

Educators' and learners' experiences of parental involvement in creating a positive  
climate for the teaching of Life Orientation

by

MAPHUPHA DANIEL PHOKANE

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Supervisor: Dr T.A Ogina

Co-Supervisor: Dr S.T Mampane

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## Researcher's Declaration

I, Maphupha Daniel Phokane, declare that “**Educators’ and learners’ experiences of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation**” is my own work. It has never been submitted in any form for a degree or diploma before in any tertiary institution. The sources used have been indicated and acknowledged.

Signature:

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Date:

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my mother, Mokatau Salisah Phokane who raised me up with unstinting love and care after losing our father at a tender age. Dearest mother, you toiled against all odds to assist us to get education. You always put food on the table even though you had no formal education and were unemployed. To us, you are a wonderful source of inspiration and a tower of strength. May the Almighty God abundantly bless and keep you through His unfailing grace.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research studies emphasize the need for a supportive educator-parent relationship in promoting teaching and learning in Life Orientation. This study is based on the assumption that educators are supposed to supplement the teaching of values by building on what parents have already taught at home and this means that learners need the support of their parents in their academic achievement especially in Life Orientation. The aim of this study is to explore the role that educators and learners expect parents to play in creating a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation.

A qualitative approach was applied in this study in order to get in-depth information about the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews from four Life Orientation educators and Grade 10 learners from two Secondary schools at Phokoane Circuit. The data was analysed resulting with themes and sub-themes. The researcher ensured that data collected enhance trustworthiness. Both educators and learners experienced minimal parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. They both recommended partnership, openness and regular meetings amongst partners for effective teaching of life orientation.

## KEY WORDS

Educators

Expectations

Experiences

Learners

Life Orientation

Parent

Parental Involvement

Partnership

School Climate

Secondary School

## ACRONYMS

CA	-	Curriculum Advisor
CAPS	-	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CASS	-	Continuous Assessment
DOE	-	Department of Education
LO	-	Life Orientation
NCS	-	National Curriculum Statements
PTA	-	Parent and Teachers Association
SASA	-	South African Schools Act

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The intensive post-apartheid restructuring of education has brought about a fundamental transformation in the relationship between parents, learners and educators. It has also created a new legal structure of accountability (Dieltiens, 2008: 288). The introduction of School Governing Bodies in South African public schools brought about an interaction between the parents, learners and educators in the decision-making process, which has, ultimately, promoted the active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning process of the learners. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa S28 (1) (b) emphasizes the right of the child to parental care and mandates parents to provide parental care in the well-being of their children.

The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, sets out the responsibilities of the major stakeholders in education, i.e. the state, parents and learners. Section 3 (1) mandates parents to ensure that learners attend school from the age of seven until they reach the age of fifteen or Grade nine - whichever occurs first. Singh, Mbokodi & Msila (2004: 303; Hornby, 2000: 2; Lemmer, 2007: 220) agree that the involvement of parents in education is crucial in ensuring the success of the learners' education. Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeven (2007: 178) argue that lack of parental involvement is the main cause of low levels of academic achievement. Prinsloo (2007: 162) identifies the lack of parental involvement as one of the causes of the poor implementation of Life Orientation programmes.

Life Orientation is one of the learning areas in the new National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Life Orientation is about the self in relation to others and society (Department of Education, 2002: 4; Department of Education, 2003: 9; Department of Education, 2005: 7; Van Deventer, 2008: 132; Van Deventer, 2009: 129). The content of this learning area is central to the holistic development of learners, i.e. the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of learners. The curriculum envisages learners who can identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; who can work as a

team; who can manage themselves in a responsible manner; who have good communication skills; and who show responsibility and respect towards the environment and to others (Department of Education, 2002: 1).

In order to promote the holistic development of the learners, the involvement of the parents in the teaching of Life Orientation is of vital importance. Parents are regarded as the primary educators of children and they need to support their children by educating/training them at home (Oosthuizen, 2009: 281). The transmission of religion and culture to the child takes place through the influence of the parents on the life of the child (Oosthuizen, 2009: 282). This means that parents play a significant role in directly influencing the quality of the teaching and learning process and which, in turn, has the potential of creating a positive school climate.

The school climate is defined as the quality and character of school life which is based on patterns of life experiences and which reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009: 2). The assumption underpinning this study is that the involvement of parents in the teaching of Life Orientation may contribute to the creation of a positive climate in the school environment. A positive school climate is a school where the parents of learners are actively involved in teaching their children the norms and values of the society. A negative climate, on the other hand, is the non-involvement of parents in the teaching of their children. This study focuses on the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation.

## **1.2 RATIONALE**

This research study is based on studies that emphasize the need for a supportive educator-parent relationship in enhancing teaching and learning, in general, and more particularly in Life Orientation programmes (Prinsloo, 2007: 162). The researcher has explored the experiences of educators and learners regarding the presence or absence of parents in creating an enabling climate for the promotion of the objectives of Life Orientation programmes. Arguing from the researcher's personal experience as an educator, the researcher has realized that there is a lack of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes in

most of the schools in the Phokoane Circuit in the Sekhukhune District. The majority of the parents are not supportive and, ultimately, this leads to insufficient coordination, cooperation and complementariness between educators and parents - resulting in a high rate of ill-discipline amongst learners, teenage pregnancies, moral decline, dropouts and drug abuse, especially amongst secondary schools learners.

In the researcher's opinion and observations, parents in the rural areas seem to be afraid of discussing issues, like HIV/AIDS, sex education, children's rights and career choices, with their children. As a result, all these issues are left to the educators. The parents are the primary educators of their children and educators - as secondary educators - are supposed to supplement the teaching of values by building on what the parents have already taught at home. The teachers need the support of the parents in ensuring the effective achievement of educational goals.

Smit and Liebenberg (2003: 1) maintain that parental involvement in schooling, especially within South Africa, is limited and is widely restricted to wealthier social groups. It is emphasized that wealthy people are able to send their children to private schools and are more able to participate in their children's education due to the fact that they spend a great deal of money on the education of their children. This study deviates to some extent from the recommendation made by Smit and Liebenberg (2003: 1) that there is still a need to research parental involvement, especially in the public schools and with special reference to the schools in rural areas. A rural area in this study means a geographical area that is located outside the city and town, undeveloped area.

In this study the focus is on rural schools where the community practises cultural values and beliefs to the extent that parents are afraid to talk about certain issues and are not ready to support the educators in addressing these challenges. In 2006 a group of Life Orientation educators and members of school governing bodies attended a life skills workshop in Graskop, Mpumalanga Province. The delegates were mandated to meet with parents and give them a report on issues emanating from the workshop, including the fact that most parents were reluctant to share issues, like sex education and HIV/AIDS, with their children and that they vehemently argued that it was taboo to teach children about their body parts - especially their private parts. Every community has its own morals which are the norms of a whole community/group that sometimes may or may not coincide with laws, such as the South

African Schools Act (Klein & Viljoen, 2002: 6). To be able to support learners better, it is important to investigate the norms of the school community and the strategies of using those norms to enrich the learning experiences of the learners at school.

### **1.3 THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

In this study the researcher examines the experiences of educators and learners in creating a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation. Those experiences are explored by asking the following research questions.

#### **1.3.1 Research Questions**

The primary research question is:

What are the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation?

The sub-research questions are:

- How do educators and learners experience parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation?
- What role do educators and learners expect parents to play in support of the teaching of Life Orientation?
- How do educators and learners experience the presence or absence of parents in support of the teaching of Life Orientation?
- What do educators and learners view as barriers in parental involvement in the creation of a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation?
- What are the possible strategies of overcoming the identified barriers?

### **1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

Conceptualization is the process of clarifying what is meant by the concepts being used in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 105). The following concepts are the backbone of this



research project and their meanings are clarified.

#### **1.4.1 Educators**

The concept of an educator means any person who teaches, educates or trains others or who provides professional educational services in a school (South African Schools Act, Act No 84 of 1996). The concept in this study refers to a person who educates or teaches learners in the rural, public secondary schools, i.e. Grades 8 to 12, especially Life Orientation educators.

#### **1.4.2 Expectation(s)**

The term expectation/s is the belief that something ought to happen or that someone should behave in a particular way (Longman Corpus Network, 1995: 479). The researcher in this study uses the term to explore the expectations of both educators and learners with regard to the role that parents may play in support of Life Orientation educators in their successful teaching of the specific learning area.

#### **1.4.3 Experience(s)**

The term experience/s is the state of knowing or having learnt much about life and the world from direct participation (observation) in events or activities that have happened to you and people you have met (Longman Corpus Network, 1995: 479). In this study the term ‘experience/s’ will refer to the knowledge which is gained by both educators and learners through observation in terms of the role that parents of learners play in supporting the effective teaching of Life Orientation.

#### **1.4.4 Learner**

The learner means any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of the South African Schools Act. The term in this study means learners who receive education at secondary schools, i.e. from Grade 8 to Grade 12. In this study the researcher will collect data from Grade 10 learners, as participants, to explore their experiences of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation.

### **1.4.5 Life Orientation**

Life Orientation is a learning area in both primary and secondary schools, i.e. Grades R–12. It is the study of the self in relation to others and to society, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagements, recreation and physical activity and also career choices. It attempts to empower learners for a meaningful and successful life in a rapidly changing society (Department of Education, 2002: 4; Department of Education, 2003: 9; Department of Education, 2005: 7, Van Deventer, 2008: 132; Van Deventer, 2009: 129; Prinsloo, 2007: 156).

### **1.4.6 Parent**

SASA explains the concept parent as a parent or guardian of a learner or any person who is entitled to the custody of a learner by legal means and fulfils the responsibilities of being a parent or the person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a person referred to earlier in a learner's education at school. The parent in this study means any person responsible for the education of the learner both at home and at school, especially the secondary school learner. Oosthuizen (2009: 281) refers to parents of learners as the primary educators of their children. They are responsible for continuous attention to, and involvement in, the educational training of their children.

### **1.4.7 Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is viewed as a variety of parental behaviour which can, directly or indirectly, influence their children's educational achievement and cognitive development (Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeven, 2007: 178; Bakker & Denessen, 2007: 189). Smit, Driessen and Sluiter and Slegers (2007: 56) suggest that parental involvement is the active and willing participation or role of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities which may be educational or non-educational. This study focuses on the involvement of parents in their support of the Life Orientation educators in an effective implementation of Life Orientation in secondary schools.

#### **1.4.8 Partnership**

A partnership is a written agreement whereby two or more people or groups work together to achieve mutual goals (Cox-Petersen, 2011: 240). A partnership is an ideal relationship between parents and educators which is based on respect and trust between the partners (Vincent, 2000: 5). In this study the concept of partnership refers to the working together of the home and the school, i.e. the parents of learners and the educators, especially at the secondary schools, to ensure that educational objectives are achieved - particularly in Life Orientation.

#### **1.4.9 Secondary School**

This refers to all public schools that enroll learners in one or more grades from Grade 8 to Grade 12, as is the case with all the schools in Limpopo Province. In this study the secondary schools refer to the two selected public secondary schools in the Phokoane Circuit in the Sekhukhune District which serve as research sites for the collection of data.

### **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review focuses on the perceptions of educators concerning parental involvement; the partnership of parents and educators; parental involvement in education; expectations of educators; and barriers and strategies that enhance parental involvement.

#### **1.5.1 Perceptions of Educators on Parental Involvement**

Bakker, Denessen and Brus-Laeven (2007: 177) concur that educators perceive parental involvement as a factor that affects learner achievement more strongly than parental reports. Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004: 301) further maintain that the learner's background is also perceived as one of the crucial factors that influence learner performance. Research has found that educators are positive about the impact of parental support in the teaching and learning process (Ho Sui Chu, 2007: 8). This means that educators see parental involvement as one of the contributing factors in the success of learners in terms of the achievement of educational goals.

### **1.5.2 Partnership in Education**

It can be strongly argued that no effective education can take place without the interaction of three components, i.e. the educator, the parent and the learner. Freeman and Karr-Kidwell (1998: 3) are of the opinion that the partnership of the parent, the learner and the teacher is so critical that if one of them is non-supportive, the education process stops and very little is accomplished. Sound working relationships need to be established between all stakeholders in education in order to achieve the educational goals and the objectives of Life Orientation.

Research indicates that the partnership of school, family and the community could lead to improved academic learner achievement, self-esteem, healthy development, school attendance and social behaviour (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow & Fendrich, 1999: 818; Lawson, 2003: 77; Lemmer, 2007: 218; Martnez-Gonzales & Rodriquez-Ruiz, 2007: 21). A partnership should be based on the shared responsibilities of the family and the school (Epstein, 2001: 19; Lemmer, 2007: 219; Vincent, 2000: 5). In shared responsibilities the educators and parents work together as a team and allow for the overlapping of responsibilities. A well-balanced relationship, whereby parents assume responsibilities and understand teachers' expectations regarding their role in homework and whereby teachers assume responsibilities and understand parents' expectations of their role, is obviously of paramount importance to family-school collaboration (Deslandes & Rousseau, 2007: 109).

### **1.5.3 Parental Involvement in Education**

Parental involvement is defined as the role of the parents in support of their own children, both at home and in school (Smit *et al*, 2007: 56). This implies that the parents may assist their children with school work at home and also in school, for example, by attending parents' meetings in order to check the books of their children.

Research indicates that parental involvement is a contributing factor to good progress in the acquisition of linguistic competence and that parents who spend some quality time with their children each day tend to be good motivators of their children (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009: 260; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004: 303). More positive attitudes are correlated with greater success in involving hard-to-reach parents, like working parents, less educated parents, single

parents, parents of older learners, young parents, parents new to the school and other adults with whom children live (Epstein, 2001: 139).

#### **1.5.4 Expectations of Educators concerning Parental Involvement**

Educators expect parents to assume responsibility for their children's education which will benefit the learners and reduce their own frustrations (O'Connor & Geiger (2009: 263). The educators have high expectations of the parents in their role in assisting their children with their homework (Deslandes & Rousseau, 2007: 108).

#### **1.5.5 Barriers to Parental Involvement**

Research has identified some of the reasons why parents do not participate in the teaching and learning process. These include work commitments, lack of transport to schools, financial constraints, language, insufficient time, being single working parents, educators' lack of training, unemployment, parents' negative attitudes towards the school, parents' feelings of inferiority in the presence of educators, lack of knowledge, skills and competencies of both the parents and educators, demographic reasons and teachers' negative actions and attitudes (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009: 260; Gelsthorpe & West-Burnham, 2003: 152; Levine, 2002: 5; Lemmer, 2007: 223; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004: 304). The perceived barriers to parental involvement need to be addressed for a partnership between parents and educators to be established (Lawson, 2003: 79).

#### **1.5.6 Strategies that Enhance Parental Involvement**

Many educators believe that it is worth developing programmes that involve parents in assisting their children with school work at home in supplementing the efforts of educators (Epstein, 2001: 131). Schools need to develop programmes which encourage parental involvement in the educational achievement of their children. Stimulating programmes for parental involvement are important and need to be initiated by the school, especially in the early stages of the child's development (Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeven, 2007: 178).

## 1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research study uses a qualitative approach in addressing the research question. It explores the experiences of educators and learners in terms of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. Qualitative research focuses on the interaction of people with other people and the objects in their natural contexts and it answers the research question inductively (Hittleman & Simon, 2006: 65). Qualitative research is based on the use of words whereby the researcher describes, attaches meanings, interprets or tells a story about a particular phenomenon. In qualitative research, the researcher does the analysis, interpretation and description of the individual and group behaviour, attitudes, perceptions and convictions (Prinsloo, 2007: 159).

This study is framed within an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive paradigm is utilized to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights and a deeper understanding of the phenomena occurring in the social world by means of collecting predominantly qualitative data (Burton, Brundrett & Jones, 2008: 60). Interpretivists perceive reality as a human construct through the attachment of meanings to a phenomenon. This study is a case of parental involvement in two selected schools situated in the Phokoane Circuit in the Sekhukhune District in Limpopo Province.

A case study is a qualitative design in which the researcher explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time by means of a detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell (2007: 73). The aim of a case study is to understand the case in depth; in its natural setting; in recognizing its complexity; and in its context (Punch, 2003: 144).

The Phokoane Circuit is made up of 13 secondary schools and two of these schools were purposefully selected. Purposeful sampling is a sampling strategy used by the researcher to select individuals and sites for study because they purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007: 166). The criterion for selection was based on their different socio-economic status. Although the two schools differ in terms of academic results in the matriculation examination, both schools are quintile 1 and 2 public schools. This means that their poverty levels are different and that the researcher wanted to understand this phenomenon in an economic context.

### **1.6.1 Selection of Participants**

The researcher selected two Life Orientation educators from each of the two schools as participants, i.e. four educators were interviewed in the collection of data. The selection of the Life Orientation educators was based on the objective of this research study. The researcher also selected volunteers from Grade 10 learners, as participants, to explore their experiences in terms of the involvement of their parents in supporting the educators' implementation of the Life Orientation (LO) programmes. The reason for selecting the Grade 10 learners is that most of those learners are at an adolescent stage - with many body changes which may have impact on their behaviour.

