

Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Carmen du Plessis, hereby declare that the mini-dissertation entitled “***Life Orientation teachers’ perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives***”, submitted for the degree of Magister Educationis in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, is my original work and has not been submitted previously by me for any degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, the role of Life Orientation (LO) teachers is to assist learners in making informed decisions about life responsibilities, which includes subject and career choices, as part of aiding them in the process of designing successful lives (DBE, 2011; Ruiters & Maree, 2022). LO teachers' role as subject specialists is, however, challenged by limitations in their professional qualifications, particularly regarding their career practitioner competencies in providing career guidance to learners (Diale, 2016; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Furthermore, LO teachers face the formidable task of teaching a subject often regarded as less important to learners and their colleagues, which can adversely affect their personal fulfilment and intrinsic motivation (Dama, 2020; Diale, 2016).

The purpose of the research study is to fill the gap in literature regarding LO teachers' experiences teaching the LO subject, which contributes to their perceived sense of meaning and purpose. The experiences and perceptions of LO teachers were explored in the research study, particularly for those currently teaching the LO subject to learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, in schools within South Africa's Gauteng province. The interviews explored the factors that influence fulfilment amongst LO teachers, the challenges they face in their work, and strategies they use to sustain their motivation. The findings of this research study could be potentially helpful in contributing to the knowledge, as well as informing stakeholders, of how teachers experience LO as a subject, how they present the content, and how their classroom instruction influences the career choices and self-development of Grade 11 learners.

The research study is qualitative in nature, with the Self-determination theory (SDT) as the theoretical basis. For data generation, semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group interview were conducted with 10 LO teachers who are currently employed within the Gauteng Province and possess at least 10 years of teaching experience, particularly for Grade 11 learners. Phenomenology is the research design, and the researcher will utilise hermeneutic phenomenology, followed by the implementation of Ajjawi and Higgs's (2007) six stages for data analysis.



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, Life Orientation (LO) teachers are presumed to be subject specialists whereas this is often beyond their level of professional training. It can be a daunting task to teach a subject that other teachers and learners consider to be 'less important' and to find meaning and purpose in doing so (Dama, 2020; Diale, 2016). Studies have shown that the career satisfaction of teachers is mainly influenced by intrinsic motivators, such as personal enjoyment when teaching, developing learners' potential, as well as opportunities for professional growth and development (Iwu et al., 2013; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). With this in mind, one wonders whether LO teachers will experience the same career satisfaction as those teaching other subjects.

LO teachers face obstacles unique to their subject area, which impact their intrinsic motivation adversely. They may feel incompetent and insufficiently trained, yet they are obliged to act as specialists beyond their level of professional qualifications while instilling an appreciation for the subject in learners (Diale, 2016; Jacobs, 2011; Ngobese et al., 2020). LO teachers are expected to fulfil the role of counsellors, through providing learners with guidance in making well-informed career decisions and through the provision of information about tertiary or higher education opportunities and the world of work (DBE, 2011; Diale, 2016; Ngobese et al., 2020). However, many learners still experience a lack of support from LO teachers in career decision-making due to teachers' underdeveloped career practitioner competencies, especially with rapid changes in the labour market (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Placing teachers in situations where they lack expertise leads to learners' sensing their 'incompetence' and perceiving the subject as a waste of time (Diale, 2016). These perceptions are still present despite efforts by the Department of Education (DoE) to convince stakeholders of the vital role that LO teachers play in ensuring learners are prepared for the challenges posed by the world of work in the 21st century (Diale, 2016).

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.2.1 Personal rationale

As a former LO teacher, the researcher of the proposed study is aware of the stigma of the subject being considered insignificant for learners in their career decision-making process,

as well as it not being considered a serious subject. The researcher, however, believes the study could be worth conducting, as it may enhance understanding of factors that influence fulfilment amongst LO teachers, the challenges they face in their work and strategies they use to sustain their motivation.

1.2.2 Academic rationale

In addition to the researcher's assumptions, studies acknowledge that research on LO woven into teachers' stories could play a valuable role in helping stakeholders understand their needs for further career development and factors influencing their intrinsic motivation for job satisfaction (Dama, 2020; Diale, 2016; Iwu et al., 2013). The few studies that have been conducted have mostly addressed the role that school management teams and the DoE should play in equipping LO teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and proficiencies (Diale, 2016; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Yet, there is still little evidence that LO teachers are equipped to be specialists in their subject. There is also limited research available on determining LO teachers' attitudes toward teaching the subject, which contributes to their perceived sense of meaning and purpose (Diale, 2016). Should teachers be involved in curriculum discussions, based on their classroom perspectives, it may lead to the development of an improved passion for teaching, which can positively impact learning outcomes (Iwu et al., 2013).

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore and describe how LO teachers perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in teaching LO as a subject. By doing this, the researcher will potentially contribute to the knowledge of how teachers experience LO as a subject, how they present the content and how their classroom instruction influences the career choices and self-development of specifically Grade 11 learners.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Primary research question

The research study was guided by the following primary research question:

What is Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

In an attempt to understand and facilitate research on the primary research question, the following secondary (exploratory) questions were formulated:

- ❖ *What are the perceptions of participants regarding how LO teachers' classes influence Grade 11 learners' career choices and self-development?*
- ❖ *What are the perceptions of participants regarding how LO teachers perceive experiencing a sense of meaning through teaching Life Orientation as a subject?*

1.5 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

- ❖ The absence of adequate support from the school and colleagues, as well as limited resources for effective career guidance negatively impact LO teachers' perception of meaning and purpose in their career lives.
- ❖ By reflecting on how they perceive the teaching of LO, this enables the participants to identify and utilise intrinsic motivators to improve their perception of meaning and purpose in their career lives.
- ❖ An exploration of teachers' intrinsic motivation and how it influences their ability to effectively facilitate career guidance, holds important implications for improving the career decision-making and self-development of learners, particularly those in Grade 11.
- ❖ Teachers' narratives about teaching LO as a subject provide valuable insights for key stakeholders, including the DoE, in developing and refining the LO curriculum, particularly concerning career guidance.

1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.6.1 Life Orientation (LO) as a subject

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), LO is a compulsory subject that addresses the knowledge, skills and values associated with the self, environment, responsible citizenship, physical activity, careers and career choices (DBE, 2011). Based on the context of the proposed study, LO as a subject focuses specifically on the topic of careers and career choices, with the aim of equipping learners with the competencies they need to make informed decisions about careers, tertiary or higher education opportunities and the world of work (DBE, 2011).

1.6.2 Life Orientation (LO) teacher

LO teachers, as subject specialists, are expected to provide learners with information regarding careers, related workplace activities, as well as admission requirements for tertiary or higher learning institutions through career guidance (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). In the proposed study, LO teachers' role in delivering career guidance is considered particularly for learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, from Grades 10 to 12, to facilitate the successful transition into tertiary education or their access to employment opportunities.

1.6.3 Career guidance or education

The provision of career guidance or education, within the context of LO learning outcomes, involves equipping learners with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes, to enable them to make informed decisions about academic and vocational pathways, thus ensuring that work assumes a meaningful and satisfying role in their lives (Ruiters & Maree, 2022). Additionally, it encompasses the provision of psychoeducational information (i.e., appropriate study methods, encouraging learners to apply themselves, etc.), and psychosocial information (i.e., the importance of forming and sustaining interpersonal relationships, the value of emotional intelligence, and persevering during adversities despite feeling demotivated (Maree, 2020a). In the context of this study, I adopt the following definition for the term "career guidance/education": 'a systematic process of providing self-assessment and career information to enhance learners' understanding of the world of work, to facilitate their career development and decision-making strategies to make deliberate and well-informed decisions about higher education and career pursuits (Dama, 2020; Ruiters & Maree, 2022).

1.6.4 Career counselling

Career counselling is a collaborative and co-constructive process, focused on assisting individuals' development to embrace an adequate self-concept, to explore, and to face unique challenges concerning their career trajectory, as well as understand their role in the world of work (Maree, 2013; Maree, 2020a). In the context of this study, I have adopted the following definition for the term 'career counselling': the collaborative process between the LO teacher and learners, where learners are provided with guidance, support, and facilitation of skill development essential for making informed decisions about an appropriate field of study and navigating the world of work. Career counselling assists individuals in reassessing the role of work in their lives, as it involves the exploration of their central life

themes, as well as values associated with work, that can bestow a sense of purpose and meaning in their career lives (Maree, 2018; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2020).

1.6.5 Meaning and purpose (in career guidance)

The perception of meaning and purpose in one's career can be described as the degree to which individuals perceive themselves as playing a significant role within their workplace, fulfilling what they believe to be a personal calling and making a valuable contribution through their work (Fourie & Deacon, 2015). In the context of the present study, the participants' conceptualisation of meaning and purpose can be described by their perception of their role as being influential when teaching LO and their positive guidance of learners in the career decision-making process.

1.6.6 Career development

Career development is a continuous, life-long process, requiring individuals to respond to changes in career conditions effectively, and to construct their personal identity and career in a manner that contributes to personal and societal significance (Maree, 2020a; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2020). Progression through a series of life and career stages entails confronting a unique set of professional challenges that affect an individual's job satisfaction, work engagement and may encompass issues pertinent to unemployment or work overload (Hartung, 2010). To proficiently master the developmental tasks aligned with each life stage, individuals need to identify crucial resources and develop the requisite attitudes, beliefs, and competencies (Maree, 2020a). In the proposed study, it is imperative for LO teachers to prioritise learners' career developmental needs, especially encompassing self-exploration, identity formation, and the facilitation of effective career decision-making, given that learners are at the launching point of their careers, also referred to as the exploration phase (Maree, 2017a).

1.7 ANTICIPATED PROBLEMS

The researcher might encounter difficulties regarding finding a sufficient number of participants that meet the requirements of the selection criteria, within the particular geographic area of Gauteng. The researcher may experience challenges in obtaining the cooperation and willingness of participants to participate in the research study, due to teachers often having busy work schedules. Additionally, the participants might also decide to withdraw from the research at any stage, which would result in the researcher having to repeat the process of participant selection and data generation. Another challenge that the

researcher will consider is that the research focuses on LO teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions, thus the findings might not be generalisable to the larger population.

1.8 OUTLINE OF RESEARCH APPROACH, PARADIGM AND PROCESSES

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the research paradigm, research approach and the processes used in this research. Chapter 3 provides a detailed analysis of the methodological choices made in this study.

Table 1.1

Framework of research process

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY APPROACH AND PROCESS				
RESEARCH QUESTIONS				
Primary research question				
What is Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives?				
Secondary research questions				
What are the perceptions of participants regarding how LO teachers' classes influence Grade 11 learners' career choices and self-development?				
What are the perceptions of participants regarding how LO teachers perceive experiencing a sense of meaning through teaching Life Orientation as a subject?				
Paradigm and research approach	Research design	Selection of case participants	Data generation	Data analysis and interpretation
Qualitative research methodology Interpretivist paradigm	Phenomenology	Purposive selection, as well as snowball sampling	Individual semi structured interviews Focus group, combined with observations Data documentation done by using audio and video recordings, as well as field notes	Hermeneutic phenomenology for data interpretation and Ajjawi and Higgs's (2007) six stages for data analysis.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to commencing data gathering, the researcher submitted her research proposal to the University of Pretoria's ethical committee board to receive ethical clearance, ensuring the research aims, design and data-gathering methods were ethically acceptable. Consent had to be obtained from the relevant DoE, and the principals of the schools where the participants are currently employed, explaining the purpose of the research and what it entails. Subsequently, it was essential to obtain informed consent from participants, making them aware of the research's purpose, and potential positive and negative consequences of participation, as well as ensuring their confidentiality through signed non-disclosure statements and anonymising personally identifiable data (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2019). Furthermore, the participants were also reminded of the option to withdraw from the study at any point, without feeling an obligation to continue and not needing to provide a reason for withdrawing from the study (Creswell, 2014; Maree, 2019).

1.10 SUMMARY

The researcher concisely delved into the underlying rationale, providing a foundation for subsequent elaboration on the factors influencing LO teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives. The forthcoming chapter further explores these influences in greater detail. Moreover, a section emphasised the specific research questions which the study will aspire to address and provide answers to. In addition, the researcher has identified anticipated problems that may occur during the course of the research.

1.11 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation

Chapter 2: Literature study

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 4: Results and discussion of findings

Chapter 5: Findings, conclusions and recommendations



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2020), the meaning of work refers to individuals' perception of their occupational engagements, the significance of their contributions, and the value or worth associated with work in their lives. The quest for experiencing one's work as meaningful is multifaceted, with individuals drawing from diverse sources, including authenticity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, belongingness, and purpose to construct or discover significance (Fourie & Deacon, 2015). Subsequently, experiencing one's work as meaningful can generally yield benefits, such as a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life and an increase in life satisfaction, health, and wellbeing (Fourie & Deacon, 2015; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2020).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature which underpinned and guided this research. Firstly, it provides a brief overview of the LO subject's nature and purpose, as a compulsory subject within the South African curriculum, as well as the pivotal role assumed by LO teachers, particularly in providing learners in the FET phase with career guidance and counselling. Furthermore, the literature reviews the challenges that LO teachers face in their careers, including inadequacies in their training, particularly in career guidance, and the insufficient support they receive from pertinent stakeholders such as the DoE, school management teams, and principals. Additionally, the absence of recognition and respect from colleagues are also among the prominent obstacles hindering the job satisfaction of LO teachers. The literature review concludes by discussing the current findings and gaps in the literature concerning studies on how teachers navigate a perceived sense of meaning and purpose in teaching the LO subject, and how they sustain intrinsic motivation despite the challenges they face.

2.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LIFE ORIENTATION AS A COMPULSORY SCHOOL SUBJECT

The LO subject was introduced post-1994 in South Africa, as a mandatory subject, as a result of the implementation of a unified curriculum policy encompassed by Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), thereby replacing subjects such as vocational guidance and physical education (Dama, 2020; Ngobese et al., 2020). Presently, LO remains a compulsory school subject in the South African curriculum,

aimed at equipping learners to navigate the complexities and responsibilities associated with life in the 21st century on different levels of functioning and wellbeing, including cognitive, psychological, physical, social and cultural (Dama, 2020; Joubert, 2023). This objective further extends to the overarching holistic approach to developing balanced and confident learners who will become responsible citizens contributing to economic growth and development, as well as fostering a democratic society (Pillay, 2012; Swarts et al., 2019). Furthermore, the overarching goal of the LO subject is to provide learners with the guidance to set goals and utilise problem-solving skills, to make informed decisions regarding their individual and ecological health, educational pathways, and career trajectory (Dama, 2020).

Transitioning its emphasis toward career development, LO aims to empower learners to make well-versed decisions regarding their subject and career choices, tertiary and higher education opportunities, and the world of work (DBE, 2011; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019; Ngobese et al., 2020). Similar to high schools in some other countries, the provision of career guidance or education and career counselling does not exist as an independent subject in South African schools; rather, it has been integrated in LO as one of the mandatory subjects in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), equipping learners with the skills required for adulthood and post-school qualification (Ngobese et al., 2020; Ruiters & Maree, 2022). In the South African basic education system, learners are expected to embark on career decision-making as early as in their senior phase (grades 7-9), to make appropriate subject choices upon reaching grade 10 (Ngobese et al., 2020). Subsequently, throughout the FET phase (grades 10-12), the overarching objective of LO is to educate and adequately guide learners to make informed decisions regarding post-school career preferences (Ngobese et al., 2020). Additionally, the LO curriculum also requires teachers to address certain social challenges, such as youth unemployment and shortage of skills, through career guidance and counselling (Dama, 2020; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019).

2.3 THE ROLE OF LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS

2.3.1 The competencies and skills expected from Life Orientation teachers

According to De Villiers and De Jager (2021), the social issues that South Africa faces warrant LO teachers to be highly trained and specialised to provide learners with academically sound knowledge and expose them to multiple perspectives. Teaching and learning activities aimed at equipping learners with the requisite knowledge, skills, and values, as prescribed by CAPS, entail the facilitation of active and critical learning, as well as dialogical approaches, to effectively engage learners and bear relevance and significance

to their lives (Pillay, 2012; Swarts et al., 2019). Furthermore, LO teachers' teaching practices should also motivate their learners to enrich themselves with the knowledge and competencies that will promote responsible behaviour, as endorsed by the South African constitution (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Pillay, 2012).

In the South African educational landscape, LO teachers are encouraged to foster an environment supportive of the exploration of multiple perspectives and the active engagement of learners in "courageous conversations", to facilitate their critical thinking regarding other perspectives on issues encompassing identity development, gender equality, sexuality, human rights and mental health (De Villiers & De Jager, 2021).

2.3.2 The role of LO teachers in providing learners with career guidance

According to Maree (2013), career counselling was for many years compromised by apartheid ideology, a lack of qualified teachers trained in school guidance and counselling, as well as under-resourced schools. Prior to 1994, the DoE administered school guidance as a non-examinable subject, encompassing elements such as occupational education, self-development, and the cultivation of socially acceptable behaviour (Dama, 2020). However, in 1995, the National Education Department suspended the use of psychological assessments within schools, resulting in learners from affluent families acquiring the services of private psychologists to assist them with subject and career choices (Dama, 2020). However, historically and presently, learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, and attending poorly resourced schools, have lacked equitable access to modern, up-to-date assessments, and adequate support, particularly for career counselling purposes (Dama, 2020; Maree, 2021b). Subsequently, learners attending under-resourced schools are severely limited concerning the availability of opportunities to pursue tertiary studies and succeed at a later stage in their career lives, due to restrictions in acquiring the essential skills to choose and construct careers successfully (Maree, 2021b).

Currently, schools are expected to provide career guidance through the LO curriculum, to assist learners in making informed decisions about their subject and career choices, thereby aiding in the development of designing successful lives (Dama, 2020; Ruiters & Maree, 2022). According to Ruiters and Maree (2022), career guidance or education, as part of the LO subject, is the process whereby learners are equipped with the core competencies needed throughout their lifespan to continuously manage career decisions, and optimally function within the personal, social, and educational spheres relating to the work environment. Career guidance aims to consider learners' intrinsic profiles, including their

personalities, attributes, interests, and potential, as part of their identity and self before assisting them in successfully selecting a career (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Maree, 2021a). The aforementioned is considered crucial, as it intertwines with learners' identity formation, which is continuously developing and notably accentuated during adolescence according to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, and it is also considered pivotal in early career development (Maree, 2021a). Learners who are at the "exploratory stage of life" aim to accomplish essential developmental tasks to affirm their sense of self, their self-concept, and their self-image, while concurrently seeking to define their personal and career identities (Maree, 2021a, p. 1115). This process of "self-making", demands that adolescents acquire essential attitudes, competencies, and resources that will help them navigate adjustments in their work, their life-long career planning, and career decision making, all of which are facilitated by the guidance provided through career counselling (Maree, 2021a).

