CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2   RATIONALE

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

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

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

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

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

1.4   AIMS OF THIS STUDY

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

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

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

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

1.5   BACKGROUND

1.5.1   LIFE ORIENTATION AS A COMPULSORY LEARNING AREA

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

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

1.5.2 THE PURPOSE OF LIFE ORIENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

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

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

1.6 IMPLEMENTING LIFE ORIENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

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

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

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

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

Despite the differences in the perception of Life Orientation as a learning area at the schools in Mpumalanga, several lessons could be learnt about the implementation of Life Orientation by revising what the learning area entails, rather than blaming the design and delivery of Life Orientation content. The Life Orientation curriculum includes the structure, organisation, balance, and presentation of the content in the classroom (National Research Council, 1996). Many critics (Christiaans, 2006:12) believed that the lack of the successful implementation of Life Orientation can be attributed to the inadequate number of training workshops for teachers and unproductive implementation plans. For implementation to be successful, all affected classroom teachers must be involved in all implementation stages, including the following:
- Building awareness and a vision of the reform changes
- Designing a developing curriculum
- Implementing new curricula and instructional practice in the classroom
- Reflecting upon practice
- Refining the implementation process and continuing to learn to grow (Cook, 2000).

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

1.7   COMPLICATIONS AFFECTING THE INTENDED OUTCOMES

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

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

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

1.8   CURRICULUM CHANGE IN SCHOOLS

Michael Fullan (2001:51) categorizes change into three phases:
1. The initiation phase, including the decision to embrace the change and the process that generates meaning confusion, commitment or alienation.
2. The implementation phase, which includes the initial attempt to put change in motion and includes the decision to embrace change. The ideas are then put into motion or practice. The teachers' response to policy implementation as part of change depends on the knowledge and skills they have, the District support from the Department of Education, and communication between the Department of Education authorities and teachers with regard to change.
3. Institutionalization which refers to the complete embracement of the change by the school or district.

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

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

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

1.9   META-THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

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

1.10   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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

1.11   DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.11.1 TEACHER

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

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

1.11.2 SECONDARY SCHOOL

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

1.11.3 UNDERSTAND

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

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

1.11.4   RESPONSE

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

1.11.5   IMPLEMENT

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

1.11.6 LIFE ORIENTATION

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

1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.12.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

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

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

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

1.12.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

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

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

1.13 DATA COLLECTION

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

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

1.13.1 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

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

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

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

1.13.1.1 Focus group interviews

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

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

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

1.13.1.2 Face-to-face interviews

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

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

1.13.1.3 Field notes (Reflexivity)

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

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

1.14 DATA ANALYSIS

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

1.15 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGIES

1.15.1 SAMPLING METHOD: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

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

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

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

1.16   ETHICAL MEASURES

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

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

1.17   THE ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

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

CHAPTER 1: Background and Orientation

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

CHAPTER 2: Literature Study and Theoretical Framework

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

CHAPTER 3: Research methodology and research design

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

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

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

CHAPTER 5: Review, synthesis, recommendations and guidelines

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

1.18   SUMMARY

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

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

2.2 RATIONALE FOR LIFE ORIENTATION AS A SCHOOL LEARNING AREA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.3   OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION

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

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

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

2.4   SCOPE OF LIFE ORIENTATION

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Development
Religious experience

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

Occupational learning/learning for Life
Exploration
Reflection
Strategic planning
Career Orientation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.4.1   LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS SHOULD BE LEARNING AREA SPECIALISTS

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

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

2.4.1.1 Teachers should understand and have knowledge of Life Orientation

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

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

2.4.1.2 Life Orientation teachers should be critical thinkers and reflective practitioners

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

2.4.1.3 Life Orientation teachers must be grounded in the learning area

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5   POLICY AND PRACTICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.1 TEACHERS' ROLE IN CURRICULUM CHANGE

