

CHAPTER 2

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THE SENIOR PHASE LEARNER

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The majority of children in South Africa do not have the opportunity to learn life skills from their families. Poverty, migratory labour, poor or no housing and long distances from the workplace are a few of the destructive forces that have affected the family life of black South Africans over many decades (Viljoen, 1994:91). It is the school, rather than their parents, that is now responsible for helping these children to develop and learn life skills.

The development of a curriculum for life skills education should be understood in the overall context of the development of education support services, namely social work, school health, specialised education, vocational and general guidance and counselling, and psychological services. The life skills curriculum is also underpinned by the principle of service integration: that is emphasising the need to view issues of development as interrelated. This principle requires an interdisciplinary / sectoral approach to curriculum development and implementation, including all the above-mentioned education support services (De Jong, Ganie, Lazarus & Prinsloo, 1995:92-93). Service agencies near to the school are regarded as part of the community and therefore as members of the Outcomes-Based Education team (Department of Education, 1999:13-16).

Tshiwula (1995) points out that because social workers have the training, knowledge and experience in working with individuals, groups and communities, they are in a position to provide meaningful direction to the work done in schools. The social worker is an important link between the school, the learner, the family and the community. Since the social worker takes part in strategies for intervention, prevention and development, he/she can contribute to developing life skills programmes that will foster the personal and interpersonal development of learners. Life skills training should include skills in developing self-awareness, communication and assertiveness skills, skills in interpersonal relationships and problem

solving (McKendrick & Hoffmann, 1990; Tshiwula, 1995). In a broader sense, Tshiwula (1995) recommends that schools should ask social workers to run context-specific programmes which could help to prevent problems such as truancy, vandalism, substance abuse and juvenile delinquency. The researcher also believes that social workers ought to be involved in developmental programmes, such as developing and implementing various life skills programmes. In addition, Delva-Taui'ili (1995:86) stresses the important roles of social work in encouraging sensitivity to the individual's cultural and social experiences, and in preparing teachers and students to meet the needs of an increasingly multicultural school population. Social workers should actively develop interventions that include the entire school system.

2.2 LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Life skills education is a concept which originated in thinking about training and education. This kind of education covers the skills and competencies that an individual needs for sustaining and enriching life and also the kind of behaviour-based learning that the individual needs for coping with predictable developmental tasks (Schmidt, Brown & Waycott, 1988:13; Swann, 1981:350; Adkins, 1984:53-54; Pickworth, 1989:105). The central reason for including life skills education in the school curriculum is that an interventional, preventive and developmental approach to equipping schoolchildren (learners) in the senior phase with coping skills will help them to deal effectively with predictable developmental tasks and an ever-changing world (Curriculum 2005).

Life skills comprise particular attitudes, knowledge and skills (Nelson-Jones, 1991) which enable the individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Division of Mental Health WHO, 1993). Nelson-Jones (1992:232) recommends that specific life skills should be regarded as comprising three dimensions: attitude, knowledge and skill.

- **Attitude:** An appropriate attitude to any skill is that one should assume personal responsibility for acquiring, maintaining, using and developing it. One may lose some or all of a life skill if one fails to work at using and developing it. A personally responsible attitude is the motivational or “wanting to do it” dimension of a life skill.

- **Knowledge:** Any life skill involves knowing how to make the right choices. People who have been exposed to good models may have this kind of knowledge, albeit implicitly rather than explicitly. Though they may not be able to say why, they know which choices are correct, for example for being a good speaker. People with shortcomings in certain areas of skills may require the relevant knowledge to be clearly articulated or “spelled out”, so that this can guide their actions. This is the “knowing how to do it” dimension of a life skill.
- **Skill:** The skill dimension entails putting attitude and knowledge into practice. In appropriate circumstances, one translate one's “wanting to do it” and “knowing how to do it” into “actually doing it” (Nelson-Jones, 1992:232).

Life skills are indispensable to the process of empowering individuals to engage in and cope successfully with life and its challenges. This is seen as imperative in societies which are still developing, such as South Africa (De Jong, et al., 1995:93). The development of life skills promotes psychosocial competence. Life skills education enhances an individual's coping resources by promoting personal and interpersonal (social) competence and confidence (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1999:96).

2.2.1 Aims of life skills education and training

Central to the life skills philosophy are the concept of self-empowerment and a belief that skills can be learnt, modified and improved as a person develops and adjusts to life's challenges. There is also the conviction that all young people should be prepared for life at all levels – physically, emotionally, cognitively and socially – if society is to consist of mentally healthy and balanced individuals capable of contributing to a strong nation (Brownell, Craig, de Haas, Harris & Ntshangase, 1996:1).

Since empowerment is central to the vision of life skills, it is important to discuss what is entailed by operating in a self-empowered way. Hopson and Scally (1981:57) state that operating in a self-empowered way entails –

- being able to look at oneself objectively and believe that one is open to change;
- having the skills to change some aspects of oneself and the world in which one lives;

- being able to use one's feelings to recognise where there is a discrepancy between what is and what one would like it to be;
- being able to specify desired outcomes and the actions required to achieve them;
- being able to act – to implement plans of action;
- living each day aware of one's power to assess, reassess, influence and self-direct;
- enabling others to gain the power to take charge of their lives and influence the different arenas of their lives.

Underlying the whole concept is the belief that, no matter what, there is always an alternative and the individual can choose. Self-empowerment means believing this, and having the ability to identify the alternatives in any situation, so that one can choose on the basis of one's values, priorities and commitments. None of the alternatives in some situations may be desirable, but it is the knowledge that there is always a choice that heralds the beginning of self-empowered thinking.

Hopson and Scally (1981:58) offer an operational definition of self-empowerment. They state that to become more self-empowered, one needs awareness, goals, values, life skills and information (knowledge):

- **Awareness:** Self: knowing one's strengths, limitations, values, prejudices, potential.
Other people: being sensitive to other people – their moods, values, weaknesses, strengths, prejudices, potential.
Systems: realising that everyone lives in networks, groups, organisations and social structures.
- **Goals:** One knows why one is behaving in a certain way, in other words one has a goal. Outcomes are more specific. Goals need to be one's own, arrived at freely from an examination of the alternatives in the context of one's personal value system. This kind of goal would also qualify as a commitment. Therefore goals should have specified outcomes and be one's own commitments.
- **Values:** A belief becomes a value only if all the following criteria are met: it must be chosen freely, chosen from among alternatives, chosen after due reflection, prized and cherished, publicly affirmed, acted upon and be part of a pattern of repeated actions.

- **Life skills:** The crucial generalised skills that will help one become more self-empowered are: skills for learning, relating, working and playing, and for developing oneself and others.
- **Knowledge:** A person without information is a person without power. To become more self-empowered, individuals need information about themselves, others and the world in which they live. An uninformed person is open to manipulation at a microlevel or macrolevel (Hopson & Scally, 1981:58-73).

Rooth (1997:11) states that acquiring life skills makes capacity building a reality. Capacity building refers to the growth and development of people. It is also a process which assists in empowering people to become involved in various initiatives for reconstruction in their communities. Capacity building is a most important aspect, and a basic underlying theme, of life skills education.

Life skills education aims at assisting learners to meet the demands for more effective responses to the challenges of coping with life. By offering learners the opportunities to develop the skills they need for coping successfully with life and any problems, life skills education aims at assisting these learners to become empowered and eventually to build their capacity (Rooth, 1997:12).

Life skills education is aimed at encouraging learners to explore and develop the skills necessary for successful living and learning. The more coping skills that learners have, the better their chances of an improved quality of life and better social functioning (compare Rooth, 1997:12).

2.2.2 International models of life skills

There are taxonomies of generic life skills for categorising and arranging a wide range of life skills. Barrie Hopson and Mike Scally of the Counselling and Career Development Unit, Leeds University, use an analytical approach to categorising life skills. They revised the model of life skills that they had originally developed in 1980. In the revised model (Hopson & Scally, 1986:16) they identify four categories of life skills: learning, relating, working and playing, developing self and others. Table 2.1 (on page 30) lists the life skills falling into these four

TABLE 2.1

REVISED CLASSIFICATION OF LIFE SKILLS ACCORDING TO HOPSON AND SCALLY (1986)

| SKILLS OF LEARNING | SKILLS OF RELATING | SKILLS OF WORKING AND PLAYING | SKILLS OF DEVELOPING SELF AND OTHERS |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Numeracy • Information-seeking • Learning from experience • Using whole-brain approaches • Computer literacy • Study Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making, keeping and ending relationships • Communication • Assertiveness • Being an effective member of a group • Conflict management • Giving and receiving feedback • Parenting • Influencing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career management • Time management • Money management • Entrepreneurship • Choosing and using leisure options • Preparation for retirement • Seeking and keeping a job • Managing unemployment • Home management • Setting objectives and action planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being positive about yourself • Creative problem-solving • Decision-making • Stress management • Transition management • Managing sexuality • Maintaining physical well-being • Making the most of the present • Pro-activity • Managing negative emotions • Discovering interests, values and skills • Discovering what makes us do the things we do • Developing the spiritual self • Helping others • Developing the political self |

(Hopson & Scally, 1986:15)

categories. David Brooks, professor of counselling and guidance at Syracuse University, uses an empirical approach to classify life skills. Using the results of a national Delphi study, Brooks in conjunction with developmental psychology theorists (Erikson, 1963; Havighurst, 1972; Kohlberg, 1973), classified over 300 life skills descriptors into four generic categories. Table 2.2 (on page 32) shows the four categories together with the definition that Gazda, Childers and Brooks (1987) give for each category.

