins, 2005). *Understanding* also involves knowing and sympathising with how people feel and why they behave in the way they do (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995), as well as to know or realise the meaning of words and language (Hornby, 2005). Collins (2005) defines *understanding* as the ''ability to think and act flexibly with what one knows to communicate ones' capability." *Understanding* also involves assessing learners' capacity to use their knowledge thoughtfully and to apply it effectively in diverse settings. *Understanding* involves more than just knowing information. Teachers have to understand the subject content in order to design learning activities, and to assess learning outcomes adequately.

A person who *understands* is able to explain states of being and not just state facts. It is revealed through performances and products that clearly, thoroughly and instructively explain how things work, what they imply, where they connect and why they happen. To *understand* is to make sense of what one knows, to be able to know why something is so, and to have the ability to use it in various situations and contexts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005:343). For the purpose of this study the concept *understand* indicates teachers' ability to establish the meaning of the learning area content and how to implement it. Teachers need to be innovative to design challenging activities to cater for different needs of the learners in the classroom.

1.11.4 RESPONSE

To *respond* is to react to something that has been said or done; to answer, return, reply, come back, counter, acknowledge, retort to or react to (Collins, 2005). To *respond* is also to improve as a result of a particular kind of treatment (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995) or to say or write something as a reply to a spoken or written word (Hornby, 2005). In this study, *respond* means to perform according to what is expected in order to reach the goals that are expected; in other words, a way to describe how teachers' acknowledge and react to the teaching of Life Orientation in schools.

1.11.5 IMPLEMENT

To *implement* is to make that which has been officially decided upon, happen: "carry out, effect, carry through, complete, apply, perform, realise, fulfil, enforce, execute, bring about, enact and put into action or effect" (Collins, 2005). The term could otherwise be said to refer to the *implementation* of a new system, a tool or an instrument, often one that is quite simple and that is used outdoors to carry out the intended function (Hornby, 2005). *Implementation* also means to take action or make changes that one has officially decided should happen. For the purposes of this study, to *implement* refers to the way in which teachers perform, fulfil, carry out, enact and put the Life Orientation curriculum into action.

1.11.6 LIFE ORIENTATION

Life Orientation is a compulsory learning area in schools for all grades and learners. It presupposes that an adult parent or teacher should educate children in the light of their own cultural view and philosophy of life and should guide them towards obtaining reliable self-knowledge and knowledge of life (DoE, 2002). This statement confirms the fact that Life Orientation is possible in the home and school to equip learners with life competencies and skills to guide and prepare them for life and its possibilities; to equip learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society (DoE, 2002b:4). This study explores how teachers prepare learners for a meaningful and responsible life in a changing society.

1.12   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.12.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Qualitative research is an approach that focuses on an understanding of the phenomenon under study as a whole (Burns & Grove, 1993:27). Since the concept of an "emergent design" looks at the variables in the natural setting in which they are found, the research was positioned in the qualitative research paradigm. Research was therefore conducted in a naturalistic setting, specifically within a school in order to gain an understanding of and insight into the teachers' responses to Life Orientation (Mouton, 2001:270, 278; De Vos, 2000:273; Creswell, 1994:2, 147). Such research is also based on values and value judgements of both a researcher and participants (Smit, 2001:59). Thus, this qualitative study allowed for the interpretation and reconstruction of information since it revealed how teachers respond to and implement the Life Orientation curriculum (Burns & Grove, 1997:67). A qualitative approach assumes that for interpretation inter-subjective personal knowledge is needed (Mouton & Marais, 1994:205)**.**

Within this qualitative, interpretive study, the interactive contact between me as the researcher/interviewer and the teachers resulted in the submissions of teachers in terms Life Orientation within the schools. Hence, the research aim was to ascertain the natural setting within the school context regarding Life Orientation from the

teachers' "assumptions, intentions, attitudes, beliefs and values" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:55). However, it was not scientifically possible to generalise the conclusions reached in this study to other such studies but the emergent or developing conclusions are nevertheless important in terms of added knowledge. The research design constituted focus group and individual interviews as discussed below as well as in Chapter 3.

1.12.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design promoted the anticipation of appropriate decisions to maximise the validity of the research and served as the framework or set of guidelines and instructions to be followed during the research project (Mouton, 1996:10). Mouton (2001:55) refers to research design as a "plan or blueprint of the research process." The focus is on the product and formulation of the research problem as a point of departure where logic is a focus of research. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:22) state that the purpose of a research design is to specify a plan for generating evidence that will result in the most credible and valid conclusions derived from responses to the research questions.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) research designs may be classified into two major categories: quantitative and qualitative. For the purpose of this research a qualitative case study was decided upon and various research strategies, including focus group and face-to-face interviews, were used to create the best strategies suited to the case study design (De Vos, 2000:272). The "in-depth analysis" of the "bounded system" of the school consisting of teachers of LO provided significant data during this case study research design via the various data collection methods discussed below.

1.13 DATA COLLECTION

Various strategies and interrelated data collection activities were used to gather data and answer the research questions (De Vos, 2000:340; Creswell, 1994:110; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:674). In this qualitative research design, data analysis and data collection occurred simultaneously. The methods used for data collection in

this study were influenced by the research questions and design. Various methods and techniques are accomplished through data collection (Mouton, 1996:10).

1.13.1   DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Data was collected from secondary school Life Orientation male and female teachers through focus group interviews, face-to-face interviews and field notes. These strategies subsequently sanctioned descriptive research observation (McMillan, 2008:277-279).

Focus group interviews allowed participants to interact freely and information rich participants could be observed and selected for individual interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with the heads of department and teachers, firstly to obtain data with regard to Life Orientation implementation in schools as well as from a managerial point of view and also to compare the information with the information received from teachers from a particular school.

The journal assisted me to be mindful of personal biases and not to be subjective when interpreting data. I kept the journal in order to facilitate reflexivity and be able to examine personal assumptions and goals to clarify my beliefs and subjectivity.

1.13.1.1 Focus group interviews

Explorative and descriptive questions guided the focus group interviews. However, as the focus group interviews proceeded, the guided questions became unguided questions according to the participants' answers. Focus group interviews and discussions were conducted with a purposive sampled group of three or more Life Orientation teachers from Grades Eight to Twelve from selected schools to determine how they understand, respond to and implement Life Orientation in their school contexts. The groups met once as required by the established research process. A context was created within the group setting where participants spoke freely and openly, exemplifying dynamism and energy as respondents reacted to the contributions of others (Louw, 1993). Discussions also shifted from groups of people to only people committed to a specific learning area. In addition, the focus

groups provided an opportunity for participants to explore different points of view and formulate and consider their own ideas and understandings (Louw, 1993).

Techniques such as clarification, paraphrasing, summarising, probing and minimal verbal as well as non-verbal responses were used to 'mine', 'uncover', and 'extract' existing knowledge (Gibson-Graham, 1994). Focus group interviews of 30-45 minute duration were recorded and transcribed verbatim, thus enhancing the validity by providing accurate and complete records of each session. Thereafter themes and categories were obtained to initiate discussion in relation to the research questions. Field notes and a research diary were also used after every interview to record reflections, observations and experiences during the data collection process (Morse & Field, 1996:91).

1.13.1.2 Face-to-face interviews

Kvale (in Sewell, 2001:1) defines face-to-face interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of the view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation." For the purpose of this study the face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants' to gauge their experiences at their schools with special reference to Life Orientation (Kitchin & Tate, 2000:212). Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were used in order to understand the central themes of the participants' experiences (Kvale, 1996:174). These interviews ensured sufficient collection of information while they permitted participant freedom of response and description to illustrate concepts, thus creating meanings that ostensibly resided within participants (Manning in Holstein & Gubrium, 1995:3).

The interviews were conducted at school during non-contact time. Interaction between participants and the researcher was accomplished through simple comprehensible language. A tape recorder assisted with interpreting raw data and to focus on the meanings of words for later interpretation (Weiss, 1998:154).

1.13.1.3 Field notes (Reflexivity)

Reflexivity refers to the assessment of the influence of a researcher's personal background perceptions and interests in the qualitative research process. Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991:304) state that field notes consist of everything that is seen, heard, felt and thought of in the process of collecting or reflecting on data in a qualitative research process. This is a process of 'unbracketing' subjectivity as a researcher and also challenging the objectivist ideology associated with the bracketing of personal beliefs, assumptions, tastes and preferences (Peter & Besley, 2007:188). Therefore field notes also contain a chronological description of the participants (Arkava & Lane, 1983:177).

Silverman (2000:140-142) suggests two practical rules for writing field notes, which are "recording what is seen as well as what is heard, from both the interviews and focus groups and expanding field notes beyond immediate observations."

1.14 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the final stage of data reduction, presentation and interpretation (Sarantakos, 2000:210). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:461), qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying patterns and (relationships) among the categories. The main research question was posed at the beginning of the interviews and other questions followed according to the participants' answers (Weiss, 1998:83; Kitchin & Tate, 2000:213). Data were systematically collected and meanings, themes, sub-themes and general descriptions of the experience analysed within a specific school context (De Vos, 2000:273). Data collection strategies use in this research will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.15 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGIES

1.15.1 SAMPLING METHOD: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

The sampling method was purposively based on the knowledge and expertise of the phenomenon under study. Purposive sampling means selecting information-rich

cases for in-depth study with the understanding of something about those cases, without needing or desiring to generalise to all such cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:319).

Purposive sampling was used in this study to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples. Therefore the sample came from the portion of the population of secondary school teachers who taught Life Orientation. Thus the sample in this case constituted the characteristics, representations or typical attributes of the target population with regard to more universal social experiences and processes (Silverman, 2000:102; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:370). According to Sarantakos (2000:156) qualitative research sampling is relatively limited, based on saturation and not representative. The site selection, the sample size and the participants' selection will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.16   ETHICAL MEASURES

There are several basic principles relevant to ethical measures of research. An example of an unethical measure is the recollection of negative behaviour from the past by participants during the investigation that could be the beginning of personal harassment or embarrassment by colleagues. As a senior education specialist for Life Orientation in the region (district) under study I had to suppress my subjectivity in order not to influence the teachers' views. I accepted and noted the participants' views about their understanding, response to and implementation of Life Orientation. Participants were free to express their views and I never interrupted them. This approach to the interviews ensured the recording of the actual data from participants. For this reason an investigation should be based on sound scientific principles when it entails the extraction of sensitive and personal information from the participants (Babbie, 2001:417). Ethical issues, therefore, needed to be considered during all the research methods employed (Halloway & Wheeler, 1996:36-50). As a result applied principles were meant to protect the participants in the research from any kind of harm or risk. At the same time the results of the study were fully and honestly reported (Weiss, 1998:109). The focus group and individual interviews started with the introduction of my assurance of the protection of the

institution and the confidentiality of the interviewees. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

1.17   THE ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The outline of the chapters in the research report is presented below:

CHAPTER 1: Background and Orientation

This chapter introduces the study by defining the key constructs and discusses the aims, problem statement, background, overview and rationale of the study. The research questions and theoretical framework are presented. I also indicate how the research methods and design and the data collection strategies were implemented and describe the research population and sampling strategies.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Study and Theoretical Framework

It is the aim in this chapter to provide a comprehensive description of the exploration and investigation of issues surrounding curriculum implementation, the scope of Life Orientation, teachers' roles in curriculum implementation, attitudes of teachers towards the implementation and the effects of change on teaching and learning on the topic under study. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of teachers teaching Life Orientation in schools are discussed. Literature in relation to the teachers' responses to change, work load, attitudes towards teaching Life Orientation, their content-knowledge, implementation and understanding of the learning area at schools are discussed in detail. The theoretical framework providing an organized plan for classification and a description of the education phenomenon under study is outlined.

CHAPTER 3: Research methodology and research design

This chapter was constructed to outline the theoretical framework in order to present an in-depth view of the research methods and research design. The data collection strategies, analysis and interpretation are discussed. The strengths and challenges that were encountered and the researcher's methodological choices are also discussed. The ethical considerations that guided the study are clarified.

CHAPTER 4: **Data analysis and results based on the data collection**

This chapter compares and discusses the empirical research findings with the policy provision and educational practices regarding Life Orientation. Discussions include the relevance, value and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: Review, synthesis, recommendations and guidelines

My intention in this chapter is to present the findings and recommendations and present guidelines for teachers, with particular reference to Life Orientation policy knowledge and its implementation in secondary schools. In addition, recommendations as well as the conclusions and possibilities for future research are presented.

1.18   SUMMARY

This chapter provides an introduction and overview of the study concerning Life Orientation implementation in secondary schools. The constructs that were used are outlined. The background to the research problem, statement of the rationale, aim of the research, research methods, ethical measures, and data sampling technique, data analysis, clarification of concepts and the primary research question are formulated. The outline of the research design and research methods and data collection strategies is presented.

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2.1   INTRODUCTION

It was the aim of Chapter 1 to introduce the topic and basic framework of the research that was undertaken. This chapter reflects on the relevant literature as an integral part of the planning and execution of the research project in terms of Life Orientation as a learning area offered at secondary schools (Smith, 1993:9). Specifically this study examines the scope of the Life Orientation policy and curriculum at schools in the Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. In terms of the available literature, the emphasis is on the learning area teachers' understanding of and response to curriculum implementation, their perceptions of the Life Orientation curriculum, the attitudes of the teachers towards the implementation and the effects of curriculum change on teaching and learning. The chapter of the thesis also explores Life Orientation as a learning area, the teachers' work load and the salient characteristics of curriculum change. The literature review intends to identify, locate and analyse the policy documents containing information relating to the research problem systematically. Furthermore, the chapter is meant to satisfy the criteria that maintain that the literature review should project the value of pursuing the line of inquiry established and compare previous findings and ideas with information the research project expects to achieve (Smith, 1993).

According to Lee (2005) the successful transformation of education and training depended on professional development and commitment of teachers in curriculum implementation. I am in agreement with Lee (2005) argues that education could not be divorced from other sectors of society and is a significant factor that drove change processes. The point of view (Lee, 2005) is most relevant within the context of educational research in South Africa post-1994. Van der Horst and MacDonald (2008:36) on the other hand claim that teachers could acquire a positive or negative attitude towards curriculum change. These attitudes consequently influence the way in which teachers could perceive Life Orientation in schools. In terms of Ohanian's

(2005:1) argument that teachers were frustrated in their profession due to a lack of administrative and training support verified this in my preliminary findings. In addition I concurred with the assertion is supported of Tatum and Morote (2004:6) who are of the opinion that the teachers' role in curriculum implementation in most cases directs, shapes, influences and maps the course of events in the classroom. From my personal experience and the preliminary literature studies in Chapter 1, I concur with Van der Horst and MacDonald (2008:36) that curriculum change does influence teachers' attitudes. The support with regard to Life Orientation implementation or lack thereof that teachers receive from the Department of Education could influence teachers' attitudes.

2.2   RATIONALE FOR LIFE ORIENTATION AS A SCHOOL LEARNING AREA

According to the South African Department of Education (DoE, 2002a) the subject Life Orientation (LO) plays a vital role in the education, training and development of an individual, ensuring a holistic development of the learner. This principle is enshrined in the constitution of South Africa of 1996 which promotes a free and democratic society. The Department of Education of its own volition admits that such an egalitarian society is perceived as a South African vision for growth, the promotion of quality of life in the community and a productive economy that can be achieved through the successful implementation of Life Orientation (DoE, 1997b). Concomitantly, Toddun (2000:56) upheld the belief that the learning area(Life Orientation) was viewed as unique because it aims at guiding and preparing learners for real life within society and the possibilities that life holds for them since the learning area develops the learners socially, personally, academically and spiritually. Following a pilot study (Christiaans, 2006) it was noted that adequate implementation of Life Orientation is practically not achievable in schools due to a lack of policy awareness and ignorance about documents. Policy guidelines sent to schools by the Department of Education are also insufficient.

The Department of Education's (1995a:25) aims for the teaching of Life Orientation are to prepare learners for life in the world of work, for study at institutions of further learning and for adult life in general. Teachers should assist in developing learning

programmes in the Senior Phase from Grade Seven to Grade Nine while for Further Education and Training the National Department of Education sends exemplars of lesson plans and workbooks to schools (Van der Horst & McDonald, 2008:146). Unfortunately visits and observations by the Department of Education officials to schools show that the documents submitted by the Department of Education are ignored and the learning outcomes not achieved (Christiaans, 2006). The teachers' lack of knowledge of support documents hinder learners' progress towards receiving information about local needs and further learning opportunities. As a result learners are disadvantaged and often prevented from reaching their life goals or expectations. Life Orientation is structured to drive a constitutional visualisation that educates learners about their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic, multicultural and multi- religious society that has unique beliefs and value systems (Prinsloo, 2007; Van Deventer, 2007; Rooth, 2005; DoE, 2002b).

Learning area teachers are supposed to plan lesson activities that address the vast content area as stated in the policy. In this regard the learner's rights and responsibilities are important as such knowledge informs learners about their roles in relation to society. Tuddun (2000:40) contends that teachers should develop learning programmes to provide learners with the necessary knowledge to help them make decisions regarding careers and vocational orientations. According to Spady (1994:53), Life Orientation ought to guide learners in their decision-making skills to develop healthy life styles and responsibility in life. The learning area should also provide learners with the opportunity to acquire develop and apply a range of more advanced knowledge, skills and understanding. Moreover, Life Orientation is structured in such a manner learners can focus on critical and creative thinking skills, attitude development, application, analysing and understanding of their role in society (Van Deventer, 2009:128).

The Department of Education (DoE, 2002a:8) envisions that learners ought to be confident, independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled and compassionate. They should also respect the environment and participate in South Africa's multi-cultural society. According to submissions by the Department of Education (2002b:4) Life Orientation as a learning area enhances the practice of positive values, attitudes, and behaviour in the individual and the community. It is therefore imperative that

Life Orientation lessons advance the transformation of South African society in terms of promoting human rights. As a result learners are to be empowered to use their individual talents to develop their full spiritual, physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential.

According to Lee (1985:1), the Life Orientation learning area was a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon that puts into practice ideas, programmes and sets of activities. The learning area encouraged learners to acquire and practise life skills that helped them respond to challenges and to play an active and responsible role in their economy and society (DoE, 2002a). The curriculum facilitated the learners' achievement of these goals through learning area outcomes which progress from the Senior Phase to the Further Education and Training Phase. The objectives for the learning area Life Orientation include the promotion of personal well being, social development of citizenship, personal development, physical development, movement, recreation, orientation as well as orientation to the world of work through career guidance (Prinsloo, 2007; Christiaans, 2006; Rooth, 2006; DoE, 2002a). This study attempted to create awareness of the teachers' indisputable role in the realm of Life Orientation.

2.3   OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

Life Orientation forms a key factor within the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum. In the South African context the new democratically elected government adopted the sophisticated Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum devised to employ competent teachers and utilising educational resources that are non-existent in disadvantaged communities. The South African Government was compelled to engage in large-scale educational reforms to change the educational system to conform to the expectations of Outcomes Based Education. The government believed that Outcome Based Education was the only possible solution to empower its former disadvantaged majority who were victims of the destructive apartheid education. Since 2006 Grades 10 and 11 have been exposed to an Outcomes Based Education curriculum progressively for the first time in the history of South African education. However, there has been criticism of the newly introduced Outcomes Based Education curriculum for Grades 1 to 9. Since

Outcomes Based Education is a new approach to teaching, teachers find the mode of teaching difficult to understand and implement, especially those without in-service training.

In conjunction with the Outcomes Based approach, the Department of Education also introduced the National Curriculum Statement that moulds the curriculum of all learning areas of the school curriculum, including Life Orientation. Teachers need to understand how to interpret, design lesson plans and create activities for the National Curriculum Statement in accordance with the Outcomes Based approach. Most teachers were not well trained in the Outcomes Based Education approach, or informed about how the new National Curriculum Statement works. Consequently there was ignorance, frustration, resistance, uncertainty and confusion among Life Orientation teachers. Learners were able to achieve the objectives or learning outcomes[5] only if teachers had the necessary knowledge and skills of the content knowledge and know - how to assess learners correctly. Teachers needed to develop activities that would assist learners in achieving the interned learning outcomes.

2.4   SCOPE OF LIFE ORIENTATION

The Department of Education's White Paper on Education and Training (1995c:9-13) stated that the education system as a whole should encourage and promote the collective moral perspective of the citizens of a democratically governed society. This included building self-worth, human dignity, equality, mutual tolerance and respect for diversity. South Africans should understand one another's' history, culture, beliefs, values and aspirations. Changes in education were brought about by the Department of Education policy framework (1997b:3) that generated a lifelong learning programme through the National Qualifications Framework to engender improvements in social conditions and the overall quality of an individual's life (DoE, 1996a:14). The life Orientation learning area was described as "fundamental in empowering learners to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation" (DOE, 2002a).

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[5] Objectives or learning outcomes: Describe what the knowledge, skills and values a learner should know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of the phase.

The Department of Education (1995a:34:35) in its discussion document on curriculum framework for General and Further Education and Training, created the Consultative Forum. This forum served as a Technical Committee on curriculum and created the essential outcomes that informed the processes encompassing procedures of learning and teaching used for the selection of content knowledge areas. Ten areas of learning, including Life Orientation, were proposed by the forum, taking into consideration the additions and specificities of South Africa. All the programmes within the subjects were designed for the South African context.

The focus areas defined for Life Orientation are physical education, life skills, health promotion, human rights, religion education, career guidance as well as the social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth of South African learners. It is the aim of the DoE to emphasise that Life Orientation is not to be regarded as a less important learning area in the reconstruction and transformation of the South African society. This document (DoE, 1995a:36) also states that areas such as Cultural Awareness and Moral Development should not be placed solely in one learning area, but should be treated as cross-curricular issues. Areas of learning were also considered in response to societal and educational needs that were found to be necessary for the holistic development of a learner (DoE, 2003:3). The content that is to be dealt with in three learning areas are illustrated in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.1: Life Orientation content as per Department of Education (Adapted from DoE (1995a:36)

Spiritual Development
Religious experience

Physical Education and Health
Fitness and Health
Creative Movement
Co-ordination and Control

Occupational learning/learning for Life
Exploration
Reflection
Strategic planning
Career Orientation
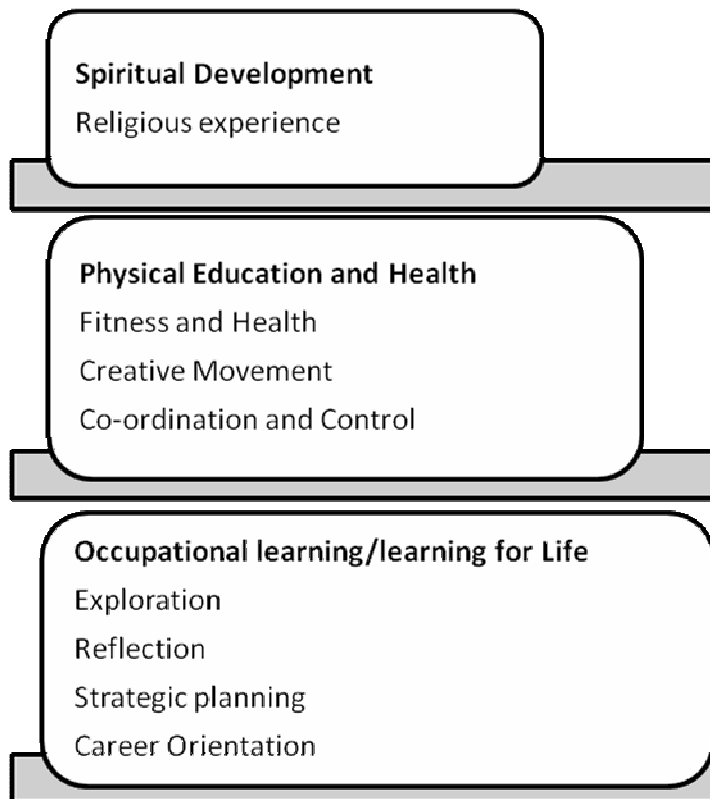
The content under each heading seemed difficult for teachers to comprehend. For example, Religious Experience had created a variety of religious connotations which was a concern of the spiritual development of the learners. The curriculum committees were aware that they did not have enough exemplars to refer to and they were not sure how to meet the varied needs of religious diversity in the democratic South African society (Christiaan, 2005:37). Curriculum planners in South Africa drew from a school of thought similar to the Australian Education Council in the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) (1994). According to the CSF (1994:2) the learning area ought to include the personal actions, beliefs, attitudes and values held by families, cultural groups and the community. Public policies affecting health and physical activity together with the contents and contexts of activities in the learning area were all clearly stated in the CSF document (1994:2).