### **1.6.2 Data Collection**

The researcher collected qualitative data by means of semi-structured interviews involving probing questions for more depth. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the Life Orientation educators and two Grade 10 learners *per* school and group interviews with all the volunteers (Grade 10 learners). The selection of semi-structured interviews is based on the views of O'Donoqhue (2007: 133) because they allow for a greater depth of data than any other methods of data collection. Punch (2003: 168) suggests that interviewing is a very good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. The researcher recorded the views of the participants during the face-to-face interviews by taking notes and using a tape recorder. These semi-structured interviews were based on the experiences and expectations of both educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation, the contextual barriers in parental involvement and the possible strategies of overcoming the identified barriers.

### **1.6.3 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the collected data which includes the consolidation, reduction and interpretation of what people have said and also what the researcher has seen and read (Sharan, 2009: 175). The main idea during this process is to make meaning from the data and to answer the research questions. Hittleman and Simon (2006: 136) identify five steps to consider when analyzing the collected data: the

transcription of orally obtained information; the organization of information; the familiarization with all the information; the coding and categorizing of the information; and the identification of themes.

The data from the participants was transcribed from the notes and the tape recordings and the responses were organized in terms of the questions asked. To ensure that major categories were identified, the researcher read the data several times to familiarize himself with the information. The researcher also assigned codes to the pieces of data by using symbols and labels. Payne and Payne (2004: 36) explain coding as a strategy that the researcher uses to organize and conceptualize the detailed components of data into patterns by using symbols and labels to identify and interpret the elements that feature in the analysis. The concepts underpinning most of the data were developed and, ultimately, themes and sub-themes were identified and refined.

## **1.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness refers to the truthfulness/accuracy of the qualitative data. The researcher considered the following criteria to enhance the validity of the results: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Hittleman and Simon (2006: 191) define trustworthiness as the concern of all researchers to ensure that the collected data is representative.

## **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher received permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to conduct research by interviewing educators and learners at the two selected secondary schools in the Phokoane Circuit. The researcher also received a letter from the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee allowing him to continue with the field work. All the participants signed the informed consent forms and learners under the age of 18 years were given assent forms prior their participation in the study. The participants were informed that participation in this study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. The participants were also told that they would remain anonymous and that the data obtained from them would be treated as confidential. The researcher told the participants that a tape



recorder would be used when collecting data and obtained their consent. The researcher ensured that the participants' privacy was taken into consideration in reporting the results and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities.

## **1.9 PERSONAL ROLE IN THE RESEARCH**

The role of the researcher in this study was to gather data, using a tape recorder; by taking notes; by conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants to facilitate the participation of the participants; and by presiding over all the proceedings. During the group interviews the researcher's role was to facilitate, moderate, monitor and record the group interaction in the study.

## **1.10 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

CHAPTER 4: Data Analysis – Experiences of Educators

CHAPTER 5: Experiences of Learners

CHAPTER 6: Interpretation of Data, Recommendations and Conclusion

## **1.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has focused on the background, statement of purpose, research questions, clarification of concepts and a discussion of the methodology. The following chapter, Chapter 2, focuses on a literature review.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this literature review is to explore academic and scholarly texts concerning parental involvement in Life Orientation programmes. Parents may be involved in various activities in assisting their children with their schoolwork and, ultimately, in contributing to their cognitive development. In this chapter the researcher provides a detailed discussion of issues, such as the primacy of parental involvement; the partnership of parents, educators and learners in education; the concept of Life Orientation; the school climate; and the conceptual framework of the study.

#### 2.2 DEFINITION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement encompasses a variety of parental behaviour which may, directly or indirectly, influence their children's educational achievement and cognitive development (Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeven, 2007: 178; Bakker & Denessen, 2007: 189). Bakker and Denessen (2007: 189, Driessen, Smit & Slegers, 2005: 510) identify the following parental behaviour:

- Attending parent-educator meetings, celebrations, parent nights and conferences.
- Being a member of the SGB and other school committees and volunteering at school.
- Helping in the classroom and with homework.
- Discussing school activities with the child.
- Monitoring the child's school progress.
- Taking the child to the library, reading to/with the child and modeling reading behaviour.
- Contacting the school in case of problems and monitoring the child's out of school activities.
- Talking regularly to the child.

Parental involvement is the active and willing participation or role of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities which may be educational or non-educational (Smit, Driessen, Sluiter & Slegers, 2007: 56). This emphasizes the point that parents play a significant role in assisting children with their school activities, both at home and at school. Hoang (2007: 3) describes parental involvement as the extent to which a parent is dedicated to, takes an interest in, is knowledgeable about, and actively participates in the child's life. In terms of another dimension, Epstein (2001: 101) explains parental involvement in learning activities as a strategy for increasing the educational effectiveness of the time that parents and children spend with one another at home, whereas Driessen, Smit and Slegers (2005: 509) view parental involvement as an important strategy for advancing the quality of education.

### **2.2.1. Kinds of Parental Involvement**

Driessen *et al* (2005: 512; Walsh, 2010: 959; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011: 37) identify two basic kinds of parental involvement, i.e. School-Initiated (based) Parental Involvement and Parent (home)-Initiated Parental Involvement. School-initiated parental involvement refers to the activities initiated by the school which usually take place at school, such as attending parent education workshops, parent-teacher meetings and volunteering at the school, whereas home-initiated parental involvement refers to activities started by parents and which take place at home, such as assisting learners with homework and listening to children read. Oosthuizen (2003: 195) makes the point that parental involvement in a child's school activities demonstrates a parent's love for his/her child.

Educators need to be educated about the value of parental involvement in schools and also to encourage and educate parents to participate in school activities in order to bring about school improvement (Mncube, 2009: 100). Fisher (2009: 35) supports the claim that education does not take place only at school but also in the home. There is, therefore, a need for parents to understand that the success of their children's academic education in schools depends on their cooperation, support and active involvement in school activities. Parents may support educators from the early stages of the child's development by teaching values at home. Hence, they are regarded as the first educators of children. Educators, then, need to supplement what children have learned at home from their parents and community. Therefore, the parents are the primary educators of the child; they have the duty to give

continuous attention to, and also be involved in, the educational training of the child (Oosthuizen, 2003: 194). In the researcher's opinion the support of parents may serve as a guarantee for establishing and maintaining community values and character.

Various education systems regard parents as full partners in the educational process. Parents are the legal guardians of the children and they have a responsibility in terms of the child's educational and social advancement (Fisher; 2009: 40). The families of learners serve as the most important reference group for young people by providing feedback on the attitudes and behaviour of learners. They also play a role in the development of the social and cultural identity of the learners (Taub, 2008: 20). The school may rely on the contribution of parents in terms of getting more information about the child and, in turn, providing relevant information to the parents about the challenges that the child is facing in the learning environment.

This study is based on the assumption that the involvement of parents in the education of their children may assist in preventing some of the problems that schools face, like teenage pregnancies, drugs addiction amongst learners, ill-discipline and dropouts. That could be why research confirms the value of the shared responsibilities of the school and the home which need coordination, cooperation and complementariness - as well as collaboration between parents and educators (Epstein, 2001: 22; Driessen *et al*, 2005: 512; Lemmer, 2007: 219). This emphasizes the basic idea of promoting a partnership between parents and educators for school improvement and effective communication between the school and the home.

### **2.3. PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME**

A partnership is a written, spoken or informal agreement whereby two or more people or groups work together toward mutual goals (Cox-Petersen, 2011: 240). In a partnership all the partners share the responsibility for education by working together for the common good of the school to enhance student learning. Epstein (2001: 4) suggests that in a partnership, educator, families and community members work together to share information; to guide learners; to solve problems that exist; and to celebrate successes. This explanation is further viewed as a process in which all the involved stakeholders mutually support each other and aim at promoting learning, motivation and the development of the learners (Driessen *et al.*, 2005: 510).

A partnership promotes meaningful relations between the school, the parents and the local community. Oosthuizen (2003: 193) concurs by indicating that the idea of partnership in an educational situation is of particular importance in the interrelationship between the family, the church and the school in terms of societal relationships. The above-mentioned social institutions may influence the education and socialization of children by using strategies, like communication and cooperation. Therefore, each institution needs to know, and play, its part in child-rearing and in the educational process. This type of partnership is based on Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence. It emphasizes the relationship between parents, schools and local communities in an integrated manner.

When families and schools work together to communicate strategies, ideas and expectations students demonstrate a higher achievement in academic areas. The family is regarded as the basic societal relationship and its main primary responsibility is the educational training of learners, whereas the school is regarded as the extension of the family, i.e. the secondary societal relationship (Oosthuizen, 2003: 193). The reason for the inclusion of the school as an education partner in the societal relationship is because the family lacks the professional training in subject knowledge and didactical skills.

It is important to indicate that no effective education can take place without the interaction of the three components, i.e. the educator, the parent and the learner. The working together of these partners will, ultimately, lead to the provision of quality and beneficial education and the improvement of communities. Good school, family and community partnerships lead to improved academic achievement, self esteem, school attendance and social behaviour (Lemmer, 2007: 218). There should be a sound working relationship between the above-mentioned stakeholders in order to have progress in a school, especially in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes, due to the fact that it deals with holistic development of children. Van Deventer (2009: 129) believes that Life Orientation may address the needs and challenges that the learners encounter in learning, in life and in their well-being.

According to the South African Council of Educators Act No. 31 of 2000, every educator should recognize the parents of learners as partners in education and should keep contact with them at all times. Parents of learners should feel that they are valued and respected as important and equal partners of the school. It is important for educators to view parents as

assets rather than deficits (Cox-Petersen, 2011: 131). Freeman and Karr-Kidwell (1998: 3) maintain that the partnership of the parent, the learner and the educator is so critical that if one of them is non-supportive, education process stops and very little is accomplished. This illustrates the fact that a partnership can achieve results that, acting alone, no single institution or segment of the community could achieve (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002: 100). Teamwork plays a significant role in the success of any institution, including schools as learning organizations.

An effective partnership may be characterized by shared objectives, sustained cooperation, a joint sense of solidarity and values and a mutual impact on the child-rearing and educational process (Driessen *et al.*, 2005: 511). There should be an interaction process whereby educators, parents and schools exchange ideas as equals with regard to the education and development of children and learners. The school needs to support parents when it comes to the design and the improvement of their children's rearing practices. Jeynes (2005: 261) claims that schools need to become more parent-friendly and should go the extra mile to ensure full parental involvement in the child's education.

Children, on the other hand, develop little respect for their own dignity; they suffer from self concepts; some refuse to accept authority; and they show little respect for the value of others, i.e. they adopt some anti-social attitudes and habits and often turn to criminal activities (Prinsloo, 2007: 155). In this study it is argued that parents and the community need to be involved in the teaching of values which will be supplemented by educators at school, especially in the implementation of the Life Orientation programmes. It is irrefutable that parents are one of the sources of the values and beliefs that learners bring to the school and that they play a significant role in the development of the learner's religious and spiritual beliefs and behaviours (Taub, 2008: 22).

Research indicates that establishing and maintaining high levels of parental involvement in schools is an essential element in ensuring their effectiveness in providing the best possible education for their children (Hornby, 2000: 3). The education of children is a joint endeavour between the home and the school (Jeynes, 2005: 261, Skaliotis, 2010: 976). Our future prosperity as a nation depends on how well our schools - in partnership with parents - prepare young people for work (Middlewood & Parker, 2009: 87).

Research by Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro and Fendrich (1999: 819; Skaliotis; 2010: 978) shows that when the child grows older the involvement of the parents declines. That is the reason why parents of secondary school children are not as committed to their children's work as parents of primary school children. Driessen *et al.* (2005: 512) highlight the fact that the involvement of parents in primary education is much greater than that in secondary education, especially in Dutch education. Parents of younger children are beneficial in helping those children to the best start of their lives. There is, however, a need to increase or maintain the intervention of parents at a later stage when the child is at an adolescent stage because of the major decisions that they have to make (Skaliotis, 2010: 976).

#### **2.4. THE LEGAL OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS IN EDUCATION**

The South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 S3 mandates parents to ensure that learners attend school from the first school day of the year till the last day of the year and until the learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade. This means that parents must ensure that children are sent to school to receive an education and that they should monitor and support their children's attendance. Parents of learners are also elected as members of the school governing body of the public school with governance obligation. This means that parents play an important role in decision-making to ensure that schools are governed constitutionally. SASA also mandates parents - as members of the SGB at a public school - to determine admission and language policies; to adopt a code of conduct; to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning; to develop the vision and mission statements of the school; to ensure quality education for learners; and to guarantee the safety and security of learners.

The parents are regarded as the primary educators of their children while the educators are the secondary educators (Berger, 2000: 8; Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge, & Ngcobo, 2008: 117). Parents need to take an interest in their children's education by motivating them to attend school regularly; to encourage them to do their assigned tasks; and to assist in learner discipline by ensuring that they are punctual, well behaved and responsible for their deeds (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009: 242).

Parents are not professional educators but they need to provide informal education at home. Hence, they are expected to teach their children some values that, in school, the educators

will supplement. The value framework set at home by parents may enable children and parents to talk about important and sensitive issues. Squelch (2006: 249) believes that parents - as primary educators - have a significant responsibility for their children's education by enhancing the social, educational and moral development of their children.

#### **2.4.1. The General Roles of Parents in Education**

Hornby (2000: 12; Berger, 2000: 283; Wright & Stegelin, 2003: 19) identify the following different ways/roles in which schools may, collaboratively, involve parents:

##### ***2.4.1.1 Recipients of Information***

The parent may serve as the recipient of education and be supportive to the school (Berger, 2000: 283). The school may use different communication strategies with parents, such as telephone calls, visits and letters. Co-operation between the parent and the educator is vital to ensure the successful learning of the child and to ensure that quality education is provided.

##### ***2.4.1.2 Experts***

Parents are regarded as the experts in terms of their own children and they need to provide educators with valuable information about their children, e.g. special needs, family challenges, medical conditions and behaviour. Oosthuizen (2003: 194) suggests that parents can make a meaningful contribution to school activities, especially those that fall outside the expertise of educators. Parents have the expertise equivalent and are complementary to the professionals (Middlewood & Parker, 2009: 87). As a result, their partnership with educators is significant for the child's school achievement and progress.

##### ***2.4.1.3 Co-educators***

Parents may play the role of co-educators of their children with educators by checking the children's homework; listening as they read; and by completing various tasks. Berger (2000: 283; Squelch, 2006: 248) maintains that parents may act as a liaison between the school and home to support homework. Therefore, the parents are the first nurturers, socializers and educators of their children. All children need the support of family involvement in their



education and Taub (2008: 23) indicates that parents may provide reassurance, comfort, support as well as advice and honest feedback.

West, Noden and Edge (1998: 461; Jones & Jones, 2001: 153; Middlewood & Parker, 2009: 85; Wright & Stegelin; 2003: 51) regard parents as the child's first and most important and enduring teachers because parents know their children better than any other person and, as such, they play a crucial role in helping them. This means that the education of the child is a joint responsibility of the school and the home (Jeynes, 2005: 261; Skaliotis, 2010: 976). Because of the parents of the learners' expertise, educators need to consult them in terms of their children's problems and there should, therefore, be a joint decision on how to assist them as educators - and parents should support one another.

#### **2.4.2. Expected Roles of Parents**

O'Connor and Geiger (2009: 263) feel that educators expect parents to bear the burden of responsibility for their children's education as primary educators as it will benefit the learners and reduce their frustrations and delinquencies. Teachers expect parents to participate in the decision-making of the school as members of the School Governing Body (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004: 304). Research also indicates that teachers have a higher expectation of the parents' role in assisting the learners with their homework than parents, themselves, do (Deslandes & Rousseau, 2007: 108). Teachers view parents as active participants who play an important role in the academic achievements of their children.

Educators and learners have high expectations of the parents in terms of their support in the academic achievement of their children. Educators expect parents to participate on school committees; in monitoring learner attendance; in behavioural monitoring; and in emotional support (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2007: 11). Latino students expect their parents to support them emotionally and to motivate them rather than volunteering at the school or participating in the Parent-Teachers Association. They view the volunteering exercise by parents as an intrusion in their space. The learners do not expect their parents to be fully involved in their schoolwork but rather to motivate them and instead of participating in voluntary activities, like attending parents' meetings.

## 2.5 THE PRIMACY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The idea that parental involvement has a positive influence on students' academic achievement is so intuitively appealing that society, in general, and educators, in particular, have considered parental involvement as an important ingredient for a remedy for many problems in education (Fan & Chen, 2001: 1). The involvement of parents in the education of their children is viewed as an important strategy to advance the effectiveness and improvement of the quality of education (Driessen *et al.*; 2005: 509; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011: 37).

Research confirms that parental involvement in education can bring about many benefits, such as improved school performance (achievement of outcomes); reduced drop-out rates; a decrease in learner delinquency; improved school climate; improved educator morale; positive learner attitudes towards the school; more positive parental attitudes towards educators; an enhanced communication between parents, educators and learners; improved school attendance or low school absentee rates; improved parent-educator relationships; increased parental confidence, and a satisfaction and interest in their own education and in doing their homework (Hornby, 2000: 1-2, Jeynes, 2005: 260; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011: 37; Squelch, 2006: 262).

Parental involvement is capable of restoring a trust between the home and the school and, as a result, the educator may rely on the support of parents. Ho Sui Chu (2007: 7) agrees that trust is vital and that it has a direct impact on the collaboration of stakeholders in education and in other interpersonal relationships. The knowledge of educators about the child's home background assists them in their educative task in the school. When parents are actively involved it may, positively, enhance the management of the behaviour of learners and reduce anti-social behaviour (Squelch, 2006: 248). Parents - as primary educators and caregivers - are responsible for their children's behavior, both inside and outside school premises.