Each of these categories has a comprehensive list of descriptors for each of three stages of life: childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Normative age ranges are provided for the descriptors, indicating the approximate age at which the skill is usually acquired. Life skills develop in and apply to the contexts of home and family, school, work and the community. This comprehensive taxonomy of life skills is the first classification of life skills in terms of a developmental rationale to appear in the literature (see Gazda & Brooks, 1985:1-10; Gazda, et al., 1987).

Although the exact nature and description of life skills are likely to differ across social and cultural contexts, an analysis of the life skills field suggests that a core set of skills is integral to the initiatives to promote social functioning, health and well-being. This set of skills includes the following:

- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication
- Interpersonal relating
- Self-awareness
- Ability to empathise
- Coping with emotions
- Coping with stress (Division of Health WHO, 1993).

Judging by these two international models of life skills, the conclusion can be drawn that the specific needs to be addressed in Life skills education are communication, interpersonal

relationships, problem solving, decision making and the development of a positive self-concept in the adolescent.

TABLE 2.2: LIFE SKILLS CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO GAZDA, CHILDERS AND BROOKS (1987)

| |
|---|
| <p>□ Interpersonal communication and human relations skills</p> <p>Skills necessary for –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, with others, leading to ease in establishing relationships; ➤ small and large group and community membership and participation; ➤ management of interpersonal intimacy; ➤ clear expression of ideas and opinions; ➤ giving and receiving feedback. |
| <p>□ Problem-solving and decision-making skills</p> <p>Skills necessary for –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ information seeking; ➤ information assessment and analysis; ➤ problem identification, solution, implementation and evaluation; ➤ goal setting; ➤ systematic planning and forecasting; ➤ time management; ➤ critical thinking; ➤ conflict resolution. |
| <p>□ Physical fitness and health maintenance skills</p> <p>Skills necessary for –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ motor development and co-ordination; nutritional maintenance; ➤ weight control; ➤ physical fitness; ➤ athletics participation; ➤ understanding the physiological aspects of sexuality; ➤ stress management; ➤ selection and practice of leisure activities. |
| <p>□ Identity development / purpose in life skills</p> <p>Skills and awareness necessary for –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ongoing development of personal identity and emotional awareness, including self-monitoring, maintenance of self-esteem; ➤ manipulating and accommodating to one's environment; ➤ sex-role development; ➤ developing meaning of life; ➤ clarifying morals and values. |

(Gazda, Childers & Brooks, 1987: Appendices D, E, F & G).

2.2.3 Principles for a life skills curriculum and the development of programmes

According to De Jong, et al. (1995:95-96) a life skills curriculum, and therefore the development of programmes, should be guided by, developed from, and evaluated against the following principles:

- Non-discrimination which is a commitment to a non-racial and non-sexist society, and non-discrimination against those with special needs
- An awareness of and respect for diversity, reflected in the curriculum that has a commitment to non-discrimination yet remains flexible, non-prescriptive and relevant to the particular needs of individuals and local contexts. In particular, the curriculum should be committed to the development of an authentic South African framework for understanding life and the development of life skills
- Democratic values and practice, including the involvement of all relevant sectors (learners, teachers, parents, community leaders) in the development and, where appropriate, implementation of life skills programmes
- An awareness and the implementation of human rights and responsibilities in a democratic society
- A multidisciplinary / sectoral approach, involving all the resources of education support services (social work, vocational and general guidance and counselling, specialised education, school health and psychological services), in curriculum and service development and implementation
- The developmental needs of children and adolescents and the assessment of these needs in terms of emotional, social, cognitive and physical domains (i.e. a holistic understanding)
- An awareness of contextual demands and trends, including environmental and global issues
- The development of a national identity and reconciliation, through which inequalities in curriculum resources and practices will be addressed
- The separation and integration of education support services in the general curriculum, as reflected in a balanced combination of the life skills programmes being offered as a separate core subject and also integrated into the general curriculum

- A facilitative approach to teaching, where the primary approach to teaching is based upon acknowledging and drawing on the existing competencies and resources of learners as well as of the broader community.

The above principles should primarily govern what is taught in life skills education and developed in life skills programmes.

2.2.4 Life skills curriculum and programmes for the South African school context

In 1993 Vermaak conducted a needs assessment of the life skills that should be taught to adolescents in a multicultural school and society, namely South Africa. Table 2.3 (on page 35) lists the identified needs for life skills education in South Africa. Vermaak (1993:28; 50-61) recommends that the needs listed in this table should be used as criteria for evaluating the contents of the life skills programmes that would be taught in schools in the multicultural society of South Africa.

In *Curriculum Frameworks for the General Phase of Education*, De Jong, et al., (1995:91-106) propose general guidelines for a life skills curriculum framework. The authors refer to the attitudes, skills and knowledge areas that reflect the scope of life skills. It should be noted that the categorisation of "attitudes, skills and knowledge" is used for ease of discussion and does indicate aspects that should be developed in an integrated manner in practice.

Life skills include the following:

- The development of **qualities and attitudes** relating to, for example:
 - Social responsibility / community commitment / *ubuntu*
 - Confidence / assertiveness
 - Sensitivity to others and to the environment
 - Self-awareness and reflectiveness
 - Creativity
 - Health promotion and the maintenance of wellness.

TABLE 2.3
SOUTH AFRICAN NEEDS FOR LIFESKILLS EDUCATION (VERMAAK, 1993:29)

| COMMUNICATION SKILLS | RELATION SKILLS | MANAGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING SKILLS | SKILLS FOR A HEALTHY LIFE STYLE | SKILLS FOR DEVELOPING A VALUE SYSTEM | SKILLS FOR IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening skills • Verbal communication • The ability to say NO • To understand other people's viewpoint • Campaign of human rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building of relationships • Dealing with conflict • Reducing of prejudices • Avoidance of stereotyping • Dealing with stress • Respect for self and other • Self control • Self confidence • Building and keeping friendships • Action/behaviour in cross cultural relationships • Relation with opposite sex | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management • Development of study methods • Career planning • Entrepreneurship • Punctuality • Decision making • Loyalty • Teamwork and –building • Problem identification and solving | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of values and norms • Respect and appreciation of values • Tolerance for other values • Knowledge and understanding of democratic rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of values and norms • Respect and appreciation of values • Tolerance for other values • Knowledge and understanding of democratic rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-knowledge • Self-respect • Self-identity • Self-confidence |

- The development of particular **strategies / skills / competencies**, for example:
 - Goal setting and decision making
 - Problem solving
 - Various levels of thinking (including critical / discriminatory / discerning skills and the cognitive subskills that underlie them)
 - Conflict management
 - Networking
 - Communication
 - Teamwork / groupwork
 - Learning / study skills and strategies, including learning from experience
 - Research / information processing
 - Stress management
 - Time management
 - Crisis management.

- A focus on particular **areas** (or knowledge), such as:
 - General health promotion and primary health care
 - Substance use and abuse
 - Mortality education (dealing with death, loss and grief)
 - Sexuality (including HIV, AIDS) education
 - Work (including employment, unemployment, entrepreneurship)
 - Career and vocational education
 - Economic education
 - Citizen education (including legal / human rights, peace education / education for democracy)
 - Dealing with oppression / prejudice (including racism, sexism and other gender issues, and violence - gangsterism, abuse of children and adults, particularly of women) (De Jong, et al., 1995:94-95).

De Jong, et al., (1995:99-100) stress the following as broad and fundamental areas of concern in life skills education in the context of South African schools:

- **Health education**, for example primary health, nutrition, substance abuse and first aid

- **Personal and interpersonal development**, for example self-awareness, communication, relationships, problem solving and conflict management
- **Citizenship education**, for example legal rights, democratic skills, challenging discrimination, peace education and participation in civil society
- **Environmental education**, for example environmental issues and responsibilities
- **Work and career education**, for example connecting personal abilities with work and career requirements or opportunities
- **Study**, for example strategies for learning, study skills, subject choice and options for further study
- **Sexuality education**, for example physical development, relationships, contraception, HIV, AIDS and sexual abuse
- **Economic education**, for example budgeting, banking and the management of personal finances.

The fundamental areas in life skills education are very important to social workers so that relevant developmental programmes can be developed and implemented in South African schools.

2.2.5 The practice of life skills education and training

The overall outcome of life skills education and training is empowerment and capacity building. Skills, insight, awareness, knowledge, values, attitudes and qualities are necessary to empower individuals, families and their communities to cope with and engage successfully in life and its challenges in South African society. In the challenging context of the transformation and reconstruction of education, life skills education and training is committed, at all levels of education, to empower South African individuals, families, groups and their communities to cope with and engage successfully in life and its challenges.