For these aforementioned reasons, sufficient provision of career guidance requires LO teachers to be knowledgeable about changes in employment trends, admission requirements into tertiary institutions as well as scarce skills or sought-after career fields (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). This knowledge about the world of work will enable LO teachers to equip their learners with the information and resources required to make decisions regarding further educational and professional development (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Effective career guidance by LO teachers could potentially impact the development of the country's human resources, as more learners successfully transition from the education system to the labour market (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). However, when considering the challenges and developments associated with the 21st century world of work, such as work environments no longer providing a sense of security and structure, it is no longer sufficient for learners to only be prepared to search for secure, paid employment, but rather emphasis should be placed on creating proactive and independent individuals who can deal more satisfactorily with repeated transitions in the workplace (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Maree, 2017b; Maree, 2020a). Individuals no longer have stable work identities, but instead are expected to continually redefine themselves in work contexts, hence the need to broaden career counselling to not only assist individuals with career-related decisions but also in accepting the idea of life-long learning, as part of enhancing their employability, career adaptability, and, consequently, becoming more career resilient (Maree, 2017b; Maree, 2020a).

2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS IN THEIR CAREERS

2.4.1 LO teachers' inadequate training in career guidance and counselling

An ongoing debate exists on how successfully teachers are implementing the LO curriculum, as well as the extent to which they are preparing learners for the world of work, especially when considering the potential impact it could have on the unemployment rate of South Africa, and the number of students dropping out from tertiary education institutions (Dama, 2020; Diale, 2016).

Some studies have emphasised the presence of barriers standing in the way of effectively providing career guidance within the framework of the LO subject, which include the shortage of educational resources, as well as insufficient emphasis on continuous professional development (CPD) of LO teachers (Van Zyl et al., 2021; Ngobese et al., 2020). According to Diale (2016), some research underscores the importance of addressing the career and professional development needs of teachers in other subjects, but unfortunately LO teachers have not consistently received adequate attention. An expectancy is placed on LO teachers to fulfil the role of career counsellors¹ surpassing their professional education and qualifications. This exposes their lack of career development, causing stressful situations for LO teachers and raising concerns among learners (Diale, 2016). Many LO teachers perceive offering career guidance to learners in schools to be a daunting responsibility, primarily attributable to insufficient training in this area, as well as the prevailing imperative to prioritise completion of the curriculum over providing learners with the requisite skills for making informed subject and career choices (Ngobese et al., 2020). Acknowledgment should be given to the reality that in many schools, LO is taught by unskilled teachers to simply fulfil the curriculum design, thus failing to provide learners with pertinent guidance concerning changing trends in the labour market, and insufficiently motivating them to select suitable career paths (Dama, 2020). Subsequently, LO teachers' lack of training in career guidance is supported by studies that reported that learners did not perceive LO teachers as influential in their subject choices and appeared to be incompetent in providing them with the desired support needed for career decision-making (Dama, 2020; Jacobs, 2011; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015).

¹ Career counseling is recognised as a psychological intervention that should solely be conducted by registered counselors and psychologists.

According to Maree (2022), it is crucial to also consider learners, particularly from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, whose career guidance, development and education needs are not met satisfactorily. LO teachers in disadvantaged areas, who do attempt to provide career guidance and development, tend to operate from the traditional vocational guidance perspective, characterised by non-dialogic and non-responsive approaches, meaning that the learners' contextual circumstances are not considered (Maree, 2022). Furthermore, this type of approach to career guidance, education, and development involves learners being told or advised which fields of study, associated careers and work environment would best 'match' or 'fit' their personalities, instead of empowering them to choose and construct a career for themselves (Maree, 2022). The implementation of career guidance and education should ideally be based on learners' strengths, enhancing their personal, emotional-social, and spiritual wellbeing and resilience, while considering the holistic context in which they reside (Maree, 2022; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015). In addition, learners, especially those from disadvantaged contexts, could greatly benefit from expressing themselves through the narration of their micro-stories, as it will help them acquire a stable sense of self and identity, resulting in more autonomy in their career-related decisions (Maree, 2022). However, the aforementioned ideal implementation of career counselling, as outlined, remains challenging for many LO teachers, particularly those situated in disadvantaged areas, as they lack the capacity of skills and training to facilitate such comprehensive support (Maree, 2022).

In light of what has been discussed, LO teachers also need adequate support and training in two critical domains related to proficient career guidance in the 21st century world of work: the positive integration of technology in the classroom, and the development of networking skills (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). LO teachers who lack computer literacy often experience low self-confidence when expected to initiate computer activities or tasks and might feel intimidated to function in the fourth industrial revolution and the accompanying uncertainties regarding job security (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Moreover, networking skills are also expected from LO teachers, seeing as they need to reach out to various types of professionals to help their learners embark on their career trajectories (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Many LO teachers only participate in career activities and events arranged by the DoE, such as coordinated career days or career exhibitions, mainly targeted at Grade 12 learners, outside of school hours (Makola et al., 2021; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Nonetheless, there is a compelling necessity for LO teachers to employ networking skills vital for accommodating all learners in the FET phase, extending beyond just Grade 12,

seeing as the engagement of local businesses in the community can potentially enrich learners' understanding of employment and professions (Makola et al., 2021). Exposing learners to various career options and routes can assist them in making decisions about their own further education and training, thus providing learners with perspectives and interactions that offer distinct value – something which schools cannot necessarily duplicate (Makola et al., 2021).

2.4.2 Perceived irrelevance of LO as a school subject

Ever since LO was implemented as a compulsory subject, the perceptions held by stakeholders have been tenuous, characterised by persistent scepticism regarding its significance, encompassing notions of its perceived lack of importance (Botha et al., 2022; De Villiers & De Jager, 2021). According to De Villiers and De Jager (2021), the support for both LO as an important subject and LO teachers as professionals is often limited, which results in greater rates of teacher turnover. Subsequently, there is a shortage of specialised LO teachers capable of meeting the growing demand for a higher academic standard, particularly in the realm of providing comprehensive career guidance within the LO subject (De Villiers & De Jager, 2021). Some studies' interviews with learners reflected their view of LO as irrelevant, a waste of time and often a 'free' period where they could socialise with friends and catch up on the homework of other subjects (Botha et al., 2022; Jacobs, 2011). The poor attitude toward the LO by learners, as well as other teachers, can be attributed to them not valuing the subject, especially due to tertiary institutions not considering learners' LO marks when calculating the admission point score (APS) for prospective students (Botha et al., 2022; Ngobese et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that LO is not an external examinable subject, thus rendering teachers ineligible to get hired and receive remuneration for marking examinations, as opposed to other subjects (Ngobese et al., 2020).

2.4.3 Limited support from stakeholders

2.4.3.1 Insufficient training opportunities offered by the Department of Education

Research acknowledges LO teachers' need for further career development but there are limitations regarding how effectively this has been considered by stakeholders, such as the DoE (Diale, 2016). The DoE does, in fact, provide LO teachers with formal training workshops but they are perceived as generic and insufficient in addressing the content of the subject adequately, positioning teachers as passive participants rather than active contributors (Diale, 2016; Wessels & Wood, 2019). Furthermore, there is also a lack of training opportunities that focus specifically on career guidance and equipping LO teachers

with career practitioner competencies (Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). Moreover, LO teachers are also challenged with insufficient time in providing learners with career guidance, seeing as the LO curriculum only allocates two hours per week for presenting the subject in Grades 10-12, with one period mandated for physical education (Ngobese et al., 2020). Consequently, the DoE expects LO teachers to address all prescribed topics, as stipulated in the curriculum, within this timeframe, resulting in insufficient opportunities for dedicated career guidance and counselling (Ngobese et al., 2020).

2.4.3.2 The role of school management teams and principals

According to Savickas (2015, p. 130), 'career development' is considered as "including the provision of general, psychosocial, and psycho-educational information; vocational and/ or career guidance or education; psychological counselling; self- and career constructing, and life designing and healing provision." At an intrinsic level, LO teachers can attend to their own career development needs by exploring the Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) programmes offered by accredited service providers of the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (Diale, 2016). Furthermore, the South African Career Development Association (SACDA, n.d) helps to promote the role of Career Development Practitioners (CDPs) (including LO teachers) in providing career development through their continuous Professional Development (CPD) system, allowing teachers access to professional development activities and resources (SACDA n.d.; SACDA, 2020). As mentioned earlier, these opportunities can assist LO teachers in remaining current and informed on the latest research and developments in the career guidance field through obtaining more career information about the world of work, making career decisions, as well as what high school graduates require for effective job searching, and adapting to a changing work environment (SACDA n.d.; SACDA, 2020).

However, many LO teachers still depend solely on schools to assist them in effectively delivering career guidance and counselling, by providing resources, such as career guides, brochures of tertiary institutions, career exhibitions and career tours (Dama, 2020). Unfortunately, teachers have experienced that schools would rather prioritise other content subjects before allocating resources to LO (Diale, 2016). This has resulted, amongst other outcomes, in LO teachers migrating to other subjects, resulting in instability and a lack of continuity in LO teaching positions within numerous schools (Diale, 2016).

In addition, there is also a lack of support, specifically by principals, regarding the LO subject's status in schools (Diale, 2016). Most principals fail to recognise their role as central

agents in emphasising the importance of innovation in the LO curriculum; this being evidenced in the perception amongst personnel that LO is less important compared to other school subjects (Diale, 2016). The lack of support from school principals towards the LO curriculum becomes apparent when observing the tension between LO teachers and the division of responsibilities, including timetabling, as well as the role and status within school settings (Diale, 2016). The perception at many schools is that LO is an ‘easy’ subject that any teacher can teach, without proper qualifications within the field of life skills education, causing colleagues to treat LO teachers with less support and less respect than they deserve (Diale, 2016; Nel, 2020; Swarts, 2021). According to Swarts (2021), in the instance where LO is perceived as a second-class subject, compared to subjects such as Mathematics and Science, it will negatively impact LO teachers’ enthusiasm and motivation in striving to ensure that meaningful learning occurs.

2.5 TEACHERS’ PERCEIVED SENSE OF MEANING AND PURPOSE IN TEACHING LIFE ORIENTATION AS A SUBJECT

Studies have revealed that an individual’s ability to find meaning in their work, results in higher levels of enjoyment in their careers, greater engagement in work and enhanced job satisfaction, essential for fostering working behaviours that are conducive to productivity, high-quality performance, and bolstered morale within the work setting (Fourie & Deacon, 2015; Matla & Xaba, 2019; Turner & Thielking, 2019). Research shows that some teachers in South Africa relate meaning in their work to the transfer of knowledge, making a positive difference in learners’ lives and experiencing a sense of belonging through building trusting relationships with both learners and their colleagues (Fourie & Deacon, 2015). According to Turner and Thielking (2019), studies have shown that South African teachers have reported experiencing a search for ‘calling’, referring to a commitment to their work based on their efforts in promoting the greater good, making the world a better place, and perceived the work as fulfilling in its own right. Moreover, teachers’ views of work as a calling and being meaningful are more likely to have a positive workplace attitude and experience an enhanced sense of wellbeing (Turner & Thielking, 2019).

Limited studies have been done on how teachers perceive a sense of meaning and purpose through teaching LO as a subject (Jacobs, 2011). As previously discussed, LO teachers face challenges unique to their subject area, which may include misconceptions about their roles, inadequate professional training in career guidance and a lack of support from key stakeholders. The factors previously mentioned will possibly have a negative impact on not

only their job satisfaction but also their ability to perceive meaning and purpose in their careers. As it is uncertain when and to what extent LO teachers' needs for career development will be addressed adequately, it could be valuable to determine how they have learned to create a positive working climate and developed a sense of purpose in their teaching (Wessels & Wood, 2019). Wessels and Wood's (2019) finding is supported by Diale (2016), who emphasises the value of LO teachers constructing their own career stories, as it could form part of an expansive learning opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching and identify areas for improvement in their careers.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.6.1 General introduction to the Self-determination Theory

The proposed research will be guided by the Self-determination Theory (SDT), which is a macro theory of human motivation that addresses the relationship between individuals' motivation, and their performance and wellbeing within the workplace (Deci et al., 2017). The SDT rests on the assumption that individuals are driven by three inherent psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Allan et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017). Autonomy is defined as the need to feel self-determined when carrying out occupational tasks, in accordance with one's own values and interests (Deci et al., 2017). Deci et al. (2017) propose that employees' competence refers to their ability to effectively execute the requisite skills and possess the vital knowledge to perform their job duties and interact with a work environment that is challenging, yet not excessively overwhelming. Relatedness refers to individuals' sense of belonging in the workplace, based on the quality of their work relationships and their perceived level of significance within the organisational context (Brenner, 2022; Deci et al., 2017).

The satisfaction of individuals' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, in a supportive work environment, is likely to contribute to enhanced autonomous motivation, which refers to behaving with a full sense of volition and willingness when engaging with work (Deci et al., 2017; Gagné, 2014). Autonomous motivation comprises intrinsic motivation, considered the highest type of self-determined motivation, referring to a person's drive to execute work-related activities or tasks, when it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and when no external rewards are required (Gagné, 2014; Van der Vyver & Geduld, 2022). In comparison, extrinsic motivation is evident when an activity or task is carried out to achieve a particular outcome in reaction to a tangible reward or other external stimulus, such as positive or negative reinforcement (Van der Vyver & Geduld,

2022). Extrinsic motivation may also form part of autonomous motivation in the instance where individuals have identified the importance of their work roles and performance, resulting in self-regulated behaviours toward their work activities and responsibilities; a phenomenon known as internalised extrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017; Van der Vyver & Geduld, 2022).

Studies have shown that autonomous motivation, either intrinsic or extrinsic, is associated with higher levels of job performance and experiencing work as meaningful compared to controlled motivation, which involves feeling obligated or coerced to fulfil work responsibilities (Allan et al., 2016; Gagné, 2014; Van der Vyver & Geduld, 2022). Gagné's (2014) finding is supported by Brenner (2022), who emphasises that in comparison to individuals with controlled motivational orientations, those who are autonomously motivated demonstrate enhanced levels of work engagement, perceived competence, self-regulation, relatedness with colleagues and authority figures, as well as job performance and wellbeing.

2.6.2 How the Self-determination theory relates to experiencing a sense of meaning, and career satisfaction among LO teachers

2.6.2.1 The inherent psychological needs of LO teachers

The SDT can be beneficial in exploring how Life Orientation (LO) teachers perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives, as this theory, having been applied to the field of education, considers the extent to which these psychological needs being met will affect teachers' intrinsic motivation and sense of career satisfaction (Allan et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017; Geduld, 2023; Van der Vyver & Geduld, 2022).

Autonomy in teaching refers to the freedom to accommodate new ideas and knowledge and explore methods to improve the quality of classroom instruction (Brenner, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). According to Brenner (2022), when teachers' autonomy needs are fulfilled, they are more likely to provide learners with meaningful activities, minimise controlling forms of classroom management, and create opportunities for learners to enhance their decision-making skills. For LO teachers in particular, autonomy will be the freedom to adapt and teach the curriculum in alignment with the dynamic changes and emerging trends in the labour market and various career fields. Teachers who teach the LO subject should not be constrained by the rigidity of prescribed learning outcomes, specifically for career education. Instead, they should be allowed to provide learners with additional information pertaining to constant changes in the demand for scarce skills and certain careers, profoundly influenced by environmental and social context-related variables, as well as the fourth industrial

revolutions' influence on significant technological developments (Maree, 2020a; Maree, 2020b; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019). These environmental and social context-related variables include South Africa's high poverty and unemployment rates, which often contribute to learners' career indecision due to a lack of resources, intrinsic motivation, and family support, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world of work (Jude & Maree, 2024; Maree, 2021b; Maree, 2024). Factors such as fundamental global changes in the workplace and the COVID-19 pandemic require LO teachers to be given the freedom to inform learners about the growth and job opportunities in certain industries, such as agriculture, digital commerce, and trade employment, as well as anticipated job losses in administrative and traditional factory settings (Maree, 2024). Furthermore, LO teachers must be given more time to assist learners in cultivating vital skills, such as creative and analytical thinking, to enhance their adaptability and employability in constantly changing occupational environments (Jude & Maree, 2024; Maree, 2021b; Maree, 2024).

Teachers' demonstration of greater autonomy in teaching their subject will, however, be influenced by their level of competence, which is both validated and supported by stakeholders, such as the school management teams, principals, and the DBE, when they provide teachers with career development opportunities (Brenner, 2022; Geduld, 2023). According to Zhang et al. (2022), research indicates that reasonable workloads, as well as guidance in planning lessons and continuous constructive feedback from their subject head, are important in raising teachers' perceived levels of competence. Moreover, the DBE can enhance LO teachers' perceived sense of competence by addressing their need for further career and professional development, thereby improving LO teachers' proficiency in providing learners with career education and guidance (Dama, 2020).

The fulfilment of LO teachers' remaining psychological need for a sense of relatedness relies not only upon the quality of their relationships with colleagues, principals, school management teams and parents, but also on the level of connection they establish with learners (Geduld, 2023). According to Turner and Thielking (2019), teachers who focus on developing their relationships with learners, as well as providing social support to their colleagues experience an enhanced sense of meaning in their careers. Moreover, teachers who report a strong sense of relatedness with their learners experience greater autonomy when employing new approaches in their teaching, improved emotional wellbeing, and perceived competence, compared to teachers whose main interpersonal connections are confined to their co-workers (Geduld, 2023). Moreover, experiencing a sense of relatedness with learners can lead to more positive teaching outcomes, such as improved engagement

of learners in the LO subject, but, more importantly, to support learners' development of agency and critical thinking skills, as a vital part of their self-development (Turner & Thielking, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022).