The choice of Life Orientation content is guided by the socio-political changes that South Africa is undergoing as well as the personal challenges learners encounter in the South African society. Life Orientation acknowledges that there is a wide diversity of knowledge systems through which people make meaning of the world in which they live. Indigenous knowledge systems in the South African context refer to a body of knowledge embedded in the philosophical thinking and social patterns of indigenous people and their systems of knowledge that serve as the source of change to assist in the transformation and values of learners (DoE, 2003). Life Orientation teachers require background knowledge of different cultures in South Africa. Teachers should be able to differentiate between morals, values, ethics and belief systems that the different cultures uphold. Teachers should be non-judgemental, objective and able to substantiate facts about each culture.

In secondary schools (Gr. 8-12) there are five learning outcomes for Grade 8 and 9, and four learning outcomes for Grades 10 to 12. Grade 8 - 9 learning outcomes are the following:

- Health promotion: Learners should be able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health.

- Social development: Learners should be able to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.

- Personal development: Learners should be able to use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in their world.

- Physical development and movement: Learners should be able to demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in, activities that promote movement and physical development

- Orientation to the world of work: Learners should be able to make informed decisions about further study and career choices. Grade 10 - 12 learning outcomes are the following: Personal well-being, citizenship education,

recreation and physical activity and career and career choices, acknowledgment of issues of gender, the environment, all forms of violence, discrimination, bias, sexism abuse, sexuality and HIV and AIDS (DoE, 2003:10).

The above leaning outcomes can be described as follows in Grades 10 to 12:

- Personal well-being: Learners should be able to achieve and maintain personal well-being. Learners should be engaged effectively in interpersonal relationship, community life and society. The learners' self concept, emotional, literacy, social competency and life skills are the focus points. Learners are assisted with life skills to handle peer pressure, entrepreneurial skills, leadership skills, prevention of substance abuse, diseases of lifestyle, sexuality, teenage pregnancy and the sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. The learners' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes are addressed through extra-curricular activities and the promotion of personal, community and environmental health (DoE, 2003:10).

- Citizenship Education: Learners should be able to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the values and rights that underpin the Constitution in order to practise to be responsible citizens, and to enhance social justice and environmentally sustainable living (DoE, 2003).

- Recreation and Physical Well-being: Learners should be able to explore and engage responsibly in recreation and physical activities, to promote well-being, healthy lifestyle through nutrition, sports, recreational and leisure time activities and understanding of the relationship between health, physical activities and the environment. Life Orientation teachers require intense knowledge of a variety of careers and career opportunities in order to guide learners to obtain knowledge and skills required for their career choices. The learning area teachers' knowledge of the range of resources that can be explored regarding careers should assist the teacher to guide learners towards utilising opportunities for future careers in the increasingly expanding labour market. Life Orientation acknowledges that participation

in recreational and physical activities influences ideologies, beliefs and worldviews. According to the National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2003) the vision of Life Orientation is to facilitate individual growth in order to contribute towards the creation of a democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life in the community (DoE, 2003).

- Careers and career choices: Learners should be able to demonstrate self-knowledge and the ability to make informed decisions regarding further study, career fields and career pathing. The learners' self knowledge and knowledge of labour laws, the job market, work ethics, the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) leaner ship and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), unemployment and issues of equity and redress are addressed (DoE, 2003).

The learning process in Life Orientation requires learners to apply different forms of learning, such as to plan an action, participate in a group, be able to describe, demonstrate skills, examine, design and play, investigate and report, critically evaluate, analyse and discuss, explain, plan and participate, reflect, design and implement, draw up an action plan, illustrate and evaluate, develop and implement, assess, research, motivate, debate issues, explain, refine and evaluate, apply, identify and display an understanding. The above indicated learning processes are derived from the learning outcomes assessment standards. Learners learn individually, in groups by reflection and through role play.

Spady (1994:10) indicates that in these learning outcomes, learners have been provided with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and values that would have enabled them to participate as active and informed citizens in a democratic society and a global community. To achieve these outcomes, a number of issues had to be done dealt with, including democratic processes, individuals' rights and responsibilities, social justice and sustainable ecological development. Indeed, as Newton and Rogers (2001:139) declared, "the primary goal of Life Orientation education is to contribute to the intellectual development of learners through the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills and understanding." Spady based his philosophy that all learners can learn. It formed the foundation of South African

schools curriculum. Life Orientation teaching and learning was driven by outcomes and the assessment standards that teachers had to make meaning and have the strategies to design activities for teaching and learning. The assessment standards provide the details of the content that learners should know.

The Department of Education has the following expectations of Life Orientation teachers:

2.4.1 LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS SHOULD BE LEARNING AREA SPECIALISTS

Christiaans (2006:31) concurs with the DoE's (2002a) view that a teacher as a learning area specialist should adapt the general educational principles indicated in the learning area policy and select a personal sequence and pace in a manner appropriate to the learning area. The needs of the learners and the local context also play a vital role in the teachers' selection of methods and instructional strategies appropriate to the learners' context. It is also important to integrate specific learning areas into broader subject themes and learning programmes to teach concepts in a manner that allows learners to transfer acquired knowledge and use it in different contexts (DoE, 2002a).

In my experience as a Senior Education Specialist, I agree with the contention of Christiaans (2006:31) with regard to the characteristics of the learning area specialist. However, it was an observation that these requirements were not applied practically at school level. Life Orientation teachers were replaced too often within the school environment, sometimes even before they had mastered the content of the learning area. As a result, it was difficult for Life Orientation teachers to acquire the knowledge and skills that would have been achieved through extensive teaching.

2.4.1.1 Teachers should understand and have knowledge of Life Orientation

As a learning area specialist, the Life Orientation teacher should be aware of the assumptions of the learning area and how it could be taught. The Life Orientation policy (2006a) indicated that teachers should understand and put the Outcomes Based Education focus area into practice by designing effective learning activities.

They should be able to identify the unique content for each grade level. These teachers had to understand the importance of the learning area and know how it could contribute to the holistic development of the learners.

2.4.1.2 Life Orientation teachers should be critical thinkers and reflective practitioners

Life Orientation teachers should reflect on and assess personal practices, lesson plans, learning programmes in addition to analysing lesson activities and demonstrating an understanding of appropriate actions, sequencing and pacing of content (DoE, 2000a:21-22). The Department of Education (2000a:21-22) indicated that teachers must also identify and critically evaluate what counted as undisputed knowledge, necessary skills and important values to ensure that they made educational judgements on issues arising from real practice and authentic case study exercises. Research by Christiaans (2006:33) highlights real educational problems and demonstrated an understanding of the implications of this research, particularly in terms of integration.

2.4.1.3 Life Orientation teachers must be grounded in the learning area

The Department of Education (2000a:21-22) and Christiaans (2006:33) articulated that Life Orientation teachers ought to have a firm theoretical and practical basis in Life Orientation in order to be able to reflect on their own practices as part of their content area selection during the planning process. It was expected of teachers to understand the learning area framework, work schedules and lesson plans in order to sequence and pace the relevant content for their grade level (DoE, 2000a:9). Only then could teachers reflect on the successes and failures of their previous practices.

Teachers were expected to display competency, dedication, care and qualification in the learning area. According to Lee (2005), for effective curriculum implementation, teachers have to understand that the new curriculum is not fixed, but should be modified, developed, adopted and adapted over time by teachers. Lee (1985) further indicates that the implementation is a process of clarification, whereby users and practitioners understand the material, behaviour and thinking.

Implementation pertains to socialisation and clarification and is a highly personal and social experience for those involved. Lederman (1994:143) emphasise that the process of implementation suggests assistance to and interaction among teachers.

Fullan (2001:37) explains that the goal of implementation is not just to implement a particular curriculum but to have implementation "capacity" building put into the schooling system as a normal, regular procedure. Planning at the school and at the system level is a necessity if curriculum implementation is to be effective. The school system plans and guides action to create teaching materials, discuss approaches, examine beliefs, and monitor information used to assess learner and school progress.

2.4.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (IN-SERVICE TRAINING) FOR LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS

In-service teacher training with regard to the National Curriculum Statement in South Africa (2006) was guided by the National Curriculum Statement policy and the Norms and Standards for Teacher Education (DoE, 2002a). These terms of reference were recommended, based on the five principles underlying education according to the 1996 Constitution of South Africa (Pretorius & Lemmer, 1998:114). They outlined these principles as follows: learner-centeredness, professionalism, global and national relevance, co-operation and collegiality and innovation. The training programme allowed teachers from different schools and districts to communicate, share solutions to problems and to exchange views. It was expected that in order to create valuable learning experiences for teachers, there would have to be practical designs of activities and enthusiastic participation (Christiaans, 2006:73).

Carl (2002:8) defined professional development as a process of development and growth through which an individual teacher was able to make independent decisions and act autonomously to make a contribution towards the development of his or her particular environment. In this regard, Bakar, Amin Embi and Hamat (2006:18) referred to teacher development as an ongoing learning opportunity available to teachers through schools, districts regions, states or at a national level.

Teacher development was a process that was coupled with the development of particular skills, attitudes and knowledge within a positive democratic climate.

Teacher development in the form of in-service training, according to Wai-Wam (1996:43), was a short duration of training during which teachers were meant to acquire new knowledge and skills of teaching and learning. However, the process had not proved successful since the goals were difficult to attain in just a few days. Merideth (2000:55) claimed that teachers were regarded as professionals in their own right; hence, they should have been able to make an effort to change through their individual power as professionals (Bakar *et al.*, 2006:18). Teacher empowerment and democracy allowed teachers to voice their personal opinions about educational policy. Such empowerment included expanding the teachers' knowledge base, which enabled them to reflect with confidence on how schools and classrooms operate (Blasé & Blasé, 2001:3). Blasé and Blasé (2001:3) further emphasised the fact that, through empowerment, teachers' elevation included being "knowledgeable professionals" with regard to aspects of schooling, administration, teaching and management.

In-service training was required not only for secondary schools but also for primary schools that wished to implement Life Orientation curriculum strategies successfully (Christiaans, 2006). The strategies within Life Orientation often mean that teachers had to work with unfamiliar ideas about teaching and learning. The training necessitated more than developing and educating teachers about change; it also required similar execution in the development of leadership. Heidemann, Chang and Manninga (2005:86) indicate that "through professional development, teachers move from a stance of confusion and tentativeness to one of confidence. Teacher's professional development reduced the state of confusion and built self-assurance in teachers. The teachers visited by the Department of Education officials in the process of monitoring and support indicated that confusion in the implementation of the learning area was not rare.

Steens (2001:89) explained that teachers need to be empowered in terms of content and pedagogical knowledge so that they, in turn, were able to develop learners' potential without ambiguity. Carl (2002:2) stated that improving teachers'

knowledge of the learning area syllabus was an opportunity to experiment while still making it relevant and meaningful. Specific knowledge, skills and proficiency were required in order to fulfil the required relevance and meaningfulness of a learning area such as Life Orientation. MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed, (1997:54) claimed that there was belief that teachers who enjoyed learning opportunities are more likely to benefit from their job and remain in the profession. Teacher development supported a variety of learning opportunities appropriate to the situation and context, thus providing information that could be applied by teachers in practice (Blasé & Blasé, 2001:79). Blasé and Blasé (2001) mentioned that the goal of professional development in South Africa was to improve the quality of service provided in the interest of the client, who was the learner. Teachers needed knowledge, skills and values gained from theoretical and practical work or studies in order to extend their effectiveness with curriculum implementation in schools.

Professional development among teachers extended personal and professional expertise in the school context (Wai-Wam, 1996:43). Teacher development took place during staff development programmes, staff meetings, team planning and monitoring and support processes. The school principal could arrange the in-service training for school governance in accordance with the needs of the individual and the school. Friedman, Brinlee and Hayes (1980:9) proposed that there was always a need for teachers to hone existing skills and develop new proficiencies. Friedman further explained that teacher professional development takes place through various means, including distance training, radio, television, periodical and e-communication.

Teachers often entered professional development with the view to content understanding that was fact-based and procedural (Bakar *et al.*, 2006:18). Tensions could arise when professional development challenged teachers to rethink content areas in a way that might differ from the teacher's understanding of the content (Bakar *et al.*, 2006:18). The implication was that, consistent with the majority of their prior experiences regarding professional development, teachers typically expected to be provided with materials and instructions on how to use them in their classrooms. Bakar *et al.* (2006:18) drew the attention of stakeholders in the education fraternity to the fact that teachers' professional development was limited

since the in-service training courses for teachers were short and incapable of supporting them as they carried the weight of adequately preparing future citizens. This argument was fully supported by Prinsloo (2007:164-165) who indicated that most programmes fell far short of helping teachers to develop the depth of understanding they must have for the implementation of the learning area content in addition to knowing how best learning should take place in schools.

The Department of Education (1997a:20) identified the need for a dynamic, transformative and emancipatory model for teacher training. This implied that teacher training had often been about obtaining knowledge of the topics to be taught and the variety of methods that could be applied in the process. Avalos and Haddad, (in Craig, Kraft & Du Plessis, 1998:4) indicate that the "academic and professional training of teachers has a direct and positive effect on the quality of the teacher performance and consequently on the achievement of learners."

Christiaans (2006:65) argued that training institutions had been accused of an inferior standard of preparation of teachers for schools. She was echoed by Friedman *et al*. (1980:5) who state that many new teachers entered the profession full of enthusiasm, only to discover that their training was unrealistic and not in touch with what was happening and what was required at school level. I fully agree with Friedman since my observations during school monitoring and support sessions indicate that not much assistance was provided to teachers in the learning area. Teachers even fail to use the knowledge they gained during their teaching practice to become lifelong learners in the learning area (Ahmad, 2000:24). Ahmad (2000) stipulates that Life Orientation was a multi-faceted learning area which presented many challenges to teachers who need new skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to perform their duties confidently and competently. Teachers, who are human beings with emotions, confront and responded to these ordeals on a daily basis (Ahmad, 2000:24).

2.5   POLICY AND PRACTICE

An observation I made during school visits was that most teachers in the learning area just complied with the school management team to be seen as taking part in

the school curriculum. Smit (2001) stated her view of policy, "as a process rather than a product, involving negotiation, contestations or struggle between different groups who may lie outside formal machinery of official policy making." According to Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992:23) education policy studies had focused mainly on the generation or the production of policy and to a lesser extent on the implementation of policy. It was my view that policymakers at national and provincial level usually produce policy while schools and teachers remain in the background. I also found earlier that teacher unions might present them at policy level but teachers' voices were seldom heard.

Research (Bowe *et al.*, 1992:23) conducted related to the silent voices of the teachers, who were either overwhelmed "beyond their control" or "autonomous resisters or subverters of the status quo." By the same token teachers were supposed to implement policies even though they were hardly likely to have been involved in the formulation. In my opinion as an official of the department of Education I found that teachers were supposed to change themselves and what they do to meet specifications laid down by policy makers who neither know them or the context in which they worked (Bowe *et al.*, 1992).

Policy was the main arena for contestation, conflicts and challenges. Implementation of policy was a challenge to most countries (De Clerq, 1997:129). Policy change, which might have had impact on the implementation process, was contested and debated from contrasting and opposing points of view. It was found that teachers had their own way of regarding themselves as being experienced. Such experience could be associated to experiences of education policy change which required some conceptual background of the education policy and practice debate. The policy "spaces", "silences" and contradictions remain the teachers' resource to develop in use and could reflect what actually happened in education practice. At school level the implementation of policy may or may not have corresponded with what was announced. That referred "the institutional practice and discourses that emerged out of the responses of teachers to both the intended and actual policies of their arena, the peculiarities and particularities of their context and the perceptions of the intended and actual policies of other arena" (Bowe *et al.*, 1992). Smit (2001) pointed out that teachers deviate from official policy as they

regarded policies as official statements that may or may not have been implemented and certainly do not guide what teachers actually did. Stated policy might in actuality differ from policy in practice (Smit, 2001:39).

Vulliamy, Kimoner, Nevalainen & Webb (1997:101) argue that comparative education was often "bedevilled by an overemphasis on policies and systems at the expense of the actual practice of such policies." Policy implementation should form part of policy formulation and not be regarded as an "add-on." The gap between policy and its implementation should be catered for to eliminate the perception that the policy decisions made by Government have a major negative effect on teacher motivation, thus affecting the implementation thereof. There must be closer attention to education policy change and to monitoring to gauge what happens on ground level in the actual classroom practice. Vulliamy *et al.* (1997) state that policy documents initiating change may "remain partial, often ephemeral (short-lived/fleeting), and inherently vulnerable... and they may be distorted, deflected, or simply ignored." Bowe *et al.* (1992:7) were of the opinion that teachers at school appeared to be disconnected policy receivers, "absorbing implementers to deliver" goods excluded from the generation or the production of policy. He further indicated that education policy in the form of legislated texts is re-contextualised through different kinds of interpretations that needed to be understood within a variety of contexts which were put into practice. It seems that there is a disjuncture between policy and its implementation in the classroom in the South African context. The lack of support and in-service training could lead to lack of understanding, confusion and ignorance with regard to policy implementation. Teachers may have different interpretations or simply ignore the curriculum.

2.5.1 TEACHERS' ROLE IN CURRICULUM CHANGE

Referring to curriculum transformation in South Africa, Motala (2003) pointed out those teachers had been left behind in curriculum innovation, regardless of the fact that effective implementation depended on them. There appeared to be tension between the knowledge those teachers had about the change process, and making that knowledge evident. According to Harley and Wedekind (2004) the main variables in quality education were the teacher's skill and commitment. Further,

Harley and Wedekind (2004:199) averred that the key role of teachers in change implementation and their responses to this change also form an integral part of this study. Cornbleth (1990:24) explained that the "curriculum is not a tangible product but the actual, day-to-day interactions of learners, teachers, knowledge and milieu."

Schofield (1995:165) found that different schools progress at different rates as a result of school change processes, with each school and each area reacting differently to the "threats of change", and change at school transpiring as a "chaotic and circuitous process." How this "chaos" has affected teachers' emotional states, needs investigation – hence the importance of the study I chose to undertake. Teachers are key role players; the impact of change on their affective or emotional lives needs consideration (Bakar *et al.*, 2006:20).

Teachers were much more involved in the dynamics of the practice of their own domain of competence and remain in this way in their own activities (and in their learning process) (Prinsloo, 2007; Theron & Dalzell, 2006; Roots, 2005; Hendricks, 2004). Although teachers were cardinal agents of change implementation, learners' experiences and attributions of significance together with the ways in which they reacted to the curriculum could not be ignored. Teachers were the leaders of the projects and have to keep up the relation with the external community of practice that the learners want to belong to (Toddun, 2000:56). With reference to the preceding argument, I agree that Life Orientation as curriculum innovation depends to a large extent on teachers' understanding for its successful implementation. Teachers need to be educated and trained as critical and reflective practitioners that can independently adapt to curriculum change.

2.5.2 THE TEACHER AS DESIGNER AND DEVELOPER OF EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM INNOVATION

According to Pilot, Deck & Owen (2007:7) teachers were placed in positions of responsibility that gave them authority to design and develop educational constructs. Teachers were not just performers of educational activities that were developed or decided on elsewhere by others unless they explicitly decide to make that choice (Pilot *et al.*, 2007:7). The dynamics of situational adaptation dictate that

teachers will always have to adapt their education to changes and be owners of the educational constructs and problems (Bakar *et al.*, 2006:24). According to Bakar *et al.* (2006:xviii) teachers are curriculum designers that are constantly "creating curriculum", since they design new lessons, decide what parts of textbooks to use, what chapters to leave out and what new activities in the form of quizzes and tests to add. In addition, teachers search the web for activities, borrow from one another and bring back activities from conferences. It is widely acknowledged that teachers are key actors in curriculum innovations that usually require a change in teacher practice (Fullan, 2001).

This study concurs with the line of reasoning presented by Bakar *et al.* (2006). Teachers should be lesson designers, decide on what content is to be taught and resources or material to be used for content implementation. However, being a good designer and implementer requires that teachers have adequate knowledge, skills, and a critical and reflective approach to content implementation.

2.6   TEACHERS' REACTIONS TO CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers' responses to curriculum change were acted out in different ways. This was due to the different environments and the uniqueness of teachers. The curriculum change responses of teachers are presented in the following categories:

Figure 2.2: Curriculum Change responses of Teachers (Adapted from Cook, 2005:9)

"The alienated"	• teacher regards him or herself as a victim of external forces of change
"the independent"	• teacher believes that he or she should decide how to respond to externally imposed change
"the spectator"	• feels that vested interests are inherent in the demand for change and that change is imposed on teachers
"the loyal official"	• feels that the reasons for change are very reasonable and that it is his or her duty to participate
"the pioneer"	• believes that there is a mutual correspondence between the changes demanded and his or her existing teaching practices
"the partisan"	• feels that there are vested interests behind the demand for change and has chosen sides deciding to use the experiential scheme as an opportunity to do what he or she thinks is right.

Teachers have limited choice between change and non-change; they implement change in their classrooms which is sometimes not easy to do because of their level of understanding on what needs to be implemented as change (Rogan, 2007). Rogers (2003) indicates that for teachers to change their practices, they require understanding of the process of change while Penuel (2007:929) indicates that teachers must either assimilate teaching strategies into their current repertoire with little substantive change or they ought to reject those suggested changes altogether. The social context of schooling has a strong influence on teachers' interpretive frames and their decisions about how to enact or resist change.

The examples described by Cook (2005:46) do exist in any education sector but the degree to which they occur depends on how the process of change is managed and implemented. The degree of consultation with teachers and the support and

education of a teacher influence the teacher's responses and attitudes towards the learning area. Teachers cope with curriculum change in their own ways and according to their individual analysis of the situation (Mageret, 1986:352). This indicates that teachers' appreciation of meaning is as different as they are diverse. Additionally, the way in which they receive curriculum change depends on the level of understanding and implementation of change effort. The teachers' agency in curriculum change can be either passive or active (Datnow & Castellano, 2000:777). Datnow and Castellano further indicate that the teachers' responses to change can include the following:

▪   Anger due to frustration and lack of knowledge

▪   Leaving the profession on a positive note.