The process of life skills education and training begins long before the first session and extends far beyond the last session. Morganett (1994:1-9) notes that in general, the following steps are not only the foundation of the group counselling experience, but also apply to facilitating life skills education in schools.

- Step 1: Conduct a needs assessment to determine the important themes and topics
- Step 2: Compile a written proposal with a description and rationale, learning outcomes, procedures (methods, techniques) and evaluation
- Step 3: Advertise the group
- Step 4: Obtain consent from parent/guardian
- Step 5: Conduct a pre-group interview
- Step 6: Select group members according to general selection guidelines
- Step 7: Administer pre-test
- Step 8: Conduct sessions
- Step 9: Administer post-test
- Step 10: Conduct post-group follow-up and evaluation (Morganett, 1994:1-9).

Nelson-Jones (1992:232-233) states that life skills training groups have the same four stages as counselling groups, namely preparatory, initial, working and ending. He adds: "*Many of the facilitator skills for group counselling are similar to, if not the same as, the trainer skills for life skills training*" (Nelson-Jones, 1992:232-233). The four stages of life skills training and the skills needed by the trainer or facilitator are briefly discussed below (Nelson-Jones, 1992:233-246):

□ **Stage 1: Preparatory stage skills**

Preparatory considerations are the following: the number of trainers / facilitators; clientele; group size; duration of group and frequency and length of sessions; location, physical setting and facilities. An important skill for this stage is the ability to design a life skills programme.

□ **Stage 2: Initial stage skills**

Skills for facilitating the initial stage include: structuring, encouraging participation, encouraging responsibility and empathic responding; and further facilitation skills such as questioning, confronting, disclosing and summarising, "breaking the ice" exercises and also collecting baseline data and encouraging self-assessment through questionnaires, self-observation, ratings by others and by trainers.

□ **Stage 3: Working-stage skills**

The aim is to impart both knowledge and “how to do it” information. The guidelines that should be followed are: have manageable goals; communicate goals clearly; break the task down and clearly identify each step; be mindful of opportunities to intersperse presentation with rehearsal and practice; use verbal, vocal and body language in public speaking skills; use modelling; use audiovisual aids; prepare a handout; use checking skills and build in homework to transfer skills to outside settings. Using and designing exercises and games are important for promoting learning by doing.

□ **Stage 4: Ending-stage skills**

The most important task is to consolidate self-help skills. To this end, trainees must have access to a skills manual or handouts. Ways of consolidating self-help skills at the end of a programme include having the trainees do the following: make an accurate assessment of their resources and shortcomings in the skills area; develop plans of action for maintaining, using and developing their skills; review their understanding of the skills; and attend one or more follow-up sessions.

In Nelson-Jones's (1992:249) outline for the designing of a life skills training programme on how to make friends, he recommends that the trainer should formulate and write down the following items: the overall goal of the programme; the operationalisation of the overall goal into objectives; and a session-by-session outline of the programme, for example by using the headings: Session, Objectives and Training methods; and should also outline the homework.

Larson and Cook (1985:18) reviewed the more systematic and influential life skills training programmes in the fields of education and mental health. They found that these programmes had the following characteristics in common:

- Clients and learners (students) participate actively in the learning process
- There is a focus on specific behaviours (internal and external) and the mastery and maintenance of such behaviours
- The programmes are based on the established learning principles of modelling, observing, discriminating, reinforcing and generalising
- Each programme includes didactic and experiential emphases
- The programmes are highly structured

- Goals are clear
- Progress is monitored
- Mystification is minimised.

To this can be added that groupwork is the one method dominant in all the programmes (Schmidt, et al, 1988:18).

As empowerment is central to the vision of life skills, De Jong, et al. (1995:104) state that the approach used in facilitating the learning of life skills should reflect the following:

- Drawing upon the experiences of the learners when facilitating experiential learning
- Co-operative learning where appropriate
- Problem-centred learning which relates to the contextual demands placed on participants
- Self-initiated and participatory learning where learners are encouraged to take an active role in their learning processes, and the facilitator (for example a social worker) is considered to be a learner, and the learner is a facilitator too
- An open, flexible and non-threatening yet challenging attitude in the facilitator
- A multidisciplinary and sectoral approach that utilises the expertise of relevant fields and develops partnerships to enhance the development of skills and knowledge.

There is a wide range of teaching and learning methods and locations that could be utilised in an overall life skills programme, for example:

- Self-reflective exercises
- Work and community experience, where learners are placed in work and community settings
- Peer tutoring and peer learning where learners teach, support and learn from one another
- Simulation exercises
- Role-playing
- Debates
- Excursions and visits to places of interest
- Projects, such as community outreach (De Jong, et al., 1995:104).

2.2.5.1 Guidelines for the facilitator

Hopson and Scally (1981:108) give the following guidelines to a facilitator, for example a social worker or teacher who wants to start a life skills programme:

- Decide which of the skills in the life skills models will be the most appropriate skills to start the programme
- Decide whether the programme will fit most naturally into the work that the facilitator is already doing or whether it will require a series of separate sessions
- Give thought to how the facilitator can introduce the idea of skill development to the learners
- Study relevant resources, become familiar with the teaching materials one may wish to use, identify where they might fit in, and begin fostering the learners' commitment to the approach.

2.2.5.2 Stages of life skills teaching and training

Hopson and Scally (1981:109) recommend that the stages of life skills teaching and learning should include the following:

- Developing an awareness in the facilitator (social worker) and the child / adolescent of the skills each already has and what other skills each would like to develop
- Identifying the skills that individuals or groups wish to work on first. Learning is more effective if the learners have expressed a desire to develop a skill, considered the consequences and recognised the advantages of doing so
- Assessing the material or resources that will help to develop the skill on which people wish to work
- Analysing and understanding the components of each skill – each skill will be more easily learned if it can be understood and practised in identifiable, simple stages
- Practising the component parts, getting feedback about performance, and reviewing progress
- Practising further, and reinforcing, recognising and supporting progress and effort
- Using the skill in real-life situations
- Achieving a sufficiently high level of skill to enable one to teach that skill to someone else.

In the end, the effectiveness of life skills teaching or facilitating will depend upon the skills of individual facilitators (social workers, teachers) and, what is more important, on the active participation of the children / adolescents (learning by doing).

The social worker wishing to develop or supplement life skills education efforts in school settings should have a clear idea of the “how to” methods for facilitating the learning of life skills in a more systematic and appropriate manner.

2.2.6 The components of life skills education

Edna Rooth, director of the Life Skills Project at the University of Cape Town, has developed a model for life skills education in South African schools (1997). She refers to the components of life skills education, namely facilitation, groupwork, experiential learning and continuity. In the present research, a schematic representation of these components is shown in Figure 2.1, as designed by the researcher. These components will subsequently be discussed.