2.6.2.2 *LO teachers' capacity to experience autonomous motivation in their careers*

Teachers who can identify their intrinsic goals, including finding teaching enjoyable, relating well to both their colleagues and learners, and seeing personal development in their learners, including seeing them being actively involved in society, have reported higher levels of career satisfaction (Iwu et al., 2013; Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017). Furthermore, research confirms that intrinsic reasons associated with choosing to become a teacher predict relatively better levels of planning, staying in the profession, and how open teachers are to new teaching methods as part of continuous professional development (Gagné, 2014; Klaijssen et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2022). LO teachers can, therefore, greatly benefit from drawing from their intrinsic motivation to assist them in adopting a greater mastery-oriented approach and self-efficacy in their professional practice (Barni et al., 2019; Gagné, 2014; Klaijssen et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2022).

As previously mentioned, addressing teachers' psychological needs to obtain autonomous motivation depends upon the support they receive from their social context, in other words, the school management team, principals, parents, and the DBE (Gagné, 2014; Geduld, 2023). When LO teachers operate in school environments characterised by severe external forms of control, for example rigid learning outcomes, and excessive pressure to prioritise completion of the curriculum over equipping learners with the necessary skills for making career choices, their consideration and willingness of innovative educational practices, referring to their sense of autonomy, declines (Turner & Thielking, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). These expectancies frequently originate from school principals, as well as the DoE, and are monitored through frequent visitations from departmental officials, who evaluate and make recommendations for improvement (Mohammed, 2018). According to Brenner (2022), such 'top down' models of professional development, although intended to encourage growth, may result in teachers' hesitation or resistance toward exploring new teaching methods over time. Furthermore, LO teacher's motivation can also be exceedingly controlled by their subject head, for example when there is pressure for high pass rates based on the preconceived assumption that LO is an 'easy subject' (Van der Vyver & Geduld, 2022). Teachers are subjected to exaggeratedly controlled motivation, which primarily focuses their efforts on complying with administrative demands, rules, and regulations set by the DoE, may experience short-term performance, but these gains will not be sustainable over

extended periods (Mohammed, 2018; Van der Vyver & Geduld, 2022). The aforementioned supports the previously discussed challenges that LO teachers face, particularly the perception that LO teachers are not adequately trained in providing learners with career education and guidance.

Given that experiencing career satisfaction and work as meaningful is dependent on individuals' support from their work environment, LO teachers could be more likely to develop autonomous motivation when stakeholders, including the school principal, school management teams, and the DBE focus on supporting and satisfying LO teachers' psychological needs. Autonomy-supportive leadership styles consider individuals' ideas, promote intellectual stimulation, and, in the context of education, could result in teachers modelling a similar autonomy-supportive style aimed at enhancing learners' motivation to learn and fulfilling their psychological needs. Van der Vyver and Geduld's (2022) findings are supported by Brenner (2022), who emphasises that teachers with autonomous motivational orientations are more inclined to actively listen and respond to learners, encourage learners' initiative, and place less emphasis on seeking learner compliance, thereby contributing to LO teachers' sense of experiencing relatedness with their learners.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter offered a concise overview regarding the nature and purpose of LO within the school curriculum, as well as the role assumed by LO teachers, particularly in providing learners in the FET phase with career education and guidance. The literature reviews examined the challenges that LO teachers face in their careers, including not being proficiently trained, particularly in career guidance, and the inadequate support they receive from stakeholders such as their colleagues, school management teams, principals, and the DBE. Furthermore, the current findings and gaps in the literature were also discussed concerning studies on how teachers navigate a perceived sense of meaning and purpose in teaching the LO subject. The theoretical framework of the current study, referring to the SDT, further emphasised how LO teachers' intrinsic motivation and the satisfaction of their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can contribute to their perceived sense of career meaning and purpose.



CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed to explore Life Orientation teachers' perceptions of meaning and purpose in their professional lives. The research design serves as the blueprint for the study, ensuring a systematic approach to data gathering and interpretation to address the research question and achieve the study aims. Furthermore, I detail the methodological framework, which underpins the study's rigour, emphasising aspects such as trustworthiness, dependability, and credibility.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND RESEARCH APPROACH

3.2.1 An overview of interpretivism

The proposed study will adopt an interpretivist paradigm, a research paradigm that views reality and truth as being embedded in individuals' subjective experiences, and social interactions they encounter in their daily lives (Maree, 2019; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022; Stainton, 2022). Interpretivism is used to understand specific social phenomena from individuals' perspectives, based on the belief that individuals' interpretations of the world and the meaning they associate with it are based on individuals' active participation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Subsequently, the researcher, who implements the interpretivist paradigm, obtains participants' interpretations of the world through their verbal explanations of shared meanings, as well as their non-verbal behaviour, to uncover how individuals have developed their own views through their unique experiences (Nickerson, 2024; Stainton, 2022).

3.2.1.1 *Ontological and epistemological assumptions of interpretivism*

Ontologically, the interpretive paradigm recognises that reality can be socially constructed, therefore, rejecting the concept of universal, context-independent truth, or an objective reality existing apart from human perception (Nickerson, 2024; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Moreover, reality is continuously constructed by individuals, as active participants rather than passive observers, through their social interactions, shared meaning, and individual experiences (Omodan, 2024; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand varying perspectives and the multiple realities existing within

a given social setting, recognising that individuals' experiences are uniquely situated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Omodan, 2024).

Within the interpretive paradigm, epistemology emphasises inherent subjectivity in understanding and constructing knowledge, meaning that the social phenomena must be understood “through the eyes of the participants rather than the researchers” (Omodan, 2024; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Keeping in mind that humans are assumed to be inseparable from knowledge, interpretivist researchers treat the context of the research as unique, given the specific social and cultural circumstances, as well as the participants involved (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). According to Maree (2019), one of the greatest strengths of interpretivism is the in-depth insight and descriptions it yields in understanding a situation or social phenomenon. Interpretivists focus on adding richness to the data collected when being more concerned with the thoughts, perspectives, feelings, and meaning expressed by individuals (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022).

The interpretivist epistemology aligns with the researcher's objective to improve their understanding of how LO teachers perceive their teaching as meaningful, given that it is a subjective experience influenced by teachers' perceptions of their significance and purpose, as well as their adherence to an overarching aim in life (Fourie & Deacon, 2015). As revealed by the literature review, LO teachers face a range of challenges, including misunderstandings of their occupational roles, inadequate professional training, a lack of educational resources, insufficient support from key stakeholders, and the perception that they teach a subject that is considered 'easy' or unimportant (Diale, 2016; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019; Ngobese et al., 2020; Van Zyl et al., 2021). The researcher adopting an interpretivist approach allows the exploration of not only the individual experiences of LO teachers teaching the subject, but also their ability to perceive their teaching as significant amidst challenges that arise during the facilitation of teaching and learning activities in LO classes.

3.2.1.2 Addressing the criticisms of interpretivism

As previously mentioned, interpretivism acknowledges the importance of individual experiences and therefore values the participants' perspectives (Stainton, 2022). Nevertheless, subjectivity can pose a significant challenge for interpretive researchers due to the failure to generalise the findings beyond the specific context of the study (Maree, 2019). Interpretive research also relies heavily on researchers' interpretation, sometimes making it challenging to establish the validity and reliability of the research (Maree, 2019;

Stainton, 2022). Interpretivist researchers are expected to be mindful of the fact that more than one interpretation of the findings can be derived from the data, therefore, it is the responsibility of the researchers to ensure they understand the diverse nature of experiencing the social issue or phenomena in various cultural settings (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). The researcher attempted to address these challenges through crystallisation, which is the practice of validating results by using multiple methods of data generation and analysis, as well as peer examination to solicit the opinions of an independent secondary data analyst (Maree, 2019). Furthermore, the researcher's supervisor provided continuous guidance throughout the research process, serving as a valuable source of reflection and insight to help mitigate potential challenges and personal biases.

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The research study was conducted using qualitative research methods and data-gathering instruments. Qualitative research involves studying participants in their natural setting or social context, with an attempt to comprehend or interpret phenomena through the lens of how individuals construct meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2017). According to Creswell and Poth (2017), qualitative research is conducted to explore and determine individuals' perspectives of a social phenomenon, while also empowering research participants through the sharing of their narratives. Qualitative researchers utilise a variety of data generation methods, such as interviews and observations, to gather subjective evidence based on individual perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

A qualitative research approach was utilised, considering that the study was based on an interpretive framework that aligns with the proposed epistemology of exploring multiple perspectives to gain an in-depth understanding of situations and behaviours (Carminati, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2017). The sense of meaning and purpose in LO teachers' career lives is subjective in nature and is based on their individual experiences of teaching LO as a subject, as well as their views on the various factors that contribute to their career fulfilment. Qualitative research, therefore, proved to be valuable in providing new insights and discoveries of LO teachers' experiences and perceived meaning in their work, through more personal interactions between the researcher and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). However, the qualitative methodological approach faces certain obstacles regarding the quality of its findings, particularly in terms of the generalisability of its results to a larger context (Carminati, 2018). Carminati (2018) argues that, based on qualitative research's emphasis on personal views and subjective meanings, this kind of research has often been

criticised for being 'soft' or unscientific compared to quantitative inquiries. To address these challenges, the researcher utilised the technique of crystallisation, as described in the previous section, as well as received regular feedback from their supervisor to maintain objectivity and reduce the influence of personal biases.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study utilised phenomenology as her research design, which is a qualitative approach primarily concerned with describing the meaning that specific lived experiences of a phenomenon hold for the participants (Maree, 2019). The study specifically adopted a hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, which involves the analysis and interpretation of the diverse meanings that are deduced from the subjective experiences, perceptions and descriptions of participants, regarding a particular phenomenon (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Maree, 2019). Hermeneutic phenomenology not only offers a rich description of the phenomenon being studied but also provides a useful strategy for the interpretation of the shared characteristics among the participants in their respective experiences (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Using hermeneutic phenomenology as the research design aligned positively with the study's interpretivist paradigm, with the aim of producing an improved understanding of how the subjective experiences of Life Orientation (LO) teachers influence their perception of meaning and purpose in their career lives. Drawing on the hermeneutic approach, the researcher was able to explore how LO teachers perceive teaching the subject, the challenges they encounter, and the factors that contribute to their career satisfaction. Through analysing and interpreting the diverse meanings that emerged from the participants' descriptions, the researcher identified key themes and patterns that underlie their sense of meaning and purpose (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

It is, however, important to mention the criticism associated with this research design, referring to the tendency of novice researchers in hermeneutic phenomenology to experience challenges in identifying themes and validating interpretations of meaning, as it entails a complex process of data analysis that might be influenced by their own personal biases. The researcher, therefore, attempted to address this challenge through reflexivity, which is the process of being conscious and reflective of how their questions and methods may impact the data (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Additionally, the researcher also drew on previous studies that have utilised hermeneutic phenomenology as a research design to better understand how other researchers have approached the analysis of meaning.

3.5 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

According to Maree (2019), qualitative research generally utilises purposive selection, where participants are carefully selected based on specific criteria to represent an area of interest, with the objective of gathering rich data on the phenomenon being studied. Purposive selection refers to non-probability techniques and relies on researchers' discretion when identifying and selecting individuals who can provide the most relevant and valuable data to achieve the study's objectives and address the predetermined research questions, based on their precise and similar competence and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The study adopted a two-phase sampling approach. In phase one, the primary criterion for participant selection involved selecting 10 individuals who are currently employed as LO teachers within the Gauteng Province, particularly in Tshwane South high schools. In phase two, the researcher selected participants with at least 10 years of professional experience in teaching the subject, thus ensuring their capability to express their perceptions regarding the meaning and purpose of their career lives. In addition, the selected participants' teaching experience had to be in the Further Education and Training Phase, particularly in Grade 11, as the researcher intended to explore LO teachers' perceptions of assisting learners with regard to career choices and self-development. In the pursuit of identifying and selecting suitable participants, the researcher leveraged their personal network, cultivated during their time in the field as both a student and LO teacher.

3.6 DATA GENERATION

The researcher made use of multiple methods of data generation, in an attempt to promote the validity of the data, through the use of individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group. Furthermore, making use of both individual interviews and a focus-group interview for data generation, aligned with the interpretivist framework of the proposed study, which facilitated the expression of participants' subjective experiences and challenges as LO teachers. Prior to the commencement of the individual interviews and focus group, the researcher developed a question guide (refer to Appendices D and E).

In-depth individual interviews are usually conducted face-to-face when researchers require data regarding the participants' personal perspectives and experiences of the studied phenomenon, which they are not likely to share in a group setting (Creswell, 2015; Dangal & Joshi, 2020). The semi-structured interviews, which lasted between 30-45 minutes, relied on the researcher asking open-ended questions within a predetermined thematic framework (Maree, 2019). The semi-structured interviews provided greater richness in data, as they

allowed the participants the flexibility to respond to questions and narrate their stories without being tied down to specific answers (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, the flexibility regarding the order of the questions being asked, enabled the researcher to respond to and explore the topic at hand, accommodating the emerging perspectives of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), semi-structured interviews offer the advantage of comparability across interviews, due to the inclusion of some questions that are standard. The aforementioned was evident in this research study, as the researcher was able to utilise the participants' individual descriptions to identify patterns and comparisons between the LO teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives. Furthermore, the individual interviews enabled the researcher to observe the body language of the participants, as well as establish a personal connection, which contributed to the participants' willingness to open up about their experiences teaching LO as a subject (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Creswell, 2015).

According to Maree (2019), a focus group is facilitated by a moderator to direct a discussion among five to 12 people with the purpose of collecting rich qualitative data about the group's perceptions, attitudes, and experiences relating to a specific phenomenon. During the focus-group interview, which lasted approximately 60 minutes, the participants were encouraged to engage and interact actively with one another, building upon ideas and comments to provide a more comprehensive understanding that may not be achievable solely through individual interviews (Creswell, 2015; Maree, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The focus-group discussions facilitated the identification of patterns of similarity and differences in the challenges teachers face in teaching the LO subject, including difficulties in providing career guidance and education, as well as factors impacting the participants' career satisfaction.

During both the individual interviews and focus-group discussion, the researcher integrated the oral data with observations, referring to field notes she made regarding the group's dynamic and individuals' body language, which facilitated an enhanced understanding of the group's responses, beyond their verbal answers alone (Creswell, 2015; Maree, 2019).

3.7 DATA DOCUMENTATION

The individual interviews and focus group interview were documented with audio recordings (with the participant's consent), thus enabling the researcher's enhanced ability to engage with the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, the researcher was able to produce verbatim transcriptions by using audio recordings, therefore, ensuring a written record of what was said for the purpose of the data analysis (Maree, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). In addition to the audio recordings, the researcher made use of observational field notes, thereby documenting both oral data and non-verbal cues (Maree, 2019). When the researcher conducted the data analysis, the observations served as a good adjunct to the recordings, as the researcher could compare the themes from the observations with findings from the interviews (Creswell, 2015). According to Creswell (2015), this triangulation of data sources is important to ensure the accuracy of the interpretations made by researchers.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

3.8.1 General introduction to hermeneutic phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology is underpinned by both phenomenological data analysis and hermeneutics. The focus of phenomenological data analysis is the meaning that individuals allocate to their lived experiences, therefore, to make sense of the world through their own words and detailed descriptions of their perspectives (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Maree, 2019; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Hermeneutics serve as a philosophical foundation for interpretivism and as a data analysis method, it facilitates researchers' understanding and interpretation of data to enhance their comprehension of the phenomenon at hand (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Maree, 2019). According to Eddles-Hirsch (2015), hermeneutic phenomenology requires researchers to be equally concerned with the participants' descriptions of the phenomenon, and the researchers' interpretation or meaning of the experience (deduced from the participants' perceptions). The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology can, therefore, be summarised as researchers' interpretation of data retrieved from the participants' perspectives, based on researchers' theoretical and personal knowledge, to gain a better understanding of a specific phenomenon, where common meanings and shared experiences reside (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Dibley et al., 2020; Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

3.8.2 Steps for data analysis

As mentioned, the researcher utilised hermeneutic phenomenology for data analysis, followed by the implementation of Ajjawi and Higgs's (2007) six stages for data analysis. The choice for the mentioned data analysis method was based on the stages being very detailed, structured, and clear to follow, as well as aligning with the research paradigm of interpretivism (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Cook & Coyne, 2021; Maree, 2019).

Table 3.1

Six stages of Ajjawi and Higgs's data analysis

PHASE OF ANALYSIS	THE PROCEDURE FOLLOWED
1. Immersion with the data	<p>The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim, and then constructed texts for each participant from the interview transcripts and observational field notes.</p> <p>The researcher thoroughly immersed herself in the data by engaging in the process of repeatedly reading through the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings of the interviews several times.</p> <p>The researcher's immersion with the data was aimed to gain a 'sense' or preliminary interpretation of the texts, to facilitate the next stage of coding.</p>
2. Understanding	<p>The researcher identified the first-order 'participant constructs', also known as the participants' horizon, referring to the participants' ideas expressed in their own words or phrases, captured through the precise detail of what the person is saying.</p> <p>The researcher engaged in the initial coding of each transcript by, first, reading the transcript and then drawing a bracket around the text segment, and assigning a preliminary code ('in vivo codes') label for that segment.</p>
3. Abstraction	<p>The researcher identified second-order 'researcher constructs', also known as the researcher's horizon, which entailed the researcher staying as close to the text as possible while noting what was interesting and what evoked thinking.</p> <p>Sub-themes were generated, through the integration of first-order constructs with the researcher's theoretical and personal knowledge.</p> <p>For each sub-theme, the researcher created a dedicated computer file and transferred all relevant excerpts into these files, using the first-order constructs as labels. In the instance where second-order constructs were very similar to another, the data was merged into the same file. Furthermore, the researcher compiled composite data-sets for each group to enable a deeper exploration of similarities and differences within the sub-groups.</p> <p>At the end of the third stage, all text material was, therefore, grouped under the relevant sub-group to answer the primary research question, as well as secondary research questions.</p>
4. Synthesising and developing themes	<p>This stage entailed the fusion of the participants' horizon with the researcher's horizon, where the sub-themes were developed into themes. These themes were named to fit the phenomenon being researched and to ensure that they would answer the research question(s).</p> <p>The researcher had to continuously move backwards and forwards between the literature, the transcriptions, and the earlier analysis to make interpretations and to confirm that there was no overlap between themes.</p>

PHASE OF ANALYSIS	THE PROCEDURE FOLLOWED
5. Illustrating the phenomenon	<p>The researcher linked the literature to the themes and sub-themes identified from the entire data-set. Links were also explored between the main themes to support further theoretical development.</p> <p>Using the interrelationship between the themes and sub-themes, the researcher reconstructed the LO teachers' experiences into stories through the use of their own words (first-order constructs) to illuminate the phenomenon and highlight the key findings from the data.</p>
6. Validating the interpretation	<p>The final stage of data analysis involved the critique of the themes by the researcher, as well as externally. The researcher made use of validation techniques, such as peer review and the use of a second data analyst, as well as seeking insights from their supervisor to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.</p>

Note. Adapted from Ajjawi and Higgs (2007); Alsaigh and Coyne (2021); Dibley et al. (2020).