▪   Using reform as an opportunity for new career prospects.

▪   Ignoring, resisting, adopting or adapting the change.

2.6.1   RESISTANCE TO CURRICULUM CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Kennedy (2005:15) indicates that teachers perceive change differently. This is acted out in different forms such as passively resisting change or aggressively undermining the required change. Curriculum change has to be managed because teachers generally fear and resist change which they perceive as a threat to their self interest. The officials and teachers can resist curriculum change as they may perceive it as a threat. Resistance is a negative reaction that occurs when people feel that their personal freedom is threatened. Kennedy (2005) is of the opinion that if an organisation has a track record of opposing change since they perceive that it might cost them much more than the amount they will gain, more care should be taken to design a gradual, non-threatening participation.

With every change process there is resistance because people are not sure of the level of change in respect to their future and comfort. Teachers also have a fear of the unknown and display an unwillingness to learn new skills. At this stage it is important that the Department of Education is actively attentive to the teachers' needs and are able to clarify expectations. Curriculum change should be clearly explained in terms of the purpose of the change and the vision to be created or to be nullified. To boost the morale of the teachers, learning area teachers should be

capacitated and empowered by the Department of Education in the content that they have to teach to meet the curriculum demands. The course of action requires developing the competence of teachers, improving low morale, eliminating negative energy and resistance as well as dealing with a lack of commitment and lack of research (Hargreaves, 2003). Hargreaves (2005:11) and McLaughlin (1987:173) state that teachers are often recalcitrant and resistant when they are expected to implement the mandated curriculum change. Self- doubt, fear and loss of motivation trigger many emotional responses that cause resistance. Hargreaves (2005:11) argues that it is not just teachers' personal task-perception and job motivation that are at stake. It has been found that teachers who resist curriculum change often have insufficient time or energy, or get very little reward or support locally for exercising discretion or for being innovative (Rowan & Miller, 2007:256).

According to Stone (2002:579) people resist change because of the following reasons:

- "Fear of the unknown – not understanding what is happening or why.
- Disrupted habits – feeling upset when old ways of doing things cannot be followed.
- Loss of confidence – feeling incapable of performing well under the new way of doing things.
- Loss of control – feeling that things are being done 'to' them rather than by them or 'with' them.
- Poor timing – feeling inadequate or humiliated because the old ways are no longer perceived as good ways.
- Lack of purpose – not seeing a reason for the change or not understanding its benefits.
- Economic loss – feeling that their pay and benefits may be reduced or that they may lose their jobs."

Experienced teachers tend not to change their current practice easily because it is rooted in their beliefs and in the practical knowledge they have accumulated during their years of teaching (Fullan, 2001). If teachers do not have the right competencies to fulfil their new roles or if they are not convinced about the

usefulness of an innovation, it is difficult to persuade them about the merits of change.

2.6.2 ADOPTING CURRICULUM CHANGE

Teachers' responses to policy changes often demonstrate frustrations to policy implementation (Hargreaves, 2005:9). The assessments of Black and William (2005:259) further indicate that compliance might mean that although teachers adapt their behaviour, their attitudes remain the same. This reinforces the view that "values and attitudes are important components of motivation and performance at work" (Datnow & Castellano, 2000:260). Datnow and Castellano (2000:778) aver that a series of imposed changes creates a "culture of compliance" encouraging teachers to want to know how to implement the required change "as painlessly as possible."

2.6.3 IGNORING CURRICULUM CHANGE

Teachers see curriculum change as a top-down hierarchy. As a result, their reaction is to reject the change and to carry on as before. This is due to the failure of policy makers' to communicate the values of policy and the need for change.

2.6.4 ADAPTING TO CURRICULUM CHANGE

Teachers who have considerable knowledge and skills do not simply adapt or passively answer calls to embrace curriculum change. Policy makers need to recognise that teachers develop, define and reinterpret the curriculum. They are not merely involved in reproducing, interpreting and transforming policy through individual action or agency. Drake and Sherine (2006:182) state that when working with a complex, conceptually-rich curriculum, different teachers make different choices and adaptations. Teachers must balance multiple issues, including their own ideologies and past pedagogical practices, with a host of demands as they attempt to incorporate curriculum change. Top-down curriculum change disregards the power of teachers to mediate the process of change that needs their input.

Curriculum implementation and practice require mutual adaptation and time to grasp (Drake & Sherine, 2006:1830). Policy makers often misinterpret how teachers

respond to change, as they often view teachers' modifications or adaptations of externally-driven change as a corruption of the change effort (Leander & Osborne, 2008:44). Administrators need to be aware that teachers are not just responsive to their learners' but are also highly responsive to many different audiences in their work. Since teachers work in a complex, conceptual-rich curriculum they make different choices and adaptations depending on their assessments. Transformation with reference to the curriculum should be a two-way issue, the initiative and the context, for enactment must be apparent in every step of the process. Teachers need to adapt and implement the policies accordingly (Datnow & Castellano, 2000:779). Adaptation to the policies pertains to their environment so that they can be innovative and be able to use the teaching strategies that suit their learners. This gives teachers sufficient discretion and autonomy to adapt their practices to their own classroom context (Rowan & Miller, 2007:255). Life Orientation teachers need to understand how the policy should be implemented. They need to be critical, reflexive and flexible to adapt to the changed curriculum in order to align it to their educational context.

2.7   TEACHERS' SUPPORT AND CURRICULUM CHANGE IN SCHOOLS

Jones (2006:4) indicates that for curriculum change to happen, it must be given a high priority by the senior management team (SMT) of the school. He further stipulates that the SMT should demonstrate commitment to the staff by appointing an SMT member to take responsibility for coordinating the changes and instigating the staff development that is required. This individual has to provide a clear picture of how the curriculum change will affect teachers, learners and the school as a whole. Besides this, the SMT must ensure that governors are involved in decisions about curriculum delivery – if they feel a sense of commitment they are far more likely to provide the support needed for success. It is essential that curriculum development issues be made a priority for debate at SMT meetings to ensure that throughout the development, implementation and evaluation phases, members are informed of progress and asked for advice to ensure that any strategic, operational and developmental changes to the curriculum are explicit. This is to guarantee that teachers get the necessary guidance and support with regard to planning.

Jones (2006:6) further emphasises the key roles and responsibilities of senior managers, given that successful level programmes require support of the SMT. Teaching staff and learners need to see that the SMT is enthusiastic and supportive of the new levels as a key part of the curriculum. Senior managers can do this by having an SMT member, who understands what is involved for staff and learners, responsible for overseeing all the new levels to make sure that these are promoted as an integral part of the curriculum. The SMT member has to make sure that the individuals involved devote attention to the needs of the new levels in terms of curriculum development, resources and access to professional development opportunities.

Life Orientation teachers need skills, knowledge and attitudes if they are to perform their duties confidentially and competently as new challenges face them in their profession time and again. The Department of Education reported in the Norms and Standards for Teachers Education (DoE, 1997a:13), that some of the weaknesses in the teacher education in South Africa relate to old-fashioned methodologies and modes of assessment. This criticism emphasizes the need for pre-training in certain institutions for higher education that need to meet the demands of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) model. Although some teachers get information through lectures or seminars or by reading policies and guidelines, practical skills are best learned through hands-on experience in the classroom. The teachers' practical experience is emphasised as a means of developing attitudes to modify preconceived ideas (Head & Taylor, 1997:13). Head and Taylor (1997:13) further indicate that most teachers' preparation programmes are aimed at the development of competency for individuals thus these will have as goals the development of a repertoire of classroom skills and the ability to apply skills when needed.

Life Orientation teachers need to master Life Orientation content knowledge (knowing that), concepts and theories (knowing why), procedural knowledge (knowing how) and strategic knowledge (knowing about why, when, where and who) that are all embraced in the development of knowledge of the specialisation discipline, subject, learning area and a phase of study (DoE, 2000a). This content knowledge is central to the programme and integrated into the development of competence in the other roles of the teacher (DoE, 2000a:32). For teachers to gain

this knowledge there should be an ongoing developmental programme that will be influenced by teaching experience, verbal fluency, knowledge of subject matter, availability of resources and knowing how to use them, preparation time and frequent monitoring (Craig *et al.*, 1998:xi). Teachers need to be up to date with recent research about pedagogy, legislative changes in the curriculum, assessment as well as appraisal (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1997:53). They also need to familiarise themselves with ways to manage change and acquire new skills to improve classroom practice (MacGilchrist *et al.*, 1997:53). In my experience it seems that teachers lack knowledge and competence due to a lack of ongoing in-service teacher developmental programmes. Contrary to what the literature reveals about the impact of ongoing support, it seems that teachers are not up to date with the content knowledge, recent research and the policy and assessment requirements in Life Orientation.

2.8   WORKLOAD OF TEACHERS

The teachers' workload is determined by policy which states how many periods they should teach in a week or cycle. The provisioning of teachers per school is carried out according to the policy which is a challenge as schools are not the same. Jansen (1998:56) indicates that the failure of education policy is a direct result of the over-investment of the state in the political symbolic of policy rather than its practical implementation in terms of personnel availability and training, availability of funds and many other issues. In my observations in schools, teachers are allocated learning areas to teach not according to their fields of specialisation but according to the needs of the school. Life Orientation is regarded as a less important learning area in schools and is allocated to any teacher to fill up and to balance their timetables (Chapter 1). This could lead to ineffective implementation of Life Orientation.

2.8.1   TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORKLOAD

Hart (2009:102) and Clasquin-Johnson (2008) confirm that change affects the teachers' work lives since there is an increase in the number of tasks or activities they have to accomplish without sufficient resources or time, which constitutes an intensification of their work and de-professionalization. According to Hart (2009:26),

teachers have more to do than there is time in which to accomplish their work; hence, there is an acute sense of overwork in the teaching profession. Hart (2009:102) and Clasquin-Johnson (2008) indicate that many teachers find that there is little time to devote to the investigation and study of potentially beneficial changes in their practice or within the educational institution.

Hart (2009:26) argues that teachers already feel as though they do not have enough time to do all that is already asked of them in their daily practice. Researchers such as Hargreaves and Giles (2006), Kennedy (2005), Senge (2000), Newman (1998) and Fullan (1991) agree that there is a sharp imbalance of teacher time and teacher workload. Hart (2009:27) further stresses the role of the daily lesson preparation time – the average teacher is responsible for creating three lesson preparations or more per day and both formal and informal learner assessment.

The school management team members are allocated Life Orientation to reduce their workload and this practice results in Life Orientation being considered an inferior learning area.

2.8.2   TEACHERS WORKLOAD AND COLLABORATION

In terms of Hart's (2009:29) deliberation, the teacher's increased workload complicates the teaching and learning situation within a changing public education. The teachers' busy schedule leaves them without time to collaborate and share with others. As a consequence, the teacher's isolation inhibits successful school change. Wagner (1994) confirms that the teacher's isolation due to workload is not new in the field of research, while Fullan (1991:6) maintains that the challenge of isolation is reinforced by timetabling and workload. However, it would appear that teachers are used to working alone and do not have a great deal of experience of sharing and working on a professional basis (Hart, 2009:31). Therefore the teacher's workload causes teacher-isolation which is a contributing factor that inhibits the change process. The teacher's professional isolation limits access to new ideas and better solutions. Hart (2009) stipulates that the lack of consistency in the curriculum leads to teacher uncertainty. A lack of effectiveness due to feelings of workload

results in a decreased inclination to change and "the more lessons teachers give weekly, the more they suffer from emotional exhaustion, and the less they are convinced of their capacities to stand up to the stress innovative changes are accompanied with."

2.8.3 TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TO CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Attitudes can be general or specific and are closely linked with values, ethics, moral reasoning and choice when considering the affective skill development of an individual (Reilly & Oermann, 1992; Gething, 1991). Changing attitudes in the long term are difficult and Livneh (1982) suggests that historical, experiential, social, visual, demographic and personality factors combine to contribute to attitude development.

In conceptualising the affective domain of Life Orientation education, the teacher has to distinguish in terms of emotions, attitudes and beliefs (Nyaumwe & Buzuzi, 2007:22). Attitudes are intensive feelings, relatively stable, which are consequences of positive or negative experiences over time in learning a topic (Peasley & Herderson, 1992:2). There is evidence that some personal factors do affect teaching negatively, such as the importance of teachers' attitudes and the interconnections with beliefs and teaching behaviour practised every day at school (Estrada, Batanero, Fortny & Diaz, 2009:1; Kennedy & Kennedy, 1999:2). Teachers blame learners and see them as stupid, troublesome, hostile and having no direction; therefore the teaching experience becomes boring and stressful as a result of the incapacity to understand content, pedagogy and learners in a learner-centred classroom (Nyaumwe & Buzuzi, 2007:22).

Teachers show a common mindset with regard to their attitude to change in the sense that even if they show a high commitment level to changing their practice, they still question themselves as to how this transformation is different to what they already do. There are many teachers who deny that they are changing, preferring to say that they are "solidifying" or " adding structure" but "definitely not revamping" (Hart, 2009:63). Teachers regard their work as being based on challenges and they just teach for the sake of teaching. The legislation and communication of policies for

educational change depend on what teachers "think" and do, and on their personal disposition and feelings concerning change or policies proposing change. However, there are teachers who have confidence in the existing practice, a desire to improve in specific areas and explore new teaching horizons.

Teachers' experience ranges in a variety of ways, beginning with the attitude each brings to work. In their everyday teaching teachers apply a variety of strategies in implementation and they experience varying degrees of difficulty within the actual planning and writing of challenges (Hart, 2009:69). The teachers' approach to teaching content together with experiences in teaching are emotional contexts manifesting in diverse dispositions, such as feeling insecure, confident, tired, confused or surprised. When change implementation is less successful or more difficult to institutionalise, isolation is predominant.

Information about why change should be implemented and the process which it should follow should be clear and appropriately provided with written information. This will assist in the distribution of new information that may change the teacher's perception, leading to change in attitude and behaviour which is the final component in the process of attitude change. Teachers are supposed to be furnished with correct and sufficient information by officials who do not contradict themselves and who know the vision and the objectives to be achieved through change. In the South African context curriculum design and change seems to follow a top-down approach. There is no or little communication with teachers about why curriculum changes occur. New changes seem to be implemented without prior consultation, education or training of teachers.

2.9   TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS IN LIFE ORIENTATION

Studies (Prinsloo, 2007; Christiaans, 2006; Van Deventer, 2006) in terms of teacher attitudes and beliefs towards Life Orientation reforms have found that these aspects contribute to the influence of Life Orientation education. This focus of interest has grown in the larger Life Orientation community in the last three decades since the founding of Life Orientation Education. Life Orientation teachers' underlying beliefs about teaching and Life Orientation were found to be compelling discriminatory

factors between highly effective teachers and those not charged likewise. "The area where reformers are most likely to be active in bringing about change is the task of building consensus on the beliefs and values that should guide the teaching and learning of Life Orientation."

An additional implementation pitfall is related to the pervasive practice of teaching the programmes of Life Orientation detached from the meaning and application of these programmes. Furthermore, Romberg (2001:8) claims that, "the complexity of instructional issues involving creating classrooms that promote the learning area include amongst others the normative beliefs within a classroom about how one does programmes in Life Orientation." What complicates research on beliefs, however, is not only that such beliefs are wide-ranging and based on personal and societal constructs but also that, like attitudes, they are difficult to measure and ascertain. Nonetheless, this difficulty does not preclude the importance of aiming to develop the learners' positive attitudes towards Life Orientation that are derived from teacher's attitudes (Romberg, 2001).

The inquiry into the beliefs, attitudes, understanding and responses of teachers teaching Life Orientation in schools is underdeveloped, particularly in democratically developing countries like South Africa where Life Orientation has been introduced as a unique discipline and not as an integral component of other learning areas. In the same way teachers' understanding of Life Orientation curricula has been insufficiently researched.

2.9.1   COMMUNICATION AND CURRICULUM CHANGE

Curriculum change must be an open channel communication so that the new programme does not come as a surprise. Frequent discussion about the new programme among teachers, principals and senior education specialists is a key to its successful implementation. Communication is a complex phenomenon as it is defined as the transmission of facts, ideas, values, feelings, and attitudes from one individual or group to another. The policy needs to be communicated effectively to the entire stakeholder's *source* so that individuals should understand the *concept* of

change. The specialist should understand both formal and informal communication channels within the school system.

Communication flow is important and equally involved in change or curriculum implementation. The activities involved in combining subject areas or the integration of major segments of the curriculum presupposes effective lateral communication. Information needs to be communicated both in oral and written form. Personal involvement is also of paramount importance as much can be learned from the tone of the voice, body language and facial expression of the parties involved. Feedback and inputs are crucial to the success of the programme and so that people as individuals and professionals are valued (Orstein & Hunkins, 1998:295).

2.10 SUPPORT NEEDED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW CURRICULUM

Curriculum designers need to provide the necessary support for their recommended programmes or programme modification. They have to do this to build self-confidence among those affected. Teachers often require in-service training or staff development time to feel comfortable within new programmes. Effective in-service training has the necessary flexibility to respond to the changing needs of the staff and there should be accessible schedules for curriculum implementation. There also ought to be open discussions for the new programme throughout the implementation process. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme or measure to determine whether the objectives have been achieved should be carried out but it should be noted that without adequate financial support the programme will fail (Orstein & Hunkins, 1998:296).

2.11 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING, PURPOSE, PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES CONTAINED IN THE LIFE ORIENTATION CURRICULUM

My observation from monitoring and support I normally carry out at schools is that Life Orientation teachers may not have the necessary understanding of but only a rather a superficial grasp on the implementation of this learning area. Teachers lack understanding of reform and its associated constructivist process of change. Each

school community must struggle with new ideas for itself if it is to develop the understanding and commitment needed to engage in the continual problem-solving demanded by major changes in practice (Darling-Hammond, 1998:650).

Insufficient time to adapt to the changes confuses the educators. Sometimes they try to do the right things in a wrong way. Even educators who are open to change feel uncertainty about what kind of changes will be most effective and how best to go about making them. In Chapter 3, I expand the conceptual framework of change to include the discipline of Life Orientation. The change framework provides for the inclusion of different increments and understanding of required change and Chapter 3 further discusses both strengths and limitations of such a conceptual framework.

2.12   TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE ORIENTATION CURRICULA

Teachers are supposed to be innovative in designing activities in the learning area (Stoffel, 2004). The importance of understanding as a condition that can contribute to educational innovation was recognised in the seventies by Drake (2002). He indicates that the lack of what he terms "lack of clarity about the innovation" is a factor contributing to implementation failure. McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) established that the acquisition of such conceptual clarity cannot be divulged to teachers at the beginning of the reform as it takes place and evolves during the implementation phase. What it evolves to is dependent on frames such as "career stage", "career stories" and "structural contexts" in which teachers are situated (Drake, 2002).

The teachers' responses and understanding are consciously and unconsciously replicated in their own classrooms during their teaching. Teachers identify with teaching of Life Orientation in the way that it was taught in educational guidance (Borasi, 1990). As teachers seek to embrace a new reform, they "reach out with their old professional selves, including all the ideas and practices comprised therein" (Cohen, 1990:339). Romberg (2001:8) states that instead of changing conventional practices, the common response for reform has been the 'nominal' adoption of the reform ideas.

Drake (2002:314) describes understanding as a complex issue that is "framed by teachers and learners of Life Orientation." It is important to implement the blueprint of the Life Orientation curriculum and to have a clear understanding of the intention of the written word in order to change learners' behaviour. The process further allows time for important reflection and discussion during the implementation process. Understanding has become the "spirit of reform" that resonates with grappling with purpose and the process of the reform which is important in change. In the workshops conducted with teachers they understand the process but not the material and techniques to be used in the teaching of the learning area.

The teacher's understanding of the learning area content is determined by the manner in which he or she is able to negotiate meaning. Christiaans (2006), in their observations regarding the implementation of Outcomes Based Education in Grade 4, found that teachers do not have an authentic understanding of the philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of Outcomes Based Education.

Teachers are frontline implementers of policy even though they might not understand it. They are expected to be innovative in the implementation of policy that is measured by the extent to which they alter practices. They differ with regard to what the best approach is in implementing the new policies. Some teachers disapprove of the way in which curriculum policy implementation is conducted. The contention is that the curriculum is designed as a top-down hierarchy where teachers are regarded as recipients and technicians. There are dynamics on ground level in the implementation of the policy which include realities that do not acknowledge classroom practice (Christiaans, 2006). The policy makers and authorities that mandate curriculum change do not provide for the highly complex, uncertain, unpredictable rapidly changing conditions which prevail in schools.

2.13   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Benstein's Structural Curriculum Theory (1977) identifies the school curriculum content in view of its value for mastering conditions and challenges later in life. In the case of Life Orientation, this theory refers to the demands of lifelong learning or recurrent education and the subsequent impact on the school curriculum (Lewy,

1991). It looks at questions based on the formal transmission of educational knowledge. However, it also includes deliberation upon the results of implementing a curriculum process and how to learn from such implementation. Therefore, implementation cannot be a final activity but is rather a formative and intermediate effort that lasts for a long time (Hameyer, 1983).

The Structural Curriculum Theory, used throughout this study, sustains the conceptualisation of life situations, areas of human activities and a praxeology of human actions. The theory suitably corresponds with the chosen methodology that answers the research questions because it deals with two basic issues, namely:

1.   How to select and justify worthwhile educational knowledge.

2.   How to organise educational knowledge within a curriculum.

Hence, a core task of the Structural Curriculum Theory is to identify and transform knowledge which is considered educationally meaningful into learning area content as part of the curriculum (Lewy, 1991:23). Three levels of competency – all of which are applicable when researching the field of Life Orientation – are unique to Structural Curriculum Theory. These levels of competencies are:

Figure 2.3:   Three levels of competencies of Structural Curriculum Theory
(Adapted from Lewy (1991:23)

(a)   • Subject and interdisciplinary knowledge

(b)   • Human /social learning demands

(c)   • Development of personality
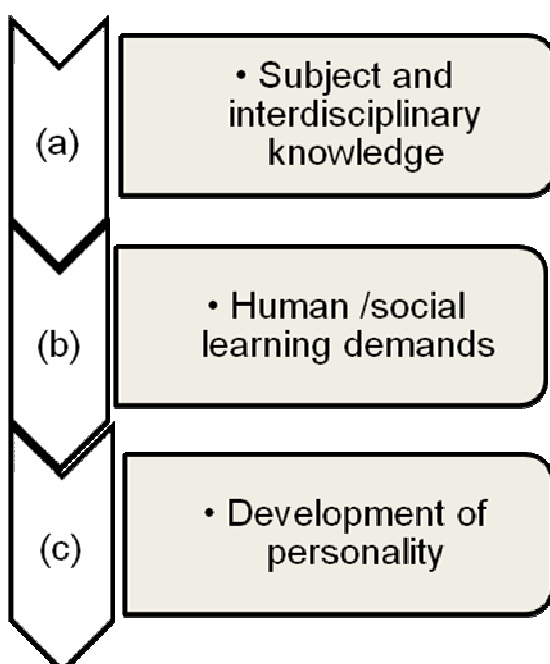
Such levels of competencies as proposed by Bernstein, serve as a guide for selecting educational aims, content and learning activities. The guide also serves as a framework to determine how teachers are able to select, understand and implement the educational aims, content and learning activities in terms of Life Orientation (Lewy, 1991:23). In order to get a better understanding of how teachers select, justify and organise educational knowledge, Benstein introduces the ideas of "classification" and "framing" of educational knowledge. Bernstein (1977) focuses on a model of pedagogic discourse and practices. He begins with "classification" and "framing" of content knowledge and continues to a systematic core outline of the 'what' and the 'how' of education (Sadovnik, 2001:8).