Jeynes (2003: 203; Jeynes, 2005: 261; Jeynes, 2007: 82; Skaliotis, 2010: 975) maintains that increased parental involvement is the key to improving the academic achievement of children. It determines how well children perform both at the primary and secondary school levels. Parental involvement is clearly linked to their children's academic, social and emotional development and it assists in building a parent-school partnership as one strategy

for improving student success worldwide. Increased parental involvement may, positively, affect the cognitive and social functioning of children by means of activities, like parent workshops and home visits (Driessen *et al.*, 2005: 514). Squelch (2006: 248; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008: 65) agrees that active and positive parental involvement in schools can significantly improve learner achievement; that it promotes good behaviour; and that it reduces truancy. Parental involvement also influences the various ways in which learners tend to balance family and career lives (Taub, 2008: 21).

Parental involvement is a cost effective and feasible way to improve the culture of teaching and learning in our schools (Lemmer, 2007: 227). The effective involvement of parents may promote the development of various skills, such as good interpersonal skills, communication or language skills, organizational skills, music skills and leadership skills, amongst learners. Schools that work closely with parents and encourage the involvement of parents are inclined to be more effective and successful than those that do not involve them.

Parental involvement may bring about some changes in parents by leading to a more positive attitude towards the school on the part of the parents and changes in their child-rearing behaviour (Driessen *et al.*, 2005: 514). The parents of learners play a vital role by providing attention and love; by caring for their child's physical welfare; and through the transmission of religious and cultural behaviour to the learners (Oosthuizen, 2003: 195). Parental involvement also correlates with the functioning of the school organization and local community i.e. by bringing a more positive climate to the school and in influencing the local community.

Latino students experience parental involvement as an educational foundation for enforcing school attendance, having high expectations for academic performance and enforcing discipline - especially in elementary school education (The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2007: 14). The researcher focused only on the Latino learners in this study because he wanted to explore how parental involvement influenced and shaped their educational experiences especially in elementary schooling.

## 2.6 BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Lawson (2003: 79) believes that perceived barriers to parental involvement need to be addressed for the partnership between parents and teachers to succeed. Smit and Liebenberg (2003: 4; Singh, Mbokodi & Msina, 2004: 304) suggest that teachers and schools bar parents from being actively involved in their children's education by failing to design parental involvement programmes and policies. There is a gap between the parents and the teachers and a way of closing that gap is to enhance propinquity between teachers and parents (Singh, Mbokodi & Msina, 2004: 306).

Levine (2002: 9; Lemmer, 2007: 223; O'Connor & Geiger, 2009: 260) identifies certain social circumstances which serve as barriers to parental involvement, such as long hours of work, lack of transport or finances, lack of time, cultural style and language. Language is regarded as a barrier to parental involvement as most parents are not educated and, therefore, experience difficulties in attempting to assist their children with their school work. As a result, it seems difficult to bring these hard to reach parents into a significant and meaningful relationship. Latino students are of the opinion that language and low educational/illiteracy levels contribute to the non-involvement of their parents (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2007: 14).

Educators' lack of training or qualifications in terms of their awareness of the need to work closely with parents serves as one of the barriers to parental involvement and, as a result, it discourages parents from coming forward and it increases skeptical attitudes on the parts of the parents and the school (Bhering, 2002: 237). To work with parents is a skill and, as such, teachers need to be trained thoroughly so that parents may be motivated to be part of the development of the child - both at school and at home. Lemmer (2007: 223) maintains that schools should become places where parents feel wanted and recognized for their strengths and potential. He further suggests that parental involvement activities should take into account the needs of families and the realities of contemporary life. Gelsthorpe and West-Burnham (2003: 152) identify the following reasons why parents do not participate actively in school activities:

- Parents' negative attitudes towards the school.

- Parents' feelings of inferiority in the presence of the teachers.
- Lack of knowledge, skills and competencies of both parents and teachers.
- Demographic reasons.
- Teachers' negative actions and attitudes.

It is the responsibility of the school to empower parents with knowledge and opportunities to become involved in school activities. The schools should invite parents to assist their children with their schoolwork and also attend parents meetings.

## **2.7 STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION**

Research shows that the interaction of parents with school professionals as colleagues and peers does a great deal to reduce the barriers between them (Levine, 2002: 6). There are many challenges that confront learners - especially at secondary schools – and, as such, continuous contact between parents and educators must take place. Bhering (2002: 229) posits that it is the responsibility of the school to initiate and develop parental involvement policies and practices which should be led by the educators - as professionals - for effective educational implementation. Hornby (2000: 34 – 42) identifies the following strategies for enhancing parental involvement in education:

### **2.7.1 Informal Contacts**

Informal contacts are means whereby the parents of learners and the educators meet with an aim to establish good relationships on behalf of the children and, in so doing; they try to destroy the barriers that usually exist between the home and the school (Hornby, 2000: 34). The organisation of events, like open days, gala days and outings, between the educators and the parents is one of the fundamental strategies of involving the parents in the education of their children.

### **2.7.2 Telephone Contact**

Effective communication between the school and home is very imperative in supporting the

learner to achieve his/her educational goals. Both the parents and the educators may use the telephone to contact one another to discuss the behaviour or performance of the child and this will promote sound relationships and may have a positive impact on the academic achievement of the learner.

### **2.7.3 Written Communication**

The parent may communicate with the school by means of a letter to enquire about the performance of his/her child or in order to discuss any problem related to the child's absence from school due to sickness. One of the challenges of using letters in communicating with parents is language literacy as most of the parents are not conversant with the English language and, therefore, the mother-tongue should be used (Hornby (2000: 37).

### **2.7.4 Parent-Teacher Meetings**

There is a need for both the parents and the educators to have meetings in order to discuss the challenges that they face in assisting the children to adulthood. Such meetings between the parents and educators may result in higher attendance rates, fewer behavioural problems and improved academic achievement (Hornby, 2000: 41).

### **2.7.5. Home Visits**

Educators may visit the homes of the learners to discuss the problems of learners with their parents which will assist them in maintaining good relations with the parents. Home visits promote the partnership between the parents and the educators. There is a need for all the partners to trust and support one another in their endeavour to assist the learners to succeed in their educational pursuits.

## **2.8 THE CONCEPTS OF LIFE ORIENTATION AND LIFE SKILLS**

Van Deventer (2009: 127) indicates that educational transformation in South Africa did not only bring about an Outcomes Based Education system, but it also introduced a new learning area/ subject called Life Orientation.

### **2.8.1. Introduction to Life Orientation**

Life Orientation is a combination of formative subjects, such as Religious Education, Moral Education, Guidance and Physical Education, which were part of the old curriculum prior to 1994 and were responsible for the spiritual, moral and physical development of learners. After the dawn of a democratic, non-racist South Africa, Life Orientation was introduced into Curriculum 2005, Revised National Curriculum Statements, National Curriculum Statements and, most recently, part of CAPS which is compulsory for all learners from Grade 4 to Grade 12. It is a learning area or subject that orientates children towards life in general/totality.

### **2.8.2 A Definition of Life Orientation and Life Skills**

Life Orientation concerns itself with the self in relation to others and to society, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagements, recreation and physical activity and career choices in an attempt to empower learners for a meaningful and successful life in a rapidly changing society (Department of Education, 2002: 4; Department of Education, 2003: 9; Department of Education, 2005: 7; Prinsloo, 2007: 156; Van Deventer, 2008: 132; Van Deventer, 2009: 129). It is a unique subject which applies a holistic approach to the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, motor and physical growth and development of learners. This means that it is central to the holistic development of learners.

The main purpose of the new learning area, Life Orientation, is to equip learners to engage on various levels, such as the personal, psychological, neuro-cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural and socio-economic. Learners are made aware of their constitutional rights and responsibilities, the rights of others and issues of diversity. They are encouraged to respond positively to the demands of the world; to assume responsibilities; and to make the most of life's opportunities. Life Orientation also promotes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values of learners in order to respond effectively to life's challenges that confront them in an informed, confident and responsible way and to play a meaningful role in society and the economy (DoE, 2002: 4; DoE, 2003: 9; DoE, 2004: 4; DoE, 2005: 8; Theron, 2008: 45; Van Deventer, 2008: 132; Van Deventer, 2009: 128).

Life Orientation, as a new subject in the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10–12, is based on four focus areas/learning outcomes, i.e. Personal Well-being, Citizenship Education, Recreation and Physical Activity and Careers and Career Choices. The envisaged outcomes of the Life Orientation are:

- Positive self-esteem and self-understanding, healthy relations, interpersonal respect, healthy and balanced lifestyle.
- Informed and responsible decision-making skills
- Independent, critical and creative thinking skills
- Devotion to life-long learning or career-mindedness
- An internal locus of control, adequate motivation levels
- Confidence about facing life challenges and the realization of personal potential (Theron, 2008: 47-48).

Internationally the term Life Skills Education is used as a subject in the curriculum whereas in a South African context it caters for the foundation phase. Life Skills refers to problem-solving skills for coping with the predictable problems of development; self-help skills; abilities in terms of adaptive and positive behaviour that enable people to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life; and the skills which are necessary for successful living and learning (Rooth; 2005: 88). This type of curriculum includes a comprehensive, integrated life skills education which enables young people to make informed choices and demonstrate healthy behaviour throughout their lives.

Yankah and Aggleton (2008: 467) define life skills-based education as a programme that focuses on a number of topics, such as human rights, citizenship and social issues, like health. Life Skills emphasizes the point that the basic rights of people and their well-being are taken into consideration just as in Life Orientation programmes. Life Skills also refers to the use of appropriate and responsible problem-solving behaviour in the management of personal affairs (Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006: 76). People should be able to utilize the skills to manage their own lives. Learners are given the chance to learn and apply these skills in real life situations; to participate in activities of the community; and to make connections between the home, school, workplace and career.



### **2.8.3 The Objectives of Life Orientation and Life Skills in South Africa**

The introduction of Life Orientation and Life Skills has signified a new era in a democratic South Africa - especially in the education system - and they serve the following objectives:

#### **2.8.3.1 *Empowerment of Learners***

The main purpose of Life Orientation as one of the learning areas is to empower learners to use their talents to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential (DoE, 2004: 4). The teaching and learning of Life Orientation programmes assists learners to make informed, morally responsible and accountable decisions about their health and the environment. It encourages learners to acquire and practice Life Skills that assist them to confront any challenges in their lives and enable them to play an active and responsible role in promoting the economy and the society at large.

#### **2.8.3.2 *Development of Self***

Life Orientation is concerned with the development of self in society and it enables learners to be responsible, healthy and productive citizens. It promotes human rights and constitutional values, like social justice, equality, respect, freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. The role of Life Orientation is to equip learners with skills, values and attitudes in order to live as decent, compassionate, law-abiding and peace-loving citizens (DoE, 2002: 4). The curriculum of Life Orientation as a learning area forms an excellent basis for equipping learners to respond positively to social demands, assume responsibilities and optimize their chances in life (Prinsloo, 2007: 155).

#### **2.8.3.3 *Adopt Positive Attitudes***

The Life Orientation programme assists learners to adopt positive attitudes towards physical activity, fitness and recreation. It may also create a space in which learners develop the skills of debate, dialogue, deliberation, critique and self-evaluation. Life Orientation is regarded as the medium through which bullying and violence in schools and the surrounding communities may be addressed. This indicates the significance of the role that Life Orientation plays in the holistic development of the child and in life in general.

#### **2.8.3.4 *Promotes Personal and Social Well-being***

The Life Skills programmes aim at promoting personal and social well-being and equipping humans to cope with the challenges that life brings. Life Skills assist learners to become socially and psychologically competent and enable them to function confidently and competently with themselves, with other people and within the community (Rooth, 2005: 88). Life Skills programmes promote positive healthy choices, such as taking informed decisions, practicing healthy behaviour and recognizing and avoiding risky situations and behaviour (Gachuhi, 1999: iv). The researcher is of the opinion that Life Skills is a global term that reaches beyond the realm of personal development.

#### **2.8.4 The Impact of Life Orientation and Life Skills on South African Learners and Internationally**

Life Orientation as a learning area empowers learners to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health; to demonstrate an understanding of, and commitment to, their own constitutional rights and obligations; to respect the cultures and religions of their fellow citizens; and to be able to use the acquired skills to achieve and extend personal potential; and to respond effectively to the challenges and problems encountered in the social world. The interviewed learners commented on the meaningfulness and empowering aspects of Life Orientation in their lives as they managed to acquire more knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to their physical development (Theron, 2008: 56). They also mentioned that it encouraged a healthy orientation to the world of work, i.e. in terms of career choices. Life Orientation provides learners with a safe place where they may feel free to express themselves in the classroom by experimenting and asking for assistance without any fear (Theron, 2008: 59).

The World Health Organization (2003: 11) maintains that Life Skills Education has an impact on the general education of learners by contributing to a decrease in alcohol misuse, drug abuse, smoking, delinquency, violence and suicide and an improvement in pro-social behaviour. It has a positive impact on mental health in relation to self-image, self-esteem, self-efficacy and social and emotional adjustment and a decrease in social anxiety. It contributes to school improvement with regard to behaviour, academic achievement and

absenteeism and it assists in the improvement of certain skills in students, like problem solving, communication and coping skills.

Life Skills Education empowers people to participate in the economy and in politics; it ameliorates gender inequalities; it enhances the quality of parenting; and it reduces anti-social behaviour and crime. In countries, such as the United States, the life Skills-based programmes are said to have contributed to a reduction of alcohol and tobacco use, substance abuse, gang crime and reoffending (Yankah & Aggleton, 2008: 466). The programmes also enabled people to communicate openly about the HIV epidemic, sex and drugs - due to the fact that people have the right attitude, think clearly and are able to stay safe. The teaching of these Life Skills programmes has contributed positively towards the holistic development of young people.

Yankah and Aggleton (2008: 480) maintain that these Life Skills-based programmes consistently delay sexual activity in young people in several Sub-Saharan African Countries and increase the use of contraceptives in Latin American countries. Generally, there is consensus that the successful implementation or teaching of these Life Orientation or Life skills programmes has a positive effect on the holistic development of learners, but that the impact is limited. Our schools still face problems of high learner delinquencies despite the teaching of Life Orientation programmes and, ultimately, the involvement of parents as one of the intervention strategies in supporting schools is imperative and may contribute to the creation of a positive school climate.

## **2.9 THE SCHOOL CLIMATE**

Pretorius and De Villiers (2009: 33) describe the school climate as the heart and soul of the school, i.e. it is about the essence of a school that leads children, teachers and other staff members to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day. The school climate is all about quality in the school that enables every individual to feel personal worth, dignity and importance. The school climate is further characterised as the quality of a school that creates a healthy learning place; nurtures children's and parents' dreams and aspirations; stimulates teachers' creativity and enthusiasm; and elevates all its members. Creemers and Kyriakides (2008: 255) maintain that the school climate is one of the strategies for school

effectiveness or improvement. By establishing a climate of trust, openness and collaboration amongst the stakeholders, school effectiveness will be realized.

The school climate may be a positive influence on the health of the learning environment or a significant barrier to learning (Mampane, 2001: 59). The climate of the school is something which is created by people and there is a need for the parents of learners to be actively involved in the education of their children in order to create a positive school climate. A positive school climate may have a positive impact on the academic achievement of learners. If parents play their role in supporting educators in executing their professional responsibilities, a positive climate may prevail in the school environment and every person will love to be part of that school. A negative school climate may contribute negatively to the educational achievement of the learners.

The environment or climate is widely acknowledged as a vital aspect of the life of an organization or school (Mailula, Laugksch, Aldridge & Fraser; 2003: 3). This means that each and every organization depends on the climate for its success as a negative climate may bring about the destruction of such an organisation. If the school climate is negative, then there will be a lack of discipline amongst the learners and other abnormalities will manifest themselves which will, ultimately, hinder effective and efficient teaching and learning.

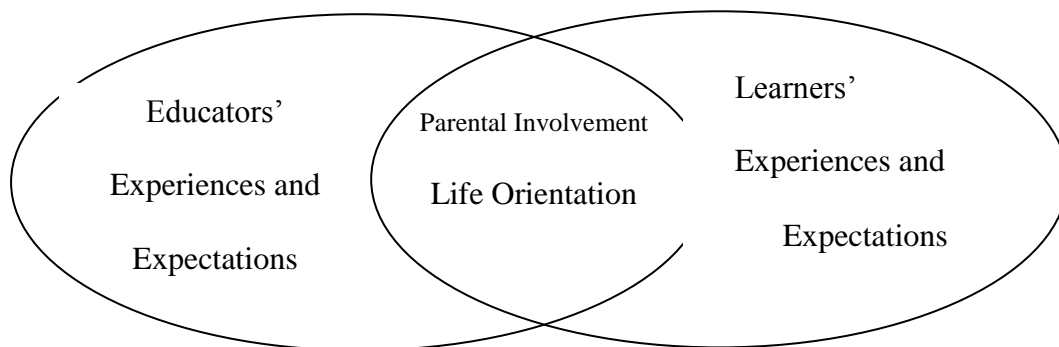
Research has confirmed that parental participation in the educational process at school leads to a great improvement in the school climate and in learners' achievements (Oosthuizen, 2003: 194). This shows that parental involvement may contribute to the creation of a positive climate at school - if used effectively. Squelch (2006: 262) agrees that parental involvement may create a more inviting school climate which will have an impact on the educational achievement, social development and the conduct of the learner.