3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

According to Maree (2019), trustworthiness is of importance in qualitative research and should be assessed throughout the research study, particularly during the data analysis, reporting findings, and drawing conclusions. Qualitative research entails researchers acting as the data generation instrument responsible for exploration of the intricate details of human attitudes, experiences, and behaviour, meaning that researchers need to ensure their qualitative findings are credible and trustworthy (Ahmed, 2024; Maree, 2019). The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research comprises various essential elements, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024; Given, 2015).

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the ability of researchers to accurately reflect the multiple realities of the participants' experiences, of a specific phenomenon, in the research findings (Ahmed, 2024; Given, 2015). For the research study, credibility was enhanced using triangulation, which involves the integration of multiple data generation methods, such as individual interviews and a focus group, in combination with observational field notes, which reduced the impact of potential biases when only using a single method or data source (Given, 2015; Creswell, 2015). Subsequently, triangulation allowed the researcher to explore the researched phenomenon from multiple perspectives, referring not only to the multiple methods of data generation but also to the diversity of the research participants (Given, 2015). Furthermore, seeing as hermeneutic phenomenology is a challenging data analysis method for novice

researchers to use, the researcher ensured the use of verbatim quotes from the participants, including their shared and varied experiences, to allow readers to partake in the validation of the findings (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Dibley et al., 2020).

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of a research study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or studies similar in nature (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Given, 2015). According to Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), researchers are responsible for ensuring that comprehensive and detailed descriptions are provided regarding the study's context, to allow readers to judge for themselves whether the research findings are applicable and relevant to their contexts. Considering that the decision of transferability lies with the readers, the researcher of this study was focused on providing thorough and transparent descriptions of the researched phenomenon, the purposive selection of participants, data generation and analysis methods, as well as ensured demonstrating the relationship of findings to the wider literature (Ahmed, 2024; Dibley et al., 2020).

3.9.3 Dependability

According to Given (2015), dependability refers to readers' ability to determine whether the outcomes and research findings will be comparable should a similar research study be conducted with the same participants or in similar settings. According to Alsaigh and Coyne (2021), there is uncertainty in determining whether dependability can be endorsed to a study that involves the integration of both the participants' and the researcher's horizon, which will change over time. The researcher, however, sought to enhance the study's dependability through rigorous documentation and the establishment of a clear audit trail, by providing verbatim transcript records for both the individual interviews and the focus group interview, that captured the participants' actual responses (Ahmed, 2024). Furthermore, throughout the research process, the researcher continuously engaged in discussions with their supervisor, which were essential to their efforts of enhancing the dependability of the research study.

3.9.4 Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability refers to the degree to which the researcher can remain objective regarding the research findings, which is pursued from the outset, starting from the pre-research phase, where the researcher identifies any potential biases and limitations in their knowledge related to the studied phenomena (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Considering the data analysis method of hermeneutic phenomenology, it was important for

the researcher of the present study to acknowledge the challenges associated with this approach, as it entails a complex and time-consuming data analysis process that demands a high level of expertise that the researcher has yet to acquire (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). To address these challenges, the researcher employed various validation techniques, including peer review and a second data analyst (Ahmed, 2024). In addition, the researcher also sought insights from their supervisor to reduce the influence of personal biases and ensure the confirmability of the research findings (Ahmed, 2024).

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.10.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Throughout the research process, the researcher abided by the ethical guidelines prescribed by the University of Pretoria. Prior to commencing data gathering, the researcher submitted their research proposal to an institutional review board to receive ethical clearance, ensuring the research aims, design, and data generation methods were ethically acceptable (Creswell, 2014). Consent was obtained from the relevant Department of Education, as well as the principals of the participating schools, explaining the purpose of the research and what it entails (Creswell, 2014; Wasserman, 2014). Subsequently, it was necessary to obtain informed consent from participants, making them aware of the research's purpose, and potential positive and negative consequences of participation, as well as ensuring their confidentiality through signed non-disclosure statements and anonymising personally identifiable data (Creswell, 2014; Wasserman, 2014). The participants were informed both in writing and verbally by the researcher of the research study's nature, purpose, and duration to ensure the participants' comprehension of what to expect. Furthermore, the researcher attempted to foster open and transparent communication with participants, reminding them during the data-gathering process of the option they had of withdrawing from the study at any point, without feeling an obligation to continue and not needing to provide a reason for withdrawing from the study (Greaney et al., 2012; Maree, 2019).

3.10.2 Respect, integrity and truthfulness

According to Macfarlane (2010), moral values such as respect, integrity, and truthfulness should continuously be upheld by the researcher throughout the research process. Operating within the ethics of respect entails researchers treating all participants fairly, and with dignity and freedom from prejudice, where recognition is given for both individuals' rights and their differences (Mirza et al., 2023). The principle of respect also ensures protection against the exploitation of participants, as the researcher must value individuals'

intrinsic worth and treat them as people rather than only sources of data (Greaney et al., 2012; Macfarlane, 2010). Furthermore, participants should not be subjected to any form of deception by the researcher. To uphold this ethical standard, the researcher avoided asking leading questions during data generation, by following the predetermined interview schedule and by seeking clarification from participants to ensure accurate interpretation of their intended statements (Mirza et al., 2023). Subsequently, the researcher's focus was on obtaining information based on participants' personal experiences and perspectives, whilst refraining from expressing the researcher's own opinions and ideas (Creswell, 2014; Mirza et al., 2023). Upholding integrity and truthfulness further entailed the researcher reporting findings representative of the participants' multiple perspectives regarding the researched phenomena, including any contrary findings that emerged (Creswell, 2014).

3.10.3 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

In an attempt to respect and ensure the participants' right to privacy and anonymity, the researcher treated all personal and private information with the strictest confidentiality, including safeguarding the audio and video recordings of the interviews through the utilisation of password protection measures, which were only accessible to the researcher and their supervisor (Macfarlane, 2010; Maree, 2019; Mirza et al., 2023). Limits to confidentiality were, however, made known to participants before the focus group interview and individuals were encouraged to avoid disclosing any sensitive information shared within the group (Creswell, 2014; Greaney et al., 2012). Subsequently, participants were reassured that all shared experiences and perspectives would only be known by the researcher, their supervisor, and the other participants within the focus group (Greaney et al., 2012). Following the completion of data generation and analysis, field notes and participant forms were carefully enclosed in sealed envelopes to ensure their confidentiality. This approach guarantees that access to the data is exclusively granted to the researcher, thus preventing unauthorised individuals from obtaining it. The researcher implemented distinctive passwords, ensuring that they are sufficiently complex and not easily guessable. Furthermore, the participants' identities were protected during the discussion of the research findings by not using their real names at any stage but instead making use of descriptive pseudonyms (Maree, 2019).

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter 3, the underlying qualitative methodological approach of the research study was reviewed along with the paradigmatic perspective of interpretivism by which it was guided.

Additionally, the method of selecting participants, as well as procedures for data generation and data documentation were outlined, after which the data analysis method of hermeneutic phenomenology and interpretation techniques applied to the generated data were discussed. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the role of the researcher in addressing trustworthiness, including descriptions of how the researcher complied with the various ethical considerations that had to be adhered to throughout the research process.



CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aimed to explore and describe Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives. The identification of 10 participants, who were currently teaching LO to learners in the FET phase, was done through purposive selection. The teachers engaged in both an individual semi-structured interview, and a semi-structured focus group interview, all determined by a pre-established interview schedule. The participants were encouraged to express and share their experiences and perspectives with one another during the focus group interview, based on their teaching experiences. The data generated through the individual interviews and focus group interview was recorded, transcribed, and subsequently used for data analysis.

As previously mentioned, individual interviews were conducted with all 10 participants, as well as a focus group interview, which seven of the participants were able to attend. In this chapter, a concise outline is provided regarding the data analysis method, particularly describing the referencing system the researcher used and how the categorisation of themes and sub-themes was done. Then follows the themes and sub-themes that emerged from individual interviews, which will be discussed first, followed by those identified from the focus group interview. The themes and sub-themes that were identified are presented and summarised together with participants' verbatim quotations from the generated data.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

4.2.1 Procedure for identifying sub-themes and themes

As described in Chapter 3, the researcher utilised hermeneutic phenomenology for purposes of analysing the generated qualitative data. The researcher particularly followed Ajjawi and Higgs's (2007) six stages for data analysis, which entailed: immersion with the data, understanding patterns and themes, interpreting the phenomenon, synthesising and developing themes, illustrating the phenomenon, and validating the interpretation.

4.2.2 Identifying the source of a quote

The way in which the data from the individual interviews and focus group interview was coded in this research study is described below. The description enables readers to comprehend and track the source of each quote. The researcher identified 21 initial data

codes that belong to five categories. These codes, together with the highlighting of the initial group of codes in a particular colour, serve to ease reference for readers (see Appendix F for an extract of the focus group interview transcript).

Table 4.1 indicates the initial codes and highlights the description of each code in a colour corresponding to the category to which it belongs.

Table 4.1

Coding and description of codes

INITIAL CODES	DESCRIPTIONS
CO 1.1.1	LO teachers' role as mentors or role models to learners
CO 1.1.2	Involving external stakeholders to support and improve learners' wellbeing
CO 1.1.3	Addressing real-world problems during LO lessons
CO 1.1.4	Resources and strategies utilised to facilitate Grade 11 learners' self-development
CO 1.1.5	Resources and strategies utilised in providing career guidance and education to Grade 11 learners
CO 2.1.1	The relationship between Grade 11 learners' self-development and their ability to make career choices
CO 3.1.1	LO teachers' perceived sense of making a difference in learners' lives
CO 3.1.2	Enhanced learner engagement during LO lessons
CO 3.1.3	Skills, abilities and approaches LO teachers use to build personal connections with learners
CO 3.1.4	Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts
CO 3.1.5	LO teachers' pursuit of personal and professional development opportunities
CO 3.1.6	Internal or external resources enhancing LO teachers' wellbeing
CO 4.1.1	Challenges associated with implementing the LO curriculum in schools
CO 4.1.2	Stakeholders' negative attitude toward the LO subject
CO 4.1.3	Learners in the FET phase's low sense of motivation to develop themselves
CO 4.1.4	Learners in the FET phase's misconceptions of the world of work, and career indecision
CO 4.1.5	Parents' strong influence on learners in the FET phase's subject and career choices
CO 4.1.6	High workload and a lack of supportive resources in the school environment
CO 4.1.7	LO teachers' lack of knowledge, skills and competencies
CO 5.1.1	Social and economic challenges experienced by learners in the FET phase
CO 5.1.2	A lack of parental involvement or support for learners in the FET phase

The initial codes were used in the individual interviews and the focus group transcripts to identify the source of quotes, along with the specific participant number, and various corresponding colours. Once the initial codes and descriptions had been identified, the researcher analysed the interview transcripts to extract relevant quotes and excerpts, which informed the development of sub-themes and themes for both the individual interviews and the focus group interview. The corresponding participant numbers, line numbers, and colours representing coding categories are indicated on the individual interview and focus group interview transcripts. At the end of each excerpt, the letter P (in brackets) indicates the participant who made the specific remark, followed by either FG for focus group interview or IV for individual interview, and then the letter L indicating the line number reference range. Table 4.2 explains the method for finding quotes in both the individual interviews and the focus group interview transcripts.

Table 4.2

Data referencing and coding system

CODE	PARTICIPANT NUMBER	SOURCE	LINE NUMBER
(P2,FG, L21-24)	2	FG (Focus Group)	L21-24

For example, the direct quote from the interview transcript is as follows... *So, it's a very fulfilling experience for me. I really enjoy offering career guidance to learners because it allows you to connect with them on a more personal level and allows also the learners to share aspects of themselves with you that are important, important to them* (P2, FG, L21-24²). (The letters P (page number) and L (line number) will no longer be referenced from this point forward.)

4.3 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The four broad themes and six sub-themes that were identified, based on an analysis of the data gathered, are outlined in Table 4.3.

² As mentioned, the letters P (page number) and L (line number) will no longer be referenced from this point forward.

Table 4.3

Overview of themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUBORDINATE THEMES
Theme 1: LO teachers' role in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development in society	Sub-theme 1.1: Equipping learners with life skills to navigate real-world problems
	Sub-theme 1.2: LO teachers providing learners with psychosocial support
Theme 2: LO teachers' role in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners	Sub-theme 2.1: LO teachers as active agents to prepare learners for the world of work
	Sub-theme 2.2: Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts
Theme 3: Challenges LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners	Sub-theme 3.1: Learners' career indecision due to low self-efficacy
	Sub-theme 3.2: Learners' career indecision due to a lack of information
Theme 4: Challenges affecting LO teachers' job satisfaction in general	Sub-theme 4.1: A lack of support from the Department of Education
	Sub-theme 4.2: A lack of support from school management teams

4.3.1 Theme 1: LO teachers' role in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development in society

A working definition of Theme 1 (LO teachers' role in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development in society) is presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

LO teachers' role in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development in society

WORKING DEFINITION – LO TEACHERS' ROLE IN FACILITATING GRADE 11 LEARNERS' SELF-DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIETY
LO teachers' role in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development can be defined as LO teachers providing learners with knowledge and opportunities to cultivate a variety of life skills and values to equip them to solve problems and make informed decisions in real-life situations, to promote their own and the wellbeing of others in society (DBE, 2011).

The participants were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences in teaching the LO subject, with an emphasis on which aspects they most enjoyed teaching. The participants

began reflecting on the content they enjoyed teaching, which includes topics of the LO curriculum that enable teachers to equip learners to navigate real-world challenges, as part of developing themselves in society. Furthermore, in addressing the real-life challenges learners face, teachers are fulfilling their roles in providing learners with psychosocial support.

For Theme 1, the following two sub-themes were identified:

- ❖ 1.1 – Equipping learners to navigate real-world challenges as part of self-development
- ❖ 1.2 – LO teachers providing learners with psychosocial support

4.3.1.1 *Sub-theme 1.1: Equipping learners to navigate real-world challenges as part of self-development*

Table 4.5 presents a working definition of Sub-theme 1.1 (Equipping learners to navigate real-world problems as part of self-development) and indicates the criteria applied by the researcher to include and exclude data.

Table 4.5

Equipping learners to successfully navigate real-world problems as part of self-development (Sub-theme 1.1)

WORKING DEFINITION – EQUIPPING LEARNERS TO NAVIGATE REAL-WORLD PROBLEMS AS PART OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT	
Equipping learners to navigate real-world problems refers to assisting learners in acquiring vital life skills to address adversities they face in their everyday lives, referring to problem-solving and decision-making skills, as well as values that learners need to develop to respond appropriately to life’s responsibilities in a rapidly changing society to consequently perceive their lives as meaningful (DBE, 2011).	
INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Any data indicating real-world challenges that are covered in the LO subject, as prescribed in the CAPS document, as well as any data describing socio-economic or emotional challenges unique to learners’ contexts.	Data involving LO teachers facilitating learners’ self-development through facilitating empathetic discussions, providing counselling services, or referral to external stakeholders for additional support or guidance.
Example: ...really relating the conversations and the topics into the reality of life where our kids, they really need to you know, expand that into their lives when they grow up. So, development of self in society is quite an amazing topic to discuss because in terms of development and social development and respect and self-awareness and self-reflection (P7, FG, 34-38).	Example: ...it always makes me think about the huge responsibility we actually carry as LO teachers, to be responsible for the emotional wellbeing of the learners and to be able to, you know... I can’t always do something about their problems, but they come to me and I can help them to at least get to the right place to receive the help that they need (P2, FG, 153-157).

The participants mentioned that the topic ‘development of the self in society’, is perceived as enjoyable to teach. On several occasions, seven participants mentioned that the topic

allowed them as teachers to teach content relating to the problems and adversities learners face in their daily lives. An illustration of this situation is provided by the following verbatim extracts.

- ❖ *...you as a Life Orientation teacher, you have to take all these issues [referring to social issues learners experience] into account and making sure that you really assist the kids to become, you know better in how to deal with all these challenges that they are experiencing (P7, FG, 224-226).*

Six participants provided specific examples of social issues learners are confronted with in their households or communities, including gender-based violence, child-headed households, poverty, unemployment, as well as risky behaviours leading to substance abuse and teenage pregnancies. Five participants indicated the importance and value of learners participating and interacting with them during lessons to enable the teachers to identify and better comprehend what challenges the learners face in their various contexts. Participant 6 in particular mentioned that being aware of what challenges learners encounter, makes room for more diverse lessons to accommodate learners' different needs.

- ❖ *Look when I have different classes, the lessons are never the same because each class has a different question that they sit with or other problem that they struggle with so sometimes you have different, totally different lessons, that may be about the same theme, but I usually let myself be guided by the kids, cause they have needs and specific things they want to know (P6, IV, 16-20).*

Three participants mentioned the importance of addressing learners' developmental stage concerning them navigating friendships, romantic relationships, and social interaction challenges, such as peer pressure and bullying.

- ❖ *... we can also assist the scholars to understand who they are and to also route them into the pathway that peer pressure is not the way to go into. The true self is yourself. So, learning that about themselves is very important and relationships and friendships because they're also at that stage where their relationships and friendships are also a big part of their lives as well... (P8, FG, 52-56).*

Three participants mentioned the concern of parents not being involved in their children's lives, whether it was due to them passing away, or not supporting learners' self-development processes. Seven participants mentioned that they feel responsible for providing mentorship

to learners by modelling healthy relationships to learners and teaching them life skills, morals, and values.