"Classification" refers to the extent of identifying and covering content as it describes the power and control of the relationships of 'what' is taught and learned in the learning area (Bernstein, 1977:26-28; 88-94). Strong classification is identified as insulation, indicating that the learning area has tight control over the content and scope of the approved, formal curriculum. Strong classification also indicates that the control by teachers over what is to be learned in schools and when it is to be learned is restricted. Weak classification indicates that the curriculum is loosely defined and may lead to or encourage the development of new fields and processes of learning. Learners and teachers are afforded more control over what is to be learned and when it is to be learned (Bernstein, 1977:88-94; 26-28) in weak classification.

"Framing", on the other hand, is used to determine the structure of the pedagogical message system. The concept of "framing" refers to the structure of the pedagogical context system that form contexts in which knowledge is transmitted and received and to the specific pedagogical relationship of teacher and learners. If framing is strong, there is a sharp boundary between what may and may not be transmitted. Thus, framing refers "to the degree of control" teachers and learners possess over the selection, organisation, pacing, and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received (Bernstein, 1977:89). Strong framing indicates that the transmitter (teacher, parents, educational system, text, television and Internet) explicitly regulates the content, sequencing, form, pacing, location and discourse that constitute the learning context. However, if the framing is weak then the acquirer

(learners) has increased apparent control over one or more elements of the pedagogy (Short, Singh, Yarrow & Millwater, 2000:10).

When classification and framing are strong, there is a visible teaching and learning practice. The rules of regulative and instructional discourse are explicit, are known and understood by the teacher. Teachers clearly plan and frame what is to be taught as well as the range of options available for teaching and learning relationships. Where classification and framing are weak, learning and teaching practice takes place so that the learning area objectives are not achieved (Bernstein, 1977:116-136; 1971:88-90). There are a range of options available to the Life Orientation teacher about what to teach and what is transmitted and received in the learning and teaching relationship. Subject teachers need clear understanding of the Life Orientation policy to serve as a guideline for what is to be taught.

2.14   "FRAMING" AS APPLIED TO THIS RESEARCH

A description of the nature of the secondary school teachers' understanding of, response to and implementation of the learning area often depends on the framing of the lesson. I served as an observer of the teaching of Life Orientation in schools. The observations were seen as purely physical or within the frame of "nature", thus not different from seeing teaching as occurring within a social frame. I did not look at the secondary school teachers' understanding, response to and implementation of the learning area only but I also examined the application of a frame and projection into the world around. The interpretative frame allowed me to make sense of findings and provided the freedom of a frame shift as discussions of themes were held with the independent coder.

My perceptions were deduced from the meanings of words and phrases from the data that had been collected from participants. Data were packaged according to Tesch's method of data analysis in order to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others (Creswell, 1994:154). I relied on my field notes which indicated the significance of teacher's gestures and other non-verbal clues. The "schemata of interpretation" allowed individuals or group of participants to locate, perceive,

identify and label events and occurrences, thus depicting meaning, organisation of experiences and guiding actions. It was my decision to use framing to comprehend and to discuss issues in the focus group interviews. Snow and Benford (1988) identify three core framing-tasks and state that the degree to which framers attend to these tasks determines participants' mobilisation. They characterised the three tasks as:

1. Diagnostic framing for the identification of a problem and assignment of blame.
2. Prognostic framing to suggest solutions, strategies, and tactics to solve a problem.
3. Motivational framing that serves as a call to arms and a rationale for action.

The processes specified how conceptual framing was done in order to merge the structure of the learning area. For the learning area teachers, framing "mean(s) work", which is an active continuous process which they are engaged in, producing and disseminating meanings that differ from, and may in fact, challenge, existing socio-political and economic conditions of learners at school (Benford & Snow, 2000). Learning area teachers frame or assign meaning to and interpret events and conditions in ways they understand.

For the learning area teachers framing provides a useful conceptual guide to understand the ongoing challenge to produce competent learners with a high level of skills. The collective action framework must be constructed by learning area teachers to share an understanding of some problematic conditions or situations that define the need for change. Teachers have to make some attributions regarding who or what to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements and urge others to act in concert to affect change (Benford & Snow, 2000:613).

Collective action frames provide diagnostic attributions with problem identification; prognostic attribution is concerned with problem solution (Snow & Benford, 1992). Hence, the so called "master frames" provide broader perspective paradigms for shaping the outlook of activities and their implementation. It also provides them with skills and knowledge necessary to implement the learning area components such as different religions, cultural diversity, discrimination, awareness of economic and

social justice and environmentally sustainable living. Then learners are able to demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the values learned in the learning area and rights underpinned in the Constitution in order to practise responsible citizenship and enhance social justice and environmentally sustainable living.

Framing was used for the classification of data and the identification of themes that is supported by the literature review. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:3-4) see the world as a series of presentations which are categorised in the form of field notes, personal notes, theoretical notes, observational notes, methodological notes, phenomenological notes, focus group interviews and conversations. The interpretive understanding of the learning area was gained through interpretation of data, which is influenced by social contexts in which the phenomena occur (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:20). During the teachers' interviews I gained insight into the practical implementation of Life Orientation in Mpumalanga schools. This includes the ways in which they want to be rescued, requests for suggestions on how they should implement lessons in the learning area and indications that they do not make use of the policy documents. Teachers have to work together in their social environment and share the knowledge and skills in order to teach the Learning area effectively.

2.15   LEARNING AREA IMPLEMENTATION

The learning area lessons serve as a social contract between the teacher and learners, using the mortar of classroom talk and building blocks of activity structures and thematic patterns. Teachers must understand the interplay that occurs between a range of possible classroom activities and the learners' level of understanding of the semantics and patterns of the learning area (Lemke, 1993). Teachers must successfully realise planned learning outcomes for their learners. This will indicate whether they are proficient in planning, modelling and managing the interaction strategies and activity structures of the social activity that is the lesson (Lemke, 1993). In addition, teachers must plan to achieve the intended learning outcomes in a series of lesson plans or through a unit. In order for this to work, teachers must

also be proficient in the teaching practice and committed to improving it (Short, *et al.*, 2000).

The "what" of teaching and learning in Life Orientation is also important as it is the complex web of meanings about the particular topic or theme that is constructed by the teacher while learning takes place in the learning area. Learners must take part in different learning programmes at schools and simultaneously be empowered by teachers to engage with and to master the content of the learning area. They will then understand the relationship between the learning area programmes and will work with semantic relationships derived from thematic patterns through practice and explanation. A thematic pattern is a way of picturing or imagining the network of relationships among the meanings of themes and the key terms in the language of Life Orientation (Lemke, 1993:98).

The goals of the learning area teachers' are to impart knowledge, content, process and most importantly to create enthusiasm, motivation as well as interest for learners to learn (DoE, 2002a). However, some learning area teachers are unaware that their learners do not implicitly understand or relate to what they say or do in the lesson. According to Lemke (1993:170) learners are expected to make sense of the teacher's language above and beyond understanding the vocabulary, semantics and grammar of the language of the learning area by themselves. However this language is very often far removed from learners' own experiences in terms of the ways in which they think and talk about the value of the topics within the learning area. Lemke (1993:170) further challenges teachers to become more proficient in communicating with learners, stating that teachers expect too much from learners. The teachers' understanding of the learning area is also associated with how the clarity of the content is presented in a systematic way. As a result relationships, meanings, subject terminology and language structure need to be evident in the manner in which learning area teachers communicate with their learners.

Teachers need to become habitual users of and proficient in this meta-discourse when teaching learners in the learning area. However, learners must be proficient users of programmes in the learning area which will be commensurate with their levels of interest in and understanding of the topic being studied. Subject knowledge

leads to assimilation through experience of personal confidence and acquiring skills necessary to approach and work through any problem (Glasgow, 1996:49).

Teachers must teach learners to use different skills acquired effectively if they are to construct successful lessons in the learning area (Short *et al.*, 2000:3). The 'how' part of teaching and learning within the learning area is an essential part of the form in which the content is taught and learned. The ability to communicate knowledge in the learning area depends largely upon the teacher's mastery of the knowledge communicated. Teachers who are not masters of their subject should take the necessary steps to improve their mastery (Tatum & Morote, 2004).

The learning area content depends on the quality of the relationships between thematic patterns of the subject and activity structures that are developed and enacted by teachers and learners as they construct a lesson. It is critical that the teacher understands the quality of learners' learning outcomes in the learning area (Lemke, 1993:19). There must be evidence of what is actually taught and learned by learners in any learning area lesson. The evidence provided should be based on what the teacher intends to teach in a lesson, what the lesson is for and why the particular lesson content, structure and processes were chosen. The use of discussions is just as effective in this specific learning area as it is in any other learning area. It has been found that the teacher asks the question, learners answer and teachers evaluate or elaborate on the topic in relation to the learners' responses. This gives teachers a sense of control over the structuring and construction of the lesson (Lemke, 1993).

2.16   SUMMARY

Chapter 2 explores the literature on Life Orientation and new learning areas in the school curriculum. The inclusion of the learning are in the curriculum ensures the vision of "a prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country, with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice" (DoE,1997b:1). Life Orientation would ensure that learners gain skills, knowledge and values that would allow them to contribute to their own success and to the success of their families,

communities and the nation at large (DoE, 2002b:4-5). Teachers are expected to master the new approach in teaching that is brought about by transformation with regard to content teaching, methodology and assessment within a short space of time (Carl, 2000:2). Some teachers are removed from their specialist learning areas as they are regarded as experts to teach Life Orientation; as a result, they are filled with uncertainty and disempowerment due to having to teach a learning area which they do not have a clue about (Die Burger, 2003:17). The instructional practices in the classroom remain unchanged despite the willingness of teachers to embrace transformation.

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3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methods that were utilised during the study. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background against which the methodology for this study was presented while the literature review in Chapter 2 entails a discussion of other studies that were related to the teachers' understanding, response to and implementation of Life Orientation. Although the focus of those studies is not identical to those in this study, similar methodologies with some variation were adopted. The use of qualitative research is clarified in Chapter 1 and provides a complex perspective in order to explore the topic under study. The participants selected for the study who are secondary school teachers provided their expressions of reality in terms of their experiences and interpretations as primary evidence via the spoken word (Silverman, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

I chose to the data collection tools that I used. The data collection tools I used have corresponded with the research philosophy. In this chapter I described and justify the research philosophy, the methodology, the research instruments, the data collection strategies and the process of data analysis. I begin this chapter by discussing the interpretative nature of the qualitative research.

3.2   INTERPRETATIVE NATURE OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The use of a qualitative research strategy meant that the entire process of research, from the conceptualization of the problem to writing the narrative, formed a range of different perspectives on the world (Smit, 2001:58). Research was conducted in its naturalistic setting, for the discovery of teachers' reality, understanding, response to and implementation of Life Orientation according to policy in their respective schools (De Vos, 2000:273; Mouton, 2001:270, 278). The personal values that teachers place upon their learning area and teaching played a vital role in this qualitative research (Smit, 2001:59).

This study yielded an interpretive discussion (Chapters 4 and 5) of the research by means of the participants' spoken words, using a qualitative process (Creswell, 1998:170; De Vos, 2000:357; Kitchin & Tate, 2000:212). The main aim of the intensive examination was to discover an unbiased description of the manner in which to conceptualise the curriculum and to experience the facilitation of the learning area Life Orientation (Stringer, 2004:26; Rubin & Babbie, 2001:125). Emphasis was placed on variables within the schools' natural setting – hence information-rich data were collected (Silverman, 2004:138; Creswell, 1994:2, 147; De Vos, 2000:273; Mouton, 2001:270, 278). Salient themes, sub-themes and categories were identified from the collected data where participants' descriptions confirmed the depth of the investigation (De Vos, 2000:243; Mouton, 1996:103; Kvale, 1996:32).

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research methods produce useful insight into the world of the research participants, especially within their school contexts (Babbie, 2001:28). The qualitative research that I opted for provided information drawn from the local teachers' experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Interaction within the group members and in relation to their learning area assisted in my gathering the descriptive data in the participants' own words, gestures and feelings (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The process allowed me to function from an interpretivist standpoint in order to attain "holistic" insight into the way in which the teachers relate to the learning area Life Orientation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:75). As a result the findings made possible a "deeper understanding" of the educational background of Life Orientation and its associated shortcomings within the school situation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:75).

I was able to exploit the research design and data collection strategies to determine what actually happens in the classroom and at the various schools regarding Life Orientation. Various data collection strategies were employed as part of the research design of the research project (De Vos, 2000:272). I accumulated data from the observation sessions and interviews personally at the allocated schools. During these research sessions I observed and experienced realities that teachers provided in their implementation of Life Orientation.

3.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGIES

3.4.1 SITE SELECTION

The research sites were chosen from schools in the region. These schools also benefited from content-based workshops as a strategy to empower teachers in Life Orientation. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the Head of Department's offices at each school or other prepared offices that were comfortable and available for use. The specific site locations within the schools varied at the different locations according to availability and personal preferences of the participants.

Two focus group interviews were held in a conference room, one in the deputy principals' offices and one in a school library. Four individual interviews were conducted in the Head of Departments' office and two in the school principal's office. From personal experiences and the preliminary study of the problems teachers encounter with regard to Life Orientation, the selected sites were supposed to provide rich details and maximise the range of specific information.

3.4.2 SAMPLE SIZE

The number of participants suitable for the study was confirmed after the actual process of data collection had taken place, because the logic of the sample size was related to the purpose of the research problem. The sample size was determined by data saturation. Hence, the relevance of the data collected was important. The eventual number of participants was determined by the repetition of themes and categories during the interviews to indicate the detailed and in-depth information which provided evidence of data saturation (Neuman, 2000:200).

3.4.3 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

In this research study participants included Grade 8 to Grade 12 teachers. Gert Sibande Region is divided into three sub-regions and research occurred in two sub-regions. Entry was proposed to both urban, semi urban and rural secondary schools

in different circuits within these two sub-regions. The sample of schools participating in this research included secondary schools. All the sample schools were mainstream schools that taught in both English and Afrikaans although the interviews and the focus group interviews were conducted in English (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The initial motivation for choosing the specific schools as indicated in tables 5.1 and 5.2 depended on whether the learning area Life Orientation was taught by different teachers or by only one teacher as three or more teachers had to be used as a focus group. Schools that had more than two teachers for Life Orientation were chosen.

3.4.4 INFORMED CONSENT

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria (See attached Appendix 1). The relevant permission to conduct the interviews in the five identified schools, in two sub-regions, was obtained from the Department of Education. Participants were then requested to sign letters of informed consent before participating in the study. The communication was indicative of their voluntary consent to participate in the research.

Informed consent for this study necessitated clearly stipulated terms of participation and justification for the research that was not supposed to be unnecessary or a hindrance to them in any way (Hakim, 2000:143) The participants had to be well-informed about the nature of the study when they signed the letters after making a reasoned decision to provide accurate and complete information of their own free will (De Vos, 2000:65; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:107).

The principals of each school where interviews were conducted as well as the participating Life Orientation teachers had to provide informed consent. The participants were therefore informed of the following in a letter in clear and comprehensible language:
- The aim of the research and the research methods
- The time involved in participation
- The type of participation that is expected of them

- How the results generated from the collected data would be utilised
- The measures to be taken to ensure their anonymity

An example of the letter of consent is enclosed as Appendix A of this study. It clearly indicates the freedom to withdraw without penalties, that there would be no possible benefits to participants and that they would be informed about the scheduled feedback of results.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

It was important for me to take note of inter-subjective personal knowledge in discussion regarding data collection during the course of the study. Inductive reasoning refers to research being executed without personal, pre-conceived ideas (Henning *et al.*, 2004:83). However, I had to accept that as a researcher within the qualitative paradigm it was inevitable that I entered the research with preconceived ideas regarding the theme.

It was imperative for me to consider the language preference of the teachers in the communication sent to the schools. Letters were sent to request permission to conduct focus group interviews and teachers generally indicated that English was to be used for communication. English is a medium of instruction used by all selected schools and a universal language. At times during their responses to the questions, some teachers switched to isiZulu or Sesotho but this was randomly done, especially when they could not quickly find the right word to express themselves in English. I fortunately understand and speak Isizulu and Sesotho fluently and could interpret the answers to the questions. In general, most of the interviews were completed entirely through the medium of English.

3.5.1 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Various methods and techniques were utilised for data collection (Mouton, 1996:10) which included focus group interviews and phenomenological face-to-face interviews with the application of open-ended questions. The main research question was posed at the beginning of the interviews and other semi-structured sub-questions followed according to the participants' answers (Weiss, 1998:83;

Kitchin & Tate, 2000:213). Data were systematically collected and meanings, themes and general descriptions of the experience were analysed within a specific school context (De Vos, 2000:273). The following data collection strategies were utilised:

3.5.1.1 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were relevant to this research since the method builds on a group process as a technique, not only increasing validity of the initial interview findings, but also increasing the credibility of the entire study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:360). Participants in the focus group interviews produced more data and valuable insight into the research problem among themselves. This form of group interview provided a range of responses from the free expression of the participants' views. Sensitive issues and personal feelings were raised and controlled because of the confidential nature; however, other participants expressed themselves freely amongst the group members (Seal, Gobo, Gabrium & Silverman, 2004:71).

One session for each of the focus group interviews at four schools was used for data collection and participants were allowed to discuss their views openly according to the questions posed directly to the participants. The format was guided by the research questions mentioned earlier in this thesis.

Table 3.1: Composition of focus groups

Group (Circuits)	Description of the group	Gender	Number
Highveld Ridge East	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 8-12 with one Head of Department	Female	Five (all female)
Highveld Ridge West (T)	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 7-12 with one Head of Department	Male and female	Five (three female and two male)
Highveld Ridge West	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 8-12 with one Head of Department	Female	Eight (all female)
Balfour	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 8-12 with one Head of Department	Female	Four (all female)

The focus groups above (Table 3.1) were composed primarily of female Life Orientation teachers. This seems to indicate that the teaching of the learning area Life Orientation is mainly allocated to female teachers in some schools.

I made special efforts to arrive at least 30 minutes before the scheduled time of the focus group interviews to check on the venue and the functionality of the audio-tape. I made the participants feel comfortable by arranging tea before the interviews; this arrangement gave me the opportunity to acquaint myself with the participants. I introduced myself as a researcher and explained the purpose of the interviews. I assured participants about their anonymity and when I had their attention, I posed the first question. I controlled the discussion to avoid dominance by individuals in the focus group discussion. The focus group interviews were informal and allowed the opportunity for interaction among the participants in the group. Initially it was necessary to ease the participants into the discussions in order to create an amiable atmosphere that was not threatening. The participants did not only interact with me as a researcher, but also with one another. I was able to elicit vital details from the focus groups by presenting questions based on the research questions and aims (Chapter 1) of the topic under study (see Appendix D).

3.5.1.2 Face-to-face interviews

Semi-structured interviews were discussion-based and enabled more interesting lines of enquiry to learn more about the topic under study (Grieves & Hanafin, 2005:31). Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes and was conducted at the schools with the scheduled informant participants who were Life Orientation Grade 8 to 12 teachers and heads of department. The research participants were key informants for in-depth interviews because they shared special knowledge, experience or status (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:351). These individual, face-to-face interviews were conducted to establish a sense of freedom to discuss issues that they would not otherwise talk about in a group. Further probing was conducted following the participants' responses in order to establish greater clarity on pertinent issues. The table below (Table 3.2) explained the individual interviews.

Table 3.2: Composition of individual interviews

Group (Circuits)	Description of the individuals	Gender	Number
Highveld Ridge East	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 8-	Female	One
Highveld Ridge West	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 7-12 with one Head of Department	Female	One
Highveld Ridge West	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 8-12 with one Head of Department	Male	One
Balfour	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 8-12	Female	One
Stan-East	Life Orientation teachers from Grade 8-12	Male and Female	One male and One female

There were participants within the focus group interviews who were more open and informative than others. I decided to get more information from them by arranging face-to-face interviews with them. I took similar introductory procedures as in the focus group interviews. The format was that of informal conversation with questions asked, paraphrasing and follow-up. The open-ended questions were used to ensure that the responses were not restricted or limited. Principals and heads of departments were interviewed individually to gain their understanding of the implementation of Life Orientation as well as information from a managerial point of view.

The face-to-face interviews enabled participants to share their personal experiences, opinions and beliefs (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005). The audio-tape recordings assisted me with the flow of the discussions and not to waste time on writing and slowing down the pace of the interview. The tape recorder was always tested before the interviews for proper functioning. After each interview I listened to the audio-tape and compared the recording with my field notes.

3.5.1.3 Field notes (Reflexivity)

Loose notes and informal jottings of ideas were taken during interviews and were then converted into field notes after the interviews had been conducted to aid interpretation during the research process (De Vos, 2000:285). A field journal also reflected values, thoughts and interests and methodological decisions that were

taken together with the reasons for making them during the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:327).

The field journal allowed personal thoughts and feelings about the research process to be recorded. The process prevented to some extent any preconceived assumptions that may unintentionally influence the research process. It also allowed for verification of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:676). It should be kept in mind that in this research situation I was an observer and had to ensure that important observations were noted. Throughout the research the field journal process provided a comprehensive account of the participants themselves, the events that took place, the actual discussions and communication as well as learning area teachers' attitudes, gestures and feelings. These served as a record of the schedule and logistics of the study and were coded to clarify the research settings. The notes served as objective descriptions of the "who", "what", "where" and "how" of a context or situation.

The journal assisted me in being mindful of personal biases and not being subjective when interpreting data. I kept the self-reflexive journal in order to facilitate reflexivity and to be able to examine personal assumptions and goals and to clarify my belief and subjectivity. With the field notes I intended to make visible my thinking and experiences of the interviews. The journal was also used as my source of additional information and guidance during my study (Cohen *et al.,* 2005).

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews were transcribed verbatim from the recordings that were made and analysed by means of the descriptive analysis of Tesch (Creswell, 1994:154-155). Data was organised and broken into measurable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned. Structural coherence integrated the masses of loosely connected data into a logical, holistic picture in the research report. Written field notes also served as material for the subsequent interpretation of meaning and to close the gaps that need to be field tin the process of observations (Kvale, 1996:27).

Consensus discussions with the research supervisor were on-going in order to refine the identified themes (Creswell, 1994:158; Krefting, 1991:216). During the data analysis phase I confirmed and refined the themes and categories which were identified. I analysed data into manageable units in order to synthesise them, searching for patterns and discovering what was important for the topic under study. It was important for me to indicate that the identified themes were supported while the sub-themes and categories were distinguished within the major themes. The verification of data served as an additional method of triangulation.

Transcriptions were analysed according to Tesch's method of data analysis (Creswell, 1994:154-155), which involved the following eight steps**:**

1. Setting a sense of the whole by carefully reading through all the transcriptions and jotting down ideas as they came to mind.