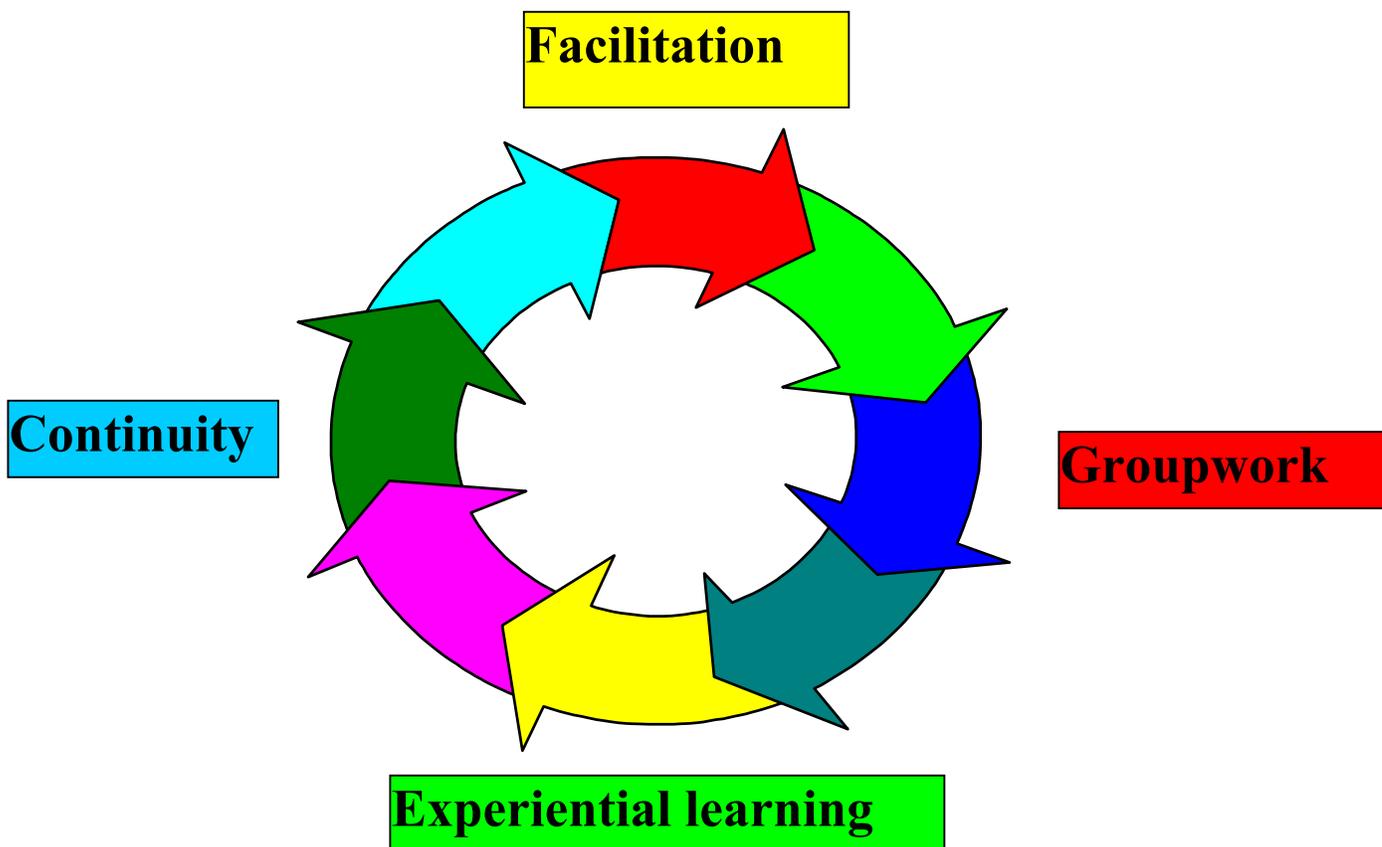


FIGURE 2.1:COMPONENTS OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION.

2.2.6.1 Facilitation

Facilitation is the approach that is used in life skills education. The facilitator creates an environment conducive to learning. To this end, the facilitator provides the structure and resources, as well as the appropriate media, questions and activities, that encourage learners to explore, experiment, discover and learn. To facilitate means to give a hand, to help and to enable learners to develop skills, giving learners the freedom and responsibility to become involved in their own growth and encouraging them to help themselves. The role of the facilitator comprises the following:

- **Introduction:** To introduce the topic and set the scene for the session
- **Groups and active involvement:** To divide the class into groups and involve them in an activity around the theme of the session
- **Report back:** To organise a report-back session after the group activity is over and to ensure that each group gets a chance to be heard
- **Summary and focus on learning:** To have the learners verbalise the learning that was generated in the group discussions or activities. The facilitator can provide some input, give relevant facts, share feelings, challenge learners to think further, consider alternative viewpoints and make them aware that there are many different solutions to problems. Information or fact worksheets could be handed out to the learners
- **Reflection:** The facilitator needs to get the learners to reflect on what the topic or theme means for them, how they feel about their learning and what they have discovered about themselves
- **Tasks or homework:** It is recommended that to ensure continuity and progression, the learners should be given tasks for the week. The learners need to be able to practise and use the skill (Rooth, 1997:107-110).

The paradigm shift that the social worker has to make from helper to facilitator is intrinsic to the successful implementation of the life skills education model. Learners or participants in groups become more empowered, instead of disempowered, when the social worker facilitates instead of merely directing (Rooth, 1998:49).

2.2.6.2 Groupwork

Groupwork is the method that is mainly, but not exclusively, used in life skills education. Learners work in groups and discuss, share and learn in a group context. Democratic group interaction and co-operation are promoted as part of the development of general skills. Glassman and Kates (1990) note that social workers played an important part in the development of democratic practices in group processes.

Rooth (1997:110) believes that experiential learning is most successful in the context of groupwork. There are times for individual reflection and discovery, but these are usually the outcomes of some kind of group interaction. The methods of groupwork are experiential and promote the empowerment of the learners in the group. Rooth (1997:110) states that practically all lessons in life skills education are based on groupwork. To ensure the success of groupwork, learners should sit facing one another in circles or semicircles. The size of the group may vary from between three to seven learners. Rooth (1997:120) recommends that when learners do not work very well in groups, these learners should play specific roles, such as a time-keeper, note-keeper or scribe, co-ordinator, mediator or encourager. The underlying credo for groupwork should be: none of us is as smart as all of us (Rooth, 1995:6).

Corey and Corey (1992:314-315) and Jacobs, Harvill and Masson (1994:6) note that groups come closer to replicating real life because people live in an environment composed of other people. By living in a group, a person learns a self-concept and how to behave in a variety of social situations. A group also provides an opportunity to make helpful commitments or contracts. Peers are an important part of adolescent experience and the researcher believes that groupwork would be an appropriate method of implementing the Life Skills Programme in the present study. The whole learner group (all learners in the classroom) is regarded as a collection of subgroups of various sizes and composition. To use groupwork in the classroom is to use a common aspect of everyday life in a developmental way. The main focus should be on the preventive and developmental aspects of life skills education, and be aimed at a broader target. The target is to facilitate large groups of learners in the classroom by dividing them into smaller groups of five to eight learners. This does not mean that all one-to-one intervention should be abandoned, as there will always be a need for this in practice. There will always be children who need special help.

Konopka (1993:30) defines groupwork as follows: "*Social groupwork is a method of social work which helps individuals to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences and to cope more effectively with their personal group and community problems.*" This definition makes a number of basic points: groupwork is a method of social work; it helps individuals with their social functioning; it is purposeful; and it is concerned with coping at personal, group and community levels. However, the emphasis is the rather traditional one of helping the individual with a problem. Contemporary groupwork emphasises action and influence as well as reaction, adaptation and development. The definition becomes more comprehensive if the researcher adds that groupwork provides a context in which individuals develop, support and help one another; it is a method of developing, supporting, and helping groups as well as individuals; and it can enable individuals and groups to influence, change and prevent personal, group, school and community problems.

Brown (1992:20-27) notes that there are different "mainstream" models of social groupwork, among which the social goals / social action / self-directed models and empowerment models are appropriate for the present study. The first two models, namely social goals / social action, are examples of developmental groupwork. The self-directed model strongly emphasises empowerment as the core principle and defines and conceptualises the role of the social worker as a "facilitator" rather than a "leader" (Brown, 1992:25). Brown (1992:25) adds that in the past decade, increasing attention has been given to group models which have empowerment at heart. There is an obvious overlap with the social goal models, particularly with the self-directed model, but whereas social goal models have been derived mostly from the youth and the community, there is another source of the conceptualisation of empowerment groups that has been derived from the response to the oppression of women, black people and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups (Brown, 1992:25).

Groupwork is inherently concerned with giving children (learners) the opportunities to develop skills, to cope with problems and to meet life's challenges successfully.

Hopson and Scally (1981:112) state that small groups in the classroom refer to the whole student (learner) group as a collection of subgroups of varying size and composition, and that this collection of subgroups has a great potential for learning. The collection is carefully structured (designed and planned) and calls for skilled, sensitive management by the social worker or teacher or person taking responsibility for the learning event. Hopson and Scally

(1981:112) add that they "... believe that well prepared and well managed small group sessions have great potential for participants to learn about themselves and others, whether or not that is the primary objective of the group. Whatever the task or purpose of the group, there will be a bonus of learning simply from having to act and interact with one another, and we would like to make that bonus available to students as they develop specific life skills". Generally, social workers, as part of their professional training, are well versed in the skills required for groupwork. They have to work toward making changes where and when these changes are feasible, and will assist large groups of learners (as a collection of subgroups) in developing life skills.

2.2.6.3 Experiential learning

Rooth (1997:75) avers that experiential learning is the learning theory or philosophy that is best suited to life skills education, since it allows for learner participation and empowerment. Experiential learning is a process of learning from direct experience and reflecting on what has been learnt. Reflection is a central part of experiential learning as it is the way to give meaning to, consolidate and internalise learning.

The following are some important aspects of experiential learning:

- **Existing experience:** All learners come into a class / group, with experience which should be respected, acknowledged and used. Experiential learning focuses on building on the learners' existing strengths and knowledge. The starting point is always what the learners know, feel and think, which serves as a basis from which the facilitator can proceed
- **Feelings:** An awareness and expression of feelings and thoughts are essential to learning. Sharing helps the learners, because their feelings become clearer when they discuss them with other learners and they may also accept and express these feelings more easily
- **Personal development:** The development of self-knowledge is an essential life skill which is often neglected in academic subjects. Besides self-awareness, experiential learning encourages the development of responsibility, co-operation, creativity, positive self-esteem, questioning, initiative and functional responses to challenges. In addition, experiential learning promotes skills such as communication, assertiveness, decision making, flexibility, problem solving and networking

- **Practice:** Learners are encouraged to become actively involved in practising skills, so that they can do instead of just know. Experiential learning is a dynamic, active process that allows learners to experiment with different types of behaviours
- **Learner involvement:** By involving learners directly in learning, they will own the process and feel part of the learning event
- **Taking responsibility:** Experiential learning promotes control and responsibility at various levels. It teaches the learners that they have an internal locus of control and the power to change (compare Rooth, 1997:77-80; Weil & McGill, 1993:25-36).