## **2.10. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Smyth (2004; Burton, Brundrett & Jones, 2008: 37) explains a Conceptual Framework as a set of broad ideas, concepts and principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation and coherence to a study. Punch (2009: 83) extends this explanation by indicating that a Conceptual Framework is a representation, either graphically or in narrative form, whereby the main concepts or variables and their presumed relationship with each other are identified.

*The conceptual framework has the following benefits in a research study: It brings clarity and focus, helping us to see and organize the research questions more clearly; it helps to make explicit what we already know and think about the area and topic; it encourages selection, and assists in focusing and delimiting thinking during the planning stage and it can also help considerably in communicating ideas about the research i.e. simplifying the preparation of the research proposal and make it more convincing (Punch, 2009: 84).*

Based on the above definitions, this study will use the following Conceptual Framework:



**Figure 1:** Educators and Learners' Experiences of Parental Involvement

The above Conceptual Framework illustrates the relationship between the main concepts or ideas that give clear direction to this study. This model of a Conceptual Framework is based on the experiences and expectations of both educators and learners concerning the role of parents in supporting Life Orientation educators - especially in their teaching of Life Orientation. The successful implementation of the Life Orientation programmes needs a partnership of various stakeholders, such as the educators, the parents and the learners, as indicated in the above Conceptual Framework. A partnership is an ideal relationship between parents and educators (Vincent, 2000: 5). There is a need for educators and parents to work together in the education of learners by sharing the responsibilities.

The parents, as the primary educators, should perform their duties - especially in the teaching of the Life Orientation as a subject - which are, then, supplemented by the educators as professionals at schools. Based on the ideas of this Conceptual Framework, the researcher interviewed educators and learners to explore their commonalities and differences in terms of how they experience parental involvement and how they expect parents to be actively

involved in the teaching of Life Orientation. The educators and learners described their experiences and expectations in relation to parental support, especially in the teaching of Life Orientation. The educators and learners expect parents to play a major role in the education of the learners. The researcher also explored the commonalities and differences in terms of barriers to parental involvement and the proposed strategies to be applied in order to overcome those barriers. Research has shown that parental involvement has a positive impact on the teaching and learning of the learners.

## **2.11. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has focused on the value of parental involvement in the total development of learners; the partnership of parents and educators for the educational achievement and cognitive development of learners; and the objectives of Life Orientation and Life Skills as school subjects. The success of the teaching of Life Orientation/Life Skills programmes depends on an effective partnership between the school and home. The next chapter, Chapter 3, discusses the methodology and research design to be used in the collection of data from participants.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research approach, design, paradigm and methodology applied in this study is discussed. The methodology is the general approach a researcher uses that includes both data collection techniques and the theoretical assumptions they bring to the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003: 260). The data collection, data analysis techniques and the strategies employed to ensure credibility of the study are also examined.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research study explores the experiences of both the educators and the learners of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes in terms of an interpretive paradigm. Bokdan and Biklen (2003: 261) describe a paradigm as a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research. An interpretive paradigm is used to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights and a deeper understanding of the phenomena occurring in the social world by means of collecting predominantly qualitative data (Burton, Brundreth and Jones; 2008: 60).

Interpretative research is generally idiographic, which means that aspects of the social world are described by offering a detailed account of specific social settings, processes and relationships (King & Horrocks, 2010: 11). An interpretive paradigm has features where people are deliberate and creative in their actions; they actively construct their social world; and they interpret events, contexts and situations. Other features include multiple interpretations and perspectives of phenomena and situations that are changing rather than being fixed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison; 2007: 20-21).

The interpretivists perceive reality as a human construct - that people are the main source of data in the research process. Therefore, a qualitative study is subjective in terms of

knowledge construction whereby knowledge is constructed from multiple perspectives (Burton, Brundrett & Jones (2008: 62). Hittleman and Simon (2006: 9) believe that an interpretive paradigm puts more emphasis on social interaction, which is regarded as the basis of knowledge. This is explored further by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011: 4) who maintain that an interpretive paradigm assumes a social world which is constantly being constructed through group interactions and, as such, social reality is understood *via* the perspectives of social actors enmeshed in meaning-making activities. This can be achieved by using carefully constructed questions which are aimed at understanding the phenomena through semi-structured or open-ended interviews with the people involved as participants and operating within their own surroundings (O'Donoghue, 2007: 190). This study focused on the interpretation and understanding of the subjective experiences and meanings that the educators and the learners attach to their expectations of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation.

Interpretivists argue that multiple realities exist which are inherently unique because individuals construct them as they experience the world from their own vantage points (Hatch, 2002: 15). The researcher engages the participants of the study by interviewing them in their own natural setting in an effort to construct knowledge. It is the objective of this research to explore the experiences, feelings and meanings that educators and learners attach to their experiences on the presence or absence of parents in the teaching of Life Orientation.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach in exploring the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation. Qualitative research is a strategy that emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2004: 19). It is based on the use of words whereby the researcher describes, attaches meanings, interprets or tells a story about a particular phenomenon. Bogdan and Biklen (2003: 261, Hittleman & Simon, 2006: 65) describe qualitative research as an approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings; uses inductive thinking; and emphasizes understanding the subjects' points of view. Qualitative research is concerned with the interaction of people with other people and objects in their natural settings or contexts as well as answering the research questions inductively.



Qualitative research is characterized by the naturalistic setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the main research instrument; multiple sources of data; descriptive data; a concern with process rather than simply with outcomes; inductive data analysis interpretation of participants' meanings; emergent design; interpretive inquiry; and holistic account (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003: 4-7; Creswell, 2007: 20, Creswell, 2009: 175-176). This means that the analysis, interpretation and description of individual and group behaviour, attitudes, perceptions and convictions are incorporated in qualitative research (Prinsloo, 2007: 159).

In this study the researcher explores the meaning that the participants attach to their experiences of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes in rural secondary schools. In qualitative research meaning is socially constructed by individuals in their interaction with the world, i.e. applying their experiences in their social context. In general, qualitative research attempts to bring about an understanding of the phenomena from the perspective of the participant in terms of how educators and learners understand and experience parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation (Sharan & Associates, 2002: 6).

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is the overall, detailed plan or framework for collecting or obtaining, analyzing and interpreting data (Bryman, 2004: 27; Charles & Mertler, 2002: 384; Creswell, 2007: 27). In addition, Cassell and Simon (2004:326) see research design as an argument for the logical steps which will be taken to link the research question(s) and the issues that are related to data collection, analysis and interpretation in a coherent way. In addressing the research question, a Case Study was used in this research by collecting qualitative data with the objective of exploring the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. A Case Study has a qualitative research design wherein the researcher explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over a period of time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, audio visual material, documents and reports and then reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007: 73).

A Case Study also has a holistic focus, which aims to preserve and understand the wholeness and the unity of the case. This research is based on a Case Study of two selected secondary schools in the Phokoane Circuit in the Sekhukhune District. The phenomenon in this study is how educators and learners experience parental involvement and the boundaries are the support given by parents in teaching Life Orientation.

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION**

This study uses a case of two secondary schools in the Phokoane Circuit to gather qualitative data. The Phokoane Circuit is one of seven circuits in the Nebo Cluster in the Sekhukhune District which comprises 13 secondary schools. In terms of the annual matriculation results, the Sekhukhune District is one of the low performing districts in Limpopo Province, but in the past two years it has become the third best performing district in the province. The researcher selected the two schools purposefully and the criteria for their selection were based on their different socio-economic backgrounds. They, therefore, fall under different quintiles - one school is a quintile 1 and the other is a quintile 2. The schools have been categorized according to the norms and standards for school funding as their poverty levels are different and they also differ in terms of their learners' performance in the matriculation results. The South African Schools Act (SASA) S35 mandates the Minister of Education to determine national quintiles for public schools and national norms and standards for school funding and to set out criteria for distributing financial resources in a fair and equitable manner to all public schools. The two schools are given different financial resources due to the fact that they fall in different quintiles.

In this study a purposive sampling method was used to select participants. Purposive sampling is a strategy in which the researcher selects participants and sites for study that can inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007: 166). In purposive sampling the researcher uses his/her judgement in the selection of participants in relation to certain characteristics or traits and, as such, this study's selection of the participants is based on certain characteristics (Burton, Brundrett & Jones, 2008: 47).

Bearing in mind the characteristics of purposive sampling, the researcher selected two schools in the rural settlement of the Sekhukhune District where the majority of the parents

are unemployed while others work in the bigger, far-flung towns and in the cities. Some parents are illiterate and some learners live with their grannies. Another side to the communities is that some families are headed by children, many are secondary schools learners. During this study, two Life Orientation educators *per* school were selected to be interviewed as participants. The selected educators were those teaching Life Orientation to Grade 10s as well as other grades. This means that four educators were selected in total to participate in this study.

The study used interviews to collect data from participants because the interview is regarded as a very good strategy of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2003: 168; Punch, 2009: 144). The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews in this study because they allow for greater depth of information than any other method of data collection (O'Donoghue, 2007: 133). In the semi-structured interviews the researcher conducted a face-to-face interaction with the participants who are Life Orientation educators to explore their experiences in their own words. A semi-structured interview schedule was used with all educators in this study.

The researcher also selected Grade 10 learners in the same secondary schools as the educators. The educators, who teach Life Orientation to Grade 10 learners, were assigned the responsibility of organizing the learners and the researcher called for volunteers from the learners. The reason for selecting Grade 10 learners instead of Grades 9 or 12 ones was because most of the learners in Grade 10 are going through an adolescent phase of development in which high teenage pregnancy and dropout rates are caused by drug addiction, bullying activities and truancy. Due to the identified teenage problems during the adolescent period, there is a serious need for the teaching of Life Orientation programmes to try and change or influence the behaviour of learners and assist them in terms of educational achievement. In order to accomplish this task the involvement of parents is vital. According to informal reports from individual educators Grade 10 is one of the troublesome grades in most secondary schools. During the adolescent stage children need the guidance of both parents as primary educators and educators as secondary educators.

In the two selected secondary schools a large number of learners volunteered to participate in the study. The majority of the volunteers were minors under the age of 18. The learners were given assent forms because of their ages as minors and consent forms were sent to their

parents to request permission to engage their children in the study. Permission was granted by the parents and the learners agreed to participate in the interviews.

In School A 13 learners volunteered and they all managed to attend the interviews although only seven were actively involved during the face-to-face group interviews. In group interviews the researcher interviews the participants in a group. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005: 19) use the term, focus group, which is defined as a carefully planned discussion with a group of participants and which is designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. The focus group interview is a research technique which is used to collect data through group interaction on a particular topic determined by the researcher.

Group interviewing is a general term whereby the researcher works with several people, simultaneously, rather than just one person (Punch, 2003: 171). King and Horrocks (2010: 70) identify the following characteristics of group interviews: they highlight the respondents' attitudes, priorities, language and framework of understanding; they encourage a variety of communication from participants; they help to identify the group norms; they provide insight into the operation of group/social processes in the articulation of knowledge; they also encourage an open conversation about embarrassing subjects; and they facilitate the expression of ideas and experiences.

The researcher used an interview schedule during the interview process to collect data from the learners. Semi-structured interview questions were used during the group interviews. The role of the researcher in this study's group interviews was more of a facilitator than an interviewer whereby the researcher was facilitating, moderating, monitoring and recording the group interaction - as outlined by Punch (2003: 171; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 180). The group interviews were used to encourage open, interactive discussion amongst the participants and control was necessary to bring everybody on board and to avoid dominance (Punch, 2003: 171; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 180).

The researcher also used face-to-face individual interviews, i.e. one-on-one interviews with two learners from the same group to get further information, clarity and understanding. Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 181) regard individual interviews as vital because they enable the researcher to probe and which, ultimately, ensure that issues are covered in depth. The

researcher managed to probe the two learners' responses with follow-up questions to elicit more information and greater understanding.

In School B eight learners volunteered to participate in the interviews. They were given assent forms as they were all minors and permission was granted by their parents by means of the completed informed consent forms. The researcher interviewed all eight learners in a single interview using the same interview schedule as for School A and the majority of participants were actively involved in the process due to the fact that they were free to use their mother tongue. The researcher managed to use the tape recorder in collecting the data from the learners and the data was translated into English to simplify the issue of data transcription. The researcher also interviewed two learners using the face-to-face interview with probing questions for further information and greater clarity.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis was an ongoing process which involved continual reflection on the data; asking analytic questions; and writing memos throughout the study (O'Donoghue, 2007: 135; Creswell (2009: 184). Creswell (2009: 183; Sharan, 2009: 175) explains data analysis as a process of making sense of the text and data which may include consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and also what the researcher has seen and read. The main aim of data analysis is to look for trends and patterns that reappear within a single focus group or among various focus groups. The critical ingredients of a qualitative analysis are the systematic, sequential, verifiable and continuous analysis of data (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 20).

It is said that data analysis from the group interview is different to that obtained from the individual interview and that, as such, the researcher should consider the words, the context, the internal consistency, the frequency of comments, the extensiveness of comments, the specificity of comments and what was not said as well as finding the big idea (De Vos *et al.*, 2005: 21). The data analysis of this study was guided by the guidelines outlined by Hittleman and Simon (2006: 136; O'Donoghue, 2007: 135-136), i.e. the transcription of the orally obtained information; the organization of data; the familiarization with all the information; the coding and categorization of the data; and identification of themes and sub-themes.

The data obtained from participant educators and learners through in-depth, semi-structured interviews was transcribed from the tape recordings. The researcher ensured that every piece of data from interviews was transcribed immediately after the interviews. The transcription of data is a process of converting recorded material into text and is usually a necessary precursor to commencing the analysis of the interview data (King & Horrocks, 2010: 142).

After transcription the researcher organized the data according to the questions asked during the interviews to compare the different opinions in a particular set of data. Once the data was organized the researcher read through the data several times to familiarize himself with it and to have a clear understanding of the general views of the participants in relation to the study. The next step was the coding process. Creswell (2009: 186) explains coding as a process of organizing data into segments of text before bringing meaning to the information. Punch (2009: 175) maintains that coding is the starting activity in qualitative analysis and the foundation for what comes later. Coding is further referred to as a process of putting tags, names or labels on the pieces of the data. In this study the researcher used tags, labels or symbols to categorise the data and the categorization of the text eventually led to the emergence of six themes in terms of the experiences of educators and five themes for learners with respective sub-themes from the data collected from the participants.

### **3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY OF THE STUDY**

O'Donoghue (2007: 99) explains that trustworthiness is concerned with determining the extent to which there is confidence in the outcome of the study and the extent to which what the researcher has reported can be believed. The quality of the data in a qualitative study (validity and reliability) is measured by the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2004: 30; Creswell, 2003: 236; Creswell, 2009: 191; De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005: 346; O'Donoghue, 2007: 99; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 271). Trustworthiness simply means the accuracy and consistency of the findings. Creswell (2009: 190) distinguishes between qualitative validity and qualitative reliability by explaining the former as the means that the researcher uses to check the accuracy of the findings by using certain procedures whereas the latter refers to the researcher's approach which is consistent across different researchers and different projects. The validation of findings was done throughout this study by following all the steps in the

research process (e.g. identifying research method, sampling, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of data, etc) in order to check the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

The researcher ensured the accuracy of the study by means of the application of member checking whereby the researcher went back to the respondents to check or confirm with them whether the data collected and its interpretations represented their experiences, perspectives, beliefs, feelings and understandings of the study. Member checking helps in that participants are given opportunity to verify whether the researcher has represented their perspectives and that there is a correctness of the interpretation of the data. Cassell and Simon (2004: 330) suggest that checking the findings with the case study participants can be a valuable part of the data analysis and, as such, it may enhance the credibility of the study. The researcher used the audiotape recorder to record the data from the participants to avoid bias. The researcher also asked himself some questions during the data analysis process to promote reflexivity and he used his experience in the interpretation of the findings to enhance credibility.

The use of a rich, thick description of various themes was adhered to in order to promote the generalisation of the results, i.e. transferability. The researcher managed to utilize the experience of the supervisor (peer debriefing) who checked and reviewed the text and data. She also assisted with some of the interpretation of the text that the researcher could not understand to ensure the accuracy of the findings. The final report was also reviewed by an external auditor/examiner - as suggested by Creswell (2009: 192) to enhance the overall validity of a qualitative study.

To promote dependability the researcher used appropriate research procedures by explaining those procedures to the participants (e.g. voluntary participation, confidentiality of information, anonymity, withdrawal without prejudice, etc) and by cross-checking the sources of the collected data. Dependability refers to the criterion of rigour related to the consistency of findings (O'Donoghue, 2007: 100). In this study the researcher ensured the applicability of dependability by keeping all the records of the research process in an accessible form. He provided the participants with an account of the research findings and strove for dependability by using audio tapes and by compiling notes during the research process.

Another quality assurance strategy employed in this study is confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the data and its interpretation are grounded in events rather than the researcher's personal constructions (O'Donoghue, 2007: 100). The researcher spent a great deal of time with the participants in order to get more information and a greater understanding of their experiences in terms of the involvement of parents in supporting the Life Orientation educators. This was done by probing participants with further questions to get more clarity on certain aspects and to ensure that the information used in this study is the interpretation of the participants - not that of the researcher.