2. One document, the shortest and most interesting, was chosen and perused to consider the underlying meaning. Thoughts were then written in the margins.

3. Having gone through all the documents, I was able to identify ideas that were listed and I grouped together similar ones into major and unique topics or themes.

4. This list was verified by means of the data collected. Themes were abbreviated as codes and written alongside the appropriate segments of the text.

5. The most descriptive wording for each topic was decided on and then turned into a suitable category. Topics that relate to one another were then grouped together. Lines were also drawn between the categories to show interrelationships.

6. A final decision on the abbreviated categories was made and codes were listed in alphabetical order.

7. Data material belonging to each theme and category was gathered and thereafter a preliminary analysis was completed.

8. All existing data were transcribed. The transcribed data were handed to the supervisor
(See Chapter 4, Table 4.3).

3.7 LITERATURE CONTROL

Literature control confirmed the results of the investigation and described the topic under study. Literature control demonstrated the underlying assumptions behind the general research questions and displayed my knowledge of related research and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:28). The literature control was conducted in conjunction with the theory to promote the confidence of the researcher (Woods & Catanzaro, 1988:136). The concepts were clarified and formulated according to the literature. To verify the findings, the literature control was reviewed only after the data collection and data analysis so that the information from the literature did not influence objectivity (Burns & Grove, 1997:545).

The information from the literature was thus compared to the findings of the study to enhance the scientific trustworthiness of the study. The literature review demonstrated the underlying assumptions behind the general research question. It ensured that the study could be valued as part of a cumulative knowledge-building effort regarding the research inquiry in terms of the topic that was under study (Rubin & Babbie, 2001:121).

3.8 ETHICAL MEASURES

I ensured that the participants were aware that their participation in this research occurred of their own free will and that they knew that their withdrawal from this investigation was possible without penalties and could take place whenever they felt they could not continue. The conditions of their participation included maintaining confidentiality when dealing with the data and respecting privacy and anonymity. Informed consent to conduct the research was obtained from the necessary authorities from the University of Pretoria, the Department of Education and from the participants (Burns & Grove, 1997:209).

For this research, the following ethical issues that could have affected the study were identified:

▪ Harm to the participants

- Deception of respondents
- Violation of privacy
- Biased actions of the researcher

The participants were fully informed of the potential impact of the investigation before they participated. Such information offered the participants the opportunity to withdraw from the investigation if they so wished, which indicated that the respondents were treated with candour and honesty (Weiss, 1998:93). For this reason discipline was maintained with and among participants, especially when sensitive and personal information was discussed (Babbie, 2001:417; 1990:340-341). The research could also have had positive effects on the participants. In addition, it was important to note that as the researcher I should not be blasé about the possible harm to subjects by stating that the investigation could benefit them in some other way in the future (Bailey, 1994:472).

3.9   MY ROLE AS RESEARCHER

Prior to the commencement of this scientific study, it was imperative for me to fulfil all the prerequisites of the process. It was beneficial that I was also familiar with the learning area of the project and its goals. My task as researcher entailed the construction of suitably phrased questions in view of the participants' culture or frame of reference (De Vos, 2000:292). Furthermore, I am a Life Orientation subject advisor from the Department of Education and was therefore familiar with the necessary qualitative research methods to conduct the interviews during which I had to be observer and interviewer. My experience as an interviewer within my job situation ensured that the participants were comfortable and able to answer questions that were overtly descriptive of their own encounters

During the individual and focus group interviews the main research question was posed as a first question to elicit experiences on the theme of the research (Burgass, 1994:277). Rapport with the participants ensured that I would be able to secure vital information from the participants while I strategized about the manner in which I would handle any probable dilemmas later. I found that there was a comfortable exchange of ideas and a positive, meaningful discussion; thus, the

intensity of the interaction during the interviews provided invaluable details in relation to the questions.

3.10   QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE RESEARCH

3.10.1 VALIDITY

According to Henning and Simon (2006:311) validity is an instrument that ensures that research is constructed and conducted to measure effectively what it expects to determine. Validity is an important tool for effective research because it checks, questions, theorizes, discusses, shapes and shares research action (Smith, 2004:148). In addition, Silverman (2001:232-248) states that validity emphasizes the elucidation of observations and responses from the participants' attitudes and values as presented during the interviews.

During the interview process I was a moderator who was required to ascertain that the information provided by the participants was valid. As a result it was my duty to deliberate upon the participants' responses in order to ascertain what was relevant and valid

3.10.2 RELIABILITY

Silverman (2001:227-228) and Leedy and Ormrod (2001:54) are of the opinion that reliability is allied to quality assurance since it is imperative that the information provided by participants does not vary and that the duration of the recording is within reasonable limits. This requirement also includes the proviso that the questions posed to participants ought not to be vague or confusing. Hence, it was also vital for the conditions of reliability that I was able to make available all related documentation that had been gathered during the research whenever it was requested.

3.10.3 NEUTRALITY ENSURED BY THE STRATEGY OF CONFORMABILITY

The concept of "neutrality" relates to the researcher's ability to be impartial in capturing and assimilating the collected data. It was, therefore, a requirement that I

was competent enough as a researcher to extract information from the interviews so that participants could later validate that I had captured their views correctly and without bias (Krefting, 1991:221).

In this particular research neutrality refers to whether the research process was free of any predisposition on my part to include personal notions of the learning area that might have impacted upon the findings and results (Krefting, 1991:216-217). My role, therefore, had to be impartial in order to avoid any tendency that could have manipulated the research responses provided by the participants. The presentation of results had to express what the participants themselves discussed during the interviews. According to the contention of De Vos (2000:331) this study secured neutrality via the policy of confirmability which verifies whether the results of the research can be confirmed by another similar one. Hence, neutrality was accomplished in my study since I had attained truth-value and an audit trial could confirm whether the results are applicable to other research.

Once I had collected all the data, I had to transcribe and capture all the audio-taped conversations. Thereafter I listened to the tape recordings and compared the transcriptions to include relevant nuances that I might have missed or found extraneous. Once this was completed I was able to code the relevant extract thematically into the pertinent categories to reinforce my analysis and discussion.

I used the reflexive notes, focus group interviews, face-to-face interviews and audio-taped recording to enable cross-checking and to confirm the accuracy of the collected data. The records are to be submitted to the University of Pretoria for archival record keeping. I also took my data analysis back to the participants to be checked for accuracy and to obtain their approval (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:113).

It was difficult to exercise self-control with regards to the topic of Life Orientation where I serve as a Subject Advisor; therefore had to guard against not moulding my personal impressions to suit any preconceived ideas and bias that I might have had. I was able to overcome my personal preconceptions and asserted that criteria relating to anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to. In my research I had to build and maintain a trustworthy and honest relationship as a researcher and work

within the framework of the University of Pretoria's ethical policies. I needed accurate data that would assist my intervention support programmes.

During an audit trial an external auditor would be able to establish if the research process had been a consequence of the natural progression of events where justified choices were made (Krefting, 1991:221). Such a condition would result in future researchers being able to confirm similar results if they were provided with the same data and context. The research processes, as well as the end product, data, findings, interpretations and recommendations were taken into consideration when confirming the research study. Lincoln and Guba (1985:319-320) have identified the following six categories of records that have to be included in an audit trial:

▪ Raw data, including audiotape recording and field notes.

▪ Data reduction and analysis products, including descriptions of the condensed field notes, qualitative summaries and theoretical notes.

▪ Data reconstruction and synthesis products including themes, categories and sub-categories of interpretations and interferences.

▪ Process notes, which include procedures and design strategies together with the methodology, trustworthiness of the research and field notes.

▪ Material related to intentions and disposition including personal notes.

▪ Information regarding instrument development which incorporates interview schedules.

To ensure reflexivity, field notes were used together with tape recorder transcribes to avoid influencing the study.

3.10.4 DEPENDABILITY

The qualitative research criteria of this study needed to confirm that the research was credible and dependable (Halloway & Wheeler, 1996:56). This study proved to be dependable since it contains compelling reports of contextual information about the research that verifies how transferable the findings are (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:301). The research project began with the face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews. The important aspects regarding the research project were logic,

clarity and usefulness of the information obtained. Field notes were completed after each interview and incorporated as part of the data collection to enhance stability over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:315).

3.11   SUMMARY

Chapter 4 describes the foundation – Benstein's Structural Curriculum Theory (1977) – upon which this research is based. There is also a description and justification for the research methods. Thus the data collection tools used corresponded with the case study research design which resulted from a qualitative research paradigm. Justification for embarking on the research project was provided in the need for analyzing the participants' lived experience within the realm of Life Orientation as a learning area at school. As a researcher I placed myself directly in the shoes of the teachers. I created an atmosphere in which I was regarded as one of the participants in the focus group interviews which means that I listened more than I talked to allow them to express their views freely (De Vos, 2000:27). The ethical measures, sampling method, site selection and sample size, role of the researcher, validity, reliability, neutrality, conformability and data analysis techniques were also taken into consideration to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. As a qualitative research project the study engendered rich data that revealed important themes in the course of the focus group and the individual interviews. This investigation into secondary school teachers' understanding, response to, and implementation of Life Orientation also necessitated that attention was paid to ethical measures during the planning and execution of the research. The data collected during the investigation are presented in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive discussion of the qualitative research approach, research design and data collection strategies used is presented in this chapter. The participants' responses were documented during the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews with Life Orientation teachers. This chapter presents the validation of the empirical data collected and audio-taped with the participants' permission. Thereafter, data were transcribed, coded and explored within the context of emergent themes, categories and sub-categories relating to the manner in which the participants understood, responded to and implemented Life Orientation education at their schools (Miller & Brewer, 2005). The discussion follows a thematic pattern relevant to details of data but also takes cognizance of the research questions (as indicated in Chapter 5).

In order to maintain the anonymity of the research site as well as of the participants a coding system was devised for the responses that emerged from the transcripts. The following codes were used:

Table 4.1: Coding of individual interviews

CODE	EXPLANATION
ZKT	Teacher Highveld Ridge East
QLT	Head of Department –Staneast
PKS	Head of Department – Highveld Ridge West
KIS	Head of Department – Balfour
SZT	Teacher Stan East
MTS	Teacher Highveld Ridge West

Table 4.2: Coding of focus group interviews

CODE	EXPLANATION
SZW	Highveld Ridge East
TGE	Highveld Ridge West
VQP	Staneast
IBM	Balfour

4.2   ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

The discussion in this chapter clarifies my interpretive approach to data analysis, substantiating the presentation of "meaningful and symbolic data" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:99). In addition, it has to be noted that the qualitative nature of the study dictated that the process of "data collection, processing, analysis and reporting" did not result in distinctive categories and occurred concurrently throughout the research process (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:99-100).

Finally, the outcome of the responses analysis provided by the various teachers in terms of Life Orientation as a learning area was the emergence of distinct and significant themes. The interpretation of the data suggested that the findings were trustworthy and relevant to the research questions. Although the collected data was classified into thematic groups, I did encounter situations where it became necessary to adapt the groups or themes as the research progressed.

The subsequent contentions highlight the themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged from the interactions with the participants. It must be noted that discussions pertaining to the data collection strategy of "observation" are included in the ensuing thematic discussion.

Table 4.3: Schematic summary of identified Theme 1 and categories

THEME 1
Teachers' faced numerous challenges relating to the understanding of Life Orientation at school
Category 1:
Teachers' lacked the appropriate knowledge and skills to implement Life Orientation
Category 2:
Teachers' lacked the necessary resources and support to implement Life Orientation

Table 4.4: Schematic summary of identified Theme 2 and categories

THEME 2
Teachers' experienced a range of feelings regarding the implementation of Life Orientation in school
Category 1:
Teachers experienced frustration with the implementation of Life Orientation in school
Category 2:
Teachers experienced feelings of helplessness, "There is no one who is there for (them)"
Category 3:
Teachers experienced a lack of confidence when implementing Life Orientation in school
Category 4:
Teachers experienced various degrees of uncertainty over aspects in the implementation of Life Orientation

Table 4.5: Schematic summary of identified Theme 3 and categories

THEME 3	
Teachers responded in different ways to the challenges they faced when implementing Life Orientation in schools	
Category	**Sub-category**
Category 1: Teachers responded to the challenges that they faced with a positive attitude	a) They collaborated with other teachers and schools to meet the challenges they faced when they implemented Life Orientation curriculum needs (collaboration/collegiality)
	b) They became proactive and had a positive attitude in order to overcome the barriers to successful implementation of LO

	c) Teachers adapted to curriculum changes
	d) Teachers adopted curriculum changes
Category 2: Teachers responded to the challenges that they faced with a negative attitude	a) They resisted, procrastinated ignored and found excuses not to implement LO
	b) They lacked initiative and demonstrated a sense of ignorance when faced with challenges in implementing LO
	c) There was a lack of collaboration between teachers at various levels

4.3 THEMATIC DISCUSSION

4.3.1 THEME 1: TEACHERS FACED NUMEROUS CHALLENGES RELATING TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE ORIENTATION IN SCHOOLS

This thematic category acknowledges that teachers of Life Orientation did experience challenges relating to the manner in which they dealt with the policy and curriculum.

4.3.1.1 Category 1: Teachers lacked the appropriate knowledge and skills to implement Life Orientation

Most participants in each of the four focus group interviews indicated that they lacked the appropriate knowledge and relevant skills to implement Life Orientation. They stressed the fact that they were not well informed about content knowledge in the learning area which results in ineffective implementation of the learning area. One of the teachers expressed his lack of understanding as follows:

> *Because it's a new subject area, we don't have knowledge about it, there are number of challenges that are there and we read without any thorough understanding because we need to know how we should implement this Life Orientation* (TGE1, 1508-1515)*.*

This statement was confirmed by some of the participants from the other focus groups when they mentioned that they just kept learners busy with the learning area content but they themselves did not fully understand it. Furthermore, they indicated that they had never had training or attended workshops in Life Orientation (DoE,

2007). This view seemingly contradicted my observations at schools where teachers were work-shopped by the Senior Education Specialist for the learning area. However, it did appear that the number of workshops was inadequate. There were also contradictions among the Life Orientation teachers in relation to learning area knowledge-sharing by different teachers at the same school (Christiaans, 2006:4). There was a lack of uniformity with reference to the understanding of policy regarding the teaching of Life Orientation. The experience of one of the teachers with regard to the teaching of Life Orientation was the following:

> *I was just teaching, not taking into consideration the policy of the subject area.* (SZW4, 1868-1869)

In all the focus group discussions participants indicated that they read policy documents but it was difficult for them to understand and comprehend these. Life Orientation teachers had policies filed, but they did not refer to these for lesson planning. The teachers' lack of understanding policy was further confirmed in the three individual interviews where it became obvious that they find it a complex issue to change policy into practice (Lee, 2005). This was confirmed at one school where teachers displayed copies of policy documents filed in the master file in the principals' office; most teachers did not use it as a source of reference.

Teachers in schools lacked the initiative to centralize curriculum projects to the practical problems of their schools. Implications for curriculum policy understanding, implementation and research into the dilemmas teachers faced in teaching were indicated as follows:

> *With curriculum issues we are just doing anything for the sake of doing it. We really lack direction. I do not follow what is in the policy because sometimes it is not easy to follow or understand other things we end up doing what we think is right … really sometimes it is confusing especially if you are also in the leadership position and we are not sure of what we are doing"*(SZW4, 1865-1870).

This discrepancy was also apparent in knowledge-sharing sessions on the design and execution of activities carried out with learners. Such shortcomings suggest that

Life Orientation implementation at school level poses challenges and is not executed according to the Department of Education's guidelines (DoE, 2002a).

> *I do not know what is right or wrong. You can read Life Orientation objectives and assessment standards but they are sometimes not easy to understand (KIS4, 1479-1481).*

Knowledge of the learning area content influenced how teachers implemented the curriculum. The learning area teachers' history with Life Orientation influenced the notions they have about the Life Orientation curriculum. The experience of one of the teachers with regard to the teaching of Life Orientation is summarised as follows:

> *I do not have proper knowledge and skills to effectively teach the subject area I was just allocated the subject area. I am involved in Life skills programme. I don't know if they are related to each other* (QLT2, 678-681).

The above extract indicated that at some schools there were no effective management and control measures to ensure proper planning of the learning area content. Hence, teachers did not know whether they were on the right track. As a consequence, they believed that departmental officials merely want to give them more work to do:

> *We are given too much work to do by different officials from the region(district) for Life Orientation and Life Skills at the same time, they all monitor those different thing at the same* (SZW1, 1750-1755).

It became apparent from the discussions of the individual and focus group interviews that the process of supervision was not uniform and sometimes results in conflicting messages to the teachers. The dialogue disclosed an element of reluctance on the part of the teachers to teach without supervision. While they admitted that workshops had been presented departmental officials, the teachers were disappointed since they maintained that they did not gain much from these meetings. Concern about the way in which the workshops were conducted was articulated by a teacher as follows:

> *The workshop they arranged for us was not up to standard. They took few days and we were work shopped about a number of things at the same time and it was not easy to understand* (MTS4, 1697-1700 and SZW1, 1741-1748)*.*

The Heads of Department in some schools were supposed to supervise a learning area that they chose to ignore. The Life Orientation teachers' frustrations became apparent during the presentation of two individual interviews carried out in the schools. One Head of Department stated the following:

> *For me the challenge was that of teachers who are not interested to teach Life Orientation, they were just allocated the subject area... since I am responsible for Life Orientation…. that was a challenge in terms of the teaching the subject area* (MTS4, 1695-1698.)

It seemed that some schools did not monitor the planning of lessons in the learning area. The extract above indicates that participants teach Life Orientation without enthusiasm or a sense of responsibility (DoE, 2000a:21-22). According to one Head of Department some teachers did not take the subject seriously and taught Life Orientation for the sake of compliance and ignore the learning area policy. The teachers mentioned that they were allocated to teach Life Orientation without any training inductions in the learning area and were left to implement the curriculum without thorough instruction (DoE, 2000a:9). Participants found it difficult to plan the lessons effectively because they lacked insight into the learning area. Planning lessons according to curriculum expectations is another challenge that teachers experience. One of the participants expressed his dissatisfaction as follows:

> *Yes! Although proper planning is a very big challenge in this school because there is no planning. I had to come here and come up with lesson plans from where I do not even…know where I get those lesson plans* (KIS3, 1284-1287).

The general comment was that instead of following what was expected by policy makers, teachers were unaware that they could refer to the departmental guidelines that provided examples of teaching strategies. In essence, the teachers' lack of information of policy and guidelines prevented them from effective learning

facilitation in Life Orientation (Christiaans, 2006). This was an indication that the implementation effort was, in fact, untenable in practice, because of the lack of understanding of how to use the Life Orientation policies and curriculum in school.

> *I am not sure of the lesson plan and that thing made me to be insecure because I am not sure of what I am doing, and what should I teach learners even though I do not talk about it* (SZW4, 1913-1916)*.*

During the individual interviews two of the five teachers acknowledged that planning was important in terms of structure and logic. They substantiated their responses as follows:

> *Planning is important … Eya (yes) to me it is important to give me direction on what to do and when according to terms. You know that this term, I have to cover may be …*
> *Learning Outcomes … yes it gives direction to me and relieves stress (*MTS4, 1819-1822).

The teachers were of the opinion that even if the learning outcomes were clearly outlined, they did not assist teachers in designing the learning activities. It meant that they were doubtful about imparting the relevant knowledge and skills to learners in a specific grade. Knowledge of the learning area was of great importance for the teachers; they had to select meaningful learning area content for their learning activities (Lee, 1985:2). Learning area teachers should have known how to organize knowledge within the learning area curriculum to identify and transform knowledge. It seemed that teachers did not know how to choose relevant content for learners.

Some respondents pointed out that the time allocated to the learning area was another limiting factor. Participants commented as follows:

> *The time allocated for Life Orientation is also a limiting factor; the subject area is allocated only two hour per week. We have to try our level best to cover more work within the allocated short period of time (*SZW4, 1608-1612).

In three schools teachers mentioned that Life Orientation was allocated little time in the school timetable resulting in teacher-frustration because they had to rush through their lessons (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). Consequently some aspects of the Life Orientation curriculum could not be completed.

4.3.1.2 Category 2: Teachers lacked the necessary resources and support to implement Life Orientation

Life Orientation teachers were disillusioned by the lack of important resources and support intended to raise the standard of delivery in the learning area. The absence of textbooks and other learning aids that ought to have been supplied by the Department of Education seemed to be a major problem that participants highlighted. They alleged that many laudable educational programmes and curriculum projects failed because of the unavailability of the relevant books and other support material (LTSM):

> *The other thing is that, we do not have enough textbooks and policies for Life Orientation (*MST1, 1617-1618).

During the course of the five individual interviews and the four focus group interviews teachers proclaimed that they did not have the acceptable number of textbooks per class to implement Life Orientation effectively. This state of affairs was detrimental to the effective implementation of Life Orientation:

> *It is sometimes difficult to teach learners without textbooks to refer to even if you want to give them homework (VQP2, 329-330).*

Another objection raised by members of one of the focus group interviews was that projects might have required surfing the Internet but the schools did not have access to this facility due to the fact that most learners come from disadvantaged communities. Research participants responded as follows:

> *That is a problem of our learners here in townships, because there are some projects expecting learners to search the Internet. They do not have money to access the Internet. We do not have access to the Internet* (SZW4, 1636-1638).

The above extract confirms that teachers did give learners projects that entailed Internet searches despite the fact that the school did not have Internet access. Some teachers stated that they were also aware that the access was provided by the Department of Education but was not made available to the teachers.

With respect to the support from the Department of Education, the research participants from all focus groups and individual interviews drew attention to the fact that there were too few officials who could have supported them with the curriculum implementation of Life Orientation. Teachers were of the view that since they did not understand the learning area content they required guidance from the Department of Education district officials. They pointed out that they found it difficult to interpret the learning area content and were therefore unable to select appropriate instructional strategies (Datnow & Castellano, 2000). One teacher outlined the lack of support in the s learning area as follows:

> *Ya … other challenges are that we not well developed. We do have senior education specialists but ah... they are not enough in the province and then we do things on our own we have to do or implement whatever we think is right* (VQP1, 17-20).

Discussions relating to policy implementation indicated that Life Orientation teachers and the Heads of Department at school were unable to demonstrate their ability to lead. Teachers in leadership positions experienced exasperation because they could not confidently provide leadership for facilitating Life Orientation (Fullan, 1991). As a consequence teachers in charge Life Orientation become frustrated due to a lack of guidance which seemed to lead to low self-esteem and insecurity.

An additional problem at school level was that effective learning area teaching was not taken into consideration when work was allocated. This indicated that planning was not taken into consideration by the school management team. At some stage during the four individual interviews, participants also indicated that they did not

understand anything about Life Orientation and seemed to be just "babysitting" the learning area:

> *I am given the* learning *area to take care of because there is no one to take care of it within the school. I am just baby-sitting and keeping learners busy because it does not have a specific Department it belongs to* (KIS, 1155-1156).

The participants were qualified to teach other learning areas or subjects such as Geography, Home Economics, History or English. The low self-esteem and insecurity of the learning area teachers seemed to overpower them as they struggled to find their footing in teaching Life Orientation. This finding emerged when four individual participants expressed their unbearable disappointment about the teaching of the learning area.