There are many models and ways of using experiential learning. The researcher has used Rooth's (1997:82-102) practical model because it works well in the school context. The steps in the model, not always necessarily implemented in this order, will be briefly discussed and schematically represented in Figure 2.2 on page 48. The schematic representation is the researcher's own interpretation of Rooth's model.

- **Awareness of the self and skill:** Learners have to focus on their personal awareness and an awareness of a skill, or lack of a skill, or awareness of a need to improve a skill. The researcher prefers to use sensory activities, for example seeing, hearing (listening to music), smelling (breathing in and out) and touching, to promote personal awareness.
- **Motivation (the sense and meaning):** If learners are motivated to acquire a skill, learning becomes far more self-directed and successful.
- **Analysis: (the components of the skills)** An analysis of the skills entails looking at what the skills mean, what is needed to develop them and what obstructs their development. It is always useful to start by using the experience, knowledge and skills that the learners already have.
- **Practice:** The learners must have the opportunity to practise their skills. The learners can experiment and practise by using various media (drama, discussion) in the life skills education class and in their own time outside the classroom.
- **Reflection:** Reflection is a way to consolidate and internalise learning, and to promote the development and extension of skills. Without reflection, experiential learning will be superficial, and not necessarily enduring. Reflection means the act of thinking about an event or experience and its relationship to the learner. The facilitator should ensure that reflection leads learners to think about what the session meant for them at a personal

level. Sometimes learners complain that it takes too much time and energy to reflect. They would much rather continue with the activity as they usually have so much fun. However, activities without reflection (introduced at almost any moment), are not useful learning opportunities. Ways to let learners reflect could include keeping a journal on a weekly basis, using reflection worksheets, asking questions and keeping a record.

2.2.6.4 Continuity

Continuity is the way to ensure that there is a link, a logical sequence and follow-up. Continuity reinforces the acquisition of skills and helps with the development of life skills programmes. Each life skills session is like a piece of a puzzle and it is important to fit all the pieces of the puzzle together. Progression and outcome achievement are enhanced by continuity (Rooth, 1997:76; 125-127).

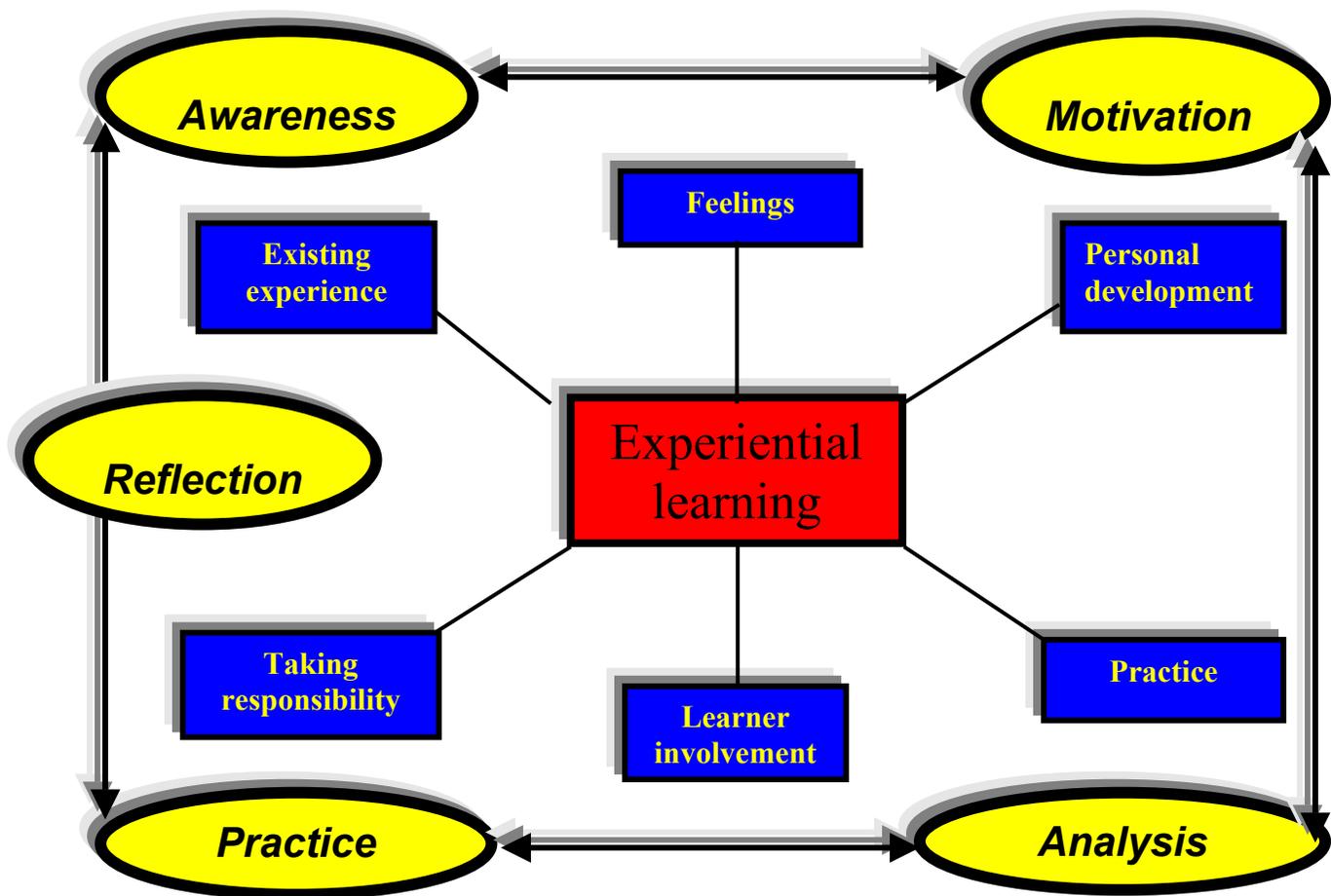


FIGURE 2.2: THE PROCESS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

2.2.7 Facilitation media for life skills education

The social worker, as the facilitator of life skills education, has to decide which media are the best for realising experiential learning in groupwork.

The media selected for facilitating the learning of life skills involve learners at a personal and group level. The media described below are interactive, participatory and help to make life skills education a practical and successful reality in class:

- ❑ Sensory contact and activities (touch, sight, sound, smell, taste and these relate to Gestalt therapy)
- ❑ Games and “ice-breakers” help to make the life skills education class fun. Learners learn more when they are enjoying themselves
- ❑ Role-playing is a valuable medium. It is important to consider warming up, debriefing, containment, choice and planning before using role-playing. Situations, first-liners, mimes, songs and props are useful aids in role-playing
- ❑ Drama, socio-drama and puppets
- ❑ Story telling, fantasy, metaphor and imagination lead to skills development at many levels
- ❑ Relaxation exercises and movement help to energise learners and should often be included
- ❑ Music is an essential aid and leads to learner involvement
- ❑ Drawings, clay, collage, seeds and junk heaps are all useful media for involving learners in activities
- ❑ Worksheets, the learners’ own exercise books and making posters for the classroom help learners to relate information to their lives
- ❑ Exercises and skills practice are essential. Skills cannot be developed and sustained unless they are practised
- ❑ Pictures from magazines and newspapers
- ❑ Brainstorming allows everybody to share ideas
- ❑ Group discussions enable the learners to share ideas
- ❑ Panels allow learners to air their views
- ❑ “Buzz” groups are great for getting learners to talk to one another
- ❑ “Buzzing” helps students relate the topic to their own experience

- Debates help learners to think, air their views and listen to different viewpoints
 - Case studies allow the detailed analysis of relevant problems
 - Making the rounds gives an opportunity to hear what everybody thinks
 - Demonstration or input is valuable and occurs when the social worker (facilitator) gives information and advice, and adds to learners' knowledge
 - Research projects help learners to discover facts and find answers
 - Task groups are great for group activities that require research beyond the school grounds, for example community service
 - Open space gives large groups the opportunity to work together. Learners are given a great deal of responsibility and freedom
 - Rehearsing occurs when learners rehearse for the roles they think they will be expected to play and they worry that they may not say the “right” thing and perform “properly”
 - Modelling
 - Peer tutoring
- (compare Hopson & Scally, 1981:142-147; Rooth, 1997:130-182; Schoeman & van der Merwe, 1996:41-56; 77-96; 128-136; Corey, 1995:309-317).

2.2.8 Summary

Life skills education and training is an expanding field of research. The reasons for the growth of life skills education and training include the following:

- It has a **developmental** emphasis. The target of life skills education and training in an ideal world would be to train everyone in the skills required to meet each task at every stage of their lifespan. Such education and training have a developmental rather than a remedial or rehabilitative emphasis
- It has a **preventive** emphasis. Developmental life skills education and training also have a preventive emphasis, for example the focus could be on the personal education of **all** learners in a way that would anticipate their developmental needs
- **Problems with living are widespread.** The world is full of the “walking wounded” – taking into account the statistics on marital breakdown in South Africa and the influence of divorce on the children involved. Moreover, many people in South Africa do not function optimally in most of the developmental tasks

- Pressures are increasing for **helper accountability**. Some social workers argue that their cost-effectiveness is much greater if they actively engage in developmental and preventive interventions, such as life skills education and training, instead of waiting in their offices for clients who need remedial help. Social workers seek ways to make an impact on as many people as possible.