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

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

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

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

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

According to Pilot, Deck & Owen (2007:7) teachers were placed in positions of responsibility that gave them authority to design and develop educational constructs. Teachers were not just performers of educational activities that were developed or decided on elsewhere by others unless they explicitly decide to make that choice (Pilot *et al.*, 2007:7). The dynamics of situational adaptation dictate that
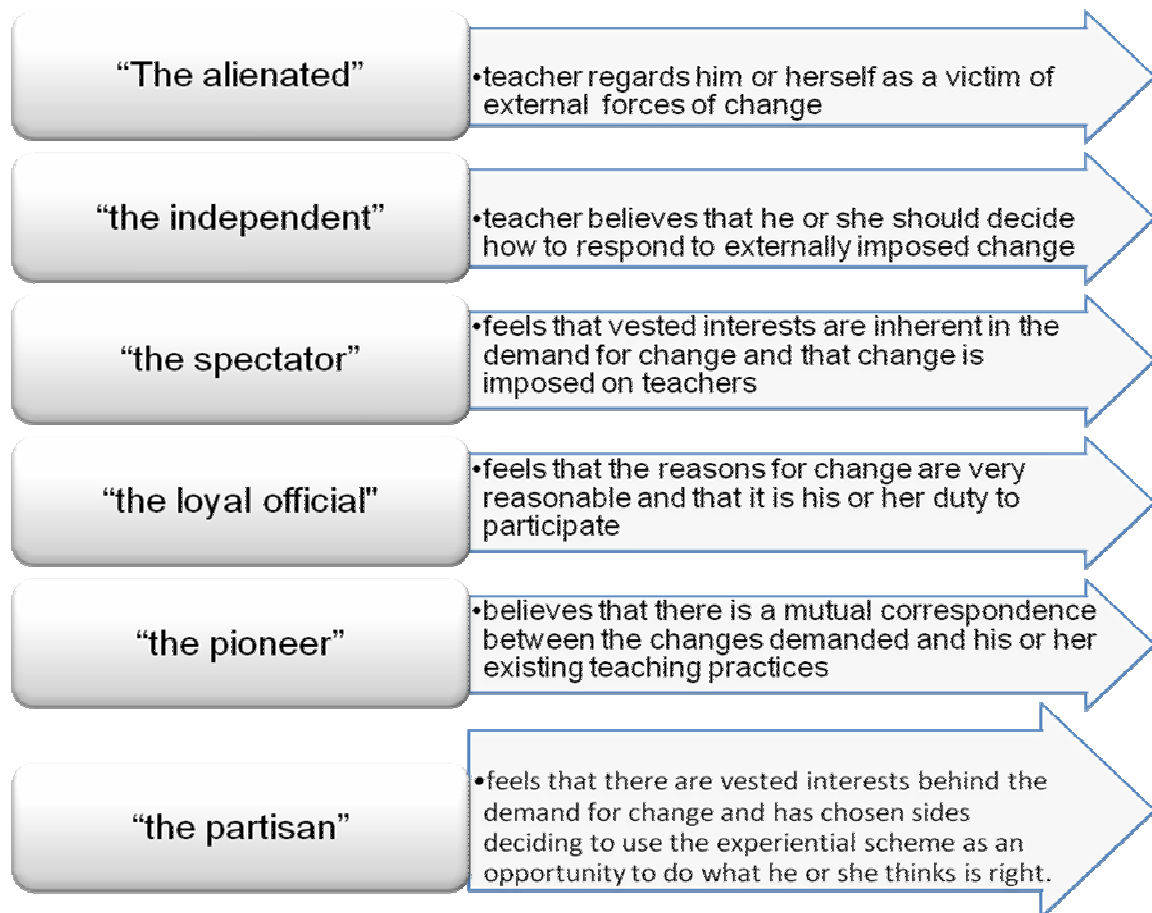
teachers will always have to adapt their education to changes and be owners of the educational constructs and problems (Bakar *et al.*, 2006:24). According to Bakar *et al.* (2006:xviii) teachers are curriculum designers that are constantly "creating curriculum", since they design new lessons, decide what parts of textbooks to use, what chapters to leave out and what new activities in the form of quizzes and tests to add. In addition, teachers search the web for activities, borrow from one another and bring back activities from conferences. It is widely acknowledged that teachers are key actors in curriculum innovations that usually require a change in teacher practice (Fullan, 2001).