The participants acknowledged that at their schools no meetings were organised by the Head of Department to share content knowledge. One of the individual participants outlined the following situation:

> *We have to understand. We can administer such areas alone that is why you find ourselves quarrelling with teachers you see the teacher will come and say let me take may be my Life Orientation portfolio to my Head of Department but any way what does he knows about this so we get all those negative comments sometimes things that will also humiliate you … see … but you still have to work all about that* (PKS4, 1885-1889).

Teachers were perturbed about being left on their own with little or no assistance to handle the facilitation in the learning area. They were eager to express their feelings indicative of the tension and frustration among them. The extract from the discussions confirmed that the workload in the learning area placed on most Heads of Department was a worrying factor. They were aware that they were not knowledgeable about the learning area content and felt inferior for occupying executive roles that they could not handle. The following response is indicative of this point of view:

> *There is no one who is there for you to supervise you or to give you the correct direction. Whenever we experience problems there is no one to assist. We are just left alone to do whatever we do on our own. We just interpret everything on our own* (MTS4, 1657-1662 and KIS3, 1105-1107)

Interviews revealed that these stressful situations emanated from poor working conditions, strained relationships with colleagues, taxing workloads, inadequate content knowledge and poor school ethos which constituted the major causes of teacher frustrations within Life Orientation. The exchange of ideas indicated that teachers in leadership positions needed support with the mediation of policy.

In exchanges during the four individual interviews it was found that the extreme workload-allocations at schools could place Heads of Department on a collision course with teachers. Some Heads of Department said that due to frustrations they preferred to avoid contact with teachers by not scheduling the meetings. One of the individual participants indicated the following:

> *I do not understand what we are supposed to do even to assist teachers to implement in Life Orientation. I don't really know how to implement it completely in classes. I am just allocated the subject area I don't know how to teach it, and even how to control its assessment* (VQP1, 1505-1506).

Evidence presented by five individual participants and all the focus group participants' illustrated their feelings of frustration that had led to the adoption of a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the implementation of the learning area. Ill-feelings and anger were the consequence of excessive frustration with the understanding and the implementation of Life Orientation in schools (Datnow & Castellano, 2000:777). Despite their feelings of disenchantment with their profession they were also perturbed about their personal lack of confidence to teach learners in the learning area. In their discussions teachers indicated that their frustrations were aggravated when officials from the Department of Education presented contradictory interpretations of the curriculum policy during support sessions at schools. The participants in all four focus groups revealed the following situation:

> *We got support from different people who are not sure what they are doing in the subject area and we have to do according to our understanding. They do not give us same explanation of information, always they differ.* (ZKT1, 475-478).

It was clear from the extract above that teachers needed support on a personal as well as on a professional level. The complexity of the situation had given rise to their uncertainty about the body of knowledge; hence, the intended learning outcomes become vague, feedback to learners is general and they revert to social and managerial aspects.

4.3.2 THEME 2: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCED A RANGE OF FEELINGS REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LIFE ORIENTATION IN SCHOOL

Teaching Life Orientation needed a more transmission-oriented approach which would assist teachers to deal with their frustrations, feelings of helplessness, sense of disempowerment and various degrees of uncertainty about implementation. This range of feelings experienced by teachers is discussed hereafter.

4.3.2.1 Category 1: Teachers' experienced frustration with the implementation of Life Orientation in schools

The interviewed teachers were emphatic that if they did not have adequate content knowledge there could not be effective teaching. As a result they became frustrated when it was necessary to produce evidence of work done in the learning area (Kennedy, 2005). Contrary to what prevailed in the discussions, teachers acknowledged that lesson-planning was important and had to be structured and logical so that there would be less dissatisfaction with the learning area content; one of the participants stated the following:

> *I sometimes become frustrated about what kind of activities must I give the learners* (MTS4, 1729-1730)?

It was apparent that although the teachers were aware that there were clear step-by-step approaches to skills to be taught and examples of activities for specific

grades, they did not read the documents for implementation. One of the participants expressed his view regarding this aspect as follows:

> *What task must we give to learners? What activities?"* (TGE5, 1729-1730, ZKT3, 167-168).

Participants acknowledged that teaching was unpleasant and progress was hindered by their limited knowledge and experience to design appropriate learning activities in Life Orientation. They were challenged by their inability to acquire the necessary skills and content knowledge to teach Life Orientation. As a result of these limitations the research participants admitted that some of them did not take their work seriously and taught simply in order to comply with regulations (Black & William, 2005:259). Besides, participants argued that their frustrations were due to their personal lack of skills in the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. The inference is that these drawbacks result in mental pressures that contribute to the teachers' fatigue:

> *I came here during the third term there was nothing I could refer to there was nothing that will tell me that this was done with these learners and this has been done with the learners. There was nothing indicating to me. That was real frustrating … I would not know … what the reason was because I just joined the school in August*(ZKT1,427-432)

The interviews demonstrated that a lack of knowledge, uncertainty about the curriculum and low self-esteem of teachers to teach the learning culminate in ineffective learning facilitation. They agreed that the learning area was not given the type of respect it deserves; as a result inferior work was done with the learners (uMalusi Report, 2009). It was outlined that most teachers teach the subject for the sake of compliance to the subject allocation done by the school (Black & William, 2005:259). The teachers' views were outlined as follows:

> *… No Madam, you see with Life Orientation sometimes it is difficult because what normally happens is in our school is this thinking that let everybody develop himself or herself in the certain learning area as you would understand we have never did this things in the universities and colleges so it's a question of passion from somebody to… because*

> *teachers will be saying I 'm just doing it because the authorities said I must do it* (PKS5, 1651-1656)

Participants mentioned that the subject presented further dilemmas for some teachers who were less committed to their work and absent from school most of the time. Participants indicated this as follows:

> *The subjects they (educators) used to teach are no more offered by the school. We do not have any subject to offer; hence we allocate them Life Orientation. They are most of them frustrated and justice is not given to learners* (MST1-1554-1559).

The discussions clearly indicate that teachers were not prepared for curriculum change. They were not informed that changes would take place and the learning areas that they wished to be involved in were no longer offered. Participants indicated that the Life Orientation content was difficult to identify, especially if teachers lacked expertise in the learning area. Hence it was not properly presented and experienced as an unpleasant challenge by teachers:

> *It is not easy to identify knowledge to teach to learners from the subject area policy document, because it is not clearly indicated although we try to look in the key words as we were told* (KIS4, 1519-1521**).**

They declared that the changes brought about by the Department of Education in the curriculum introduced more uncertainty, insecurity regarding content knowledge and frustration and anger for both teachers and Heads of Department:

> *We just keep the learners busy something we do not understand and both the teachers and learners do not regard Life Orientation as a serious subject"*(PKS5, 1566-1569)

The focus group interviews revealed that teachers were dissatisfied and unhappy with the support provided by the Department of Education. They expressed feelings of frustration and incompetence because they were not properly trained to design different activities in the learning area even though in-service training sessions had

been scheduled. Participants indicated their views on teacher development as follows:

> *When we started this new curriculum teachers went for the workshops. Workshops were no well planed and enough, how you can grasp everything for two days or for two hours you see that problem …* (PKS1, 1982-1984)

Teachers were perturbed because they did not have sufficient time to grasp much in the scheduled workshops. Activities executed in the workshop were unproductive as the teachers found them difficult to comprehend. During the school support visits teachers were expected to perform the same activities while officials were supposed to make value judgements from a professional perspective.

Participants were ambivalent about Life Orientation programmes in the schools and experienced some frustration at having to relinquish their fields of specialisation. In addition, teachers were aware that a number of them were not qualified to teach Life Orientation. Nevertheless, they are expected to teach Life Orientation since they were regarded as individuals who have to comply with school regulations:

> *I am not sure you know I was not work shopped myself about Life Orientation I am just thinking of it from English perspective as I went for English workshop for NCS. I do not know anything about Life Orientation* (PKS5,1853-1856)

4.3.2.2 Category 2: Teachers experienced feelings of helplessness, "There is no one who is there for (them)"

The participants expressed feelings of helplessness in the face of what they considered their personal incompetence within the classroom. This sense of vulnerability was reflected when the participants reported on their efforts to assist learners in social, emotional or academic discourse. The teachers described particular incidents in which their specific actions were ineffective or when they felt at a loss about how to work with the target group. It became evident that Life Orientation teachers were overwhelmed as a result of the inadequate way in which they implemented Life Orientation. There was a tendency for them to view

themselves as passive victims of the learning area implementation. As a consequence, teachers experienced dejection and a sense of hopelessness, often finding themselves in a downward emotional spiral. Participants indicated their point of reference when teaching the learning area as follows:

> As I have just said we don't know may be if we can get orientation in Life Orientation which is what I did just with English. I go to other teacher who teaches English to assist. May be it's because number of us do not qualify in Life Orientation and we have to do subject allocation according to subject teachers' choice and we look at those who are interested (VQP2, 991-995).

The extract above indicates that teachers expected to be supported in order to gain the necessary knowledge to teach Life Orientation. Their lack of assertiveness to face the authorities and to express their feelings about the implementation of the learning area results in strategies to avoid confrontation. Furthermore, there was dissatisfaction with their lack of personal work satisfaction. Some felt worried, confused and disappointed with their incompetence. They were insecure and unhappy as a result of the prevailing circumstances. The following response indicates this mental state:

> I sometimes wonder if learners are aware that we are not doing justice to them and we are also held accountable of their weak performance (ZKT1, 475-478).

The teachers believed that although Life Orientation was regarded as a core learning area by the Department of Education, they taught an inferior field of specialisation. There was a sense of low morale as teachers articulated that they lacked adequate departmental support:

> The Department of Education once stated that Life Orientation is a core learning area, but they allocate it less time compared to other core subject areas, they have national programmes driven in the core subject areas such as Languages, Maths, Science and Technology. They forgot about Life Orientation and its importance; they are careless of what we implement in the learning area (MST1, 133-140).

Life Orientation teachers proposed different solutions to address the many needs and challenges that learner's encountered. Their deliberations exposed that Life Orientation did not fulfil its potential to make a vital contribution to learners' successful living, learning and well-being (Datnow & Castellano, 2000:779). They countered that as a consequence there were signs that there was a devastating loss of educationally sound opportunities. By their own admission they were frustrated since they were placed in teaching and learning situations where they lacked expertise or found themselves ignored by Heads of Department and advisors from the Department of Education. Such a state of affairs not only created stress and feelings of hopelessness but resulted in low morale among teachers.

> *We are just left alone, without supervision from the school and the Department of Education. We are not valuable teachers in the school. We even wonder why the Department of Education is not providing assistance to us and make awareness that the subject area is important for holistic development of learners* (TGE3, 1120-1130).

One Head of Department felt that secondary school teachers were able to sense their "incompetence" because of the poor implementation of Life Orientation; teachers held the learning area in contempt. There was an attitude amongst them that being a Life Orientation teacher seemed to encouraged others to label them as being ineffective teacher. One of the Heads of Department expressed his concerns about incompetence in the following way:

> *I do not even have confidence to check the teachers' portfolios because I am not sure of what is expected and they will even get a different expectation from the Senior Education Specialist when they go for moderation* (PKS5, 1806-1809).

With regard to the assessment of learners, the participants indicated that they were ignorant of strategies of continuous assessment as required by the national curriculum. One Head of Department moderated assured participants that fair learners were assessed fairly. When participants were asked about the learners' progress, one replied as follows:

> *We do not know what is right, we do not know what is wrong, we just interpret everything on our own and there is no one who is there for you to supervise you or to give you the correct direction so whatever we are doing we think it is the correct thing and whenever we experience problems there is no one to assist, we assess learners anyhow as long as there is a formal assessment* (IBM4, 1658-1663).

4.3.2.3 Category 3: Teachers experienced a lack of confidence when implementing Life Orientation in schools

In the introduction to the policy of Life Orientation as a learning area the Department of Education indicated that every teacher could teach Life Orientation. It was the perception of the interviewed teachers that the qualifications of teachers regarding the learning area were not considered. Teachers saw curriculum change as being inflicted upon them from a top-down hierarchy; as a result the reaction was to reject the change and carry on as they used to do. The impression was created that Life Orientation had low academic status. Hence, the learning area teachers at school believed that they did not get sufficient support from the authorities to instil confidence for teaching the learning area. The following excerpt is an indication of the way in which participants regard the support they receive:

> *We are not supported fully by the Department of Education. We are really faced with the challenge and I think the Department of Education does not regard Life Orientation as a serious subject* (MST1, 231-233)

The general consensus among participants was that the Department of Education did not consider Life Orientation a valuable learning area. Teachers therefore inflicted their frustrations on learners. The teachers also noted that the lack of qualified human resources to present Life Orientation had resulted in a breakdown of education in general. This was more detrimental to learners who suffer the consequences of the authorities' decision to appoint teachers who had not been properly trained to teach Life Orientation.

It was brought to the attention of the researcher that in some schools the learning area Life Orientation was not presented. Teachers emphasised that they did not have the authority to negotiate the reintroduction of this learning area. According to

the participants inadequate induction and mentoring in the learning area posed a challenge that threatened the values, attitudes and beliefs of teachers. Heads of Department of Life Orientation in schools felt disempowered because they could not moderate the teachers' work as they did not have confidence to do so; thus they created uncertainty and instilled low morale in the teaching of the learning area. Three individuals made mention of the conditions; the following serves as an example:

> *The thing is you are given the subject to teach but you do not have a clue yourself and there is nobody to empower you, you have this problem that you do not know what to do with it and how to solve it. You are not even empowered in doing demonstrations.* (VQP3 1794-1797; 1739-1740).

At some schools it seemed as if Life Orientation had been allocated to teachers to fill up gaps in the timetable. Sometimes ineffective teachers had to teach Life Orientation. In four schools the Heads of Department disclosed that Life Orientation was allocated to them without their having any training and they also had other subject areas to teach. The interviews revealed that, as a result, teachers and school leaders alike were not able to instil confidence and efficiency in the implementation of the learning area in schools. There was agreement among the research participants from three individual interviews who responded as follows:

> *I am not confident about the implementation of the learning area. I am just trying my level best. Whatever I am doing is just for the sake of teaching learners something even if it is not worthwhile* (KIS4, 1282-1284).

Responses during the research accentuated the fact that the learning area was implemented without the knowledge of how it should be implemented. It was a common practice that teachers did not call for assistance if they did not understand the learning area content. This state of affairs was identified when they discussed the expectations of the officials from the Department of Education. In the course of the five individual interviews research participants confirmed that the leadership was often ineffective in assisting teachers in terms of the teaching requirements. This accentuated an absence of leadership and even if a leader is present, there still was

no evidence that leaders capably support the teachers of Life Orientation. Leadership shortcomings were also evident in the failure of the Heads of Department to give direction and assistance in the implementation of the learning area as suggested below:

> *The knowledge of the content itself is a challenge because if we were trained to do that today as an … because as a Head of Department (H.O.D) there is nothing arranged for me … you just do it the way you think it's right, there is no mentoring for me. Sometimes I fail to understand some of the things and as an H.O. D I do not want to be seen otherwise. I make sure and try my best to improvise but I do not have confidence in what I am doing* (KIS4, 1446-1451).

The lack of guidance and support from the ignorant Heads of Department could have contributed to the existent *laissez-faire* attitude due to lack of monitoring. It was confirmed in the discussions within the focus groups and the individual discussions that teachers were perplexed by the Life Orientation learning area. Participants admitted that they lacked accurate information with regard to Life Orientation, especially with regard to policy and assessment – a point of interest expressed in this extract:

> *I lack confidence and feel confused because I haven't got enough information I haven't undergone any training or any workshop so I was hoping that from this year we would have more workshops on how to go about teaching and assessing this Life Orientation…* (VQP2, 512-515).

It was also revealed that although teachers lacked knowledge, they did not attempt to seek information on the learning area but relied on workshops to be conducted by the regional (district) Department of Education officials to clarify the learning area issues for implementation purposes. Participants from focus groups indicated their frustration in the teaching of the learning area as follow:

> *Life Orientation is broad and we just touch here and there, we don't have specific things to deal with on day-to-day presentations; we just fumble (*MST1, 47-50).

It became apparent that teachers did not position themselves to be up to date with curriculum changes that could assist them with issues such as the objectives or focus areas to be taught to particular grades. The discussions indicated that the challenges that teachers experienced with regard to the understanding, interpretation and implementation of the policy have resulted in an inferior quality of teaching in the learning area (Datnow & Castellano, 2000:779). It also emerged that the subject teachers did not have equal access to learning content, methods, cultural ideologies or ideological values and procedures for implementation. Besides, teachers did not use the work schedule that they were provided with to assist them in pacing the content to be taught per term; this was an indication of a lack of monitoring at school level. The participants insisted that their work was uncoordinated and without proper direction:

> *We are working without the work schedule; we are not sure on how to design it, the content we teach is haphazard not well coordinated or sequenced to be integrated in to make meaning to learners. We just decide what to teach in the classroom, as long as learners are seen working* (PKS5, 1847-1851).

Despite teachers' lack of implementation skills and poor delivery, some of them conceded that they had an appreciation of Life Skills. Three individuals from focus groups indicated that they "love" the learning area:

> *I think we should be … some … good edu … edu … good teachers or experts in this learning area because we love it, we love it we love this learning area because it tells us about everything in life* (MST1, 45-49).

The discussions highlighted that teachers would prefer to teach this learning area if they could do so effectively. They admitted that they would try to make complex issues understandable, listen to the learners and thereby avoid too much 'chalk and talk' and set realistic work for learners to handle. In the focus group discussions some teachers showed understanding of the nature of the learning content. Teachers understood that they should shape their view of how teaching should take place in the classroom. However, one of them expressed the following:

> *At the end of the lesson I must know that the learner … what did the learner learn at the end of the lesson, must know that … does the learner have the knowledge of what he had to learn, does the learner have the skills or the values that he or she is supposed to acquire. After every lesson the learner must have the skills, knowledge and values* (MST1, 133-138).

Teachers indicated that they were aware that they have to develop new knowledge, skills, approaches and dispositions to improve their effectiveness in classrooms. They were also aware that their knowledge served as a bridge between where they were and where they will be in the future in order to meet new challenges in guiding learners to achieve higher standards of learning and development (Drake & Sherine, 2006:1830). Teachers were conscious that they have to improve their professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour to boost their ability to function effectively in their classrooms.

4.3.2.4 Category 4: Teachers experienced varying degrees of uncertainty in implementing Life Orientation

The interviews revealed that teachers and school leaders alike were not able to promote and efficiently put into operation the curriculum for the learning area in schools (Leander & Osborne, 2008:44). Therefore, there was agreement among the research participants from three individual interviews that the levels of teaching and learning were not acceptable in the learning area as the following statement points out:

> *I am not sure if I am correct. We just try but we are not sure. Whatever we are doing we think it is the correct thing. It seems as if I am not sure. We are not sure"* (IBM4, 1729-1731).

Responses during the research accentuated that the learning area was taught without assurance of how it should be implemented. It was common practice that teachers did not call for assistance if they did not understand the learning content. This was identified when they discussed the Department of Educations' expectations. Teachers' feelings of alienation, isolation, and anxiety and uncertainty appeared to be common and were exacerbated when they were confronted with

more information than they could handle. The feeling of uncertainty, lack of guidance and support from the ignorant Heads of Department contributed to their lack of faith and poor delivery. Participants contended that they were unable to cope, have a sense of loss, anxiety, struggle, uncertainty and ambivalence on a personal level. Leadership shortcomings were evident in the failure of the Heads of Department to give direction and assistance in the implementation of the learning area as suggested below:

I *was just allocated the subject area and I am confused about the everyday teacher support and what to monitor in the subject area* (KIS4, 1446-1451).

The lack of confidence in teaching the learning area was explicitly mentioned by teachers. They appeared to be confused, and depended on workshops to educate and train them in the learning area.They declared that some teachers did not care about the content being taught because they were uncertain about the implementation of the learning area. Participants admitted that they lacked accurate information with regard to Life Orientation. One of the participants expressed herself as follows:

I find myself uncertain and confused because I haven't got enough information about the learning area. I haven't undergone any training or any workshop so I was hoping that from this year we would have more workshops on how to go about teaching and assessing this Life Orientation (VQP2, 512-515).

It was also a point of contention that teachers did not attempt to seek information for the learning area but relied on workshops to be conducted by the regional (district) Department of Education officials to clarify content issues for implementation purposes. Teachers experienced feelings of uncertainly and insecurity when they doubted their capability to keep up with the learning area curriculum change displaying that the rhetoric of change does not match the realities of their experiences (Sayed & Jansen, 2001:2).

4.3.3 THEME 3: TEACHERS RESPOND IN DIFFERENT WAYS TO THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE WHEN IMPLEMENTING LIFE ORIENTATION IN SCHOOLS

Some teachers responded positively to the implementation of the Life Orientation learning area in school. There were teachers who reacted differently in that they procrastinated and found excuses for not putting into action the curriculum for the learning area. They lacked initiative and demonstrated a sense of ignorance when faced by challenges of implementation.

4.3.3.1 Category 1: Teachers responded to the challenges they faced with positive attitudes

From all the schools that participated in the interviews only one school showed a positive approach to the implementation of Life Orientation. It seemed that at that school learning area teachers influenced one another positively with regard to Life Orientation curriculum implementation and responsibilities. It was found that they viewed the learning area as being valuable in terms of teaching and learning. However, despite their willingness to teach the learning area to the best of their ability, they were uncertain about what to teach and what to assess in the learning area.

The learning area teachers were willing to admit that although there were tensions with regard to the learning area expectations and implementation due to the lack of assistance from the School Management Team, successful execution of the curriculum was still possible. There was a clear intention on the part of these teachers to pursue a collaborative approach for the implementation of the learning area. This was the required approach of the Department of Education for successful implementation (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6) of the learning area:

a)   **Teachers collaborated with other teachers and schools to meet the challenges they faced when they implemented Life Orientation curriculum needs (collaboration/collegiality)**

It became apparent that curriculum changes brought about new teaching methodologies that required teachers to reflect on the creativity within their work, or

on the pedagogical assumptions of their practices. For this reason it was important to realise that the process of curriculum-innovation relied on the competence of learning area teachers to translate constructive concepts into practice. They therefore came together to better understand the relation between theory and practice:

> *If we can sit down as colleagues and look at the Assessment Standards (focus area) and associate with this Learning Outcomes I think we will come right* (MST1, 291-294).

Teachers from three focus groups conceded that they could not collaborate to transform curriculum content and ideas into practice. Collaboration in terms of their discussions would assist in the sharing of ideas to improve their low confidence levels and uncertainty with regard to the interpretation and implementation of the curriculum.

b) Teachers who became proactive and had a positive attitude in order to overcome the barriers to successful implementation of LO were conscientious with regard to the implementation of the learning area

I found that there were participants who were optimistic about the teaching of Life Orientation and were conscientious with regard to the implementation of the learning area. The teachers revealed that they were committed to do what was right for the development and provision of guidance for the good of the learners. Three teachers at one school said that Life Orientation was important for the spiritual, social, personal and academic development of learners and they were therefore trying their best to understand the curriculum and to teach Life Orientation to the best of their ability.