The present study has as main goal to develop and implement a personal and interpersonal life skills programme for Grade 7 learners. So far the focus of this chapter has been on life skills education and training and now the discussion will be on the people for whom the programme will be developed, namely the senior phase learner.

2.3 THE DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The development of theories based on developmental psychology and the testing of these theories through research provide valuable information about the needs and functioning of individuals throughout their lifespan. Developmental phases or life periods are the periods, taking place in specific stages of the individual's life, when his/her physical, cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional), social, moral and religious abilities develop. The specific stage or period of time has distinctive features which are identifiable and predictable in a person's development. This implies that a specific behaviour pattern is regarded as characteristic of a particular phase of life.

The assumptions of developmental psychology (Gerdes, Ochse, Stander & van Ede, 1988; Havighurst, 1972; Hurlock, 1988:22-45) applicable to the present study are as follows:

- Biological growth and learning interact and this interaction results in the progressive increase in and modification of the individual's behavioural repertoire.
- This process occurs over time; and life can be viewed as definable, sequential stages of increasing competence.
- Each stage of development is characterised by definable tasks and skills which should be learned.
- There are critical or sensitive periods for many developmental tasks. These are points or stages during which the individual is maximally receptive to specific stimuli. These stages

may be of finite duration, during which certain experiences must occur if the individual is to assimilate them or there may be a period of increased efficiency for the individual to acquire experience. Havighurst (1972:7) refers to the "*teachable moment*" that occurs when the individual is biologically ready, when society requires the achievement of a certain task, and the individual is ready to achieve it.

- Each stage is based on the potential accumulation of experience in prior stages. A later stage of development will be handicapped if the tasks or skills appropriate to a preceding stage have not been mastered.
- Psychological adjustment consists of adequately learning and coping with the developmental tasks that are appropriate for a given stage of life.

Most theories of child development refer to age bands (ages between which a child is seen as "in" a particular stage) as approximate "indications" of when each stage is most apparent. It is when these are interpreted as fixed or absolute in some sense that difficulties arise. In particular, they often need to be seen as relative to a social context. To gain the most value from theories of stages, one has to understand individual people in relation to their social context, to their resolution of the previous stages, and to the development of their potential in relation to the stage(s) to come. Development is a continuous process, where each stage builds on the stage(s) before it, from conception to death (Donald et al., 1999:52-53).

Therefore a social worker's understanding of development should include insight into his/her own development, and how this interacts with the development of the children (learners) with whom he/she is working. This insight can only come from understanding that development is a lifelong process, and that adults, in relation to their social context, also go through developmental stages based on earlier stages.

The present study included learners in Grade 7 of the senior phase of the General Education and Training Band (GET). This is the final year of primary school. These children (learners) are in the developmental stage of late childhood to early adolescence. The ages of the learners included in the study varied from 12 to 16 years, due to progressive mainstreaming, and therefore the study focuses on the adolescent.

2.3.1 The senior phase learner: the adolescent

Adolescence has been defined in different ways. It can be regarded as the stage when young people have outgrown their child stage, but have not become adult enough to be considered adults. It is the period that follows childhood and precedes adulthood. It starts when the young person enters puberty, or the time of puberty (pre-adolescence) around the age of 12 years, and it continues until the young person reaches physical, mental, social and emotional adulthood (at the age of about 18-20 years).

Adolescence is the time in which the individual re-evaluates and discovers new aspects about him/herself, adapts his/her self-image and gains a new perception of his/her identity due to the discovery of his/her new self. Adolescence is characterised by moving away from the child's body, life perceptions and behaviour patterns.

In the study of the adolescent, the focus is on the interrelationship between physical, cognitive, emotional (affective), social, and moral and religious development in a social context. The development of the whole person (learner) is promoted (holistic perspective).

2.3.2 Developmental characteristics of the senior phase learner (adolescent)

The developmental characteristics of the senior phase learner (adolescent) include the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and religious and moral development and will subsequently be discussed.

2.3.2.1 Physical development

After a period of prolonged, gradual change, adolescence brings relatively rapid and dramatic growth which propels the person out of the childhood years into physical adulthood. There are five areas of physical growth in which accelerated growth can be noticed, namely height, mass, shoulder and hip measurements and muscle power.

Sexual maturity is accompanied by the appearance of the secondary gender characteristics that emphasise the differences in the physical appearance of boys and girls. This is also a sign of the start of the reproduction capability of men and women.

The physical needs of the adolescent are as follows:

- Understanding the endocrinological factors (hormonal changes) in development
- Coping with the variations in the intensity and duration of growth spurts
- Sexual maturation, for example menstruation (compare Rice, 1991; Shaffer, 1993: Gouws & Kruger, 1994:15-43).

2.3.2.2 Cognitive development

Cognition is described as the intellectual process that comes into operation when knowledge is acquired and used. It concerns knowing, observing, imagining. During adolescence, young people for the first time get involved in and are touched by abstract ideas, such as freedom and truth, instead of merely by specific people, activities and things. Young people are not concerned only with what *is* (reality), but also with what *can* or *should* be (potentiality).

Adolescents are able to think scientifically. Jean Piaget claims that they can now make deductions, suggest interpretations and develop hypotheses, and their thinking becomes flexible (the formal-operational phase of cognitive development) (Gouws & Kruger, 1994:46-55). They can carry out formal actions linked to abstract thinking, and evaluate their own thoughts as well as those of others. This leads to introspection and acceptance of the role model of adults. They develop a theoretical approach to the world and to things, a function involving the child's objective judgement of reality. Abstract theoretical thoughts develop with a view to developing intellectual schemes for solving problems.

Piaget admits that the social environment may accelerate or delay the start of formal operations. In fact, it has been found that compared with their more fortunate counterparts, fewer adolescents who have been exposed to economic deprivation achieve formal thinking; and that some never reach this level of cognitive thinking (Rice, 1991:185).

The following are typical of adolescents who display formally operating thinking:

- They make choices between numerous alternatives or variables that cannot be understood simultaneously, therefore they deal with many more elements and possibilities immediately

- They think of thinking, are capable of proportional logic and begin to distinguish the real from the possible
- They have a greater capacity for thought and can therefore formulate problems and hypotheses, figure out solutions, evaluate experience and reconsider values
- They are capable of hypothetical-deductive reasoning (possibilities based on initial assumptions) as well as empirical-inductive reasoning (generalising from facts)
- They can project themselves into the future, with an adult understanding of time
- As a result of this cognitive development, these adolescents feel comfortable when they reason, assess, evaluate, make comparisons, extrapolate into the future and transfer knowledge (Rice, 1991: 185-190).

Mwamwenda (1995:115) states that the Piagetian studies carried out in North, West, East and South Africa, involving the concepts of the conservation of quantity, weight, volume and number, transitive inference and class inclusion, confirm that Piaget's theory can be validated cross-culturally. There is a general developmental trend, so that the older the child, the better his/her performance. It has been shown that overall the performance of African children is comparable with that of Western children, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Mwamwenda (1995:115) notes that in a number of cases, it has been observed that dialogue with testees is disadvantageous to African children whose cultures do not facilitate or encourage intensive discussion between an adult and a child.

Adolescents' cognitive needs therefore include –

- being challenged at a more abstract and analytical level of thinking;
- developing introspection;
- solving problems and making decisions.

2.3.2.3 Emotional development

The self-concept is a conscious, cognitive perception and valuation of oneself. It is an acknowledgement that one is unique, special and a person in one's own right, and this implies a consciousness of who and what one is (Rice, 1991:198).

When the adolescent has formulated a self-concept, the value he/she places on him/herself should be examined first – this will be his/her feeling of self-worth. Psychological maladjustment and emotional disturbance occur when the self he/she is in relation to others differs from what he/she desires to be.

The adolescent's self-concept and feeling of self-worth have a tremendous influence on his/her affective development during adolescence.

The adolescent's psychological and physiological changes are often traumatic. The parents' expectations of adult behaviour are more demanding, they no longer make all the decisions, and there is strong pressure from the peer group and the teachers. Adolescence is a period of heightened emotionality. Some youngsters find the readjustments easy; others are bewildered and upset by their emotional volatility.

During adolescence, every adolescent undergoes several physical changes that concern his/her build, sex drive and reproductive ability. In the midst of all these changes (new body shape, feelings and roles) the adolescent's task is to acquire an identity, and he/she passes from being a child to being a young person. The danger of all these changes is the possibility of an identity crisis and that the adolescent may not know who he/she is and where he/she wants to go. During this phase, it is important for the adolescent to be sure of his/her identity and to be aware of the other identity choices he/she could make (Thomas, 1992:171) (compare Gouws & Kruger, 1994:83-108).