Data was collected from different sources, including life orientation educators and learners who are in Grade 10 to ensure the applicability of triangulation. Triangulation is the collection of information from several sources about the same event or behaviour (Hittleman & Simon, 2006: 137). In this study the experiences of parental involvement in the teaching of life orientation programmes of both educators and learners was explored through interviews. The researcher is regarded as the primary data gathering instrument because of his ability to construct questions in order to bring about an understanding of the phenomenon by means of semi-structured interviews within the participants' own natural contexts.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher was granted permission by the Limpopo Department of Education to conduct interviews with both educators and learners at the selected secondary schools in the Phokoane Circuit. The researcher was also given written permission by the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria to continue with the field work. All the participants in this study were requested to sign the informed consent forms prior to their participation. The learners were also requested to obtain permission from their parents as the majority of them were minors, i.e. under the age of 18. The researcher ensured that only those learners whose parents agreed to their participation were considered during the interviews and learners, then, completed the informed assent forms for their participation. The informed consent forms explained the purpose of the study; indicated the data gathering methods; and set out who the beneficiaries of the research study would be. Prior to the start of the interviews the researcher told the participants about the procedures that would be followed. The participants were also told that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.



The collected data was treated confidentially and the anonymity of the participants in the study was also adhered to. King and Horrocks (2010: 117) are adamant that confidentiality is crucial, especially when using group interviews which were used for the collection of data from the learners. Anonymity refers to concealing the identity of the participants in all documents related to the research, i.e. actively protecting the identity of the research participants (King & Horrocks, 2010: 117). The researcher promised participants that their identities would remain secret and would not to be disclosed either verbally or in any publications. In order to protect the identity of the participants, the researcher used pseudonyms during data gathering and during the processing of interview notes, tapes and transcripts. Care was also taken concerning privacy by ensuring that no school or participant could be identified in reporting the results.

### **3.9 LIMITATIONS**

Limitations are a factor that may affect the study in an important way and the researcher does not control them. In this study the available time to conduct the research affected the study as the schools were involved in continuous assessment (CASS), moderation and tests which affected the researcher's work plan. Secondly, the tape recorder which was used in the initial interviews in School B failed to record and in trying to organize second interviews at the same institution the researcher waited for three months for another opportunity to interview the learners. This never materialized and then he was compelled to select another secondary school in the same area.

### **3.10 DELIMITATIONS**

This research study explores only the experiences of educators and learners related to parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes in the Phokoane Circuit where two secondary schools were selected for the purpose of data collection. The researcher selected only Life Orientation educators as participants in this study and only Grade 10 learners who were interviewed for the collection of data. The researcher used interviews only as a data collection strategy as the study was limited to qualitative data. This study is also limited to quintile 1 and quintile 2 schools only.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has focused on a discussion of the research approach, data collection procedures and data analysis. The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents detailed research findings on the experiences of educators concerning parental involvement in supporting the teaching of Life Orientation.

## CHAPTER 4

# HOW EDUCATORS EXPERIENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN CREATING A POSITIVE CLIMATE IN THE TEACHING OF THE LIFE ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data collected from four Life Orientation educators in two selected secondary schools (School A and School B). The researcher interviewed the four educators with the purpose of exploring their experiences relating to parental involvement in creating a positive climate in the teaching of the Life Orientation programmes. In analysing the data, the researcher identified six themes which were further divided into sub-themes.

### 4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF LIFE ORIENTATION EDUCATORS

The following table includes the bibliographical information of the educators who participated in the study.

<b>Educator</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Teaching Experience in Subject</b>	<b>Subjects Teaching</b>	<b>Grade(s)</b>
James (School A)	Male	Seven (7) Years	Life Orientation & Life Sciences	10; 11 & 12
Bridget (School A)	Male	Six (6) Years	Social Sciences; Life Orientation & English	10 10 9
Sipho (School B)	Male	Three (3) Years	Life Orientation; Agriculture & Arts & Culture	10 10 9
Peter (School B)	Male	Six (6) Years	Life Orientation & English	11 & 12 10

**Table 4.2:** Biographical Information of Life Orientation Educators

### 4.3 THEMES

In analysing both the individual and focus group interviews with the teachers from School A and School B, the following themes and sub themes emerged. The first theme is based on the experiences of educators in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes.

#### **Theme 1: Experiences of Educators in the Teaching of Life Orientation Programmes**

This theme is based on how educators in School A and School B experience parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. The researcher reports on how educators experience the teaching of Life Orientation as a subject; how educators experience parental involvement/support in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes; how educators experience the presence and absence of parents in terms of improving the teaching of Life Orientation programmes.

##### *Sub-Theme 1.1: Experiences of Educators Concerning Life Orientation as a Subject*

During the interviews, all four educators agreed that Life Orientation programmes cover a wide range of facets concerning the lives of the learners, such as social aspects, physical training, health issues, career choices, i.e. the child in totality which indicates the importance of Life Orientation in the school curriculum. Life Orientation embraces the whole life of the learner. Bridget, one of the educators expressed the following:

Life Orientation covers many aspects, like eh...our health, our social life, our well being, our...What can I say? Anything concerning life, careers, sports (Bridget).

Most of the educators interviewed view Life Orientation as one of the most interesting and enjoyable subjects and which moulds the character of the learners. The educators reported that they enjoyed teaching the subject because it addressed practical issues for the learners, like knowing their body parts, choosing careers, exercising and teaching them about various diseases. One educator commented:

What I have experienced about teaching Life Orientation is that this is one of the most interesting subjects I have ever taught and the reason being that this is the subject which allows me to be in contact with the learners to help to mould their character, for example, and also guiding them with regard to their career choices and life under

In terms of experience in teaching this subject, two educators out of four indicated that at first when this subject was introduced it was really difficult to teach because of a lack of training. They attended some workshops but the experience was not sufficient to empower them to impart knowledge to the learners. They have changed their attitudes and now enjoy teaching the subject. Peter said:

I started teaching it way back in 2006. We were just called for workshops; they workshopped us in 2005 although not much work done, we were struggling in teaching this subject but I think in any case these days I'm coming alright in teaching this subject because I'm using different books and I know where to start especially when you are having what you call pace setter ( Peter).

### ***Sub-Theme 1.2: The experiences of Educators concerning Parental Involvement in the Teaching of Life Orientation***

All four educators indicated that the parents of the learners were hardly involved in the teaching of Life Orientation. There is a lack of parental involvement. It seems that parents are not supportive of the educators and they do not monitor the work of their children. Most of the educators further indicated that parents are not open to sharing information with their children on issues, such as sex and HIV/AIDS, due to cultural beliefs, lack of information and lack of skills. They are unwilling or feel that they are undermining themselves if they take part in assisting their children. Peter from School B mentioned that parents shift the responsibilities due to the fact that they do not regard themselves as educators. This is what the educators said:

Ah...something I can say, parental involvement...eh...I think Life Orientation needs the involvement of parents (James).

Sometimes when you assess them, when you give them work, when you are assessing them here and there you can see that this learner was assisted by somebody but I think eh...the role that parents play is very little (Bridget).

In my experience I think that parental involvement - if I understand this question clearly - is minimal, parental involvement is minimal in my own experience (Sipho).

Although parental...I can say parental involvement is minimal because eh...some of our parents, they shift responsibility to educators (Peter).

The educators also expressed their views in terms of the existence of a relationship of trust between the parents and the educators. Most of the educators associated bad behaviour amongst learners to a lack of a relationship between parents and educators. One of the educators, Sipho, suggested that a joint-venture between the parents and the educators is important in building the characters of the learners as Life Orientation was a vehicle to mould the good character of learners. The educators also emphasised the need for regular meetings between the educators and parents. One educator, Peter, differed from the rest by indicating that he thought bad behaviour amongst learners was linked to learners not trusting their parents and as a result those learners resorted to trusting some educators and peers for information. A quote from one educator, Sipho, says:

...the absence of parents in some learners' homes is a very serious challenge to us because for the Life Orientation to succeed parents must be there because what we are doing here at school is to complement what parents should be doing at home

### ***Sub-Theme 1.3: The Experiences of Educators of the Presence of Parents***

All educators who were interviewed indicated that the presence of parents in the lives of their children has a positive impact, i.e. learners behave more responsibly and there is an improvement in their academic performance due to the fact that parents are able to monitor their behaviour and their work. There is a perception amongst educators that the presence of parents will result in solving problems, an understanding of the school situation and in establishing good relations. Bridget indicated that when parents are present, they are able to come to school and enquire about the work of the child at school.

When parents are present, you can see the behaviour of the learners is promising; it shows that there is someone at home who is also trying by all means to guide this learner so that eh...she/he can alleviate us also the work here at school of moulding these learners' character (Sipho).

#### ***Sub-Theme 1.4: The Experiences of Educators of the Absence of Parents***

The absence of parents means there is no one - especially at home - who monitors the behaviour and the work of the children. This was confirmed by the responses of the four educators who all indicated that the absence of parents was manifested in learners behaving badly, becoming bullies and performing badly or not improving their academic performance. The educators indicated the following:

Eh...what I can say, what I noticed is that the behaviour of the learners eh...they are different. Where the parent is not there you'll find that eh...the learner is a bully, he is behaving in a negative way (Peter).  
If they are absent then we are going to encounter some problems that learners will not do as expected because parents at home they are not doing anything (Bridget).

#### ***Sub-Theme 1.5: How to Improve the Teaching of the Life Orientation Programmes***

The perception of the majority of the educators is that by undergoing formal training and specialising in Life Orientation, educators can improve the teaching of the subject. James argued that the workshops that they attended were not sufficient as there was a need to further their studies specialising in Life Orientation. Educators believe that furthering their studies will empower them with the content knowledge to be imparted to learners. This is what the educators said:

What I can say eh...if teachers teaching life orientation eh...can be empowered more than they are having in their hands empowered maybe sent to university to study further (furthering studies) so and then government pay for them to go on to study at the masters level and then I think there will be an improvement (James).  
...and then we need also to extend our knowledge by registering for further education training specialising in this subject (Peter).

The educators who were interviewed felt that the availability of resources may contribute towards the effective teaching of the subject. Peter emphasised the involvement of curriculum implementers as another way of improving the teaching of Life Orientation because it was assumed that they have more knowledge in the subject which would be helpful to the educators.

Bridget, one of the educators, argued that people needed to change their attitude towards the subject and develop a more positive attitude. If this was done, a positive climate would be created. It was suggested that educators should ensure that learners performed the practical activities, like exercising and that educators should teach them about careers and health issues as Life Orientation is a practical subject. These arguments are from the following quotations:

...and then we also need to involve our curriculum implementers because they are the ones who have knowledge in all the subjects then they can share ideas with us, the information can be helpful to us (Peter).

Number one is about attitude, positive attitude then number two must make this eh...engage your learners make them to participate in the lessons eh...and also Life Orientation is not confined to the classroom only take them outdoor to the sports field and even the learners who are normally quite you will see them laughing and then starting to be open when they are outdoor in the sports field (Bridget).

Peter also mentioned the establishment of Life Orientation clubs whereby Life Orientation educators from different schools come together to share information about the subject. The use of pace setters in the offering of the subject may also improve the teaching of Life Orientation, i.e. by creating a positive climate. The next theme is based on the various roles of educators in the teaching of Life Orientation.

## **Theme 2: The Roles of Educators in the Teaching of Life Orientation**

In this theme the researcher concentrated on the roles played by Life Orientation educators in the teaching of this programme. The educators managed to identify various roles that they play, taking into account the learners in their totality. This theme presents the roles of the educators in terms of preparing learners for future life; guiding learners on career choices; and advising them about a healthy lifestyle. There are other roles of educators but for this study only the above mentioned ones were considered.



### ***Sub-theme 2.1: Preparing Learners for Future Life***

All four educators perceived the main role of the Life Orientation educators as preparing learners for a brighter future. Siphon, one of the educators, mentioned guiding learners in order to become better citizens of this country. As the facilitators of learning, the educators guide the learners on how to succeed in their academic performances. One educator said the following to support the statements:

My role is to let the learners to be aware of their future; to be aware of their lives; and to be aware of their future careers (James).

Some of the educators indicated that there is a need to advise learners about choosing their future careers. One educator argued that parents should not choose careers for their child as in the end the learner will become frustrated.

Life Orientation I should believe it has replaced what was called guidance it has guidance in it especially this one learning outcome number 4 of career and career choices that people they must learn how to choose career, how they can apply for a work and they learn how they can be interviewed so that they know much (Peter).

### ***Sub-theme 2.2: Playing an Advisory Role on Healthy Lifestyle***

There is a common understanding amongst the educators that another role of Life Orientation educators is to promote an awareness of living a healthy lifestyle. The educators mentioned that they create an awareness of the importance of physical fitness in the learners. Another point which some educators did mention is that learners are made aware of the dangerous diseases, like HIV/AIDS, and are warned not to engage in sexual activity at a young age. One educator, James, even mentioned that he sometimes sits with the learners who are HIV Positive to offer them some counselling.

...life orientation you learn so many things like diseases, learners must be aware of dangerous diseases that they should not involve/engage in sex whilst they are still young, they must wait because eh...now in our days there is this danger of these eh...incurable diseases like HIV/Aids (Bridget).

Having discussed the roles of educators in the teaching of Life Orientation, there are some challenges faced by Life Orientation educators, now the next theme is based on those challenges.

### **Theme 3: Challenges Faced by Educators in the Teaching of Life Orientation Programmes**

This theme is based on the challenges faced by the Life Orientation educators from the two selected schools in the teaching of the subject. The educators mentioned challenges, which included a lack of formal training, limited allocation of time, lack of teaching facilities, lack of practice amongst learners and a lack of openness.

#### ***Sub-theme 3.1: Lack of Formal Training***

Two educators, James and Peter, considered a lack of formal training in the teaching of Life Orientation as one of the challenges faced by Life Orientation educators. The subject was not part of the curriculum when these educators were trained as educators by various teaching institutions. There is a perception that formal training empowers educators to be specialists in the subject and this would enable them to impart the relevant knowledge to the learners. The educators said the following:

Although I'm teaching this subject, I've never get eh...never got a formal learning about it for master training for this subject, eh...I just read the information from the books and then it is interesting, I like it very much this subject (Peter).  
....as a Life Orientation teacher if you want to be a specialist you have to do it at tertiary level so that you can go on with it...eh...help other people (James).

#### ***Sub-theme 3.2: Resources for Teaching Life Orientation***

Some educators mentioned that the time allocated for Life Orientation was not sufficient as it covers many areas and as a result many aspects are neglected. Another reason why it is allocated only a few periods is that the subject is not taken seriously by the department. That is why in Grade 12 the subject is written internally.

.....another thing is the allocated periods; the allocated time for teaching this is not adequate, is very little so you are unable to cover all the aspects (Bridget).

Sipho and Bridget referred to a lack of resources, such as physical fitness equipment, which compromises the learners' opportunities for promoting a healthy body. James emphasised the need to read different books to acquire more knowledge as a Life Orientation educator. A lack of such resources will, therefore, be a limiting factor.

Moses and Peter believe that one of the challenges faced by Life Orientation educators is that although learners acquire knowledge in the classroom concerning the dangers of substance abuse and drugs, a healthy lifestyle, matters concerning sex and diseases, they do the opposite of what they are told. There is lack of seriousness amongst learners and they learn these things only to pass; they fail to practice what is learned - ultimately, end with negative results.

....even though you tell them these physical activities you need to practice them at your own time, as at the school we do not have enough time to do them, they do not just follow them but eh...when you are required to evaluate them is then that you get the problem (Peter). This subject eh...is a practical subject because it talks about things which are happening in the life of these kids (Sipho).

### ***Sub-theme 3.3: Lack of Openness***

Some of the educators argued that there is a lack of openness, especially with regard to discussing sexual matters and there were conflicting opinions regarding whose responsibility it was to teach the children. Both the educators and the parents avoid the responsibility of talking about sex because of cultural influences in the society - and this is a limiting factor. Peter, one of the educators, also mentioned that learners are afraid to ask their parents some questions and prefer to ask their peers. Educators responded in the following way:

And some educators for instance have got attitude they think that eh...maybe it is not proper to talk some of the things in class especially in front of the learners that are sensitive that one must not say in front of the learners especially sexual issues (Bridget). Parents are unable to tell these learners at home, they learn these things here at school (James).

Besides the challenges faced by Life Orientation educators, they also have expectations from the parents of learners and those expectations will be discussed in the following theme.

#### **Theme 4: Expectations of Educators**

In this theme the researcher tried to explore what educators expect from the parents of the learners and also what they do not expect from the same parents in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. The following sub-themes are:

##### ***Sub-Theme 4.1: The Expectations of Life Orientation Educators from Parents***

Bridget indicated that educators expect parents to play a major role in assisting educators with the teaching of learners. Most of the Life Orientation educators who were interviewed maintained that they expect parents to be open with their children. Educators expect parents to talk openly to their children about their experiences with regard to sex, general behaviour, diseases and their school work. Siphon agreed that parents should be free to come to the school to talk about the behaviour of the children. Parents need to ask their children whether or not they had homework and, in this way, try to help the educators. There is a perception amongst the educators that the involvement of parents will reduce the high rate of pregnancies in the secondary schools. This is the view of one educator:

The parents should be open because especially in our school, we have a high rate of pregnancy eh...so you can see that there is something lacking because most of the girls here fall pregnant at an early age (Bridget).

Educators reported that they really need the support of the home. James is of the opinion that parents have an important role to play in changing the behaviour of their children. All educators who were interviewed expect a partnership between the home and the school to exist in order to shape the characters of the children. There is an assumption that a partnership between the school and the home will promote discipline and respect amongst the learners and, ultimately, we will have better citizens.