- ❖ *...you as the teacher have to set an example and be a role model of what does healthy communication look like, what does a healthy relationship look like even if it's a professional relationship of a teacher and learner or whatever (P2, IV, 47-50).*

Three participants mentioned that they try to teach learners life skills through incorporating games. Participant 7 emphasised that they believed learners will acquire knowledge and skills better when the learning process is enjoyable for them, therefore, the participant challenges themselves as a teacher to improve their teaching practices to foster more meaningful LO lessons.

- ❖ *You tend to reflect on yourself as an individual, you know? You start finding more purpose of, how can I better assist these kids to do better next time when we do something like that [playing games to learn certain skills]? So, I think that pushes you to do better next time (P7, FG, 283-286).*

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: LO teachers' role in providing learners with psychosocial support

Table 4.6 indicates a working definition of Sub-theme 1.2 (LO teachers' role in providing learners with psychosocial support) and outlines the criteria applied by the researcher to include and exclude data.

Table 4.6

LO teachers' role in providing learners with psychosocial support (Sub-theme 1.2)

WORKING DEFINITION – LO TEACHERS' ROLE IN PROVIDING LEARNERS WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT	
LO teachers' role in providing learners with psychosocial support can be defined as LO teachers who are responsible and expected to contribute to the holistic development of learners, particularly in providing psychosocial support through empathy, as well as counselling services, and referral to other stakeholders (Mahwai & Ross, 2023; Pillay, 2012).	
INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Data referring to the perceived role of LO teachers as supportive figures able to provide learners with psychosocial support to address challenges impacting their wellbeing, including fostering trusting relationships with learners, offering guidance, and mobilising the support of external stakeholders.	Any data referring to the role of LO teachers assisting learners with psychosocial challenges through teaching them life skills, morals, or values as part of providing them with guidance and support.

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<p>Example: ... it always makes me think about the huge responsibility we actually carry as LO teachers, to be responsible for the emotional wellbeing of the learners... I think it definitely contributes to a sense of having worth, and adding a sense of value to the work I do (P2, FG, 153-160).</p>	<p>Example: Many of the life skills we teach them are things that should have been taught at home but isn't, so we have a responsibility to teach the children some norms and values and things that they do not get at home (P6, FG, 192-195).</p>

The participants were asked to share some specific examples of experiences that have impacted their sense of meaning and purpose as LO teachers. Five participants mentioned that LO teachers are expected to a greater extent to attend to learners' emotional wellbeing, in comparison to teachers teaching other school subjects. Participant 6 in particular emphasised the role of LO teachers in improving the holistic wellbeing of learners, where learners' emotional, social, and mental wellbeing is regarded as more important than their academic performance.

- ❖ *The emotional wellbeing of children plays a very big role for me. Not just to teach the curriculum content, but also to see that they are okay mentally, emotionally, and socially (P6, IV, 37-39).*

Five participants believe that LO teachers are equipped to support learners with life's challenges due to certain characteristics LO teachers possess, such as empathy and patience, as well as approaches they use to foster supportive classroom environments for learners.

- ❖ *I think, my role as a teacher, a caring individual able to sympathise and empathise with what they experience from day to day. So, I think characteristics such as sympathy, empathy, and understanding their situation (P1, FG, 87-89).*

As part of supporting and improving learners' wellbeing, four of the participants mentioned LO teachers' responsibility to refer learners to other sources or stakeholders in cases where the LO teachers cannot provide adequate support or guidance.

- ❖ *...our district has a social worker, so if there's a child with an emotional, with a social problem, then I report it to the district and then a social worker comes out, who then helps us as a school to resolve the problem (P3, IV, 240-242).*

4.3.2 Theme 2: LO teachers' role in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners

A working definition of Theme 2 (LO teachers' role in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners) is provided in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

LO teachers' role in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners

WORKING DEFINITION – LO TEACHERS' ROLE IN PROVIDING CAREER GUIDANCE TO GRADE 11 LEARNERS
LO teachers' role in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners can be defined as LO teachers' provision of opportunities to learners for self-assessment and exposure to information about the world of work, which facilitates career development and decision-making strategies to enable learners to make deliberate and well-informed decisions regarding higher education and career pursuits (Dama, 2020; Ruiters & Maree, 2022).

The participants were asked to describe how they integrate career guidance into the LO curriculum for Grade 11 learners. They began reflecting on the teaching strategies and resources they utilise to provide Grade 11 learners with career guidance and education and emphasised their role as active agents when preparing learners for the world of work. Furthermore, the participants shared how their career guidance efforts have resulted in positive outcomes contributing to their sense of meaning and purpose as teachers.

The two sub-themes identified in the data analysis are outlined in the next section:

- ❖ Sub-theme 2.1: LO teachers as active agents to prepare learners for the world of work
- ❖ Sub-theme 2.2: Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: LO teachers as active agents to prepare learners for the world of work

A working definition of Sub-theme 2.1 (LO teachers as active agents to prepare learners for the world of work) is presented in Table 4.8. In addition, the table outlines the criteria applied by the researcher to include and exclude data.

Table 4.8

LO teachers as active agents to prepare learners for the world of work (Sub-theme 2.1)

WORKING DEFINITION – LO TEACHERS AS ACTIVE AGENTS TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR THE WORLD OF WORK	
<p>LO teachers as active agents to prepare learners for the world of work can be defined as LO teachers' role in incorporating innovative teaching and learning strategies aimed at providing learners with information about the ever-changing world of work, including the involvement of organisations and tertiary education institutions, which facilitates learners' career-decision abilities (Maree, 2022; Ruiters & Maree, 2022).</p>	
INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<p>Any data referring to the resources and strategies LO teachers employ to provide Grade 11 learners with information about the world of work, particularly facilitating learners' transition from secondary to tertiary education, or pursuit of career options. Furthermore, data referring to LO teachers' role in assisting learners with subject and career choices, and facilitating the development of their intrinsic profile, including their interests, personality and abilities during LO lessons.</p>	<p>Any data indicating career guidance and education offered to only Grade 12 learners. The researcher included data if the participants indicated career guidance offered to learners in the FET phase in general or specifically Grade 11, but excluded data with specific application to only Grade 12 learners.</p>
<p>Example: <i>There's a link that I got. So, now it asks you different kind of questions. So, now it will maybe ask, do you like going outside or working in the office? So, they'll just have to click and choose. So, after they answered all the questions then it gives them a clue of what they like and what they don't like...(P8, FG, 369-372).</i></p>	<p>Example: <i>I kinda like the career choices. I remember when I taught matrics LO, I helped them search the internet and so looked at where can we enroll them and I helped them apply (P4, IV, 16-18).</i></p>

Two participants, both of whom are Heads of the Department (HOD) of LO at their respective schools, mentioned their role of providing career guidance and counselling³ to learners in the FET phase, including assisting learners individually with subject and career choices, as well as being responsible for planning and hosting the annual career expo.

- ❖ *I kind of like the careers and career choices. It's a really nice topic for me because they don't always have a role model at home who can give them options so it's nice for me to share with them and invite universities to give information about what subjects you need for which grades (P3, IV, 10-14).*

Five participants mentioned their understanding of conducting research, as part of providing career guidance and counselling to learners, which entails contacting stakeholders at tertiary institutions or experts in certain career fields, as well as making use of the internet to regularly read news articles. Subsequently, the participants explained that by doing

³ "Using a large number of terms such as career guidance, career education, career counselling, career development, career assistance, career support, etc., might confuse the reader. Therefore, I use the umbrella term "career guidance and counselling" consistently to include a broad range of interventions.

research, they keep themselves and learners updated on the changes in labour markets, developments in technology, and the development of new career fields.

- ❖ *I kinda like doing research myself and looking for myself, and then one comes across a lot of interesting career paths or study options that weren't always there. So, I think because I'm in that mindset myself of wanting to study further, I research it myself and then I see interesting stuff and then I'll share it with the learners (P2, IV, 107-112).*

Three of the participants mentioned that their research efforts are further extended to gaining information regarding tertiary and higher education, including information about different types of institutions, for example, the differences between universities and universities of technology, funding options for learners, and changes in courses or requirements at certain tertiary institutions.

- ❖ *I talk to the professionals and I'm very in touch with Tuks's marketer. He and I; he informs me if courses change or the new entry requirements. So, I check the tertiary institutions' information brochures regularly to see what is new and what has changed (P6, IV, 159-162).*

Seven participants discussed different innovative and creative strategies they have incorporated as part of providing learners with career guidance and counselling, including showing learners videos of the various tertiary institutions, assisting learners in calculating their APS scores after handing out brochures from colleges and universities, and having learners engage in roleplay activities. Four participants mentioned the use of questionnaires to facilitate learners' exploration of their interests, strengths, and weaknesses, and linking it to possible career fields to consider.

- ❖ *I go into a website that we call gostudy.net and then you also find a questionnaire and you find all the different careers, and when you go into your career it tells you where to study it, what characteristics you should have, and even bursaries and things like that, and also other related areas (P6, FG, 376-382).*

Eight participants described how career guidance and counselling also entail involving other stakeholders, such as tertiary institutions and organisations to provide learners with information to facilitate their decision-making regarding their higher education or career pursuits, including annual career expos, professional speakers, as well as excursions.

- ❖ *...we also have a career expo, where every year, usually the first term, we have different universities, usually private institutions come to the school and they then*

basically talk and give an introduction of what they have to offer, and then the kids can go talk to each of them afterwards (P3, IV, 163-166).

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts

A working definition of Sub-theme 2.2 (Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts) is presented in Table 4.9. The table further outlines the criteria applied by the researcher to include and exclude data.

Table 4.9

Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts

WORKING DEFINITION – POSITIVE OUTCOMES DERIVED FROM LO TEACHERS' CAREER GUIDANCE EFFORTS	
Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts can be defined as the positive feedback and results LO teachers have received throughout their careers from learners to whom they have provided career guidance and education, including learners' successful applications to different higher institutions of learning, as well as learners' abilities to secure employment after completing their secondary or tertiary education (Dama, 2020; Fourie & Deacon, 2015).	
INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Any data referring to LO teachers' narratives of learners' pursuit of self-development and career decision-making as part of the career guidance and education LO teachers have provided, including improvement of learners' marks, their successful application to tertiary or higher education institutions, and their ability to secure employment after obtaining their National Senior Certificate (NCS).	Data referring to LO teachers' narratives of facilitating learners' self-development, as part of career guidance, resulting in positive outcomes of learners successfully navigating relationships, and fulfilling life roles, without mention of their career trajectories.
Example: <i>I think when I run into some of the kids I taught and I see them planning. They are done studying or they are busy studying and they are progressing with their studies, because they have a plan to get it. There are doctors, there are nurses, there are dentists and there are vets... (P1, IV, 28-31).</i>	Example: <i>Well, I'm thinking specifically of a learner I taught for long, who came back long after as a mom and a woman who came to tell me her success story. Where she came to say, "Ma'am this is what I achieved, this is what you helped me with" (P4, IV, 193-196).</i>

Three participants discussed examples of positive experiences they have encountered, where learners in the FET phase became motivated to develop themselves, engage in career planning for the future, and make career decisions, due to the LO teachers' assistance with application processes to tertiary institutions and bursaries, as well as LO teachers' role in continuously motivating learners to develop their potential and improve their marks, particularly in Grade 11.

- ❖ *...a lot of times you don't think you're really making a difference, but then they come, even in matric if they apply for universities, then they come to me and then I help them with the selection, then they do go study (P3, IV, 18-21).*

Six participants mentioned that the positive outcomes they have seen in the lives of learners as a result of the career guidance they have provided as LO teachers included examples of former learners who pursued further formal education at higher institutions of learning and were still in the process or have successfully completed their studies. Two participants mentioned that positive outcomes of LO teachers' career guidance efforts were also associated with learners who were able to secure employment after completing their high school education. Participant 6 mentioned in particular that they believe that LO teachers' career guidance efforts are only witnessed in the long-term when learners have completed their tertiary or higher education and have entered the professional world.

- ❖ *...your positive results I think you don't get until later when universities send us letters to say how successful some of our learners have been with them. Then it's nice to hear that. When you read about our former learners and what they have achieved – this one is a doctor, that one on a forum they are now serving (P6, IV, 199-202).*

Five participants emphasised how learners' pursuit of their career trajectories enhanced their job satisfaction and fostered their sense of meaning and purpose. Two participants mentioned that they were particularly motivated by examples where learners showed resilience by pursuing further education or job opportunities, despite their challenging socio-economic circumstances.

- ❖ *There was a girl, in 2014 she was in matric, and she lived in the bad conditions of Pretoria, and she got a bursary, and she studied pharmacology, and she is now a researcher. So, she completely escaped from those circumstances and that's what gives you satisfaction and even kids who don't have such aspirations and you walk into businesses, and you see those kids have a job, where their parents don't have, which brings me satisfaction (P1, IV, 38-42).*

4.3.3 Theme 3: Challenges LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners

A working definition of Theme 3 (Challenges LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners) is indicated in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Challenges LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners

WORKING DEFINITION – CHALLENGES LO TEACHERS EXPERIENCE IN PROVIDING CAREER GUIDANCE TO GRADE 11 LEARNERS

Challenges LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners can be defined as LO teachers' perceptions of barriers experienced in providing learners with career guidance and counselling due to learners' attitudes toward the LO subject, teachers' insufficient knowledge and access to resources regarding various careers and study options available at higher learning institutions, as well as a lack of support from different stakeholders, especially poor parental involvement, resulting in career indecision amongst learners (Dama, 2020; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019; Ngobese et al., 2020).

The participants were asked to discuss the challenges they have encountered as LO teachers when providing career guidance and counselling to learners in the FET phase, particularly in Grade 11. They reflected on factors attributable to learners' career indecision, particularly discussing the influence of learners' low self-efficacy, as well as a lack of career information, which LO teachers perceived as challenging when providing career guidance and counselling to Grade 11 learners. Career indecision refers to the challenges individuals experience when choosing subjects, fields of study, jobs, and careers, attributable to factors such as low levels of self-efficacy, dependence, a negative attitude, a lack of autonomy, as well as identity diffusion, referring particularly to adolescents' lack of career-goal formulation (Jude & Maree, 2024; Maree, 2020b). According to Maree (2020b), career indecision can be distinguished from career indecisiveness, where the latter refers to individuals' general indecisiveness attributed to individuals' experience of anxiety or problem-solving challenges.

The two sub-themes identified in the data analysis are outlined in the following section:

- ❖ Sub-theme 3.1: Learners' career indecision due to low self-efficacy
- ❖ Sub-theme 3.2: Learners' career indecision due to a lack of career information

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Learners' career indecision due to low self-efficacy

Table 4.11 indicates a working definition of Sub-theme 3.1 (Learners' career indecision due to low self-efficacy). Furthermore, the table outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied by the researcher.

Table 4.11

Learners' career indecision due to low self-efficacy (Sub-theme 3.1)

WORKING DEFINITION – LEARNERS' CAREER INDECISION DUE TO LOW SELF-EFFICACY	
<p>Learners' career indecision due to low self-efficacy refers to the career barrier adolescents, particularly learners in Grade 11, experience in the form of low confidence levels when choosing or aspiring for future careers, due to factors including socio-economic challenges, absent or unsupportive parents, the low education level of parents, and a lack of role models in learners' lives (Alexander, 2016; Jude & Maree, 2024).</p>	
INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<p>Any data referring to Grade 11 learners' low motivation and confidence in their abilities to make career decisions due to various challenging factors, including financial constraints due to socio-economic challenges, a lack of involvement or support from parents or guardians, and the influence of parents' low education levels or unemployment.</p>	<p>Data referring to Grade 11 learners' career indecision due to a lack of self-development and insufficient self-knowledge, referring to learners' interests, abilities, strengths and weaknesses. The researcher included data if the participants indicated career indecision due to low self-efficacy of learners in the FET phase or specifically Grade 11 but excluded data with specific application to only learners in Grades 10 or 12.</p>
<p>Example: <i>...many of the parents choose the subjects. They choose their professions, and this makes it inhumanly difficult because children lose interest in their profession (P5, IV, 195-201).</i></p>	<p>Example: <i>Self-development and career choices... I feel like these kids are very, very, very confused to be honest and when it comes to self-development. One thing I've also realised, they don't know themselves and how to also develop themselves (P8, IV, 140-142).</i></p>

Three participants mentioned that when providing career guidance or education to Grade 11 learners, the learners can be described as unmotivated to plan for the future and make important career decisions. These three participants mentioned the influence that learners' socio-economic circumstances have on their career decision-making abilities, as some learners' career choices are affected and limited by the financial constraints they experience due to poverty and parental unemployment. Two participants emphasised the significant difference occurring between the Afrikaans and English learners, as the former group appears more passive and hopeless when planning to further their formal education after completing high school and exploring career fields as part of career decision-making, in comparison to the latter. Participant 3 in particular mentioned their perception of the influence that parents' lack of ambition has on learners' career indecision, as some learners tend to model the same lack of motivation they witness from their parents.

- ❖ *Many times, the parents are not always career driven and because of the parents not having matric or having a qualification it tends to affect a child. A lot of times we'll get a kid in the school who attends a wealthier school, who is more likely to go to*

universities and study for a particular sophisticated profession, where our kids don't tend to go on to study because they don't have parents who have that motivation to help them develop to move into that profession (P3, IV, 199-204).

Seven participants addressed a lack of parental involvement or support as a factor contributing to learners' career indecision or inability to make effective career choices. Three participants mentioned parents' strong influence on learners' subject choices, specifically when encouraging learners to take Mathematics and Physical Science, based on parents' preconceived ideas of careers that learners should pursue after completing their secondary education. Four participants mentioned that in some instances they, as LO teachers, have witnessed cultural and societal factors significantly influencing learners' career decisions, subsequently resulting in parents having unrealistic expectations regarding the career choices that learners should make.

- ❖ *Parents usually have an expectation of their children and it's hard to get the expectation of the parents, um, to get parents to think realistically because all the parents think their kids are going to be doctors and neurosurgeons and everybody has to take Maths and Science (P6, IV, 90-93).*

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Learners' career indecision due to a lack of information

A working definition of Sub-theme 3.2 (Learners' career indecision due to a lack of information) is presented in Table 4.12. In addition, it outlines the criteria applied by the researcher to include and exclude data.