The emotional needs of the adolescent include –

- identity formation (who am I?);
- positive self-concept;
- independence;
- a sense of belonging.

2.3.2.4 Social development

Adolescence is the beginning of the process of emancipation, as the central part played by the family is now to a large extent taken over by the peer group. Adolescents spend more time away

from home than with the family. They undergo a disorganisation in themselves, which produces many types of behaviour that adults misunderstand. Adolescents may even display many of the annoying habits of their childhood years. The habits that have been instilled in them were formed because their parents insisted on such behaviour, not because these habits sprang from the adolescents' own inner desires; therefore adolescents now cast off these habits, as their parents are being replaced by other models of authority.

The development of the adolescent's personality is also largely determined by his/her association with his/her peer group. While adolescents are "hanging out" with and talking to members of their peer group, they get a chance to make a place for themselves. The peer group accepts or rejects adolescents for what they are and can do, not for any other reason.

Social acceptance is extremely important to adolescents, because they fear loneliness – which they experience as a symbol of exclusion or rejection. Conformity to their group makes them socially acceptable, so they fall in with the group's style of clothing, hairstyle and other forms of behaviour, even if parents and other adults disapprove.

The peer group concentrates on fulfilling the needs of the adolescent who lives under changing physiological and developmental pressure. The more athletically built the boy and the prettier the girl, the more easily they will be accepted by their age group. Acceptance by peers undoubtedly strengthens the adolescent's self-image (compare Hurlock, 1988:430; Gouws & Kruger, 1994:110-128). The social needs of the adolescent include –

- conformity to peer culture;
- the development of social relationships.

2.3.2.5 Religious and moral development

Adolescents have a real desire to think for themselves, and as religion comprises a personal encounter with truth, this should be welcomed rather than opposed. Adolescence is not really a period of increasing religious activity, rather one of decision. When they reach the age where they leave school, most young people have already made up their minds whether they will accept or reject a specific religion. The structure of the adolescents' prayers changes; their prayers become more altruistic. Confession and pleas for forgiveness display a certain

appropriateness; the church is seen as a way of changing someone into a better person, both spiritually and morally. Negative attitudes towards religion increase during adolescence; yet adolescents have a real desire for spiritual truth, even though they are highly critical of religion and often feel disillusioned with it (Hurlock, 1988:390).

Moral development is the degree to which a person internalises and acts in accordance with the values (e.g. honesty, respect) which make up his/her moral code of conduct (customs, manners, behavioural patterns that meet the standards of society). Ethics is the science of morals. Adolescents understand the difference between right and wrong, and they will internalise the values that they perceive as having merit.

The moral values of the childhood years no longer satisfy the adolescent. New and additional moral values must be learnt, such as those arising from heterosexual relationships, the use of alcohol and other drugs, and people's use of cars. Adolescents confront problems where they have to make their own decisions (and this is especially difficult if they come from an authoritarian home where decisions were made for them). They must be able to maintain themselves in the face of more and stricter rules, regulations and obligations than in their childhood days; they are confronted by conflicting values – pressure from the peer group and from gender, socio-economic, racial and religious groups.

2.3.3 The self and the development of the self-concept (personal)

Self-concept is generally defined as a multifaceted construct organised into the categories of beliefs one maintains about the self. Self-concept consists of the cognitive dimensions of self-perception, whereas self-esteem comprises the affective (emotional) dimensions associated with global feelings of self-worth. Self-esteem is therefore the evaluative and affective dimension of self-concept. Self-esteem is also referred to as self-worth or self-image (Santrock, 1992:357).

There are several components of self-concept, each relating to different aspects of the person, depending on the individual's maturity and interests. For example, the self-concept of the senior phase learner might contain separate categories for self-concept in the areas of the social (peer and adult relations), physical (appearance and ability), academic (Maths, English,

Science) and emotional self-concept. In each of these areas of the self-concept, the learner groups information about the self, obtained from interactions with significant others and the environment. The self-concept may change over a period of time, depending on the individual's experiences.

The accuracy and completeness of the self-concept are thought to increase with age. Although a young child may have a simplistic impression of "I am good at maths," the more mature child is better able to specify various strengths and weaknesses and might say: "I am good in algebra, but I have trouble with geometry." The accuracy and specificity of the self-concept are important for healthy functioning. A learner who has an accurate self-concept is able to take appropriate risks, to identify areas where assistance is needed, to make realistic predictions about the chances of success or failure, and to utilise problem-solving strategies to resolve difficulties (Ingram, 1998:22) (compare Santrock, 1992:355-356). Simply stated, the more information one has about one's skills, the better one can assess a task and successfully apply one's abilities.

Personality is a person's unique totality structure (as he/she appears to others) in interaction with his/her environment. It is the unique pattern of an individual's psychic traits at a given time that make his/her behaviour predictable to some extent. The core of the personality is the self-concept. The term self-concept therefore involves a collection of perceptions, feelings and attitudes which a person entertains about him/herself, especially as regards the assessment of his/her own characteristics, abilities and behaviour. Weiten (1992:652) defines self-concept as "*a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities, and typical behavior*". Self-concept is what a person believes about him/herself. Every child has many separate but related beliefs about the self (system of beliefs; collection of beliefs).

Pretorius (1998:158-159) states that the child's self-concept is characterised by the following essentials:

- **Stability.** The multitude of beliefs about the self are not all equally meaningful. Some beliefs deal with the essence of the self – they are basic beliefs about the self which are stable. Others are less central and meaningful and are therefore less stable. Purkey (1970:9) states: "*Closely held beliefs about oneself are difficult to change.*"
- **Value.** Every belief in the system of beliefs about the self has a positive or negative value.

- **Generation.** The system of beliefs about the self generates success and failures. If an individual fails in an important, highly valued ability, this lowers his/her self-assessment of other, less relevant abilities. Success therefore raises the individual's self-evaluation of less relevant skills.
- **Uniqueness.** No two persons form identical systems of beliefs about the self. It is this uniqueness and diversity which often hampers communication between people, because no two people perceive themselves or the world in the same way, and they find it difficult to agree about their experiences.
- **Dynamics.** Every individual constantly endeavours to maintain, protect and enhance the self – it is the motivation underlying the individual's behaviour; it is a personal, inner motivation. For the social worker and for the child, this attempt to enhance the self-concept is the given, basic, dynamic incentive to self-actualisation.
- **Point of departure.** The self is the basic frame of reference and the central core of the individual. The self is the product of the individual's experiences (especially social experiences) but it also generates new experiences for the individual. People and things are meaningful or meaningless, important or unimportant, attractive or unattractive, valuable or worthless in terms of their relation to the self. People give meaning to the world in terms of how they perceive themselves.

2.3.4 The self and culture

Culture is to society what memory is to the person. It specifies designs for living that have proven effective in the past, ways of dealing with social situations, and ways of thinking about the self and social behaviour that have been reinforced in the past. It includes systems of symbols that facilitate interaction: the rules of the game of life that have been shown to “work” in the past (Triandis, 1989:511-512).

In a study on the self and social behaviour in differing cultural contexts, Triandis (1989) reports that the self is an active agent that promotes the differential sampling (sampling information that is self-relevant more frequently than information that is not self-relevant), processing and evaluation of information from the environment, and consequently leads to differences in social behaviour. Triandis (1989:507) states that one major distinction among aspects of the self is between the private, public and collective self. The *private self* refers to

cognitions involving the person's traits, states, or behaviours, for example: "I am introverted," "I am honest." The *public self* refers to cognitions concerning the generalised views of others about the self, such as: "People think that I am introverted" or "People think I will buy X". The *collective self* refers to cognitions concerning a view of the self that is found in some collectives, such as the family, co-workers or tribe, for example: "My family thinks I am introverted" or "My tribe believe I travel too much." In other words, the private self is an assessment of the self by the self. The public self corresponds to an assessment of the self by the generalised other. The collective self corresponds to an assessment of the self by a specific reference group (Triandis, 1989:507).

The above-mentioned distinctions give rise to the dimension of individualism-collectivism. Individualists give priority to personal goals in preference to the goals of collectives. By contrast, collectives either make no distinctions between personal and collective goals, or if they do make such distinctions, they subordinate their personal goals to the collective goals. Collectives tend to be concerned about the effects that their actions have on members of their in-groups, tend to share resources with the in-group members, feel interdependent with and involved in the lives of in-group members (Triandis, 1989:509).

Kotzé (1993:xiii) elaborates on the dimension of individualism-collectivism by referring to individualistic consciousness and collective consciousness, and states: "*Neither blacks nor whites have yet come close to a profound understanding and appreciation of the untapped value of what may be called collective consciousness, the basic set of world views or perceptions of black people (as opposed to whites, individualistic consciousness).*"

Kotzé (1993:2) believes that black people in South Africa may be understood fruitfully in terms of the context of being "black". That is, while acknowledging that black people are not a monolithic body of human beings, there appears to be sufficient sense in translating a common dimension of perception overriding the differences in language, tradition, education, occupation and creed. This perceptual characteristic, which is derived from common experience or collective consciousness, contrasts with its opposite pole, individualistic consciousness, which is generally operative in the context of being "white". Collective consciousness would be incomprehensible if interpreted with the intellectual tools formed by individualistic consciousness, and vice versa, of course (Kotzé, 1993:2). Collective

consciousness has to be understood in terms of experience, for people think and behave in a certain way, largely as a result of their experience. In other words, people who differ in experience will also differ in the ways that they react to the same situation because they interpret the meaning of the situation differently.