Their concerns indicated that there existed a dynamic interplay between forms of commitment and the manner in which they appear to be linked:

> *"We have just discussed with my other two colleagues how we are going to approach this. We are new the two of us in the grade"* (VQP2, 791-794)

The responses of participants demonstrated that Life Orientation teachers realized the importance of collaboration to alleviate their areas of concern and to help them assimilate the new system. They acknowledged that together they could give meaning to the learning area and use their abilities as sources of information to interpret the learning area content:

> I have also approached my Head of Department to help me so I am still waiting for colleagues so that we can sit down and do this planning because as I have said it (VQP2, 915-917).

Teachers' who collaborated and sought means to understand the learning area acknowledged that they could overcome the barriers to successful implementation. This view was understandable, especially in contexts where the school management team ought to give guidance and direction. The discussions verified that the School Management Team lacked confidence to be of assistance to clarify content-based issues for subject teachers. Learning area teachers awaited the approval from authorities to give them direction to implement the learning area improvements that they have identified (Leander & Osborne, 2008:44).

> I will say we are still waiting for the Head of Department concerned as well as the subject head to get us together so that we can do the planning right now. I would not lie to you to say we have done any planning, But with the colleagues I have spoken with we are busy (TGE3, 1107-1110).

They also identified factors within themselves that were innovative to assist the implementation process of the learning area context. Although the teachers' attitudes were positive, they were still not sure whether the learning area had been effectively implemented (Black & William, 2005:260). The curriculum was just a broad framework and not content specific as it ought to have been to contextualise the lessons in an innovative way. It therefore required ground-breaking innovation from teachers.

c)   Teachers adapted to curriculum changes

Findings display that in certain schools there was adaptation to the learning area curriculum change since it was seen as vital to curriculum implementation. From the discussions it was evident that a series of imposed curriculum changes created a culture of compliance leading teachers to want to know how to implement the required change as painlessly as possible (Fullan, 2001; Van Driel, Beijaard & Verloop, 2001). The learning area curriculum implementation needed to adapt to curriculum change to develop situations with high learning potential in the school context with regard to the learning area. An adaptive curriculum change approach was a test for the teachers' innovation against a set of objectives that needed to be achieved by learners.

In the adaptive change approach to the learning area teachers acknowledged that they adapted innovation to situational characteristics. Complex changes necessitated relearning and invited participants to take actively part in the process of implementation which was seen as a prime opportunity for internalizing the main characteristics of the innovation. It was clear from the discussions that subject teachers need support, frequent communication and open discussion of the curriculum's values to cope with learning area curriculum implementation and to be aware of its goals. In the process of implementing the learning area content, the following was observed:

> *I am trying to help myself even when going to other Life Orientation teachers for advice, looking for some planning from other schools but here at school we do not have, sometimes I go to other schools. We use the textbooks but are not sure if they are relevant to teach Life Orientation" (ZKT1, 568-572).*

The interviews depicted what change meant for the teachers of Life Orientation in the implementation phases where a more flexible approach to implementation had strengthened their feeling of competence with respect to implementation. Teachers' who adapted policies to their environment were innovative and able to use the teaching strategies that suited the learners in the classroom context (Fullan, 2001; Van Driel *et al.*, 2001). It was also found from the discussions that learning area

teachers adapted to curriculum changes at times as they needed to modify and implement the policies accordingly. The steps of initiation to request assistance from other schools are an indication of the gradual enactment process. Teachers believed knowledge and skills could assist them to adapt to change so they mediated change by working with a complex, conceptually-rich curriculum and made different choices and adaptations. Learning area teachers accepted that they had to balance multiple issues, including their own ideologies and past pedagogical practices, with a host of demands as they attempted to incorporate curriculum change.

### d)	Teachers adopted curriculum changes

Certain schools allocated Life Orientation to teachers without assistance to cope with the learning area content. These learning area teachers were expected to demonstrate an initial improvement pattern to adopt curriculum change. Observations indicated that the learning area implementation was supposed to be managed within the security of the well-established learning area boundaries and familiar curriculum content. Teachers were expected to adopt both a formal and informal approach to curriculum implementation although they had not been conceptually grounded in an interdisciplinary framework (Fullan, 2001; Van Driel *et al.*, 2001). From the discussions it became clear that for successful Life Orientation curriculum implementation, teachers had to adopt a new discourse to make the strange familiar and to increase motivation. Life Orientation needed to move beyond the existing curricula discourses grounded in learning area thinking to a discourse of negotiation. One participant commented as follows:

> *Somewhere somehow we also get confused but through the …. for example I am trying to help myself even … when going to other Life Orientation teachers for advice most of them are not clear most of the time. I try to sit down as an individual and try to understand* (IBM4, 1786-1790).

From the extract above it was clear that the teachers were appointed to teach the learning area without any induction or support from colleagues who left them without any option but to adopt their own ways of teaching the learning area.

Teachers made reference to different sources in order to implement the learning area but were not able to distinguish between good and mediocre Life Orientation teaching. They were thus at a loss about the amount of content to be taught, how to teach it and the amount of time they had to teach it. The learning area teacher's compliance depended on his or her behaviour and attitude change. The learning area teachers' values and attitudes were important components of motivation and performance.

4.3.3.2 Category 2: Teachers respond to the challenges that they face with a negative attitude

The lack of induction, training and leadership as well as the change in curriculum de-motivated the participants resulting in negative attitudes, thus intensifying participants' apathy (Kennedy, 2005:15). In some situations, certain learning area teachers felt that change was difficult as Life Orientation appears to have a low standing when compared to other learning areas. They were of the view that they were unable to cope since they experienced a sense of loss, anxiety and uncertainty as a result of curriculum change. The observations carried out during the research produced evidence that teachers did not want to be confronted with abstract goals. Feelings of frustration, anxiety and abandonment were experienced by such teachers and this triggered anger demonstrated in their gestures and tone of the voice. As a result of such frustrations the learning area teachers acted out their negative feelings by procrastinating and finding excuses not to implement Life Orientation. They also experienced a lack of initiative when they were faced by challenges in the implementation of the learning area.

The learning area teachers' negative attitudes were brought about by curriculum change that produced burn-out as a stress response to the learning area implementation. The changes in the conditions of teaching brought about by curriculum implementation intensified job stress. Teachers developed negative feelings and appeared to have lost their optimism and enthusiasm for learning area implementation (Stone, 2002:579). They revealed characteristics such as exhaustion, depersonalization, depression, low morale and withdrawal. They did not realize that collaboration between teachers at various levels could decrease the

teacher's sense of isolation; frustration and stress with regard to curriculum change (Kennedy, 2005:15).

Research findings indicated that some teachers were reluctant to teach Life Orientation at other schools The Life Orientation teachers' position of authority and leadership in the classroom magnified the importance of their actions and their attitudes towards teaching the learning area. Participants pointed out the following:

> *Teachers also take for granted that other teachers who are teaching Life Orientation are not doing a thing in Life Orientation although we know that they are working very hard in classes but then it is not difficult and they like it because it is not difficult. Others also joke and say to others if you want to play go to Life Orientation (KIS4, 1344-1349).*

The extract above confirms that Life Orientation was not regarded as a core learning area at school level. During the six individual and four focus group discussions the negative attitude of teachers towards the learning area was apparent. When the teacher's needs in the learning area were not met they become frustrated and experience intense emotional pain which manifested negatively (Stone, 2002:579). The learning area teachers' awareness that others at the same school regarded them as insignificant in terms of quality education resulted in low self esteem. This attitude was also evident since tertiary institutions did not take Life Orientation results seriously. One participant from a focus group provided the following explanation:

> *Because to me most schools look allocate Life Orientation to those most redundant teacher; we don't know what we can we give them; just give them Life Orientation* (TGE3, 1009-1012).

It was confirmed during the discussions that principals and teachers had a negative attitude towards Life Orientation and regarded it as a less valuable learning area. The extract from the discussions confirmed that even the school management teams did not consider that the learning area added value to learners. As a result, teachers had a negative attitude towards the learning area and disregarded the content. Observations during the research monitoring and support visits to the

schools verified that teachers in different learning areas displayed a negative attitude towards Life Orientation and did not show an interest in the subject. In addition, the school support visits undertaken indicated that the teachers suffered exhaustion and reacted in unconstructive ways towards curriculum, learners and colleagues (Stone, 2002:579). Research participants substantiated that the negative responses of their fellow teachers as well as the continual changes to the curriculum led to frustration. Detrimental aspects also included the fact that before teachers had an opportunity to come to terms with existing characteristics of the curriculum, the Department of Education changed it. The research revealed that the low self-esteem that teachers experienced often culminated in a lack of personal accomplishment. Teaching involved mental and emotional demands; thus their diminished levels of self-esteem negatively impacted on their interpersonal relationships.

a)   Life Orientation teachers procrastinated and found excuses not to implement Life Orientation

Teachers delayed implementation of the learning area by acknowledging their ignorance with regard to innovation. The interviews and observations conducted during the support and monitoring programmes displayed that teachers delayed the teaching of the learning area by blaming the lack of support from Heads of Department, the Department of Education and learners for not attending classes regularly. Observations effected during the school support and monitoring programmes show that teachers were frustrated by the learning area curriculum expectations. Direct expressions of anger or hostility were expressed which result in anger or hostility toward the learners even in response to more neutral or positive questions (Rowan & Miller, 2007:256). The teachers displayed a tendency to communicate feelings of blame toward the learners. Two participants from individual interviews discussed the concept of "blame" as outlined in the following extract:

> *Sometimes the learners do not come to school ... it might be due to weather conditions it might be raining or the buses are late or something like that so it is difficult to put that into practice. Let's say learners are not attending that particular day so there is nothing you can do nothing … so that is why we do other things late* (QLT2, 707-711).

The extract is an indication how teachers expressed their annoyance with the learners' casual attitude to school in general. In addition, teachers used deprecatory statements or long sentences and explanations describing the faults of the learners. I further observed that teachers did not have evidence of work done. During the five individual interviews teachers appeared to embrace anger from past events. As a result they described their relationships with the learners or with the school in more hostile ways (Rowan & Miller, 2007:256). In the discussion it was evident that teachers suffered from avoidance syndrome and defended themselves by stating that they were new to the learning area:

> *We are both new we do not know what we are doing there. I think now we just talk we are not sure we just teach. I do not know if they are doing what is expected from them according to policy* (VQP4- 1603-1604; 1641-1642).

The extract is representative of avoidance-attitude, anger, self defence mechanisms and hostility which were acted out (Hargreaves, 2005:11; McLaughlin, 1987:173). Such feelings of inadequacy were persistent throughout the four individual interviews. Feelings of anger and hostility appeared less strongly and were communicated as "frustration" as illustrated in the next excerpt:

> *I have a challenge in my department and I do not know who will assist me about it. … We just keep the learners busy with something we do not understand* (VQP4, 1643-1644).

The strategy of observation during some discussions with teachers illustrated that their feelings impacted on their emotional stability in the school or in their relationship with their learners. However, other teachers displayed annoyance, anger or hostility especially in response to the "not click," "misbehaviour," or "doubts" questions which confirmed their psychological instability. It was evident that teachers tried to conceal their negative feelings and moved the blame for failure in the learning area to learners. Teachers included vague references that implied aggression, such as one occasion when they felt the learners or a situation at school was challenging or difficult but they did not immediately express hostility in response to those challenges.

Teachers resisted change due to their lack of skills and knowledge (Hargreaves, 2005:11; McLaughlin, 1987:173). Hence, they became fearful and resistant to curriculum change because they felt helpless and hopeless, which led to low personal self-esteem and loss of motivation. As a result they taught Life Orientation with self-doubt. The teachers' resistance to curriculum change often meant that they had insufficient time or energy; hence, they used the Life Orientation period to catch up with other teaching demands.

The teachers resisted change because they were not sure about their own future within the learning area; they articulated their fear of the unknown and their unwillingness to learn new skills. The teachers' resistance was a negative reaction that normally occurred when people felt that their personal freedom was being threatened. Their resistance to implement change was due to their low morale, negative energy, lack of commitment and lack of research.

b)   They lacked initiative and displayed a sense of ignorance when faced with challenges in implementing Life Orientation

Teachers' lacked of initiative to implement the learning area correctly was a challenge. It was obvious that some teachers could assist others with curriculum implementation. The learning area teachers were ignorant due to misunderstandings. They were found to be passive, lacking initiative and doing nothing to ask other teachers for assistance. The learning area teachers who lacked knowledge as well as support in teaching Life Orientation invariably displayed a lack of initiative. They expressed their inner feelings by being critical of the authorities. Life Orientation teachers knew that they were supposed to be knowledgeable, caring, nurturing, fair, trustworthy and ethical in their interaction with the learners in the learning area but prefer to ignore this. As a consequence, the teachers' external *locus* of control, preoccupation with feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and a sense of worthlessness gave rise to the problem of subject learning area comprehension.

The teachers' ignorance gave rise to their refusal to commit to the delivery of knowledge (Sirotnik, 1991:300). Ignorant teachers were always in the dark, as they

were confused by the learning area and unable to see beyond their defences and to reflect on their own norms and standards. The teachers' lacked of initiative ended in frustration and results in their not attending classes and not cooperating with the Heads of Department:

> *We don't know how to put their programmes into practice and how to put them into practice is a real challenge* (VQP4, 1662-1664).

> *We normally listen to them as they give us more work to do and not coming with the solution to the challenges we face* (VQP4, 1660-1661)

From the above discussions it is obvious that the participants admitted that they require learning area skills that they could use to put into practice theoretically sound programmes. Learners were disadvantaged due to administrative difficulties, the teachers' lack of knowledge of the programme design or the lack of commitment. The outcome was that the teachers' failures within the context of Life Orientation were blamed on the school or district for not providing any assistance, including proper training in curriculum matters. This was an indication that teachers paid attention to some learning content only. Learning area teachers were of the opinion that Life Orientation was unfairly allocated to them.

A common occurrence was that teachers became defensive or shift blame to others when times became difficult. As a result they resisted silently by not implementing issues and disown the curriculum. Participants from the four focus group discussions expressed themselves correspondingly:

> *We just follow it as it is; we did not sit down and draw one for ourselves or draft. We follow the example as it is and that is the instruction we got from our Senior Education Specialist written there because we did not undergo any workshop for Life Orientation. We are still waiting for that work schedule until today. We requested our Senior Education Specialist to come and assist us in that regard and give us practical examples of what she is talking about but she never come back until now to assist in that regard. She (the Senior Education Specialist) never came with the practical examples. We are doing one and the something for all the grades in our schools .I was just teaching not taking into*

> *consideration the real content for the grade. We just got the guide from the Department of Education we just follow whatever is policy and the assessment standards* (SZW1, 1795).

Additionally, when teachers showed no diligence but were dishonest about their feelings with regard to the learning area there were feelings of uncertainty and doubt about their capacity to keep up with change.

c) There was a lack of collaboration between teachers at various levels

Collaboration as a requirement for better understanding of the implementation of Life Orientation was not practised in four of the schools. Teachers indicated that they worked individually. Observation performed in the course of research at schools verified that teachers felt separated from one another. Such isolation was perceived as normal as a result of the busy schedules, course loads and additional duties that made it difficult to talk and work together. Opportunities to make work more meaningful and transform schooling into a worthwhile experience were limited. One of the participants had this to say to voice his frustration caused by lack of collaboration:

> *Most of the time I try to sit down as an individual and try to understand because we are not sharing anything everyone is for himself. We are not supported fully by the Department of Education (SZW, 1697-1700).*

Since the learning area teachers lacked opportunities to collaborate there were no opportunities for mutual benefit. It seemed that it was even rarer for teachers with busy schedules, too many classes and high educator-learner ratios take the time to work formally in partnership with colleagues. This was evident from the discussions that indicate that, while teachers might meet informally, their interactions are often superficial as they were not coordinated.

Observations further indicated that the learning area teachers did not share knowledge and skills acquired to assist the implementation of curriculum change. Life Orientation teachers did not translate their abstract pedagogical ideals into the complex realities of practice. It was demonstrated by the research that teachers did

not demonstrate an understanding of the process of collaboration. They were unable to use the different steps in the problem-solving and intervention processes in order to learn from one another.

Participants indicated that they were daunted by the challenge of collaboration to assist them in implementing change in curriculum policy after a long season of curriculum stability. Subject teachers did not encourage one another to implement new ideas or to support the processes of individual change in Life Orientation teaching.

4.4   SUMMARY

The discussions in this chapter explore the actual perceptions and responses of all the participants within the context of the different research methods employed. These strategies were focus group discussions and semi-structured individual interviews together with observation techniques. The Structural Curriculum Theory and conceptual framework were used as a foundation to sustain the research process and facilitate discourse in this chapter. Findings of this study indicated that there were implementation gaps that were caused by a lack of understanding in the interpretation of the subject policy and lack of mediation by the Department of Education. Teachers explained that Life Orientation was an important learning area that prepared learners to become active and responsible citizens who should be able to compete internationally. There were teachers who were proactive and who seek help to implement curriculum change in Life Orientation. However, there were others who refused to approach their Heads of Department and fellow colleagues for support as they had negative attitudes towards the learning area (Breier, 2001:144). The final finding is that Life Orientation has a low status among teachers resulting in their reluctance to teach it. Teachers were allocated to teaching Life Orientation without mentoring or support Lack of proper monitoring results in the learning area teachers' disillusionment and low morale. Discussions with participants revealed that they were interested in teaching Life Orientation although they lacked clarity and direction in its presentation.

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CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion in Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research in relation to the three broad themes identified. Chapter 5 offers the overview, synthesis and recommendations and confirms the results of the research study. The overview of each of the preceding chapters is given to explain the correlation between the collected data and the research question formulated at the outset of the inquiry. This chapter summarizes the findings of the entire study and provides conclusions; it points out the limitations and makes recommendations for further research.

Participants revealed their level of understanding of concepts used in the research. I was confident that I had established an emotional connection with each group to contribute to the rapport within the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The final analysis revealed that I had extended my experience and knowledge of teachers' responses to and their understanding of the learning area. I am hopeful that the recommendations of this research could later lead to the improvement of service delivery in the learning area.

5.2 OVERVIEW

The study undertaken with secondary school teachers focused on their understanding, response to and implementation of Life Orientation at schools. The learning area teachers were able to voice their concerns about the emotional implications of the conditions in which they work. Their responses illuminated their knowledge of Life Orientation and the manner in which they experienced the implementation of curriculum change in the learning area. The study specifically focused on secondary schools, which range from Grade 8 to Grade 12 since these teachers taught both in the senior Phase and Further Education and Training Band. The following overview reflects the gist of each of the preceding chapters.

CHAPTER 1:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and preliminary literature review in relation to the problem statement, objectives and aims of the research. The objectives of this study assisted me in designing the questions that guided the study. In addition the theoretical framework, Bernstein's (1977) Structural Curriculum Theory pertaining to the structuring of the learning area content, formed a suitable foundation for the study. It could also prove beneficial to teachers who use the method of "framing" to pace the learning area content of Life Orientation. The chapter includes the definition of concepts relevant to the topic under study and brief introductory discussions of the research design, research methods, data analysis, research population and ethical measures. I also explained my role as researcher in the study. I did not base my study on the different concepts Life Orientation as a compulsory learning area, the purpose of the learning area in South African schools, the implementation of the learning area in schools and the complications affecting the intended outcomes. I considered subjective evidence provided by other researchers as outlined in Chapter 2.l

CHAPTER 2:

Previously conducted studies and literature that were relevant to my study are discussed in this chapter. It is apparent from literature that the teachers' shortcomings regarding their understanding, response to and implementation of Life Orientation result from policy changes and their personal ignorance of curriculum policy changes. It is also apparent that the learning area teachers' competency was not improved by the many Departmental workshops that were organized as these were poorly planned and executed. Literature studies in respect of the implementation of Life Orientation in the Senior Phase include those of Christiaans (2006), Prinsloo (2007) and Van Deventer (2008). I concur with the above researchers who indicate that even though teachers have the policy and guidelines of the Life Orientation programmes, they are sometimes inclined to ignore the policies and the implementation is not effectively done. Life Orientation programme implementation and integration are still a challenge. My empirical research in Chapter 4 is congruent with Bowe *et al.* (1992) who indicate that when policy makers at national and provincial level produce policy while teachers are not well

vested in policy implementation, the implementation is not easily accepted by teachers (Chapter 2).

CHAPTER 3:

In this chapter the research design, research methods and theoretical framework of the research are discussed as they form the foundation of the research itself. The Structural Curriculum Theory (Bernstein, 1977) justifies the research of teachers' responses in terms of Life Orientation. A core task of Structural Curriculum Theory is to identify and transform knowledge which is considered educationally meaningful into learning activities as part of the learning area curriculum that needs to be implemented. The discussion within the context of this study, included the manner in which learning area teachers' selected content knowledge that they considered meaningful for the design of learning activities in Life Orientation.

A discussion of the qualitative and interpretive qualities of the study also features in this chapter. This entails a concise explanation of the research methods used, including the research design and data collection strategies. These details clarify the manner in which I was able to enter the life world of the secondary school teachers within their school context and how this process assisted me in understanding them as human beings. In addition the research methods allowed me to comprehend the respondents' reality in terms of their social relationships, values, knowledge, attitudes and responses with regard to Life Orientation. The focus group and semi-structured individual interviews, field notes or reflexivity are described in detail as strategies to present in-depth information about the topic under study. The necessary ethical measures were adhered to and the data analysis was conducted according to the descriptive analysis and coded with the help of an independent coder. Relevant themes, categories and sub-categories were confirmed with the independent coder to allow discussion of the findings in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4:

Chapter 4 presents a concise discussion of the findings of the study in relation to the themes that emerged from the research. I submit the findings within a naturalistic setting where the participants were free to express themselves. The relevant themes highlight the fact that teachers are expected to teach the learning

area according to policy, including changes provided by the Department of Education. It was also discovered that teachers read but did not understand how to interpret the policy and curriculum. Hence, the curriculum that outlines the content to be taught per grade was not fully understood by the participants. A few participants were positive and tried their best to implement the curriculum effectively but most participants were confused and delayed or ignored implementation of the learning area. It is evident that Life Orientation presented a challenge to teachers who were unable to frame and classify the content. This inadequacy culminated in frustration and emotional stress among the participants.

5.3 SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS IN TERMS OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

By combining the findings of the various research strategies I was able to respond effectively to the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1:

1. How do teachers understand, respond to and implement the Life Orientation curriculum in schools?

2. What are the policy and curriculum requirements and components of Life Orientation that need to be addressed?

3. How are Life Orientation teachers affected by curriculum change?

4. What is the difference between Life Orientation policy provision and educational practices regarding Life Orientation?

5.3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: HOW DO TEACHERS UNDERSTAND, RESPOND TO AND IMPLEMENT THE LIFE ORIENTATION CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS?

- **Teachers were uncertain, confused and lacked commitment with regard to the implementation of the learning area (Chapter 1 paragraph 1.1; Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.4)**

Life Orientation teachers share common misconceptions and lack clear understanding of what is expected of them to teach Life Orientation. Consequently teachers are ignorant, frustrated, uncertain and confused about Life Orientation implementation. The participants were not learning area specialists. As a result they did not feel committed to teaching Life Orientation as they lacked the necessary

confidence to do so. In addition, they lacked proper in-service training and guidance at school level. This resulted in despondency, uncertainty and lack of dedication.