Table 4.12

Learners' career indecision due to a lack of career information (Sub-theme 3.2)

WORKING DEFINITION – LEARNERS' CAREER INDECISION DUE TO A LACK OF INFORMATION
Learners' career indecision due to a lack of information can be defined as the career decision-making difficulty learners in the FET phase, particularly in Grade 11, experience due to learners' perception of the LO subject as not being helpful in their career decision-making process, learners' ignorance about the world of work, insufficient access to information regarding various career options, and resources to obtain additional information, as well as a lack of knowledge that the learners have of themselves (Boye et al., 2024; Jude & Maree, 2024; Modiba & Sefotho, 2019).

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Any data referring to Grade 11 learners' negative attitude toward the LO subject to provide them with adequate career guidance and counselling, as well as learners' career indecision due to a lack of knowledge of the self, including learners' interests, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, and insufficient knowledge about possible career options, and available resources that learners can utilise for exploring tertiary or higher education opportunities.	Data referring to general statements participants made regarding learners' career indecision without indicating a lack of information about career options or a lack of self-development as the reason. The researcher included data if the participants indicated career indecision due to a lack of information applicable to learners in the FET phase or specifically Grade 11, but excluded data with specific application to only learners in Grades 10 or 12.
Example: <i>Our learners are not exposed to many careers. They think that you only make a living after having a successful career. After maybe even matric or after going to the university, that's when we have a successful career and a good life. Not knowing that after Grade 9 you can be able to go to FET college and further your studies (P10, IV, 96-99).</i>	Example: <i>If you get to matric and I ask who already has a CV, then there are very few and Grade 10s ask, why they should do this now, but I tell them you have to, because you have to see where you are missing, if you lack skills you have to go do something to get those skills (P6, IV, 173-176).</i>

Eight participants indicated that some learners have a negative attitude toward the LO subject and perceive it as unnecessary, resulting in them being demotivated to perform in the subject, and, subsequently, LO teachers experience a lack of learner engagement when providing career guidance and counselling. Two participants mentioned that learners perceive certain content, particularly regarding self-development, as general knowledge although formal assessment results indicate that some learners do not comprehend concepts related to developing themselves in society. Participant 6 in particular emphasised the challenges of the LO curriculum's rigidity in that it does not accommodate the changing nature of the world of work.

- ❖ *...the curriculum is just fixed, but the vocational world that is changing, um, it's very hard to keep up with it (P6, IV, 154-155).*

Five participants emphasised the relationship between Grade 11 learners' lack of self-development and their career indecision. Four participants explained that learners' lack of self-development refers to their low sense of self-awareness when it comes to knowing their interests, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, thus making it difficult for learners to determine what careers they will enjoy and will suit them best.

- ❖ *Our learners are confused, most of them. They don't know what to do because they are not sure about their skills, abilities, interests or weaknesses. They don't pay*

attention to those things so that is why they are confused. So, they cannot make informed decisions when coming to choosing a career (P10, IV, 48-52).

Three participants mentioned that some learners have developed misconceptions of the world of work due to the exposure learners have to social media and the depictions of certain careers by celebrities and in movies. Two participants mentioned that some learners can be perceived as naive, as these learners have preconceived ideas of how their lives will play out after finishing their high school education, not considering how challenging it is to get accepted into tertiary institutions or the unemployment rate among the youth in South Africa. Participant 7 explained that learners considering careers such as becoming content creators and social media influencers, as well as professional athletes are not considering the sustainability of these professions, as they form part of short-term occupations.

- ❖ *They don't understand the sustainability of you choosing something. Let's say you become a singer or a soccer star. For most of them, that is what they focus on. They want to become soccer stars. They want to become content creators and influencers but they don't know that we don't even call them careers because it's no longer a long-time thing (P7, FG, 403-406).*

Two participants emphasised that in addition to the exposure and information learners usually receive from and about universities, more resources should be made available to help learners explore tertiary and higher education opportunities, such as TVET colleges and Technikons. Subsequently, the participants emphasised that the aforementioned higher learning institutions might be more suitable for learners who are more technically inclined or who will better perform at an institution focused on the practical application of knowledge.

- ❖ *Look, the gap for me at this point is the perception that one has to go to university to get a job, because there are actually a lot of colleges and Technikons, like TUT or SolTech, where one can get opportunities (P4, IV, 18-20).*

Two participants mentioned that a challenge that they experience as LO teachers is that even when resources, such as informative videos about universities and websites about various career options, are made available to learners, some learners do not have the time, motivation or sense of responsibility to do the further research that is essential to make informed career decisions.

- ❖ *The other thing is that kids don't really do research, so you can do with them all this stuff and say, go check these places and check out Tuks's website or go to [gostudy.net](https://www.gostudy.net).*

In the end, they don't, because their programs are so full in the afternoons with homework and extracurricular activities, that they don't have time to do research on professions (P6, IV, 96-100).

4.3.4 Theme 4: Challenges affecting LO teachers' job satisfaction in general

A working definition of Theme 4 (Challenges affecting LO teachers' job satisfaction in general) is presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Challenges affecting LO teachers' job satisfaction in general

WORKING DEFINITION – CHALLENGES AFFECTING LO TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION IN GENERAL

Challenges affecting LO teachers' job satisfaction can be defined as the contextual factors that negatively affect LO teachers' sense of motivation, support for autonomy, and perceived performance which encompasses experiencing job satisfaction, referring to LO teachers' sense of unfulfilled personal and professional development needs to respond to the complex nature and demands of the LO curriculum, as well as LO teachers' experience of high workload, and a lack of freedom to make decisions regarding teaching practices (Diale, 2016; Fourie & Deacon, 2015; Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017; Zhang et al., 2022).

The participants were asked to describe instances in their teaching careers where they have faced personal or professional challenges in finding meaning and purpose as LO teachers. They began reflecting on aspects of teaching the LO subject that they perceived as challenging, particularly influencing the participants' job satisfaction. Job satisfaction refers to teachers' perception of their work as a calling, and experiencing meaning in work based on the ability to contribute to learners' futures through the transfer of knowledge, fostering trusting relationships in the school environment, and receiving appreciation and gratitude for teachers' contributions (Fourie & Deacon, 2015; Turner & Thielking, 2019). The participants discussed various factors that negatively influenced their job satisfaction, which correlated with a lack of support they as LO teachers have received from stakeholders, both externally, referring to the Department of Education, and internally, referring to school management teams.

The next section outlines the two sub-themes identified in the data analysis:

- ❖ Sub-theme 4.1: A lack of support from the Department of Education
- ❖ Sub-theme 4.2: A lack of support from school management teams

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: A lack of support from the Department of Education

Table 4.14 indicates a working definition of Sub-theme 4.1 (A lack of support from the Department of Education). In addition, the table outlines the criteria applied by the researcher to include and exclude data.

Table 4.14

A lack of support from the Department of Education (Sub-theme 4.1)

WORKING DEFINITION – A LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	
<p>A lack of support from the Department of Education (DoE) can be defined as LO teachers' perception of insufficient training and career development opportunities, as well as a lack of supportive school-based and external resources offered by the DoE to enhance LO teachers' ability to act as subject specialists, and includes LO teachers' challenges with effectively implementing the LO curriculum, including insufficient time allocation for the LO subject and limited autonomy in choosing the content that teachers can teach (Diale, 2016; De Villiers & De Jager, 2021; Van Zyl et al., 2021).</p>	
INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<p>Any data referring to LO teachers' perceived challenges in teaching the LO subject due to a lack of support from the DoE, including expectations placed on LO teachers to act as subject specialists and offer psychological services they have received insufficient training for, as well as frustrations that LO teachers experience with implementing the LO curriculum, simultaneously resulting in learners fostering a negative attitude toward the subject.</p>	<p>Data indicating participants' experiences and perception of learners being demotivated or uncooperative to engage and participate during lessons, related to LO teachers' general challenges with classroom management and not related to the content covered by the LO curriculum.</p>
<p>Example: <i>I think, you know, also again the textbooks and curriculum about LO is not reality-based (P7, IV, 259-260).</i></p>	<p>Example: <i>Learners, they get carried away. Sometimes they don't want to listen. They talk to themselves. So that for control, that discipline it takes forever (P9, IV, 81-82).</i></p>

Four participants mentioned that in comparison to other subjects, less time is allocated for teaching LO, seeing as learners only have two LO periods per week. Additionally, two participants emphasised that the LO subject is offered to all learners, from Grade 8 up until Grade 12, which subsequently results in various challenges, including a higher workload due to the amount of content and information that has to be covered in the limited time of two periods.

- ❖ *We only have three periods a week, one of which is a practical and two theory so it's a practical problem to fit LO in that way (P6, IV, 252-253).*

Four participants explained that the content prescribed by the LO curriculum is perceived as irrelevant and repetitive, as it covers topics learners do not find interesting. They mentioned that the monotonous and repetitive nature of the content covered by the LO curriculum, results in learners being demotivated to participate during lessons and consequently they develop a negative attitude toward the subject. Two participants emphasised that the prescribed LO textbooks do not address the real-life problems that learners are confronted with and, therefore, do not thoroughly assist learners with guidance and examples of how to handle various context-related adversities. Two other participants mentioned specific examples of how learners' indifference toward the LO subject resulted in LO teachers facing various challenges, including lower engagement among learners, incomplete class activities, as well as learners perceiving LO as a homework period.

- ❖ *...but there are things in the curriculum that I feel, it doesn't make sense. It doesn't benefit them. I think they feel it then and it makes them demotivated and LO is a compulsory subject up until matric and not all of them want it, so one can feel it (P2, IV, 10-13).*

Two participants mentioned that an expectation is placed on LO teachers to assist learners with emotional and social problems, and, in some instances, LO teachers are not sufficiently trained to do so, specifically referring to providing counselling to learners. Participant 3 in particular suggested that LO teachers should be better trained in the field of psychology to enhance their skills and competence to provide learners with better guidance.

- ❖ *I think they need to incorporate psychology into the module or make it an extra module for Life Orientation because we work with an awful lot of emotional aspects of a child and I think we don't always have that background to help kids with that and schools would actually save a lot more money if we as LO teachers were trained in that aspect to help kids more. We'll be able to provide much better guidance as well (P3, IV, 251-256).*

4.3.4.2 *Sub-theme 4.2: A lack of support from school management teams*

A working definition of Sub-theme 4.2 (A lack of support from school management teams) is presented in Table 4.15. The table further indicates the criteria applied by the researcher to include and exclude data.

Table 4.15

A lack of support from school management teams (Sub-theme 4.2)

WORKING DEFINITION – A LACK OF SUPPORT FROM SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS	
<p>A lack of support from school management teams (SMTs) can be defined as LO teachers' perceived sense of insufficient recognition and support offered by SMTs, including school principals, which negatively impacts LO teachers' job satisfaction, and is based on challenges such as the LO department being understaffed, and administrative issues when the subject is allocated to unqualified or unrelated subject teachers based on the availability of unallocated periods in their timetables (Diale, 2016; Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017; Ngobese et al., 2020).</p>	
INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
<p>Any data indicating the participants' perceptions and experiences of SMTs not providing sufficient support to LO teachers, including references made to the high workloads associated with teaching the LO subject, a lack of qualified and trained teachers within the LO department, as well as concerns raised regarding the random allocation of the LO subject to other subject teachers, according to the school's timetable compilation.</p>	<p>Data that referred to participants indicating a high workload, especially extensive administrative duties associated with teaching in general, along with mentions of conflict or a lack of support that participants have experienced from internal stakeholders, such as the school principal and colleagues, that were not unique to stakeholders particularly possessing a negative attitude toward the LO subject.</p>
<p>Example: ...we're four full-time now. So, the head of discipline and I can really only count as one and the two people, so we're three people who give LO full-time. The rest are all others who actually teach other subjects, but now they are expected to give LO. So, I train new people every year (P6, IV, 254-258).</p>	<p>Example: ...the thing that just makes one upset these days around education nowadays, in the earlier years it was 90% schooling and 10% admin. Now it's swapped. It is now 10% schooling and 90% admin (P5, IV, 95-97).</p>

Two participants mentioned their experience of a high workload when it comes to teaching the LO subject, where examples included a lack of teachers within the LO department, and the mandatory nature of the subject for all learners in the school, resulting in excessive administrative responsibilities and duties, such as the marking of assessments.

- ❖ *I teach 400 children. I walk with this file under my arm all the time [pointing to a thick file containing papers]. This is my marking. Here's the assignments and there's the assignments and there's the assignments [points to stacks of papers on the participant's desk]. So, it's very challenging in terms of workload (P1, IV, 201-205).*

Two participants, both who are heads of department of LO at their respective schools, mentioned the challenge of appointing teachers who are competent to teach the LO subject. Two participants emphasised that some teachers end up teaching LO when school management attempts to fill the free periods on teachers' timetables.

- ❖ *...the teachers and management of the school expect good results from LO but are not willing to make sacrifices for LO. So, I know we're not the only school with the problem, but we have very few LO teachers who have really dabbled in psychology. I always say the school plays Tetris with my subject because they build a timetable and then they fill the gaps with LO (P6, IV, 230-234).*

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented the results of the data analysis, where various themes and sub-themes were identified. The findings of the study will be discussed and outlined in Chapter 5, based on the results from the data gathered. The discussion will consider the context of the literature, to which the findings of the research study will be compared and revisit the theoretical framework that supports the current research study.



CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF LITERATURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the research study was to explore and describe LO teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives. In the following chapter, the findings of the current research study are discussed by the researcher within the context of the available literature. The following points were used to guide the researcher's discussion:

1. Do the latest research studies confirm the findings of the current research study?
2. Do any of the latest research studies refute the current study's research findings?
3. Are there any findings from the current research study that have not been reported in prior research?
4. Were there any particular trends that emerged within the current study?

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE LITERATURE

Individual semi-structured interviews, as well as one semi-structured focus group interview with the participants, were used to identify the various themes and sub-themes and to gain a better understanding of LO teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives.

5.2.1 Theme 1: LO teachers' role in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development in society

Life Orientation teachers' role in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development in society was the first theme that emerged during the data analysis phase. The participants reported that they perceived LO teachers fulfilling an important role in facilitating learners', particularly in Grade 11, self-development to become responsible citizens in society.

The two sub-themes identified under Theme 1 are explored next within the context of existing literature in the following sections, where the first discussion focuses on Sub-theme 1 – Equipping learners with life skills to navigate real-world problems.

5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Equipping learners with life skills to navigate real-world problems

Seven participants mentioned that the topic ‘development of self in society’ provided them with the opportunity to enhance their understanding and offer better support to learners in navigating real-world challenges occurring in their daily lives, including gender-based violence, poverty, and risky behaviours leading to substance abuse and teenage pregnancies. Five participants mentioned the value of learners interacting during lessons, such as through discussions, where three participants referred to their efforts of enhancing learner engagement and participation through incorporating fun activities such as games to teach learners life skills, based on the belief that learners acquire knowledge and skills better when the learning process is perceived as enjoyable. The researcher’s findings in this regard confirm the findings of Swarts et al. (2019) and Swarts (2021), who in their research found that LO teachers facilitate more meaningful learning experiences regarding social and environmental responsibility when encouraging dialogues based on learners’ personal and real-life experiences of social issues. Thus, learner-centred activities are considered a vital approach in fulfilling the DoE’s vision of developing learners as responsible citizens. Furthermore, Joubert (2023) found that group discussions allow LO teachers to connect the content in the LO curriculum to real-life challenges that learners experience, resulting in the development of empathetic connections with learners, and, subsequently, allowing LO teachers to be mentors who provide learners with guidance in dealing with the adversities they face. The data gained from the participants in the current research study concur with those of Joubert (2023), as seven participants mentioned fulfilling mentorship roles in the form of teaching learners morals, values, and life skills, as well as modelling healthy behaviour required to form and maintain positive relationships, especially for those learners whose parents are less involved.

The following section outlines the second sub-theme, namely fulfilling the role of keystone LO teachers to provide psychosocial support.

5.2.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: LO teachers’ role in providing learners with psychosocial support

Five participants suggested that LO teachers are expected to tend to the emotional wellbeing of learners to a greater extent than teachers teaching other school subjects, based on the perception of LO teachers being patient and empathetic, as well as possessing the ability to foster supportive classroom environments. In addition, four participants mentioned LO teachers’ responsibility to refer learners to other sources or stakeholders in cases where LO teachers cannot provide them with adequate support or guidance. The researcher’s

finding in this regard confirms the findings of Mahwai and Ross (2023), who in their research on LO teachers' experience of providing psychosocial support to high school learners, found that LO teachers are considered well-positioned resources in schools who vulnerable learners can approach when experiencing distress, based on LO teachers' perceived ability to provide learners with support through empathy, and through referral to other sources.

Next, the second main theme is outlined, namely LO teachers' role in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners, along with the two sub-themes that emerged from this theme.

5.2.2 Theme 2: LO teachers' role in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners

Eight participants described their role in preparing learners in the FET phase, particularly in Grade 11, for the world of work, as they reflected on the various resources, including the involvement of external stakeholders, and strategies they utilise when providing learners with career guidance and counselling. Furthermore, six participants included descriptions of positive outcomes they have experienced as LO teachers in their careers, through their career guidance and counselling efforts.

The section below offers a discussion on the two sub-themes that emerged from Theme 2.