Kotzé (1993:4) claims that children in townships or rural areas generally grow up under circumstances of profound material deprivation and acute insecurity. Because parents are unable to provide adequately for the needs of their children, these children are forced to survive physically, emotionally and socially, largely independent of their parents. To this end, they learn to form strong social bonds through which they may find food, a place to sleep and often clothes as well. They learn very early in life that no single individual is able to provide for one's needs; that survival as an individual, or even as a single nuclear family, is impossible; that a collection of individuals (a group) has to be organised into enduring ties which collectively provide the best chances for survival; that in a world without material security their physical and emotional survival can be ensured only in co-operative action. These children develop social maturity as early as 5 to 6 years of age.

Social strategies in childhood breed corresponding social practices in adult life, and in this way childhood experiences eventually also contribute to child-rearing practices which in turn anticipate and therefore reinforce the need for collective strategies.

Collective consciousness is laid down at two totally different, but mutually reinforcing levels. Firstly, during infancy and the toddler stage when children are protected by, and very dependent on, adults. Secondly, from the end of the toddler stage onwards, when children are forced into collective interdependence (which, paradoxically, requires them to be independent). During the first critical phase of their life, therefore, they are taught dependence on people. During the second phase they are forced into dependence on others. People in whom collective consciousness is as powerfully created as described here, may suffer greatly in a societal system dominated by individualistic consciousness (Kotzé, 1993:5-6).

To conclude the discussion on consciousness or perception, the following:

- Collective consciousness is not a form of knowledge that people are aware of, or that they use in a situation at given moments or in certain circumstances. People are normally

completely unaware of the perceptual style they use when operating in the world of people and things – it is an all-inclusive, omnipresent, subconscious world view.

- Collective consciousness and individualistic consciousness are not two discrete types of perception. They represent the opposite poles in a continuum. Although no one is completely without the characteristics of either collective or individualistic consciousness – and although no one is either completely socially minded or completely private – people tend to be either more collective or more individualistic in their consciousness.
- Perception, as well as the values underlying it, is not a matter of whim but a functional and effective way of coping with experience. Individualistic consciousness is a pragmatic way of coping with conditions of affluence and a futuristic outlook on life, whereas collective consciousness is a functional adaptation to deprivation (Kotzé, 1993:6-7).

All these aspects should be taken into consideration in order to understand learners in the senior school in their social context and to develop appropriate life skills programmes.

2.3.5 Developmental tasks of the senior phase learner: the adolescent

The concept of "*developmental task*" was proposed by Havighurst in 1948, who defines a developmental task as "*a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of an individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society, and difficulty with later tasks*" (Havighurst, 1972:2).

Havighurst (1972) proposes a number of developmental tasks for each of the following life stages: infancy and early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle age and later maturity. The developmental tasks arise from three primary sources, namely: physical maturation; cultural pressures (the expectations of society); and individual aspirations or values. Research has confirmed the relevance of Havighurst's developmental tasks for American and European adolescents. Burns (1988) added further evidence of their universality in a study which found the tasks to be relevant for South African adolescents.

The adolescent's developmental tasks are as follows (Havighurst, 1972:43-82; Pretorius, 1994:113-122):

- The acquisition / forming of identity (the basic development task).
- The actualisation of new and more adult relationships with peer groups of both sexes and own sex.
- The achievement of the following, for the adolescent's social development:
 - Becoming an acceptable member of one or more peer groups
 - Establishing and maintaining friendships with both sexes
 - Making a date with a girl/boy and managing the social situation with ease
 - Adapting to the peer group in the school, environment and community
 - Developing social skills, e.g. handling conflict, making decisions.
- Fulfilment of the male/female social role:
 - The boy must accept that he is becoming a man and the girl must accept that she is becoming a woman (later mother). The adolescent must learn what manliness/ womanliness implies and what will be expected of him/her in the future.
- Acceptance of the body and its purposeful use (adult sexual characteristics and adult corporality) and also:
 - Acceptance of the "new" changed body
 - Acceptance (as normal) of physical differences between the self and the peer group (same sex and opposite sex)
 - Having an understanding of the meaning of puberty changes and a healthy anticipation of maturity as a man/woman
 - Caring for the body – health, optimal development and acceptance by others
 - Acquiring the physical abilities required for different leisure, social and family situations
 - Reorganising the self-concept and accepting one's own appearance resulting from physical changes.
- Establishing emotional independence from parents and other adults:
 - The adolescent must learn to be independent and to decide for him/herself
 - Two factors that may cause conflict are the generation gap due to rapid social changes and the adolescent's view that the parents are "old-fashioned" .
- Preparing for marriage and family life (positive conduct regarding family life and children) includes the following aspects:
 - The adolescent must enjoy the responsibilities and privileges of being a family member
 - He/she must develop satisfactory I-you relationships – going out with a girl/boy, courting and becoming involved

- Preparing for a career and financial independence includes:
 - Acquiring basic knowledge and abilities
 - Gaining clarity about his/her own sex role and future roles (at work/home)
 - Considering possible professions, own interests and other possibilities for preparing for a profession (also further education)
 - Acquiring a value system and ideology (i.e. a human, life and world view – coupled with acquiring an own identity)
 - Striving to achieve socially responsible behaviour requires the following of the adolescent:
 - Accepting social responsibilities and community connectedness
 - Acquiring an adult sense of values and ethical control
 - Effective handling of discouragement and depression and forming a positive self-concept
 - Learning to communicate skillfully
 - Acquiring the methods to solve problems
- (Havighurst, 1972:43-82; Pretorius, 1994:113-122).

In summary, the primary developmental tasks facing adolescents are as follows:

- Managing the transition from childhood to adulthood
- Achieving independence
- Adjusting to sexual maturation
- Establishing relationships with their peers
- Developing a philosophy of life and sense of meaning and direction
- Establishing a set of morals and standards.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The development and implementation of a life skills curriculum fall into the overall context of the development of education support services, namely social work, school health, specialised education, vocational and general guidance and counselling, and psychological services. The principle of service integration emphasises the need to view issues of development as interrelated. This principle necessitates an interdisciplinary / sectoral approach to curriculum development and implementation, including all the above-mentioned education support services. The present study focuses on the role of social work, as part of

education support services, in developing and implementing a life skills programme for the senior phase learner in the final year of primary school.

In the senior phase, learners should be given the means to acquire, develop and apply a range of more advanced knowledge, understanding and skills. Breadth, depth, access and entitlement are particularly important to ensure that learners are given a sound basis from which to take advantage of choices in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. Learners should know enough about the nature of the options to ensure that they make informed decisions about future choices. Learners in this phase are becoming more independent and clearer about their own interests.

The phase suggests that the essence of the curriculum in the Senior Phase is transitional, to inform the learners' choices and to enable them to become independent. The Senior Phase is intended to bridge the gap between consolidation and extension in the Intermediate Phase and choices in the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase.

Many changes occur in learners from the ages of 12 to 15 years. This is the last stage of childhood (adolescence) before they reach adulthood. They mature physically, sexually, cognitively, emotionally and socially in an independent manner. Furthermore the learners develop abstract thought. They concentrate on thinking in abstract terms, hypothesise and use lateral reasoning. At this level, thought processes really begin to become sophisticated and with appropriate support, the learner can analyse events and gain some understanding of probability, correlations, combinations, propositional reasoning and other higher-level cognitive skills.

At this age, learners also have the ability to perform controlled experimentation, keeping all but one factor constant. They have the ability to hypothesise variables before experimentation, to reverse the direction between reality and possibility. They can also use interpropositional operations, combining propositions by conjunction, disjunction, negation and implication.

It is important during this phase to get the learners to focus on critical and creative thinking skills, to develop their attitudes and understand their role in society. The learners also

become aware of new aspects of themselves that influence the development of their self-concept. Adolescents continually anticipate other people's reactions to their appearance and behaviour. Peer influence plays a major role in their social development. The development of a positive feeling of self-worth is paramount during this stage.

Moral development is inextricably intertwined with cognitive and social development. Adolescents' capacity for abstract thinking influences their moral judgement and decisions. They still concentrate on social responsibilities, but are moving towards independent morality.

Adolescents also believe that one must be sensitive about infringing the rights of others (peers) and violating the rules of their peers. They also respect the values and attitudes of others (peers), but rely heavily on their own intellect and values when making personal decisions (compare Department of Education, 1997:24-25).

It is important to note that the primary developmental needs and tasks of the adolescent in the senior phase should be related to the needs and tasks associated with the previous phases, and be contextually sensitive to the diverse cultures of the South African school population.