Let me say if the child, for example, is at adolescent stage and the ...the parents have to help us at home because we are trying to advise the children at the learning situation (James).

#### ***Sub-Theme 4.2: What Educators do not expect from Parents***

Most of the educators do not expect parents to shift their responsibilities by saying that it is the work of the educators to teach the children. They do not expect parents to act as spectators but, rather, to be really involved in the education of their children. They also do not expect parents to criticise educators or say bad things about educators in the presence of the children because this will undermine and disrespect the educators. There is a perception amongst the educators that parents are saying bad things about them. Another educator, Bridget, extended this response by suggesting that parents should not use vulgar language or bullying behaviour when talking to their children; they should talk to them in a respectful manner. Educators also objected the choosing of careers for the learners by parents which would, ultimately, frustrate the learners. Examples of the educators' quotes:

Eh...they must not when they are having they are together with the children at home...they must not eh...say bad about the teachers because if they say bad about teachers the children will start to look down upon the teachers.....(James).  
What I expect parents not to do is to sit down and say the teachers will take care of everything (Sipho).  
And then what I'm expecting the parents to do is that they must not criticise the educators in front of the learners, we know they call us names.....(Peter).  
Eh...maybe using vulgar words to learners, to kids, using vulgar words, bullying kids, they should talk to them in a very well mannered manner (Bridget).

Although educators expect parents to play an important role in the teaching of Life Orientation, there are some barriers which will be discussed in the next theme.

### **Theme 5: Barriers to Parental Involvement**

This theme illustrates the barriers to parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. The educators identified the following barriers:

### ***Sub-theme 5.1: Schools Failing to Involve Parents***

All the educators agreed that one of the barriers to parental involvement is the school failing to involve the parents in the affairs of the school. The educators argued that schools do not have policies that encourage parental involvement and it becomes difficult for an educator to invite parents to come and check on the learners' work. The educators said:

Let me say even the management itself, school management...if the school management is not willing to advise parents to come and the parents will never come (James).  
Sometimes we as educators to be honest eh...we do not invite parents to can come to school whereby we will be able to talk to them about the performance of their children (Sipho).  
Maybe I can also say the other barrier can be us failing to involve them eh...failing to involve them (Peter)  
Most of our schools do not have a policy on that *ja*...we don't have a policy of engaging parents especially in the teaching of their...in the education of their children (Bridget).

### ***Sub-theme 5.2: Migration Labour***

The Life Orientation educators concurred that the issue of parents working far away from their homes or their children is a major obstacle. Socio-economic factors compelled the parents to leave their homes and their children which compromised the education of the children. Sipho believes that even parents who stay with their children fail to monitor their work. The Life Orientation educators commented:

...and then we are having also a problem of migration labour, most of our learners are heading their families because their father is at work somewhere and the mother in another place and they leave the learners alone.....(Peter).  
*Ja*, there are some the first being working far away from their homes whereby you'll find that the parent is working around Johannesburg or Witbank which is plus, minus 200 to 300km away from eh...the child so that the parent only comes at the end of the month or almost the nearly whole month the parent cannot monitor the progress of the child at home and even at school (Sipho).  
But they don't come all of them and others don't give apologies why they don't come and that is a problem, others are working, others are old, some of the learners are staying with their grannies so it is difficult for them to come to school (Bridget).

### ***Sub-theme 5.3: Lack of Interest amongst Parents***

Another barrier is that parents do not show any interest in the education of their children. Bridget maintained that when parents are invited to a meeting at school they do not come and

they do not even sent an apology. This indicates their lack of commitment to the work of their children and it suggests that some parents think that everything should be done by the educators. Educators, like Peter, argued that a lack of knowledge and a lack of openness amongst the parents are, essentially, barriers to parental involvement. The educators said:

...then eh...I can also say another barrier can be little knowledge (how can I put it?) some parents are not discussing issues with their learners with their children maybe especially in life orientation we have these things like HIV/aids .....they are afraid to talk are not free to talk (Peter).  
...the parents of Grade 12 learners but they do not come all of them and others do not give apologies, why they don't come and that is a problem (Bridget).  
Some parents I think they are not interested to their children's education (James).

#### ***Sub-theme 5.4: Inferiority Complex***

The majority of the educators suggested an inferiority complex amongst the parents as a barrier to parental involvement. There is a perception that sometimes parents underestimate themselves for reasons, such as low self-esteem, illiteracy and poverty. As a result they fail to help their children with their school work or when they are invited to the school they make excuses not to attend. Bridget also mentioned the issue of parents not trusting themselves and arguing that everything should be done by the educators. The educators said the following:

Maybe parents feel that eh...we cannot teach our children something that is happening at the school especially when the parent has not even pass matric we can talk of inferiority complex (Peter).  
To add to that or to add on what you have said maybe the question of inferiority complex and also be something that can be considered only to find that maybe parents because of their standing in the community they feel very much inferior to can come and approach us as educators about problems which might need their attention as well (Sipho).  
I think it is just the mind set...most of the parents still believe that eh...they got no trust in themselves they think everything should be done by educators (Bridget).

Besides the identified barriers towards parental involvement, the researcher outlines possible strategies of overcoming those barriers in the next theme.

## **Theme 6: Possible Strategies for Overcoming the Identified Barriers**

In this theme the researcher presents the recommendations of the four Life Orientation educators of possible strategies that could be applied to overcome the various, identified barriers. In the discussion the following, various suggestions concerning the overcoming of barriers are given:

### ***Sub-theme 6.1: Parents' Meetings***

The common sentiment amongst the educators interviewed during data collection was that one of the strategies to overcome some of the barriers to parental involvement is to invite parents to meetings at the school. In these meetings, parents could be encouraged to check the books of the learners; to monitor the performance and behaviour of their children; and to feel free to contact the school if they experienced problems with their children. Peter encourages parents to be open in order to share information with educators about their children in order to promote a parent-educator relationship. Siphso perceived meetings as a vehicle to empower parents with Life Orientation knowledge and to assist them in knowing how to implement the Life Orientation programmes in preparing their children for the future.

I think it is important for the school under general to close the gap between themselves and the parents the question is how...by sometimes organising parental meetings whereby not eh...let me say the general issues of the school are discussed....(Siphso). Then another thing we need to encourage these parents especially in a parents meeting we need to encourage them to look, to check the learners' work if they are doing the correct thing, to check the learners' work (Peter).

### ***Sub-theme 6.2: Parental Involvement Policy***

Bridget, one of the educators, recommended that schools should develop policies that encourage parental involvement in the education of their children and ensure that all stakeholders were aware of such policies. The policies should encourage compulsory participation amongst parents in the education of their children. The school management should create an environment that is conducive to parental involvement.



If the school could create a climate whereby eh.. parents are constantly engaged like maybe in the school policy they set a clause that parents should eh...do this and that I think that will help (Bridget).

Another of the educators, Siphon, put forward the idea that the development of a sports programme could assist in overcoming the barriers to parental involvement in the sense that parents would be able to take part in these programmes. The parents would also assist learners when it comes to various sporting activities as some of the parents have some knowledge of various sports. The other aim of these programmes would be to promote awareness on health issues, like exercising and eating the right food.

We can also organise let me say programmes, sport programmes whereby we request parents to take part in them because sports is part and parcel of life orientation it falls under one of the learning outcomes of life orientation so we also invite parents to come and help where possible (Siphon).

### ***Sub-theme 6.3: Partnership of Stakeholders***

Some educators believe that a partnership of all stakeholders in education, including the teaching staff, parents, learners and school management, could help to overcome the barriers towards the effective teaching of Life Orientation programmes. James said the following to substantiate this:

...and these things can be solved if the stakeholders in education can be involved like teaching staff, parents and the management and if they are involved to take part in these problems, these problems will be solved (James).

## **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has focused on an analysis of data in terms of the experiences of educators of parental involvement in creating a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. The analysed data was divided into themes and sub-themes – each of which was discussed in terms of the collected information. The next chapter, Chapter 5, looks at the experiences of learners concerning parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes.

## CHAPTER 5

# HOW LEARNERS EXPERIENCE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE TEACHING OF LIFE ORIENTATION

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how learners from the two selected secondary schools experience the involvement of parents in the teaching and learning of Life Orientation programmes. In this study the researcher selected Grade 10 learners, as participants, who were interviewed in groups. Thereafter, two learners from each of the two schools were interviewed further as a follow-up mechanism for greater clarity and understanding. The researcher read, coded and categorized the data into the following themes and sub-themes.

### 5.2 THEMES

The first theme focuses on the experiences of learners with regard to parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation.

#### **Theme 1: Experiences of Learners Regarding Parental Involvement in the Teaching of Life Orientation**

This theme examines the experiences of learners with respect to Life Orientation as a subject in the school curriculum and it looks at how learners experience parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes.

#### ***Sub-theme 1.1: How learners Experience Life Orientation as a Subject***

Learners from both selected secondary schools concurred that Life Orientation is an interesting and enjoyable subject. It is a practical subject that empowers them with more knowledge about their bodies; living a healthy lifestyle through exercising in order to keep themselves fit; being aware of the sexually transmitted diseases, like HIV/AIDs; learning about the different stages that they undergo in growing into adulthood, like adolescent; and

how to choose careers for their future lives. There was consensus that Life Orientation teaches learners about life, in general, and how to behave both at home and at school. A learner from School A was convinced that Life Orientation empowers learners to have self-confidence in life and to prepare them for adulthood. Some learners from School A differed from the others by taking Life Orientation for granted and regarding it as a free period, i.e. time to relax from the main subjects or a time to play. Some of the contributions of the learners are:

I think is about things that happen in life, the changes in the body. Life Orientation is general knowledge about yourself, what is happening in yourself. I think is about teaching a person how to live a positive lifestyle and be a better person (Learner 1 from School A).

Life Orientation is a good subject that makes us and we understand it so we are able to exercise in order to be healthy because most of the time we just eat and we don't exercise but at school we are able to learn about life orientation and we go to the ground in order to be active (School B learners).

I think Life Orientation is just a hobby to us so we take break from all this main subjects, something that is easy to ask (Learner 2 from School A).

Most of the learners indicated that they like Life Orientation as it encourages them to exercise by becoming involved in physical training in order to keep themselves fit to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They also mentioned that they like Life Orientation because it promotes an awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and encourages them to live a good life. The learners are also orientated in terms of career choices and knowledge about themselves, in totality.

The one thing I like about Life Orientation is exercising, it teaches us about diseases and how they are transmitted and how to prevent them and it also help us in terms of career choices (Learner from School B).

I like exercising, I like the fact that they teach us about the stages that we go through, like puberty and the adolescent stages (Learner 1 in School A).

I like Life Orientation because it teaches about ourselves, what is happening in our bodies and how to take care of our bodies and teaches us the healthy lifestyle (Learner 2 in School A).

### ***Sub-theme 1.2: How Learners Experience Parental Involvement in the Teaching of Life Orientation***

Most of the learners from both schools agreed that the involvement of parents in their academic achievement and in life, in general, is minimal. One learner from School A felt that only a limited number of parents are involved in the education of their children. Some of the learners argued that a lack of parental guidance is one of the causes of the high rate of teenage pregnancies and the involvement of learners in substance abuse in most of the secondary schools. A learner from School B maintained that there is a perception amongst parents that if you talk to children about sex it is a license for the children to experiment with what they have been taught and, therefore, parents are ashamed to talk to their children about sex. Some learners from School A were of the opinion that some parents are helping learners by encouraging them to exercise, not to smoke and drink and also assist them when they encounter problems. The learners said the following in their discussions:

Like here at school, for instance, this year... let me give example this year there are many learners who are pregnant and they are still young so parents need to come to school and talk to the teachers and try to address the children (Learners from School B).

Exercising and smoking that is where they are helping us. Exercising and training, smoking and drinking. Even in our problems, in our problems (Learners from School A).

Hm...parents are not involved, *ja*, maybe they may be involved but not fifty percent maybe 30% or 20% are involved ( Learner from School B).

The learners are convinced that parents have the perception that learners will learn everything at school and that, as such, there is no need for them to be involved in the education of their children.

In terms of career choices, learners differed in the sense that one learner from School A argued that due to a lack of information most parents still choose careers for their children and do not give their children the freedom to choose. Another learner disagreed by saying that parents are not involved in terms of choosing careers for their children.

Ha! I think 10% of parents allow children to make their own choices but I don't think most maybe 90% left are maybe your parent have not went to school or whatever and the like O. K. I wanted to be a doctor so now because I'm not a doctor but they tell you to be a doctor and you want to be farmer or something else or maybe they choose a career for you (Learner from School B).

No, they always choose careers for their learners but they have changed their mind, back then they used to say you must take this but you don't like it they always say you gonna fail (Learner from School A).

### ***Sub-Theme 1.3: The Experiences of Learners Concerning the Presence and Absence of parents***

Some learners considered the presence of parents in their education to be a means of promoting good behaviour by teaching them to behave well and respect other people and by offering support and advice when learners are having problems, especially those related to sexually transmitted diseases. Learners agreed that if parents are present, they are able to check their books and this would have a positive effect on their academic achievement. Learners from School B suggested that the presence of parents in the lives of their children could assist learners when choosing careers for their future lives.

The majority of the learners believed that the absence of parents is a contributing factor in the high rate of teenage pregnancies and their involvement in substance abuse. A learner from School A was of the opinion that the absence of parents may result in learners not coping well in their academic work, and not completing their homework - due to a lack of parental supervision. The same learner also argued that some learners enjoy the absence of their parents because they like the freedom to do whatever they want.

Some of the learners are coping well because they like freedom but some of them are not, if you lack your parent then you are not going to cope well so if you don't care about them if you don't like being disciplined then you gonna get freedom (Learner from School A).

The next theme focuses on the challenges faced by learners especially during the Life Orientation lessons.

## **Theme 2: The Challenges Faced by Learners during Life Orientation Lessons**

This theme relates to the challenges faced by learners during the teaching and learning of Life Orientation. The following sub-themes illustrate some of the things that learners do not like about Life Orientation lessons.

### ***Sub-Theme 2.1: Lessons on Issues Concerned with Sex***

Most of the members of the two groups, i.e. in Schools A and B, said that they do not like it when educators talk about issues concerned with sex in the classroom, especially in front of the opposite sex. The learners felt that learners should be separated into boys and girls and be taught by different educators, such as a male educator teaching boys only. One learner from School A strongly maintained during individual interview that learners should not be taught separately as they all need the information to help them in future. Another challenge is the fact that learners assume that the teaching of sex education encourages them to experiment with what they are learning in class.

The learners in School B also mentioned that one of the challenges in the learning of Life Orientation is the strenuous exercises that they do at school. Only one learner from School B differed from the rest by indicating that she likes everything in Life Orientation because it is helpful in moulding character and promoting self-esteem and what children are learning is important information that they need to know as they grow towards adulthood. The learners said:

We don't like Life Orientation because we don't think girls had to hear what is happening to boy's body so we respect the fact that we don't think girls had to hear what is happening to a boy's body (Learners from School A).

Hm...I think I wanna change my mind about that.....sometimes if you a doctor you are not gonna if you are a man, you are not gonna work with only man you must know most about ladies, you gonna work with both of them (Learner from school A).

The more they talk about these sex matters, it is the more we do all those things because we want to experience what they telling us (Learner 1 from School B).

Actually there is nothing that I hate in Life Orientation and I love everything about it because if there was no Life Orientation then I could not be the person I am today (Learner 2 from school B).

After discussing the challenges faced by learners, the next theme is based on their expectations with regard to parental support in the teaching of Life Orientation.

### **Theme 3: Expectations of Learners**

Theme 3 informs on what learners expect from their parents with regard to support given in Life Orientation programmes and also what educators expect from parents in the opinion of learners.

#### ***Sub-theme 3.1: Expectations of Learners from Parents in the Teaching of Life Orientation***

The majority of the learners from the two selected secondary schools understand the important role that parents could play in the teaching of Life Orientation. The learners expect their parents to be involved in teaching them about sex and the changes that take place in their bodies and to promote an awareness of teenage pregnancies and substance abuse. They also expect their parents to orientate them with regard to good behavior, i.e. to mould their characters in order to become better adults in future. Learners from School B were of the opinion that parents should be involved in their academic achievements by checking their school work. They also expect their parents to guide them in terms of career choices because some parents are educated and may have knowledge of various careers. Learners made these statements to validate their arguments:

To teach us to behave well,.. to respect other people. They must teach us about sex so that we cannot fall pregnant still young and also in our school work, i.e. to check if we are writing the homework and to see if books are marked (Learners from School B).

I think parents should talk more about sex; all those stuffs like puberty and tell you what to expect if you go doing all those things and then you'll know when you go doing them, you will know that there are consequences that will come for your actions (Learners from School A).

Yeah....like one of them if you are a girl and you are menstruating, they have to tell you before you menstruate that when the time you get to that point then you don't have to stress all about it (Learner from School A).

The learners indicated that they expect their parents to lay the foundation for the basics of life by teaching them at home rather than having to learn most of the things at school and for this reason the teachers are there to complement what parents are teaching at home. Some learners argued that they do not expect parents to assist educators because educators have been trained to teach learners.