5.2.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: LO teachers as active agents to prepare learners for the world of work

Seven participants discussed their role in providing career guidance and counselling to Grade 11 learners, including the different strategies and resources they utilise, such as showing learners videos of the various tertiary institutions, assisting learners in calculating their APS scores, as well as going through the brochures provided by universities and colleges. In addition, four participants also mentioned the use of questionnaires to facilitate learners' exploration of their interests, strengths, and weaknesses. The current research findings regarding LO teachers' role in providing learners with career information and facilitating their self-development, as mentioned in the examples above, correspond with the results of previous studies (Dama, 2020; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Ngobese et al., 2020). According to Jonck and Swanepoel (2015) and Dama (2020), the key role that LO teachers play in preparing learners for the world of work encompasses the provision of career information, and the facilitation of activities that enable learners to explore their aptitude, strengths, and weaknesses, as part of enhancing their knowledge of themselves before deciding on a career. Eight participants also mentioned the involvement of other stakeholders, such as tertiary institutions and other organisations to provide learners with

information to facilitate their decision-making regarding their higher education or career pursuits, including annual career expos, professional speakers, as well as excursions. The research findings in this regard concur with the findings of Ngobese et al. (2020) and Makola et al. (2021), who found that LO teachers' role in familiarising learners with expositions of higher education or tertiary education institutions, as well as professionals in various career fields, forms part of the career guidance process, as it provides learners with first-hand, reliable information, forming a valuable component of the career decision-making process. Furthermore, five participants of the current research study mentioned conducting research as an essential part of providing career guidance and counselling, to keep themselves and learners updated on the changes in labour demands, developments in technology, and the development of new career fields. The finding stated above correspond with the research findings of Maree (2020b) and Jude and Maree (2024), who emphasised the increased pressure many learners face regarding career decision-making due to unpredictability and changes in the world of work associated with Work 4.0 developments, such as traditional jobs rapidly fading away, hence requiring LO teachers to stay abreast of developments in career counselling to respond to these changes in a timely and appropriate manner. However, no findings related to LO teachers actively and continuously keeping themselves and learners informed of technological advances, emerging trends and changes in the labour market, through frequently conducting research, were found by the author of this dissertation.

5.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Positive outcomes derived from LO teachers' career guidance efforts

Three participants discussed examples of positive experiences they have encountered through providing learners with career guidance and counselling, such as during the process of assisting learners with the application processes to tertiary institutions and for bursaries, as well as LO teachers' perceived role in continuously motivating learners to develop their potential and improve their marks, particularly in Grade 11. The findings of the current research study regarding LO teachers' efforts to provide learners with motivation and support, as well as to assist learners with application processes to tertiary institutions, confirm the results of previous studies (Jonck & Swanepoel, 2015; Ngobese et al., 2020). According to Jonck and Swanepoel (2015) and Ngobese et al. (2020), LO teachers perceive themselves as important role players in preparing learners for tertiary or higher education, through the provision of motivation and support, as well as helping learners apply to institutions of higher learning. However, the finding of the current research study regarding

learners in the FET phase, particularly in Grade 11, experiencing an enhanced sense of motivation to improve their self-development and engage in career planning and decision-making due to LO teachers' career guidance efforts, negatively aligns with the findings of previous research studies (Cook & Maree, 2016; Dama, 2020; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2016). In a study conducted by Cook and Maree (2016) that entailed an intervention programme exploring the career transitions of Grade 11 learners in contrasting educational settings, it was found that neither learners from lower nor wealthier socio-economic backgrounds experienced that their LO lessons had contributed to the improvement of their career adaptability skills. Five participants of the current research study further mentioned that learners' pursuit of their career trajectories enhanced the participants' job satisfaction and fostered a sense of meaning and purpose in their careers. However, no research findings regarding LO teachers' experience of perceived sense of meaning, purpose and job satisfaction through their career guidance and counselling efforts were found by the author of this dissertation.

A discussion will follow in the sections below regarding the two sub-themes that emerged from Theme 3, namely the challenges that LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Challenges that LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners

In the focus group interview and individual interviews, the participants frequently spoke of the various challenges they experienced when providing Grade 11 learners with career guidance in the face of the learners' career indecision. Learners' low self-efficacy as well as a lack of information as factors contributing to learners' career indecision, often featured in the data.

The following section provides a discussion of the two sub-themes identified under Theme 3, based within the context of the literature.

5.2.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Learners' career indecision due to low self-efficacy

Three participants mentioned that when providing career guidance or education to Grade 11 learners, the learners appear unmotivated to plan for the future, where participants discussed the negative impact that learners' socio-economic circumstances, including financial constraints due to poverty and parental unemployment, had on learners' career decision-making abilities. The researcher's findings in this regard confirm the findings of Jude and Maree (2024), who in their research on life-design counselling to Grade 11

learners with career indecision from resource-poor contexts, found that self-efficacy is considered a career barrier that adolescents in resource-scarce environments perceive or face when choosing or aspiring to future careers. Learners with low self-efficacy often struggle with demotivation to set goals, a lack of locus of control, and face a lower probability of choosing and succeeding in appropriate careers, due to insufficient exposure and information (Alexander, 2016; Jude et al., 2023; Makola et al., 2021). Furthermore, seven participants of the current research study suggested that a lack of parental involvement or support is considered a contributing factor in learners' career indecision or inability to make effective career choices. The finding in this regard confirms the findings of Dama (2020), who in their research on LO teachers' provision of career guidance and counselling to secondary school learners, found that learners in the FET phase experience a lack of motivation when their parents are less involved or supportive, particularly due to parents' lower levels of education, working far away from home or simply being uninterested in learners' future career aspirations.

5.2.3.2 *Sub-theme 3.2: Learners' career indecision due to a lack of career information*

Eight participants mentioned the challenge of learners' negative attitude and perception toward the LO subject when providing career guidance and counselling, due to learners regarding the subject as unnecessary, resulting in them being demotivated to engage during lessons. In addition, four participants explained that learners' lack of self-development contributes to learners' career indecision, as learners' low sense of self-awareness and knowledge regarding their interests, abilities, strengths and weaknesses, makes it difficult for them to determine what careers they will enjoy and will suit them best. Furthermore, three participants spoke about learners' misconceptions of the world of work influenced by social media, as well as their low motivation and sense of responsibility to do the further research that is essential for making informed career decisions. These findings concur with the results from previous research studies (Dama, 2020; Jonck & Swanepoel, 2016; Jude & Maree, 2024). According to Dama (2020) and Jude and Maree (2024), a lack of information is considered a barrier for adolescents when making career decisions and includes a lack of self-knowledge, a lack of information about occupations, and a lack of knowledge regarding the various ways to retrieve additional information. Participant 6 in particular emphasised the challenges of the LO curriculum's rigidity not accommodating the changing nature of the world of work. The participant's sentiment in this regard is illustrated by the following quote: *...the curriculum is just fixed, but the vocational world that is changing, um, it's very hard to keep up with it* (P6, IV, 154-155). This finding concurs with the findings of Jonck and

Swanepoel (2016) and Ngobese et al. (2020), who found that LO teachers are not able to provide learners with the skills and adequate knowledge required to make informed career choices, due to the pressure placed on LO teachers of completing the curriculum, as well as the discrepancy between prescribed content and the careers that learners were considering to pursue.

The two sub-themes that emerged from Theme 4 are discussed in the sections that follow. The following section discusses Theme 4, namely the challenges that LO teachers experience in providing career guidance to Grade 11 learners.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Challenges affecting LO teachers' job satisfaction in general

This section discussed Theme 4 along with its sub-themes, which emerged during the analysis of the participants' responses in the focus group, and the individual interviews. The participants shared the challenges they experience, which could be related to a lack of support that they as LO teachers receive from stakeholders, particularly the DoE and school management teams.

The following section provides a discussion of the two sub-themes identified under Theme 4, based within the context of the literature.

5.2.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: A lack of support from the Department of Education

Four participants mentioned that in comparison to other subjects, less time is allocated for teaching the LO curriculum, seeing as learners only have two LO periods per week, where some participants emphasised a higher workload due to the amount of content and information that has to be covered in this limited time. Diale (2016) and Ngobese et al. (2020) also found that LO teachers reported a limited amount of time allocated to the subject despite the multitude of topics and content that needs to be covered to ensure completion of the curriculum, hence confirming the finding of the current research study, as stated here. Four participants also spoke about the irrelevant and repetitive content prescribed by the LO curriculum, as well as the prescribed LO textbooks not adequately addressing real-life problems, resulting in learners being demotivated to participate during lessons and developing a negative attitude toward the subject. This finding corresponds with the findings of Swarts (2021) and Joubert (2023), whose research studies revealed that learners often develop a negative attitude toward LO, particularly due to overemphasis placed on textbook knowledge, resulting in learners being separated from real-world problems and not effectively being supported in terms of navigating challenges in their daily lives. Two participants mentioned how learners' indifference toward the LO subject has resulted in LO

teachers facing various challenges, including lower engagement among learners, incomplete class activities, as well as learners perceiving LO as a homework period. This research finding corresponds with research conducted by Ngobese et al. (2020) and De Villiers and De Jager (2021), who found that learners foster a negative attitude toward the LO subject, due to the perception of its insignificance and poor educational value in preparing learners for life after finishing school, as well as it being considered a non-academic subject, seeing as LO is not considered by institutions of higher learning when calculating APS scores for prospective study fields. This sentiment leads to learners adopting the view of LO being a 'free' period where they can relax, socialise with their peers or complete other homework. Furthermore, participants of the current research study mentioned the expectation which is placed on LO teachers to assist learners with emotional and social problems, yet the participants did not feel sufficiently trained to do so, specifically concerning the counselling of learners. The research finding in this regard concurs with the findings of Joubert (2023) and Mahwai and Ross (2023), whose research conveyed that an expectancy is placed on LO teachers to fulfil diverse roles, including acting as social workers or counsellors, yet LO teachers do not feel competent and sufficiently trained in the basic counselling skills required to provide learners with adequate emotional support. Participant 3 in particular suggested that LO teachers should be better trained in the field of psychology to enhance their skills and competence to provide learners with more appropriate emotional guidance. The participant's sentiment in this regard is illustrated by the following quote... *I think they need to incorporate psychology into the module or make it an extra module for Life Orientation because we work with an awful lot of emotional aspects of a child and I think we don't always have that background to help kids with that and schools would actually save a lot more money if we as LO teachers were trained in that aspect to help kids more. We'll be able to provide much better guidance as well* (P3, IV, 251-256). The finding stated above confirms the research findings of Hartell and Steyn (2013) who emphasised the responsibility of management structures like the DoE to develop strategies and implement regulations necessary for the acknowledgement of LO as an important subject in the school curriculum, which may include reviewing teachers' qualifications to teach LO, by incorporating psychology as a mandatory major, or ensuring more comprehensive training at higher education institutions.

5.2.4.2 *Sub-theme 4.2: A lack of support from school management teams*

Two participants, both of whom fulfil HOD positions at their respective schools, spoke about the challenge concerning human resources in the LO department, specifically regarding the

appointment of teachers who are competent to teach the LO subject. The researcher's finding in this regard confirms the findings of Seherrie and Mawela (2022), who in their research on LO teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and skills needed to implement cooperative teaching approaches, found that many LO teachers have not sufficiently been trained to teach the subject, based on the perception that the subject can be taught by any teacher. Furthermore, two participants mentioned the tendency of school management to allocate LO to other subject teachers at random, to fill the free periods on teachers' timetables. The researcher's findings in this regard confirm the findings of Diale (2016) and Ngobese et al. (2020), who in their research found that LO teachers perceived school management as prioritising all other subjects before LO, as the LO subject is used as an 'add-on' to fill up teachers' individual timetables, which results in the subject being taught by teachers who are not qualified, and, consequently, causing instability in the subject as a whole. Based on the aforementioned, LO teachers tend to migrate to other subjects, which means that LO as a subject is not afforded the opportunity for teachers to become subject specialists in the field (Diale, 2016). Furthermore, it was mentioned by two participants of the current research study that they experienced a high workload when it comes to teaching the LO subject, in view of the fact that the subject is mandatory for all learners from Grades 8 to 12, resulting in strenuous administrative responsibilities and duties. No research findings pertaining to the high workload associated with the LO subject was found by the author of this dissertation.

5.3 REVISITING THE RELEVANCE OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

The current research study was guided by the Self-determination Theory (SDT), which focuses on the relationship between individuals' motivation and their performance and wellbeing within the workplace (Allan et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017). This theory, having been applied to the field of education, puts forward the idea that teachers are driven by three inherent psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence and relatedness, and the extent to which these needs are fulfilled will greatly influence teachers' career satisfaction (Allan et al., 2016; Deci et al., 2017; Geduld, 2023; Van der Vyver & Geduld, 2022). The first psychological need of autonomy refers to the freedom that teachers experience in accommodating innovative knowledge and teaching methods to improve the quality of classroom instruction. The second need is the need for competence, involving teachers' feeling of efficacy when having control and knowing what is expected from them during their teaching; and the third need is relatedness, referring to the quality of relationships

established with colleagues, principals, school management teams, and parents but, most importantly, with learners (Brenner, 2022; Geduld, 2023; Zhang et al., 2022).

The participants in the current research study emphasised certain topics in the curriculum, such as 'development of self in society', and 'career and career choices' as more enjoyable to teach, as it allows the facilitation of lessons that are relevant to Grade 11 learners' life stage and the contextual challenges experienced in their daily lives. They mentioned diverse teaching strategies and resources utilised to provide career guidance and counselling, as well as to facilitate the self-development of learners, hence illustrating their autonomy in teaching the LO subject when it comes to the aforementioned topics. However, challenges associated with implementing the LO curriculum were also acknowledged, including the limited time allocated to teach the LO subject, as well as rigidity in terms of the content being repetitive and irrelevant to the challenges that learners face, especially when considering the constant changes in the demand for scarce skills and certain careers brought about by the fourth industrial revolution (Maree, 2020a; Maree, 2024). Furthermore, the significance of LO teachers in schools was discussed, based on participants' perceived sense of competence and responsibility in offering psychosocial support and guidance to learners, although some mentioned that not all LO teachers are qualified to adequately fulfil their duties as outlined in the CAPS curriculum, due to their not being sufficiently trained in the required skills and knowledge, especially in providing counselling to learners. Regarding career guidance, some participants stated that they attempt to keep themselves updated about developments in the world of work through conducting research, extended to gaining information about different types of institutions for higher learning, including understanding the differences between universities and universities of technology, exploring funding options for learners, and tracking changes in courses or requirements at certain tertiary institutions, by means of utilising strategies such as visiting the websites of various universities and colleges, and leveraging personal contacts within these institutions. In addition, they were also able to mention examples of positive outcomes they have witnessed in learners' lives due to their career guidance efforts. Various factors were identified by participants during the focus group and individual interviews, implicitly affecting their psychological need for relatedness, specifically referring to their interactions, relationships and the perceived engagement of learners, as well as the supportive roles of parents and school management teams. These factors included participants feeling favoured by learners to provide them with emotional support, yet participants also experience a lack of learner engagement due to the monotonous and repetitive nature of the content covered by the LO

curriculum, resulting in learners' view of the LO subject as non-beneficial and as a homework period. In addition, the participants also mentioned the challenge of parents not fulfilling supportive and present roles in learners' lives, thereby contributing to low self-efficacy and career indecision among learners, which creates challenges in the process of LO teachers providing learners with career guidance and counselling. Furthermore, the participants also mentioned the lack of support they experienced from school management teams and the principal based on the tendency of allocating LO to other subject teachers at random, to fill the free periods on teachers' timetables, thus signalling that LO is not equally important to other subjects.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 5 discussed the findings derived from the various themes and sub-themes of the current research study, by reviewing and comparing them in the context of the existing literature. The main findings are reviewed by answering the research questions in the next chapter in accordance with the findings that emerged from the study. Furthermore, the recommendations for further study, and the limitations of the current research study are also outlined in Chapter 6.



CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 provides an in-depth perspective on the research findings and offers conclusions and recommendations informed by these findings. It integrates the study's aims, research questions, and conceptual framework to present a comprehensive analysis. The findings are discussed in the context of the data collected, with particular emphasis on recurring themes and patterns that emerged during data analysis. These insights serve as the foundation for actionable recommendations to address identified gaps.

The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the key takeaways, reflecting on the broader implications of the outcomes both within the immediate context and the wider field. By situating the data within the study's overarching aims, the chapter seeks to clarify the relevance of the research and its contributions.

In doing so, it highlights the potential of the study to inform policy, practice, and future scholarship, ensuring that the findings are translated into meaningful, real-world impact

6.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question in the current research study was formulated as follows:

What is Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives?

The purpose of the current research study was, therefore, to explore and describe how LO teachers perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in teaching LO as a subject. The research study utilised an interpretive paradigm with a qualitative research methodology. By drawing from data obtained from the current research, the researcher will first discuss the secondary research questions that were formulated in Section 1.4.2, followed by a clear and comprehensive answer to the primary research questions.

6.2.1 Secondary research questions

6.2.1.1 Descriptive question

What are the perceptions of participants regarding how LO teachers' classes influence Grade 11 learners' career choices and self-development?

The participants in this research study mentioned several examples of resources and strategies that they, as LO teachers, utilise to contribute to Grade 11 learners' career choices and to facilitate their self-development. Examples of these resources and strategies are illustrated by the participants' verbatim quotes.

Firstly, the participants discussed how the topic, 'development of self in society' provided them, as LO teachers, with the opportunity to explore and assist learners in navigating the real-life challenges taking place in their daily lives. Five participants mentioned the value of facilitating stimulating activities, including classroom discussions and games, to address various social issues, as it creates the opportunity for learner engagement, and subsequently broadens LO teachers' understanding of the real-life challenges that learners face in their unique contexts. As indicated in Chapter 5, this finding concurs with the findings of Swarts et al. (2019) and Swarts (2021), who found that LO teachers who incorporate learner-centred activities in their classrooms based on learners' views and experiences of social issues, follow a vital approach in facilitating learners' development into responsible citizens, as they actively learn and acquire social and environmentally responsible knowledge, skills and values.

Secondly, the participants mentioned how LO teachers take on mentorship roles to support learners' personal growth and development, especially considering many instances of parents not being involved in their children's lives. Seven participants suggested that during their lessons, they teach learners morals, values and life skills, as well as model to them examples of healthy behaviour required to form and maintain good relationships. As indicated in Chapter 5, this finding concurs with the findings of Joubert (2023), who suggests that during LO lessons learner engagement during classroom discussion (as mentioned previously) fosters empathetic connections between LO teachers and learners, allowing mentorship roles to be established, and, subsequently, LO teachers can provide learners with guidance on how to deal with the adversities they face.