▪ **Teachers responded emotionally to the implementation of Life Orientation (Chapter 2 paragraph 2.6, 2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.6.4; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1.1)**

Participants expressed the opinion that the confusion, uncertainty and lack of guidance and support from officials from the Department of Education, Heads of Department and principals gave rise to emotional reactions among many teachers. Subsequently, these learning area teachers developed fear and frustration and began to acquire negative attitudes towards the implementation of Life Orientation.

▪ **Teachers expressed positive attitudes towards the implementation of Life Orientation (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.2; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3.1)**

Teachers at one school were positive and influenced others positively with regard to the implementation of Life Orientation curriculum. They collaborated with others and were committed to share knowledge and skills to transform curriculum content and put ideas into practice. They were motivated to learn from one another to become effective teachers. On the other hand, teachers with negative attitudes lacked knowledge and guidance that resulted in despondency, fear and resistance.

▪ **Life Orientation has a low status among teachers. Life Orientation teachers are labelled as ineffective (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.9; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.2)**

The data collected was incongruent with the studies done by Prinsloo (2007), Christiaans (2006) and Van Deventer (2006); in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.9, it is pointed out that Life Orientation, according to the researchers and participants, often has a low status among Life Orientation teachers (Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.2). They are labelled as unproductive teachers or made use of by school leadership because they are considered redundant. The importance of the learning area is disregarded at schools hence the learning areas were allocated to teachers to fill up their timetables.

- **Teachers delayed the implementation of Life Orientation (Chapter 2 2.7; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3.2a)**

Jones (2006) indicated that for curriculum change to happen, the school management team must consider and demonstrate commitment to it. The school's management team ensures the curriculum delivery (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.7). This is contrary to what I discovered in this research. Teachers delayed the implementation of the learning area by acknowledging their ignorance with regard to understanding and innovation of the learning content and express the emotions of anger; this is communicated as a feeling of blame towards the learners. Teachers lack knowledge and competence due to a lack of empowerment in the learning area. Others blame the delay for implementation on the poor attendance of learners and lack of support from the Department of Education officials and Heads of Department at schools (Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3.2a).

- **Teachers resisted curriculum implementation (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.1; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1.1, 4.3.3.1c & d)**

From the literature in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.1 is is evident that teachers resist curriculum change because of fear and the perception of change as a threat to the teachers' comfort. I concur with Margaret (1986:352) that teachers cope with curriculum change in their own ways and according to their individual analysis of the situation. In this study teachers acknowledged that they resist curriculum implementation for different reasons, for example, they are not learning area specialists, and they are allocated the learning area without their consent or without any in-service training (Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1.1). As a consequence most teachers are indecisive and refuse to adapt to or adopt the learning area curriculum (Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3.1c & d).

5.3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE POLICY AND CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS AND COMPONENTS OF LIFE ORIENTATION THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED? (CHAPTER 2, PARAGRAPH 2.4)

The findings below provide a short description of the requirements and components from the policy for Life Orientation; this is followed by a short discussion of the findings from the empirical data.

- **Teachers accepted that the source of the content to be taught to learners in different grades were the policy documents (National Curriculum Statement) and the Learning Area guidelines from the Department of Education (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.4; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.3)**

Teachers acknowledged that Life Orientation was structured to educate learners about their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democratic, multicultural and multi-religious society (Prinsloo, 2007; Van Deventer, 2007; Rooth, 2005; & DoE, 2002b). Life Orientation provides four learning outcomes in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band and five learning outcomes in the General Education and Training (GET) Band (Intermediate and Senior Phase). The focus areas for Life Orientation in the FET Band are Personal Well-being, Citizenship, Physical Development and Recreation, and Career Guidance. The focus areas in the Senior Phase are Health Promotion, Social Development, Personal Development, Physical Development and Movement, and Orientation to the World of Work. For each of the focus areas teachers need to understand how to apply and implement the prescribed assessment standards to achieve each learning outcome. Each learning outcome is informed by assessment standards. In this study participants revealed that they did not know how to interpret the assessment standards to achieve the expected learning outcomes. They also declared that teacher support in the form of workshops was insufficient. They were confused about how the curriculum components should be implemented (Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.3).

- **Teachers should be knowledgeable and skilful in implementing the curriculum (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3, 2.4.1)**

Although the policy of the Department of Education expects Life Orientation teachers to be qualified and competent interpreters of the learning area, the majority of participants stated that they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to implement Life Orientation. This is congruent with Christiaans (2006) in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.1 and the findings from this research that teachers feel that they have not been adequately trained to implement the curriculum content; therefore their teaching is ineffective. At some schools Life Orientation is allocated to teachers who are regarded as ineffective teachers. Teaching the learning area is also allocated to some teachers to fill up the timetables.

Outcomes-based Education is a new approach to teaching; teachers find the mode of teaching difficult to understand and implement, especially those without in-service training. Teachers need to have knowledge and skills of the content in order to assist learners to achieve the learning outcomes in the Outcomes Based Approach.

- **Life Orientation teachers should understand and put policy into practice by designing lesson plans and learning activities (Chapter 2, paragraph, 2.4.1.1, 2.5; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.3)**

Teachers who were interviewed accepted the fact that the Department of Education expected them to understand the Curriculum for Life Orientation and put it into practice by designing corresponding leaning activities. However, since teachers did not understand how to implement the policies they overlooked official statements.

In contrast to the Department of Educations' expectation of teachers, participants in the research indicated that curriculum documents are not read as they merely receive these and file them. Teachers are reluctant to read and understand policy documents such as curricula and guidelines for Life Orientation. Teaching is therefore executed without clear co-ordination of the philosophical framework which underpins their practice. This confirms what Datnow and Castellano (2000) have found, namely that challenges that teachers experience with regard to the understanding, interpretation and implementation of the policy result in an inferior quality of teaching in Life Orientation.

- **Life Orientation teachers should be subject specialists (Chapter 2, paragraph, 2.4.1; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.2)**

Christiaans (2006) concurs with the Department of Education that teachers should be learning area specialists (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.4.1). In this research participants acknowledged that the Department of Education required that all teachers appointed to teach Life Orientation were knowledgeable and competent subject specialists. It has been determined that the learning area Life Orientation was not regarded as an important learning area in schools. Consequently, as mentioned above, the learning area was taught by teachers who were regarded as ineffective or teachers from other fields of specialisation whose timetables need to be filled**.**

- **Teachers should improve their knowledge and skills through in-service training (Chapter 2, paragraph, 2.4.2)**

The Department of Education provided in-service training sessions in all districts (regions) nationally and teachers were expected to attend prescribed sessions. Christiaans (2006) and Carl (2002) concur with the Department of Education about the importance of in-service training. In contrast Merideth and Wai-Wam indicated that short-term training is not successful due to time constraints. The research has revealed that the in-service training sessions were not sufficient because teachers were still confused and uncertain about the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers did not use the in-service training sessions as a platform for networking to exchange ideas for enrichment of the learning area.

- **Teachers should be innovative designers and developers of the curriculum (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.4.1, 2.5; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1.1)**

The teachers who participated in the study declared that if they were able to design lesson plans, activities and assessment strategies they would have better control over the content and scope of the formal curriculum. Bowe *et al.* (1992) relate that teachers are silent and overwhelmed with work, which is beyond their control. They have to implement a policy which they have had no share in designing. In this research teachers indicated their lack of understanding of policy implementation. It has been found that teachers are ignorant with regard to lesson planning. Hence, some taught only to comply with a superior's request; others ignore and resisted implementation of the new curriculum.

- **Teachers should expand their network and collaborate to improve knowledge and skills (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.8.2; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3.1a)**

Hart (2009) indicates that teachers are used to working in isolation and lack experience of sharing on the professional basis. In this research participants indicated that they cannot collaborate to transform the curriculum content or put ideas into practice or even share the knowledge gained from the workshops. The participants were emphatic that in-service training workshops allowed teachers from different schools and districts (regions) to communicate, share solutions to

problems and to exchange views. Teachers stressed that they should have learning area workshops within their specific schools. The Head of Department and the school management team ought to therefore provide leadership and manage the effective implementation of the learning area in the school. The teachers from only one school attempted to work as a team but it was found that the other schools had not collaborated to improve their implementation of the components of the learning area.

5.3.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: HOW ARE LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS AFFECTED BY CURRICULUM CHANGE? (CHAPTER 1, PARAGRAPH 1.1; CHAPTER 4, PARAGRAPH 4.3.3)

▪ **Teachers responded in different ways to the challenges they faced when implementing Life Orientation in schools (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1, 1.2; Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6, 2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.6.4; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3)**

In Chapter 1 the Introduction and the Rationale of the literature study reveal that many teachers are uncertain, confused and ignorant about the implementation of Life Orientation

Some teachers refused to adapt their traditional teaching to Outcomes Based Education. Teachers resisted curriculum change and demonstrated a sense of ignorance because they lacked initiative when they faced challenges to implement Life Orientation. They become frustrated, confused and delayed implementation or ignored the new curriculum.

▪ **Teachers experienced feelings of helplessness and a lack of confidence (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.6; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2.2)**

Participants expressed a feeling of helplessness and a lack of confidence due to insufficient knowledge, skills, training and support from the Department of Education and the Heads of Department at schools. These findings concur with Van Deventer and Van Niekerk (2009) who reveal that some teachers are not qualified to teach Life Orientation. Prinsloo (2007) and Van Deventer (2009) indicate that the socio-

economic circumstances, cultural background and differences of learners in the school system present challenges to teachers.

▪ **Some teachers demonstrate a positive attitude to the implementation of Life Orientation (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.4; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.3.1)**

Drake and Sherine (2006) indicated that when working with a complex, conceptual-rich curriculum, different teachers make different choices of adaptation. Teachers balance their own ideologies and past pedagogical practices. Participants at one school accentuated a proactive approach and adapted to the new curriculum. They realized that Life Orientation was important to learners. The teachers were not subject specialists but the collaborative support amongst them had led to a positive attitude towards the learning area. The teachers found it easy to adapt to the new Outcomes Based Education approach to teaching and learning.

5.3.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE ORIENTATION POLICY PROVISION AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES REGARDING LIFE ORIENTATION? (CHAPTER 2, PARAGRAPH 2.4, 2.5; CHAPTER 4, PARAGRAPH 4.3.2.1)

▪ **Teachers admitted that they are often unsure about the policy provisions as they do not read the documents in relation to the Life Orientation curriculum (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.5; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1.1, 4.3.2.1)**

Smit (2001) views policy as a process rather than a product that involves negotiation while Bowe *et al.* (1992) indicate that that the policy "spaces", "silences" and contradictions remain the teachers' resource to develop and this could reflect the practical situation in this research. Some participants indicated that they had policy documents at their schools, while others said that they did not have them, even though policies were filed in the offices of the principals or Heads of Department. The study found that teachers conceded that they lacked initiative and displayed ignorance when faced with the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum policies. Such participants admitted that they ignored the policy document and guidelines. Some participants mentioned that they were waiting for

the Department of Education officials to visit the school for support in the learning area. However, other participants pointed out that they did consult the policy documents but these were sometimes difficult to comprehend and implement.

- **Teachers do not know how to interpret the policy documents for curriculum implementation (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.5; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2)**

Vulliamy *et al*. (1997) indicates that policy implementation should be part of policy formulation and should not be seen as an add-on element. Teachers at school appear to be disconnected policy receivers and "absorbing implementers to deliver." The research findings indicate that some teachers became despondent, frustrated and ignored policy implementation. Other participants presented the content but were unsure whether they were doing justice to the learning area.

- **Teachers find it difficult to implement the new Outcomes Based Education approach to teach Life Orientation (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.1, 1.6; Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1.1, 4.3.2.1)**

Bennie and Newstead (1995) indicate that assessment standards indicate progression between the grades at school. Teachers do not take note of this progression and determine the relevant activities for different grades. These activities need to be taught in the outcomes-based approach The awareness of the assessment standards in the policy assist teachers to achieve the intended outcomes. The research participants stated that they were ignorant about the Outcomes Based Education approach in terms of teaching Life Orientation. They did not know how to interpret and put into action the assessment standards as prescribed by the Outcomes Based Education approach and National Curriculum Statement. They were not learning area specialists and did not have the knowledge and skills to be effective facilitators. As a result they procrastinated or ignored the correct implementation of the learning area. Participants complained about the lack of support from the Department of Education and insufficient guidance and support from the Heads of Department at schools.

- **Participants say that Life Orientation is imposed upon them (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2; Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.1.1)**

Christiaans (2006) concurs with the findings from this research that new or inexperienced teachers are selected to teach the "easy" learning area, and the learning area teachers are swapped around during the course of the year. Due to the lack of specialist teachers in the field of Life Orientation and the low status the learning area enjoys among staff members, the learning area was allocated to teachers who were regarded as ineffective or to teachers from other learning areas to fill up their timetables. The learning area was often allocated to some teachers without prior consultation. Participants were of the view that the learning area was imposed upon them and this resulted in ineffective implementation of the curriculum. Teachers became despondent and frustrated because they felt overloaded (Chapter 4, paragraph 4.3.2).

- **Teachers do not regard change in curriculum as useful (Chapter 2 paragraph, 2.6.1; Chapter 4, paragraph, 4.3.3.2)**

Fullan (2001) indicates that teachers are not convinced about the usefulness of innovation which is an element of change. I concur with Fullan, teachers who were interviewed said that they did not see any merit in curriculum change, that they had an overload of teaching responsibilities and that the many innovations in teaching confused them. They also admitted that they lacked initiative and therefore displayed ignorance when confronted by the many challenges in implementing Life Orientation curriculum policies. Some participants indicated that they ignored the official policy documents and guidelines. However, the teachers acknowledged that Life Orientation was important for the holistic development of learners.

- **There is a lack of collaboration and collegiality among teachers Chapter 2, paragraph 2.8.3; Chapter 4 , paragraph 4.3.3.1)**

Hart (2009) indicates that the teachers' work load leads to a lack of collaboration. This was confirmed by this research; participants conceded that they do not collaborate. If Life Orientation was allocated to just any teacher at school it was difficult for teachers to collaborate and generate a climate of collegiality to meet the needs of the curriculum. The interviews established that participants acknowledged that together they could give meaning to the learning area and use their abilities as

sources of information to interpret the learning area content. Learning area teachers indicated that they did not meet as a department at school to share ideas, interpret content knowledge and design learning activities.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

The research aims of this study were to establish the extent of the secondary school teachers' understanding, response to and implementation of Life Orientation. The findings are noteworthy since they reveal that the learning area teachers are receptive to talk about shortcomings and that collaboration could assist them in mastering the challenges presented by the learning area.

In the light of the research findings the following recommendations can be made:

▪ The Department of Education should increase school-based support visits and monitoring by district officials. These visits should be more intense and should include practical demonstrations of curriculum implementation. District officials must monitor progress by following-up previous visits.

▪ Heads of Department should exercise control and provide guidance with regard to curriculum implementation.

▪ Learning area teachers and the Heads of Department should be empowered by the Department of Education through scheduled workshops. Specific emphasis should be given to the interpretation and practical implementation of the learning area policy components.

▪ Heads of Department should deliberately create opportunities for Life Orientation staff to collaborate to exchange creative ideas and information that will improve teachers' understanding and interpretation of the curriculum.

▪ Schools should acknowledge the status and importance of the learning area. Life Orientation should not be disregarded and deliberately allocated to ineffective teachers or to fill up gaps in the timetable of teachers. Teaching Life Orientation should not be imposed on teachers.

- Higher Education Institutions should have programmes that will prepare teachers as specialists in Life Orientation as a learning area. The Department of Education and Higher Education Institutions should actively recruit students to become specialists in Life Orientation as a learning area.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research is recommended on the following:

5.5.1 THE IMPACT OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING ON THE TEACHING OF LIFE ORIENTATION AS A LEARNING AREA

In Chapter 1, the Rationale (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2) and the Problem Statement (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.3) of the study revealed that Life Orientation is not effectively implemented. The problem with the ineffective implementation of Life Orientation was discussed from my personal experiences as the Senior Education Specialist of the learning area and a pilot study at few schools in the region (district) under study. The pilot study revealed that although in-service training workshops were held by the Department of Education, teachers seemed to be uncertain and confused with regard to the implementation of Life Orientation (Chapter 1)

In Chapter 2, a comprehensive literature review was provided on policy and curriculum; expectations of curriculum implementation from the Department of Education were discussed, as well as teachers' reactions to curriculum implementation, support provided, workload pressures and their attitudes and beliefs. The literature review gave me an in-depth understanding of teachers' reactions to change in relation to the impact of support from the Department of Education and the school management teams (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.7).

The empirical data revealed that teachers acknowledge that the in-service training workshops that are held by the Department of Education do not contribute sufficiently to the effective implementation of Life Orientation (Chapter 4, paragraph, 4.3.2.1). Teachers ffeel that workshops presented by the Department of Educationdo not address the problems they experience in their understanding and implementation of Life Orientation. It seems that the support or lack thereof from the

Department of Education and from the heads of departments in schools do not contribute to the improvement of the implementation of Life Orientation because teachers show traits of despondence, frustration, procrastination and resistance to the implementation of Life Orientation (Chapter 4, paragraph, 4.3.3.2a, 4.3.3.2b).

A study on the impact of in-service training of the teachers teaching Life Orientation will significantly contribute to the relevance and appropriateness or workshops and support for Life Orientation provided by the Department of Education and management teams at schools.

5.5.2 THE STATUS OF LIFE ORIENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

A preliminary literature review has revealed that the higher education institutions offer little or no programmes in Life Orientation. This was also revealed (Chapter 4 paragraph, 4.3.2.1) by participants who mentioned that they were not educated about Life Orientation due to a lack of programmes at higher education institutions. A few participants mentioned that they did attend courses in Life Orientation at higher education institutions, but according to them the programmes were not relevant to the new curriculum and to the diverse educational contexts in South Africa. A study on what, where and how Life Orientation is implemented in higher education institutions could highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes with regard to the new curriculum and the needs of teachers. A study on the status of Life Orientation at Higher Education Institutions could be of great significance for the Department of Education, teachers and Higher Institutions of Education to address the educational needs of teachers for the effective implementation of Life Orientation.

5.5.3 THE LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON LIFE ORIENTATION

In Chapter 4 (paragraph 4.3.1.2) Life Orientation was perceived by principals, heads of departments and teachers to be of a low status and an unimportant learning area. Participants mentioned that Life Orientation is allocated to teachers who are regarded as ineffective in schools and to the principals, heads of departments who are more committed to management tasks and cannot attend classes regularly (Chapter 1). Life Orientation is allocated to teachers with other fields of

specialisation to fill up their timetables as periods in which they can relax due to the fact that Life Orientation is not assessed formally.

It would be interesting to investigate how learners perceive Life Orientation as a learning area which, according to the research findings, is not effectively implemented and regarded as an unimportant learning area.

5.6   LIMITATIONS

It is imperative to appreciate that this study of the secondary school teachers' understanding, response to and implementation of the learning area Life Orientation was subjected to limitations as with any other qualitative research study. My role within the context of this study was that of a researcher with experience of Life Orientation as a specialist in the Province of Mpumalanga. I admit that some of the impressions I had formed prior to the study would in some way cloud my interpretations of the reality as presented by the participants. However, I also tried to embark on the research without pre-conceived ideas that could have affected the collection and discussion of the data.

It was difficult for me to ensure that the discussions with the focus group interviews remained confidential even though it had been stated in my letters requesting for permission (McMillan, 2008:227). Sometimes I got the impression that as a result of my position in the Department of Education the participants were concealing the truth. My interpretations were prone to be prejudiced by personal "intuition values, beliefs, knowledge and experience" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:60). Some of the participants in the study could not have felt comfortable to be questioned by a stranger from the regional (district) office about aspects of Life Orientation. These were some inconveniences that I had to endure in the process of the research and were unavoidable. Most of the Heads of Department preferred to be interviewed separately from the focus group, which might be considered a form of discrimination. The data gathering process became problematic when some appointments I had made with principals teaching the learning area were not honoured and I was unable to trace them at the appointed time. I also had to

contend with some of the learning area teachers who were absent from school for a long period of time and as a result could not be interviewed.

5.7   METHODOLOGICAL CRITIQUE

The methodology used in this study (Chapter 3) assisted me in answering the research questions and in achieving the aims stated in Chapter 1 of this research. The literature review in Chapter 2 was comprehensive and current. The literature throughout the chapter is relevant to the topic and gave me an in-depth understanding of the topic, the research problem and questions. It was informative and was used to clarify or emphasise findings. The theoretical background (Chapter 2, paragraph 2.13) and power of evidence from the literature (Chapter 1 and 2) support my research, research methodology, data analysis and provided a framework for my research approach. The literature and theoretical framework also assisted me to present and contextualise my strategies and arguments.

The qualitative research methodology used in Chapter 3 produced useful insights from the participants. Teachers' interaction in the focus group and individual interviews assisted participants in providing rich data. The process allowed me to function at an interpretivist level in order to attain a "holistic" insight into the phenomenon under study.

With the focus group interviews (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.14.1.2; Chapter 3, paragraph 3.5.1.1) I could reach more participants simultaneously, effectively and cost effectively. The sample size of my report increased by interviewing several people at once. The group discussion produced data and insights that would be less accessible without interaction found in the group setting (Chapter 4). Participants listened to others' verbalised experiences, stimulated memories, ideas, and experiences. The focus group members discovered a common language to describe similar experiences. This enabled me to capture the "native language" or vernacular speech" to understand the discussions. The focus group interviews provided an opportunity for learning and disclosure among colleagues in the same learning area.

The number of focus group members was not large enough to be a representative sample of the population of Life Orientation teachers in South Africa. Therefore data obtained from the groups is not necessarily representative of the whole population. Focus group interviews were in some cases disturbed by overindulgence by some members. As an observer I guarded against my method of questioning that included how questions were phrased and posed. I was continuously aware of my position as a Senior Education Specialist so that I could get relevant answers from the participants that I had to suppress my opinions during the discussion.

The face-to-face interviews (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.14.1.2; Chapter 3, paragraph 3.5.1.2.) allowed me more opportunity to assess the participants' understanding and interpretation of questions and to provide clarification for any confusion or uneasiness that might arise about the meaning of the questions or the responses. I was able to probe for additional information or more complete answers, and to encourage answers to sensitive questions. The face-to-face interviews allowed me the opportunity to present material to participants and obtain their reactions. This research strategy assisted me in establishing a relationship of trust with the participants and in soliciting answers to questions which the participants might otherwise have been reluctant to answer in the focus group interviews. However, I guarded against influencing the results intentionally or unintentionally which might have violated consistency in measurement. I noted that some respondents could be sensitive to clues that I presented verbally and non-verbally. The mentoring I received from the University of Pretoria assisted me in ensuring that I understood the way in which I could inadvertently influence responses, the importance of not doing so, and the proper techniques that can be used to elicit the needed information without affecting the integrity of the interview.

5.8   CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the problems experienced by teachers who are presenting Life Orientation as a learning area. The lack of support from the Department of Education and from Heads of Department in schools contributes to despondence, frustration, procrastination, resistance to the implementation of the Life Orientation curriculum. Ignorance amongst the teachers presenting the learning

area creates feelings of helplessness and fear of implementing the learning area. A major problem is the incompetence of teachers in interpreting the policies for effective teaching practice. Findings of and recommendations made in this study to address the problems experienced by teachers are crucial for the implementation of the learning area Life Orientation at schools, Higher Education Institutions and the Department of Education.

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