### ***Sub-theme 3.2: Learners' Views on what Educators Expect from Parents in the Teaching of Life Orientation***

According to learners interviewed from the two schools, educators expect parents to become involved in the education of their children. Most of the learners agreed that educators expect parents to support them in guiding the learners on the careers they should follow. Learners from School B indicated that educators expect parents to assist them in moulding the behaviour of the learners as parents are regarded as the primary educators and they know their children. Learners from School A stressed the idea that the educators expect the parents to teach learners about issues, like menstruation and sex, and encourage learners to take part in physical exercises to keep themselves fit. The learners said the following:

The educators expect parents to help them about the behaviour of the children, yes, because our parents know us better than our teachers hence the parents are regarded as the primary educators so they teach us some of the things at home (School B Learners).

The parents, themselves, they must teach us, they must teach more about so that the teacher when he comes to class he or she ask some questions may not have a problem (School A Learners).

Although learners expect parents to be actively involved in the teaching of Life Orientation, the next theme discusses the barriers towards parental involvement.



## **Theme 4: Barriers to Parental Involvement in the Teaching of Life Orientation**

In this theme the researcher identifies some of the barriers to parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. The learners mentioned a lack of openness and illiteracy amongst parents as barriers to parental involvement.

### ***Sub-Theme 4.1: Lack of Openness amongst Parents***

The learners suggested that lack of openness amongst parents, especially on matters concerned with sex, is one of the barriers to parental involvement. A learner from School A maintained that some parents are afraid to inform children about what was happening to their bodies because of cultural issues. One of the learners mentioned that the reason why parents are ashamed to share information on sex with their children is that they believe that the learners will then experiment, i.e. they will have sex. Another learner from School B also agreed that parents are not open to talking to their children about sex but they were also in disagreement with what the educators are teaching at school. Learners from School A also felt that parents shift responsibilities onto educators due to a shyness and rely on the belief that learners will learn everything at school. The learners are convinced that their parents are not approachable, especially on matters related to sex, and even that learners are not open to talking to their parents, but rather talk to their friends and some talk to their educators when it is somebody they trust. The learners said:

Because some of the parents are afraid to tell us what is happening in our body, they feel ashamed like telling if like exactly if you go and talk to your parent about sex hm....he won't ...he or she won't tell you, she will be ashamed (Learner from School A).

Our parents sometimes are not approachable especially when it comes to sexual matters so it is not easy (Learners from School B)

Yeah....parents don't agree with the fact that they should talk to their children about sex so they don't agree with what the teachers are teaching us..... (Learner from School B).

Parents think that here, at school, we learn everything so when we go to school so the parents don't have to tell us anything, they just say here he/she goes to school so she loses everything.....they are shy (Learners from School A).

It was felt that learners contribute to a lack of parental involvement in their academic achievements in the sense that they, too, are not open with their parents, especially in matters related to Life Orientation programmes. The majority of the learners stressed that they trust their educators and friends rather than their parents because their parents are not open to them. One learner from School B indicated that the only time children are forced to be open with their parents is when they are infected and need to be hospitalised. Most learners felt that it is not easy to approach their parents because some of them are oppressive and, ultimately, the learners are not willing to share the problems with anyone due to lack of trust. They said:

If I'm having a problem in Life Orientation I consult my friend because sometimes there are problems that I cannot share with my parents but I can share with my friend because you find that maybe he did experience that problem (Learner from School B).  
I think I rather keep them to myself because they are embarrassing, they are talking about menstruation, those kinds of stuff, no it is too embarrassing (Learner from School A).

#### ***Sub-Theme 4.2: Illiterate Parents***

The learners from Schools A and B identified the lack of ability to read and write amongst the parents as a barrier to parental involvement as most of the parents are not educated and they tend to shift life skill responsibilities, amongst others, to the teachers. Learners believe that a lack of education among the parents is a hindrance to their participation in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes for the benefit of their children. One learner from School A was of the opinion that parents, who are educated, like teachers and doctors, should be able to assist the learners in terms of school work. A learner from School B also maintained that the majority of the parents are illiterate and that they lack the ability to guide the learner in choosing a future career.

Is lack of education because some of them eh....they left school in Grade 4 and back then Grade 4 was just teaching them things that were necessary but us we were lucky in Grade 4 we were taught life orientation (Learner 1 from School A).  
Yeah.... Maybe because they were not educated about it at school when they were young and they don't think it is important to be taught about it now (Learner from School B).

Some they help the teachers and some do not because they have lack of education and knowledge about Life Orientation (Learner 2 from School A).

The last theme focuses on possible strategies of overcoming the identified barriers.

### **Theme 5: Possible Strategies to Overcome the Identified Barriers**

In this theme the researcher gives an account of the possible strategies that may be implemented to overcome the above identified barriers to parental involvement. The learners identified two main strategies, i.e. parent meetings and openness amongst stakeholders.

#### ***Sub-Theme 5.1: Meetings with Parents***

Most of the learners believe that meetings with their parents are one of the possible strategies to overcome the identified barriers and to ensure that the parents of the learners are actively involved in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. One learner from School B suggested that the educators need to engage their parents by encouraging them to talk to their children about the challenges that the learners are facing in life. In so doing, the parents may assist learners at home because it is better to learn things from the parents than from strangers. Another learner in School A commented on the issue of parents' meetings as a strategy to actively involve the parents in the educational affairs of the learners. She is, however, worried about the poor attendance of parents at such meetings. The school or educators need to organise parents' meetings to talk to parents, but some learners who want freedom to do whatever they want do not usually welcome such a move.

Hm...we can involve them by calling them to come to the meeting, hm...but you can call them to a meeting but none or all of them will respond to the call to the meeting (Learner from school A).

Hm...I don't know but maybe in meeting when they hm...they could talk about...tell the parents about these issues that we are going through because teachers know that children ...it is more important learning from your parent because you were born and bred by your parent and I think you get to believe more of what my mother said rather than what my teacher is saying (Learner from School B).

### ***Sub-Theme 5.2: Openness amongst Stakeholders***

The majority of learners argued that openness amongst all the stakeholders, i.e. educators, learners and parents is another strategy to overcome the hindrances of parental involvement in the educational achievement of their children. One learner from School A said that some educators are open to parental support while other educators, especially those who are not doing their work, are not willing to be assisted by parents. Most of the learners emphasised the need for a relationship of trust, i.e. openness amongst the stakeholders in the effective implementation of the Life Orientation programmes. The educators at school should also be open when they teach Life Orientation programmes. The learners said the following:

I also think that the person who teaches Life Orientation should be a person who is not embarrassed to talk about things and to be more open for children to hear (Learners from School A).

If we are having some problems the parents need to help the teachers by giving us some advices (Learners from School B).

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the researcher has discussed the experiences of learners in terms of parental involvement in the effective teaching of Life Orientation programmes. The next chapter, Chapter 6, gives a comprehensive interpretation of the findings, makes recommendations and draws conclusions from the research study.

## **CHAPTER 6**

# **INTERPRETATION OF DATA, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this final chapter the researcher presents a summary of the preceding chapters. This is followed by a review of the purpose of the research study and the interpretation of data. The researcher then makes recommendations and concluding statements.

### **6.2 OVERVIEW**

In Chapter 1 the researcher introduces the study by explaining the justification of this research and sets out the research question. It outlines the research design and the methodology which was followed in the study.

Chapter 2 explores academic and scholarly texts on parental involvement in Life Orientation. The literature review reveals the significance of parental involvement in the general academic progress of learners and the role played by a partnership between the parents and educators. It discusses the learning outcomes to be achieved through the teaching of Life Orientation as a school subject. The researcher also presented the conceptual framework of this research study, i.e. the experiences and expectations of educators and learners of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. Parents play important and various roles in assisting their children to achieve their academic goals. The involvement of parents in the academic world of learners creates a positive school climate.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology of the study. The researcher discusses the qualitative approach, the paradigm, the research design and the reasons for choosing the data collection and sampling methods. The researcher explains how the data was analysed; the trustworthiness of the study; and the ethical considerations which were adhered to during the research process.

Chapter 4 presents the findings - based on the experiences of educators of parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. The researcher identified the following six themes which were further divided into sub-themes: the experiences of educators in the teaching of Life Orientation; the role of Life Orientation educators; challenges faced by the educators; the expectations of educators from parents; barriers to parental involvement; and the possible strategies to overcome the identified barriers.

In Chapter 5 the researcher reports on the experiences of learners in relation to parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. In this section the following five themes are presented: the experiences of learners in the teaching of Life Orientation; the challenges faced by learners during Life Orientation lessons; the expectations of learners; barriers to parental involvement; and the possible strategies to overcome the identified barriers.

Chapter 6 provides a brief summary of Chapters 1-5. It also provides a detailed discussion on the interpretation of the findings and supplies answers to the questions posed in the research study. Finally, the researcher has made some recommendations for the effective teaching of Life Orientation and closes the chapter with concluding statements.

### **6.3 REVIEW OF THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation by asking the following secondary research questions:

1. How do educators and learners experience parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation?
2. What roles do educators and learners expect parents to play in support of the teaching of Life Orientation?
3. How do educators and learners experience the presence or absence of parents in supporting the teaching of Life Orientation?
4. What do educators and learners view as barriers to parental involvement in the creation of a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation?
5. What are the possible strategies of overcoming the identified barriers?

The Conceptual Framework of this study was basically related to the research questions outlined above as it was based on the experiences and expectations of educators and learners of parental involvement for the teaching of Life Orientation. In answering the research question, the researcher collected empirical data from Life Orientation educators and Grade 10 learners from two selected secondary schools. During the analysis of the data, several themes emerged which assisted in the understanding of how educators and learners experienced parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation. These themes attempted to address the research questions. The five main themes that emerged on both occasions were discussed in relation to studies carried out by other scholars. The themes that emerged included the following:

1. Experiences of Educators and Learners of Parental Involvement.
2. Expectations of Educators and Learners from Parents.
3. Challenges faced by Educators and Learners.
4. Barriers to Parental Involvement.
5. Possible Strategies for Overcoming the Identified Barriers.

## **6.4 FINDINGS**

Previous studies by Hornby (2000), Lemmer (2007), Singh, Mbokodi and Msila (2004) confirm that the involvement of parents in the education of their children is crucial in ensuring the success of the learners in their academic achievement. However, Bakker, Denessen and Brus-Laeven (2007) argue that lack of parental involvement is a contributing factor in the poor performance of learners in their academic achievement. These findings of previous studies were compared with the present study even though this study was specifically based on the experiences of educators and learners in terms of the involvement of parents in the teaching of Life Orientation. These findings, *per* theme, were significant in attempting to answer the research questions.

### **6.4.1. The Experiences of Educators and Learners in the Teaching of Life Orientation**

In this study Life Orientation is acknowledged by both educators and learners as a vital learning experience in the learners' transition to adulthood. They identified Life Orientation

as a significant learning area that assists in the holistic development of learners. The findings in this study are in line with the study done by Theron (2008) which reveals that learners acknowledge Life Orientation as a meaningful and empowering learning area where they manage to acquire more knowledge, skills and attitudes for personal development. These findings underline the value that Life Orientation adds to the lives of learners in moulding their character; assisting them to make relevant career choices; and acquire good behavioural patterns, self-knowledge, self-esteem and knowledge about their basic rights. In this study, learners experienced Life Orientation as a worthwhile and empowering learning area on the journey to adulthood and without it life seems to become meaningless.

In the study conducted by Van Deventer (2009) Life Orientation teachers in rural areas attached more value to Life Orientation which was similar to the finding in this study. The difference between this study and that by Van Deventer (2009) is that this study focused on FET Life Orientation teachers while Van Deventer (2009) included all teachers, i.e. Grade R–12.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for parental support in the teaching of Life Orientation as well as an existing gap in the relationship between the teachers and the parents as a result of lack of parental involvement. The study has established that both the Life Orientation educators and the Grade 10 learners agree that the parents of the children are hardly involved in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. The majority of the parents do not support the educators in the teaching of Life Orientation and this has a negative effect on the general behaviour and academic achievements of the learners. This does not mean that parents are totally unsupportive as a small percentage of mostly literate parents do assist their children at home by encouraging them to improve their academic performance.

The educators and the learners believed that the availability of parents in supporting their children has a positive effect on the academic achievement of learners. They argued that the presence of parents may positively influence the general behaviour of children and reduce teenage pregnancies and their involvement in substance abuse. The study done by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (2007) differs from this study by indicating that Latino students view the presence of parents as an intrusion in their learning environment. They do not welcome the involvement of parents in their secondary education. The Latino students argued that their parents play a more important role in their elementary education rather than in secondary



education and beyond. They believed that the presence of parents in the elementary education manages to establish some educational foundations, such as enforcing school attendance, enforcing discipline and assisting them with homework assignments. This confirms the idea that the presence of parents promotes good behaviour amongst learners and good academic performance - as indicated in this study. When parents are actively involved, it may positively enhance the management of learners' behaviour and reduce their anti-social behaviour (Squelch, 2006).

The learners and the educators in this study maintained that the absence of parental support for their children is the main cause of teenage pregnancies amongst school-going girls; addiction of substance abuse; high failure rates in education; and bad behaviour amongst the learners. The study by Prinsloo (2007) reveals that learners tend to adopt some anti-social attitudes and habits which often lead to criminal activities due to a lack of parental support.

#### **6.4.2. Expectations of Educators and Learners Concerning Parental Involvement in the Teaching of Life Orientation**

In this study the educators stressed the fact that they expect parents to play a major role in supporting them in the teaching of Life Orientation; in moulding learners' characters; and improving their academic achievements. This finding is in line with the finding in the study carried out by O'Connor and Geiger (2009) which suggests that educators expect parents to bear the burden of responsibility for their children's education. Both the findings acknowledge the important role that the parents of learners play as primary educators for the benefit of the learners in reducing learners' delinquencies and frustrations. The educators did not expect the parents to shift responsibilities and assume that it is the responsibility of only the educators to teach the learners. Epstein (2001) discusses the sharing of responsibilities by the parents and the educators in the education of the learners, i.e. by sharing information, guiding learners, solving existing problems and celebrating successes.

The Grade 10 learners in this study indicated that they expect their parents to play a significant part in supporting, especially, the teaching of Life Orientation. They required their parents to be actively involved in guiding them in their career choices and on matters related to sex, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse and good behaviour. These findings are in line with the findings in the study by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (2007) which reveal that

Latino students expected emotional support and motivation from their parents. However, they did not want their parents to volunteer at the school or participate in the Parent-Teacher Associations, which they considered to be an intrusion on their space. The Latino students did not want their parents to be directly involved in their academic progress, whereas the learners in this study want their parents to be actively and directly involved in order to succeed in their holistic development.

### **6.4.3. The Challenges Faced by Educators and Learners**

There were no commonalities between the educators and learners in relation to the challenges that they face in the teaching and learning environments. In this theme the educators identified a lack of training, insufficient resources and a lack of openness as some of the challenges that they face, especially in the teaching of Life Orientation. The findings in this study extend those of the study by Prinsloo (2007) which indicates that the Life Orientation educators undergo little rigorous formal training in the presentation of the Life Orientation programmes. This means that the training they received was insufficient as they were trained for few days only. The educators in this study said that a few workshops were conducted for a limited time and, after that, they were expected to be effective in the classroom. The research by Prinsloo (2007) further suggests that most educators in rural areas are ill-equipped to cope with the demands of the life Orientation programmes. The lack of training amongst professional Life Orientation educators seems to affect the effective teaching and learning of this and other learning areas.

This study further revealed that besides a lack of training amongst Life Orientation educators, the schools face a general problem of a lack of resources, especially physical education equipment for learners to keep fit and healthy. Life Orientation is a practical learning area where learners should be involved in some exercises during the lessons in order to achieve certain learning outcomes and lead a healthy lifestyle. This study revealed a lack of openness amongst the stakeholders, especially in the teaching of issues related to sex. Generally, there is a lack of ownership between the parents and educators as to who should be responsible for engaging the learners in discussing matters about sex. The shifting of responsibility between the educators and parents contributes negatively to the effective achievement of outcomes of Life Orientation as a subject.

The learners from rural settlements pinpointed the teaching of sex education and saw the presence of the opposite sex in the same classroom as a challenge. The learners feel embarrassed when educators talk about the body parts during Life Orientation lessons and, ultimately, they feel restricted which hinders the effective teaching of Life Orientation. Learners maintained that the opposite sex should not know what was happening in the other sex. They preferred the separation of learners into same-sex groups when being taught about sex in the classroom. The findings in this study are in contrast to those in the study by Theron (2008) which suggests that learners in townships were able to cope with life challenges during Life Orientation lessons and were not shy to discuss the challenges that they faced as young people.

#### **6.4.4. Barriers to Parental Involvement in the Creation of a Positive Climate in the Teaching of Life Orientation**

This research discovered that failure by schools to involve parents is the main barrier in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. The findings of this study are similar to those of Smit & Liebenberg (2003) and Singh, Mbokodi & Msila (2004) which reveal that teachers and schools prevent parents from being actively involved in the academic progress of the learners by failing to establish programmes and policies for parental involvement. In this study it is shown that school management teams and educators fail to establish programmes in order to encourage parental involvement in the education of their children. Some educators are not willing to involve parents in the education of their children as they fear that the parents will challenge their work as educators.

The negative attitudes of educators towards parents and the lack of self-confidence amongst the professionals contribute to the failure of schools to involve parents. Sometimes educators fail to involve parents because they are not empowered to carry out that responsibility. There is, therefore, a need for educators and school management teams to be trained on how to involve parents in the education of the learners. Some educators consider it to be their sole responsibility to teach learners - forgetting that parents are the primary educators of learners and that they need their assistance for the effective teaching of Life Orientation.