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

2.6   TEACHERS' REACTIONS TO CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Anger due to frustration and lack of knowledge
- Leaving the profession on a positive note.
- Using reform as an opportunity for new career prospects.
- Ignoring, resisting, adopting or adapting the change.

2.6.1 RESISTANCE TO CURRICULUM CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.6.2 ADOPTING CURRICULUM CHANGE

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

2.6.3 IGNORING CURRICULUM CHANGE

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

2.6.4 ADAPTING TO CURRICULUM CHANGE

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

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

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

2.7   TEACHERS' SUPPORT AND CURRICULUM CHANGE IN SCHOOLS

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

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

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

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

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

2.8   WORKLOAD OF TEACHERS

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

2.8.1   TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORKLOAD

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

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

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

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

2.8.2   TEACHERS WORKLOAD AND COLLABORATION

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

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

2.8.3   TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TO CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.9   TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS IN LIFE ORIENTATION

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

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

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

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

2.9.1 COMMUNICATION AND CURRICULUM CHANGE

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

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

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

2.10 SUPPORT NEEDED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW CURRICULUM

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

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

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

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

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

2.12   TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE ORIENTATION CURRICULA

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

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

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

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

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

2.13   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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

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

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

1.   How to select and justify worthwhile educational knowledge.
2.   How to organise educational knowledge within a curriculum.

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

Figure 2.3: Three levels of competencies of Structural Curriculum Theory
(Adapted from Lewy (1991:23)
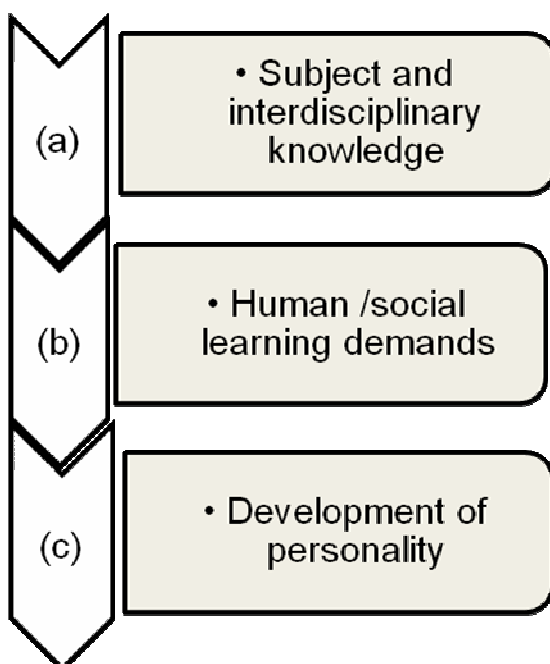
Such levels of competencies as proposed by Bernstein, serve as a guide for selecting educational aims, content and learning activities. The guide also serves as a framework to determine how teachers are able to select, understand and implement the educational aims, content and learning activities in terms of Life Orientation (Lewy, 1991:23). In order to get a better understanding of how teachers select, justify and organise educational knowledge, Benstein introduces the ideas of "classification" and "framing" of educational knowledge. Bernstein (1977) focuses on a model of pedagogic discourse and practices. He begins with "classification" and "framing" of content knowledge and continues to a systematic core outline of the 'what' and the 'how' of education (Sadovnik, 2001:8).

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

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

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

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

2.14   "FRAMING" AS APPLIED TO THIS RESEARCH

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

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

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

1.   Diagnostic framing for the identification of a problem and assignment of blame.

2.   Prognostic framing to suggest solutions, strategies, and tactics to solve a problem.

3.   Motivational framing that serves as a call to arms and a rationale for action.

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

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

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

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

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

2.15   LEARNING AREA IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.16   SUMMARY

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

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

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