Also, educators and school management teams are not receptive to parental support for the academic achievement of the learners and parents are not open to discussing sex with their

children. The lack of openness amongst the stakeholders has a negative impact on their relationship and shows an absence of trust amongst them. Trust plays a major role in building supportive educator-parent, learner-educator and learner-parent relationships - especially in Life Orientation. Ho Sui Chu (2007) maintains that trust has a direct impact on the partnership of the stakeholders in education and in any interpersonal relationships. This suggests that a lack of mutual trust could be a contributing factor in non-supportive relationships amongst stakeholders. There is no relationship that can succeed between partners without trusting one another and the presence of such trust will certainly lead to openness amongst partners.

This study also found inferiority complex to be a barrier to parental involvement. This is in line with the finding of Gelsthorpe and West-Burnham (2003) who maintain that parents' feelings of inferiority in the presence of the teachers is one of the reasons that hinders them from participating actively in school activities. The parents undermine themselves by their low self-esteem, illiteracy, poverty status and unemployment, and believe that everything should be done by the educators as they are the professionals. The parents of the learners need words of encouragement from educators in order to be actively involved and not to look down on themselves.

#### **6.4.5. Possible Strategies for Overcoming the Identified Barriers**

In this study the educators were in agreement that schools should develop parental involvement programmes and policies for the purpose of encouraging maximum participation of parents in enhancing the quality of education, especially in the teaching of Life Orientation. This finding is similar to the conclusion drawn by Bhering (2002) which indicates that schools are responsible for the initiation and development of parental involvement policies and practices under the leadership of professional educators. It is the responsibility of the educators and school management teams to establish such policies and programmes to encourage parental support in the effective teaching and learning of Life Orientation and other subjects. A parental involvement policy would make it compulsory for parents to support the educators and to check on the school work of their children. The presence of such policies and practices may, ultimately, lead to an active participation by parents and may result in fewer behavioural problems and improved academic achievement amongst the learners.

This study also suggested the establishment of partnerships amongst the stakeholders, i.e. the educators, the parents and learners, as another strategy to promote the involvement of parents in the teaching of Life Orientation. The partnership of the parent, the learner and the educator is crucial to the extent that if one of them is not involved, it affects the quality of education (Freeman & Karr-Kidwell, 1998). The establishment of partnerships may also lead to openness amongst the stakeholders in creating a positive climate - especially in the teaching of Life Orientation. There is a need for trust amongst the partners as trust plays a significant role in the supportive relationship amongst stakeholders, i.e. parent-educator, parent-learner and educator-learner relationships.

The absence of trust amongst the partners will have a negative impact on the teaching of Life Orientation. Creemers and Kyriakides (2008) acknowledge that the establishment of the climate of trust, openness and collaboration amongst stakeholders may, ultimately, result in a more effective school. The existence of trust amongst them will lead to openness and effective communication between the stakeholders, including the learners. In turn, this will create a positive school climate and active parental participation. In order to sustain any partnership amongst stakeholders there is a need for a trust relationship between the parties involved.

Both the educators and the learners agreed that convening parent meetings will also encourage the parents of the learners to play a supportive role in the education of their children. This finding is in line with the finding of the study done by Hornby (2000) which recommends that parents and educators should have meetings with the purpose of discussing the challenges and problems which are faced by learners and how to assist the child to reach adulthood. The existence of such meetings will enhance parent-educator relationships and it will promote good communication between the partners which is conducive for improved relationships. Such meetings may empower parents to be open enough to discuss the problems that their children face with their educators; to check on their books and to share any relevant information.

## 6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Life Orientation is a significant learning area in the new school curriculum and the success of its programmes depends on the involvement of parents in partnership with other stakeholders. The relevant educational stakeholders should consider the following recommendations in order to enhance the effective teaching of Life Orientation in rural secondary schools.

1. Although there is a shortage of Curriculum Advisors in most circuits, the Department of Education should ensure that Life Orientation Curriculum Advisors are employed for the effective development of the Life Orientation educators as it is believed that the Curriculum Advisors have more content knowledge to share with the educators. The Curriculum Advisors should also develop programmes through which educators may be empowered to be more effective in the teaching process.
2. Most Life Orientation educators are not properly trained in the teaching of the subject and, as such, the Department of Education should develop effective and intensive programmes for the further training of Life Orientation educators. The department should partner with higher education institutions to offer in-service training for the Life Orientation educators or those educators should be given bursaries to encourage them to further their studies. There should be educators who specialise in this subject at higher institutions of learning.
3. Life Orientation, as a learning area in the curriculum, should have the same status as other learning areas, such as Mathematics, and it should be examined externally. Most of the educators and learners take the subject for granted because it is a non-examination subject. The department should ensure that Life Orientation carries the same weight as other learning areas because of its value in the lives of learners. The time allocation *per* week should be sufficient to accommodate time for practical activities, especially in physical education.
4. Not all educators are capable of teaching this learning area and, as such, qualified educators who specialised in Life Orientation education at tertiary level should be entrusted with the responsibility of offering this learning area in the classroom.

This will ensure that learners are equipped with more intensive knowledge as a result of the acquired knowledge from the higher institutions of learning.

5. The Circuits should establish Life Orientation clubs where all educators teaching Life Orientation could come together with the aim of sharing information concerning the effective teaching of the subject. The educators could assist one another, especially by discussing concepts or topics which seem difficult for some educators to teach.
6. There is a problem in that certain educators have a negative attitude towards Life Orientation as it is not an examinable subject. Those educators should change their attitudes towards the learning area and treat all the topics with dedication. A positive attitude towards the learning area will ensure that educators are well-prepared before going into class and learners will, then, take this subject more seriously. They should develop a love for the learning area and instill the same love in their learners.
7. The majority of the schools lack resources, especially for physical training exercises. The department and the other stakeholders, such as parents, should buy physical training equipment for the subject. As life orientation is a practical subject learners need to participate in exercises to keep fit and healthy. Physical education plays a major role in keeping the learners healthy and free from sickness. All learners should be encouraged to do exercises at school under the supervision of the educators and at home under the guidance of their parents.
8. All the schools should develop parental involvement policies whereby the participation of parents in the education of their children is made compulsory. The schools should encourage parents to check the work of their children and to assist them with their homework or show interest in the learners' work - as in the case of illiterate parents. Educators should be trained and encouraged to recognise what the parents are able to contribute to in support of the teaching and learning of Life Orientation.

9. One strategy to enhance parental involvement is by conducting meetings between the educators and parents. These meetings will provide the educators and parents with the opportunity to share information about the school and the children. This is a means of promoting a parent-educator relationship which should exist for the success of the Life Orientation programmes. The school management teams, together with the educators, are responsible for initiating such meetings and should encourage maximum attendance by the parents of the learners.
  
10. All the stakeholders should ensure that a relationship of mutual trust exists amongst them, i.e. parent-educator, educator-learner and parent-learner. The existence of a mutual trust between the partners will ensure that they are open to one another and that they are also free to share any information for the well-being of the learners. Trust plays a significant role in any social relationship and in the existence of an effective partnership between the school and the home.
  
11. A question to ask is: "Who will teach the learners sex education?" It is recommended that schools should identify people from the school community as guest speakers to address learners on issues concerning sex and sexual relationships.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

This research study is based on the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation. Based on the findings of this study, the following topics are recommended for further studies:

1. The experiences and expectations of the parents of learners concerning their involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation.
2. The role that the Department of Education is expected to play in assisting schools to develop parental involvement policies.
3. An exploration of how learners may be taught sex education.



## 6.7 CONCLUSIONS

This study collected empirical data from Life Orientation educators and Grade 10 learners from two selected secondary schools concerning their experiences of parental support in the creation of a positive school climate in the teaching of Life Orientation. The participants expressed their opinions in an attempt to establish commonalities and differences on the presence and absence of parental support in the teaching of Life Orientation. Parents are regarded as primary educators who need to teach their children the basics at home which are, then, complemented at school by professional educators. Educators should ensure that the gap that exists between them and the parents is closed by initiating intensive and progressive programmes and practices that promote parental involvement. The reviewed literature confirms the need to create a positive school climate through the involvement of parents.

In this study it has been established that the presence of parents in supporting the educators in the teaching of Life Orientation has a potential to contribute to moulding the behaviour of learners, whereas the absence of parental support is perceived by the learners and the educators as one of the causes of poor academic performance and delinquent behaviour, such as bullying, school absenteeism and addiction to drugs and alcohol. This study has identified the following barriers to parental involvement in supporting educators in creating a positive school climate: a lack of trust between the parents and the educators; a lack of school policy that encourages parental involvement; and a lack of interest by parents in the education of their children, as well as illiteracy and low self-esteem.

The study has managed to discuss some of the possible strategies which may be considered in overcoming the identified barriers. The strengthening of parent-educator relationships through developing school policies that encourage parental involvement is recommended as an approach to building a positive parent-educator relationship that is based on trust. Although this study has focused on participants in a rural secondary schools context with a wide range of challenges, it is irrefutable that despite the problems experienced by the school community, the educators and the learners parental support is crucial to creating a positive environment for the effective teaching of Life Orientation which impacts positively on the future lives of the learners.

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ANNEXURE A



Universiteit van Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republiek van Suid Afrika  
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Department Education  
Management Law and Policy

P. O. Box 1115  
NEBO  
1059  
30 September 2010

Enquiries: Phokane M.D  
Cell No: 082 588 8011  
E-Mail: [phokanemd@webmail.co.za](mailto:phokanemd@webmail.co.za)

The District Office  
Department of Education  
Greater Sekhukhune District  
Private Bag X70  
Lebowakgomo  
0737

Dear Sir

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS AT THE PHOKOANE CIRCUIT SCHOOLS  
IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE**


I, Maphupha Daniel Phokane, a MED candidate in Educational Management, Law and Policy at University of Pretoria (Student No 23410052) hereby request your permission to conduct research interviews with Life Orientation Educators and Learners at Phokoane Circuit Secondary Schools.

The research is about **“Educators’ and learners’ experiences of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation”**.

My research proposal was successfully defended in May 2010 and a Statement of Ethics should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. In line with my research design and methodology, I would like to be given permission to conduct interviews with Life Orientation educators and grade 10 learners at selected secondary schools. The researcher will also take the ethical issues into consideration while conducting the research.

I hope that my request would be considered.

Yours Sincerely  
Mr Phokane M.D

  
.....





## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Enquiries : Nemalili Eastern(Manager: Office of the HOD)  
Tel Ext. : (015) 290 7702

Date : 01 October 2010

Mr.M.D.Phokane  
Box 1115  
Nebo  
1059

Cell: 0825888011

Email:phokoanemd@webmail.co.za

Dear Sir

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTERVIEWS.**

1. Thank you for your letter dated the 30 September 2010 of which the content is noted. We are indeed humbled by the interest displayed by yourself on matters affecting our education system.
2. Your request to conduct a research in Phokoane Circuit for your Master's degree in Educational Management, Law and Policy studies is hereby granted. It is however important to indicate that prior arrangements to conduct the latter should be arranged in advance so that our work flow is not sacrificed.

3. Once more, we wish you all of the best in your studies and assure you of our cooperation in this regard.

Yours Sincerely



.....  
Benny Boshielo  
Head of Department-Education  
Limpopo Province

01 October 2010

Cc: Senior General Manager: Mr.M.J.Thamaga  
District Senior Manager: Mr.D.Mabote

ANNEXURE C



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**

EM 10/11/02

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

MEd

Educators' and learners' experiences of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Phokane Maphupha Daniel

**DEPARTMENT**

Education Management and Policy Studies

**DATE CONSIDERED**

22 August 2012

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

APPROVED

Please note:

*For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

*For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**

Prof L Ebersohn

**DATE**

22 August 2012

**CC**

Jeannie Beukes  
Teresa Ogina

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.



ANNEXURE D



Universiteit van Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republiek van Suid Afrika  
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Department Education  
Management Law and Policy

Enquiries: Phokane M.D  
Cell No: 082 588 8011  
E-Mail: phokanemd@webmail.co.za

TO \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSENT FORM FOR AN EDUCATOR**

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to request you to participate in a research study which is about **"The educators and learners' experiences of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation programmes"**. Mr Phokane from the Department of Education and Policy Studies at University of Pretoria will conduct research as part of his Masters Dissertation and his supervisor is Dr Ogina from University of Pretoria.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. Participants in this research study will be interviewed and which will last for 30 minutes and will be audio-taped. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of daily life. The research may assist you and other stakeholders in the teaching profession to understand how educators experience parental involvement in creating a positive climate in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes and also to explore the possible strategies to improve parental involvement.

The researcher will adhere to the highest ethical standards as required for research study and prescribed by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. The participation in this research study is voluntary and confidentiality will be maintained. The names of the participating schools and educators will be kept anonymous throughout the research process. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without prejudice.

The outcome of the research study will be made available to the participant upon request.

Your assistance in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully

Mr Phokane M.D..... Supervisor: Dr Ogina.....

**Reply Slip**

I, ..... (Name of participant) hereby

Agree /decline to participate in the research study.

Date:..... Signature:.....

ANNEXURE E



Universiteit van Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republiek van Suid Afrika  
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Department Education  
Management Law and Policy

Enquiries: Phokane M.D  
Cell No: 082 588 8011  
E-Mail: [phokanemd@webmail.co.za](mailto:phokanemd@webmail.co.za)

TO:.....

**PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**

Your child is invited to be one of the participants in the research study about the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation Programmes. Your child has been selected as one of the participants because he/she falls under the age of 18 and this is the age range we are interested in interviewing in this study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of educators and learners of parental involvement in creating a positive climate for the teaching of Life Orientation Programmes. If you allow your child to take part in this study, your child will be interviewed for 20 minutes.

The only risk in this study is that your child will be asked questions based on their experiences about the involvement of parents in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes which may be considered sensitive. The responses of your child and his/her identity will be kept confidential and anonymous. The participation of your child in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your child any time or your child may also withdraw at any time without prejudice.

The researcher in this study is Mr Phokane Daniel who is an M.Ed student at University of Pretoria. You may contact me on the above contact number if you have any question.

Your assistance in this regard is highly appreciated.

Signature of Participant:..... Date:.....

Signature of Researcher:..... Date:.....



ANNEXURE F



Universiteit van Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republiek van Suid Afrika  
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Department Education  
Management Law and Policy

Enquiries: Phokane M.D  
Cell No: 082 588 8011  
E-Mail: [phokanemd@webmail.co.za](mailto:phokanemd@webmail.co.za)

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHILDREN'S ASSENT FORM**

I'm doing a study about the way learners see the support of parents to teachers in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes. I'm asking you to help in this study because I want to find more information on how you feel as children of your age about the support of parents to teachers especially in the teaching of Life Orientation.

If you agree to take part in this study, I'm going to ask you questions for 20 minutes about the way you see parents taking part in helping the teachers to teach life orientation successfully. You are allowed to ask questions at any time about this study and if you decide to stop from giving answers, you are free to do so. There are no right or wrong answers to all the questions but it is only what you think about the issue.

If you agree to take part in this study, sign below after you have read or someone read it for you. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign the paper and no one will punish you hence it is your choice to take part or not. The study will help you and others to know how parents can support teachers in the teaching of life orientation. No one will see the information from you and I won't tell anybody about your name. You will be given a copy of this paper to keep.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEXURE G



Universiteit van Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republiek van Suid Afrika  
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Department Education  
Management Law and Policy

Enquiries: Phokane M.D  
Cell No: 082 588 8011  
E-Mail: [phokanemd@webmail.co.za](mailto:phokanemd@webmail.co.za)

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LIFE ORIENTATION EDUCATORS

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. What is your experience in the teaching of Life Orientation?
3. What is your role as an educator in the teaching of LO programmes?
4. What challenges do you experience in the teaching of LO programmes?
5. In your opinion, how do you experience parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation?
6. What do you expect parents to do in supporting the teaching of LO programmes?
7. What do you expect parents not to do in the teaching of LO programmes?
8. How do you experience the presence and absence of parents in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes?
9. In your view, what are the barriers towards parental involvement in the teaching of Life Orientation programmes?
10. What are the possible strategies of overcoming the identified barriers?
11. What recommendation would you give to make the teaching of Life Orientation better?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?



## ANNEXURE H

Enquiries: Phokane M.D  
Cell No: 082 588 8011  
E-Mail: phokanemd@webmail.co.za



Universiteit van Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republiek van Suid Afrika  
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Department Education  
Management Law and Policy

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

1. Could you please tell me something about yourself?
2. What can you say about Life Orientation?
3. What are some of the things that you like about Life Orientation?
4. What are some of the things that you do not like in LO?
5. What kind of things do you need help with in Life Orientation?
6. If you have a problem in Life Orientation, whom do you talk with?
7. What kind of help do you think that the teachers need from parents in the teaching of Life Orientation?
8. In what areas of Life Orientation is your parent(s) helping the teacher?
9. In what areas do you wish parents to help the Life Orientation teacher?
10. What else can be done to help the Life Orientation teacher?
11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Life Orientation?

ANNEXURE I

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This document must be signed and submitted with every  
essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation and/or thesis.

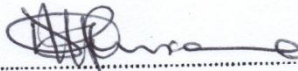
Full names of student: PHOKANE MAPHUPHA DANIEL

Student number: 04371518

Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this mini-dissertation (eg essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation, thesis, etc) is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT:



SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