Thirdly, the LO teacher participants expressed their concern regarding learners' lack of self-development and self-knowledge, and their low sense of responsibility to do additional

research on careers, as well as their misconceptions about the world of work influencing their career decision-making abilities. As shown in Chapter 5, these findings correspond with the findings of Dama (2020) and Jude and Maree (2024), who found that a lack of information of the self, lack of information about occupations, and a lack of information regarding different ways to obtain additional information is considered a barrier for adolescents when making career decisions. Seven participants suggested that during their LO lessons, their approach in assisting Grade 11 learners to make career choices involves providing them with career information, including showing videos of various tertiary education institutions, assisting learners in calculating their APS scores, and exploring various study fields by reviewing brochures provided by colleges and universities. In addition, four participants also mentioned facilitating learners' self-development and self-exploration through activities, such as questionnaires, considering the relationship that exists between learners' knowledge of their interests, strengths, and weaknesses and their ability to make sound career choices. As shown in Chapter 5, these findings confirm the findings of Dama (2020) and) Ngobese et al. (2020), who suggest that LO teachers play a role in preparing learners for the world of work, which encompasses providing them with adequate career information, and opportunities for improving their self-knowledge through exploring their aptitudes and interests, as part of self-development.

Fourthly, the participants mentioned that career guidance and counselling also require LO teachers to conduct research and stay updated about the world of work. Participant 6 suggested that "*...the curriculum is just fixed, but the vocational world that is changing, um, it's very hard to keep up with it*" (P6, IV, 154-155). This excerpt suggests that LO teachers' efforts of conducting research to keep learners updated on the changing nature of the world of work is vital to keep them abreast of technological developments, changes in labour demands, as well as the development of new career fields, as part of providing career guidance and counselling. However, as shown in Chapter 5, the perception that LO teachers actively and continuously engage in the process of keeping themselves informed about technological advances, emerging trends and changes in the labour markets, to support their career decision-making, were not found in existing literature by the author of this dissertation.

In summary, and answering the descriptive secondary research question, "*What are the perceptions of participants regarding how LO teachers' classes influence Grade 11 learners' career choices and self-development?*", the participants believed that their LO classes contribute to learners' career choices and self-development in the following ways:

- ❖ Facilitating classroom discussions that help learners to acquire social and environmentally responsible knowledge, skills and values
- ❖ Fulfilling mentorship roles to teach learners morals, values and life skills
- ❖ Providing learners with career information and opportunities to develop self-knowledge of their intrinsic profile
- ❖ Informing and preparing learners for the developments and changes in the dynamic world of work

6.2.1.2 Exploratory question

What are the perceptions of participants regarding how LO teachers perceive experiencing a sense of meaning through teaching Life Orientation as a subject?

The participants of this research study emphasised the distinctive role that LO teachers fulfil, in addressing the emotional wellbeing of learners, underscoring that they do so to a greater extent than teachers teaching other school subjects, based on learners sensing LO teachers to be more approachable and trustworthy. Participant 2 suggested that, “...*it always makes me think about the huge responsibility we actually carry as LO teachers, to be responsible for the emotional wellbeing of the learners... I think it definitely contributes to a sense of having worth, and adding a sense of value to the work I do*” (P2, FG, 153-160). As discussed in Chapter 5, the perception illustrated by this excerpt that LO teachers are concerned with learners’ emotional wellbeing, as part of their role in providing psychosocial support, corresponds with the finding of Mahwai and Ross (2023), who suggest that LO teachers are regarded as valuable resources within schools in the support they extend to learners, particularly enhanced by their ability of using empathetic approaches and referral of learners to other stakeholders. In addition, the participants mentioned that, as LO teachers, they experience a sense of meaning when witnessing learners’ pursuits of career trajectories, particularly those coming from challenging socio-economic circumstances. In addition, the participants emphasised that their perceptions of positive outcomes of their career guidance efforts not only includes learners’ continuation of their formal education, but also their successful entry into the workforce. As shown in Chapter 5, no research findings regarding LO teachers experiencing a sense of meaning and purpose, and job satisfaction through their career guidance and counselling efforts, were found by the author of this dissertation.

The participants further discussed the challenges they experience in teaching the LO subject having a detrimental effect on their job satisfaction, which they attributed to a lack of support from stakeholders such as the DoE and school management teams. These challenges

include less time allocated for teaching the LO curriculum in comparison to other subjects, which results in a higher workload. As discussed in Chapter 5, this finding concurs with the findings of Diale (2016) and Ngobese et al. (2020), who indicate that LO teachers experience limited time allocated to the subject despite the amount of content that needs to be covered to ensure completion of the curriculum. In addition, the participants also expressed frustration regarding irrelevant and repetitive content prescribed by the LO curriculum, resulting in learners developing a negative attitude toward the subject, consequently inhibiting their engagement during lessons. As shown in Chapter 5, this finding concurs with the findings of Ngobese et al. (2020) and De Villiers and De Jager (2021), who suggested that learners adopt a negative view of LO when it does not prove to be stimulating and of educational value to them. Furthermore, the participants argued that school management teams contribute to a negative attitude being fostered toward LO, as it is perceived as a subject that can be taught by anyone, and, consequently, is assigned to teachers at random, undermining qualified LO teachers' significance in subject specialisation. As discussed in Chapter 5, this finding confirms the findings of Diale (2016) and Ngobese et al. (2020), who indicated that the LO subject is used to fill up teachers' individual timetables at schools, which results in the subject being taught by teachers who are not qualified, and, consequently, causing instability in the subject.

6.2.2 Primary research question

The current research study aimed to answer the following primary research question: *What is Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives?*

The participants in this research study discussed their experiences and viewpoints of LO teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives. Based on these experiences, they suggested that LO teachers value the personal connections they are able to establish with learners through engagement during LO lessons, particularly during fun activities, like games, as well as deeper and meaningful classroom discussions about real-life challenges. In addition, it was further discussed how learners' openness in sharing their personal experiences of adversities in their daily lives, enhances LO teachers' understanding of learners' contexts, as well as fosters more empathetic connections with them. Furthermore, it was mentioned how LO teachers fulfil a unique role in comparison to other teachers, as they are perceived as mentors that learners are prone to approach for psychosocial and emotional support, due to LO teachers' ability to empathise, listen, and guide learners with advice or referral to other sources of help. Subsequently, during instances where LO teachers recognised their role in promoting learners' wellbeing and

being regarded as pillars of support and guidance, they mentioned a heightened sense of value and job satisfaction. Furthermore, it was discussed how LO teachers have taken the responsibility upon themselves to teach learners values, morals, and life skills, due to many parents being uninvolved in their children's lives.

According to the discussions in the focus group and individual interviews, the participants suggested that through career guidance and counselling they experienced job satisfaction, as it is regarded as an enjoyable part of teaching the LO subject. They mentioned experiencing a sense of meaning and purpose when their career guidance efforts resulted in positive outcomes of learners' lives, based on learners' applications to tertiary or higher institutions of learning, or their abilities to find jobs after completing high school.

Furthermore, the challenges accompanying teaching the LO subject were discussed, where factors influencing LO teachers' job satisfaction, and, subsequently, their ability to experience a sense of meaning in their careers, had to be acknowledged. According to the participants, these challenges include a lack of support and diminished value of the LO subject in schools and by the DoE, resulting in other stakeholders, particularly learners, fostering a negative view of the subject's relevance and importance. In addition, LO teachers also perceive a higher workload and fulfilling multiple roles, some for which they did not receive adequate training, including addressing learners' more severe and sensitive social and emotional problems.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Considering the research study was conducted with only one sample of LO teachers' experiences and perspectives in the Gauteng Province, the generalisability of the findings to a broader population of LO teachers in South Africa is limited. The researcher attempted to enhance the validity of the participants' subjective answers by making use of multiple data gathering methods. Furthermore, the researcher acknowledged the subjective nature of the study, and, subsequently, followed additional steps as part of ensuring the quality of the findings (refer to Section 3.9). It is, however, considered that the possibility exists for a different interpretation of the research findings to be made by another researcher, should a similar study be conducted. Furthermore, the researcher's utilisation of hermeneutic phenomenology as the data analysis method might be considered an additional limitation, based on the possibility of researcher bias to occur, due to the specific data analysis process demanding a high level of expertise that the researcher has yet to acquire (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). For this reason, the researcher acquired the assistance of an external coder to

authenticate the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. A further limitation that had to be considered was the focus group interview being conducted online to allow for flexibility and accommodation of the participants' schedules, which could have constrained the richness of the data due to the absence of in-person interaction, for example, a lack of observed non-verbal cues.

6.4 ETHICAL ASPECTS

Various ethical measures were employed, as outlined in section 3.10, to protect the participants, which were adhered to throughout the entirety of the study and are summarised as follows:

- ❖ At the onset of the research study, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria. In addition, the researcher also obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
- ❖ The researcher obtained written informed consent from all the participants to partake in the research study, clearly explaining the purpose and procedures of what the research entailed.
- ❖ The participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the research study at any stage without any consequences.
- ❖ Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality were maintained and protected by making use of pseudonyms to protect and conceal the participants' identifying information.

The recommendations that emerged from the current research study follow next.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the research findings:

- ❖ Further research should be conducted to develop and improve the comprehension of teachers' experiences of teaching the LO subject for learners in the FET phase, particularly Grade 11. It should particularly explore how teaching LO influences LO teachers' sense of meaning and purpose in their careers, where the research should include larger and more diverse participant groups.
- ❖ LO teachers' experiences of how they perceive their classes contributing to Grade 11 learners' self-development and career choices, as well as what factors contribute to their sense of experiencing job satisfaction can be further explored through conducting

a survey study. A study of this nature could bring forth various perspectives from a large sample of LO teachers from various high schools.

- ❖ The DoE could review the requirements for teachers to be considered qualified to teach the LO subject. This could entail making psychology a mandatory module or providing adequate training at higher institutions of learning, particularly in basic counselling skills.
- ❖ The DoE could consider curriculum reformation in collaboration with LO teachers by drawing from their insights and teaching experiences of presenting the prescribed content, particularly for ‘development of self in society’ and ‘career and career choices’. This could potentially alter the perspectives of learners and elevate the respect awarded to the LO subject when the content is perceived as relevant and of educational value to help them navigate challenges associated with the modern world.
- ❖ School management teams could ensure LO teachers are registered at the SACDA, which will enable them to attend workshops and courses to enhance their knowledge and skills regarding the provision of career guidance and counselling, and will ensure they stay abreast of development and changes in the world of work. Subsequently, it will also contribute to LO teachers’ sense of value when school management prioritises their career development needs, thereby preventing the migration of LO teachers to other subjects.

6.6 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH STUDY

6.6.1 Anticipated findings

As anticipated, the participants’ narratives, based on their experiences of teaching the LO subject, enabled them to identify their intrinsic motivators that contribute to their sense of meaning and purpose in their careers. In addition, it was expected that LO teachers would address their career development needs, including receiving more opportunities for further training to enhance their knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as LO subject specialists. In addition, the participants’ responses confirmed my expectation that an absence of adequate support from stakeholders, including the DoE and school management teams would negatively affect LO teachers’ job satisfaction, and, subsequently, their perception of meaning and purpose in their career lives.

6.6.2 Unanticipated findings

At the beginning of my research journey, I experienced great difficulty with motivation and making progress due to my perception of the mini-dissertation resembling a daunting adventure, the equivalent of climbing Mount Everest. The biggest challenge I experienced was during the process of finding suitable participants who would be willing to invest their time and energy to participate in my research study. There were many times I felt discouraged as my progress depended on this stage, yet I experienced many 'doors closing' due to teachers' full and demanding schedules. During this time, I made the conscious decision to be patient and persevere by continuing to reach out to schools and regularly follow up with possible participants to accommodate their schedules. Furthermore, I did not anticipate the data analysis process to be so time consuming, and, as a novice researcher, I dedicated significant time to ensure that the sub-themes and themes accurately presented the findings of the data generated.

6.6.3 Surprising findings

Although data collection took longer than I initially planned, I found myself enjoying the process and to my surprise it resulted in a valuable learning experience, where the emergence of the participants' insights was an enriching experience. I felt honoured that some of the participants had the willingness to openly share sensitive details of personal challenges they were experiencing and how it was impacting their teaching careers. Given the nature of my research study's topic, which was closely tied with my own experience teaching LO for a brief period, I was able to relate to and empathise with the narratives the participants shared. At the same time, their perceptions also enhanced my self-awareness of needing to remain objective and to be cautious of my own experiences influencing my ability of accurately interpreting the findings. After the data collection process, I experienced a renewed sense of motivation, and I was determined to present my findings to the best of my ability. I often found my mind wandering, contemplating the possibility of exploring this research topic further as a potential focus for my doctoral degree in the future.

6.6.4 What I would have done differently

While I am grateful for the LO teachers who participated in my research study, and I gained lessons in patience and perseverance throughout the process of finding suitable candidates, I would have started with this phase earlier to relieve the pressure I experienced in having to finish my mini-dissertation within a set time frame. This research study made me aware of areas for growth, particularly considering my time management skills which I need to

further improve. Furthermore, I would have preferred the focus group interview to be conducted in-person rather than online, as I believe it would have been a more personal experience and would have provided the opportunity for the participants to build more freely and naturally on each other's ideas and inputs.

6.7 WHAT THE FINDINGS MEANT TO ME PERSONALLY

Although I was extremely grateful and excited about being accepted into the Master's programme and moving closer towards my dream career of becoming an educational psychologist, I was at times overwhelmed with the various demands and responsibilities I had to face as a full-time student, a small-business owner, and a part-time lecturer. Despite all the roles I had to fulfil daily, I could always depend on the love and support of my family and close friends for comfort, words of encouragement, and prayer. The completion of this mini dissertation would also not have been possible without the invaluable support of my supervisor, whose professionalism, unwavering reliability and exceptional work ethic provided continuous direction and guidance throughout the research study process. The research study was perceived as a meaningful experience and during these past two years it formed part of my personal growth and becoming more deeply rooted in my faith and relationship with God as well, as I had to learn to surrender my anxieties and rely on Him for strength, wisdom and insight. As I am concluding this last part of my mini-dissertation, I experience gratitude for my dedication and determination throughout this process, as I know I strived to produce work reflecting the best of my abilities.

6.8 SUMMARY

The study aimed to explore and describe how LO teachers perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in teaching the LO subject. LO teachers' roles in schools, including acting as mentors to facilitate learners' self-development, providing career guidance and counselling, and offering psychosocial support, have been thoroughly researched. However, only limited research exists on whether LO teachers experience job satisfaction through teaching the LO subject, as well as whether they experience a sense of meaning and purpose in their careers. LO teachers are considered valuable and well-positioned resources in schools, as they are considered more responsible than other teachers, for enhancing learners' emotional wellbeing and assisting them with career decision-making. Despite the value associated with LO teachers, they also face challenges unique to teaching the LO subject that need to be considered, as these challenges have an adverse impact on their job satisfaction and ability to perceive meaning in their careers.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly hope that my research study will contribute to future research related to addressing LO teachers' career development needs, aiming to better equip them to act as subject specialists and fulfil their roles with confidence and, consequently, enhance their experience of meaning and purpose in their career lives. I draw this report to a close with a quote that was personally meaningful to me during the course of my research journey and enhanced my motivation to persevere: *The better ambitions have to do with the development of character and ability, rather than status and power. Status you can lose. You carry your character with you wherever you go, and it allows you to prevail against adversity* (Jordan Peterson).

6.9 EPILOGUE

A few months after the focus group and individual interviews, I contacted the teacher participants and asked them to reflect on the discussions we had. In general, they described their participation in my research study to have been an insightful experience and they reported that they were able to relate to many of the experiences that were shared amongst each other. A few participants shared their plans and endeavours for further professional development, by pursuing postgraduate qualifications in the near future. Furthermore, the participants envisioned the research study contributing to the exploration of how the LO curriculum can be revised and improved to better support LO teachers and that its findings could provide teachers with the opportunity to explore teaching strategies and professional development avenues, enhancing their abilities to teach the subject more adequately.



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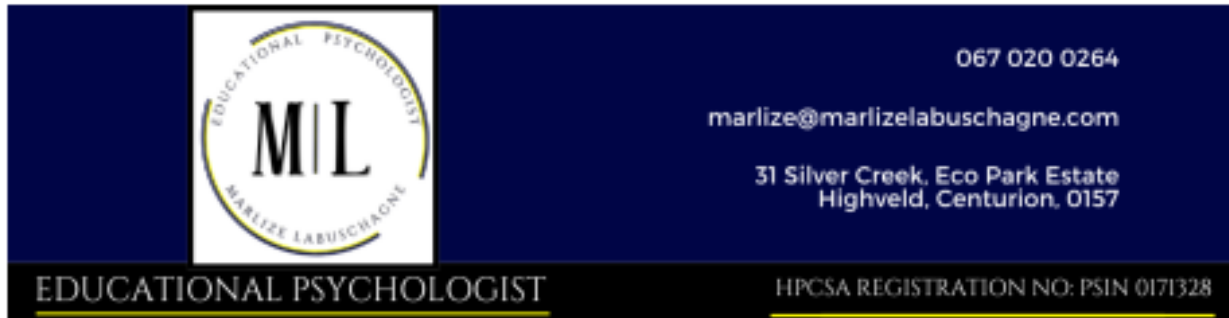
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APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM EXTERNAL CODER



BA Comm (NWU); PGCE (Unisa); BEd. Hon (Learning Support) (Univ. of Pta.); BEd. Hon (Ed. Psych) (Univ. of Pta.); MEd. Educational Psychology (Univ. of Pta)

4 November 2024

To whom it may concern,

EXTERNAL CODER'S CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

I, Maria Elizabeth Labuschagne, confirm that I acted as an external coder for Ms Carmen du Plessis' dissertation. I reviewed and verified her data analysis, and agree with her findings. I believe that the themes and subthemes identified in her study were reported accurately.

Please feel free to contact me should any questions regarding this process arise.



M.E. Labuschagne
067 020 0264



APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GRADE 11 LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

The following questions will be asked during the semi-structured individual interviews. However, follow-up questions may also be asked based on the participants' responses in order to clarify and expand on their answers.

1. Can you please describe your experience as a Life Orientation (LO) teacher? What aspects of the subject do you find most fulfilling or rewarding in your teaching career?
2. How do you personally define and understand the concept of meaning and purpose in your career as a LO teacher? What does it mean to you?
3. What intrinsic motivators drive your work motivation? How do these motivators impact your daily work and interactions with students?
4. How do you integrate career guidance and counselling into your LO curriculum for Grade 11 learners? What strategies or resources do you utilise to assist them in making informed career choices?
5. Can you describe any specific approaches or activities you employ to help Grade 11 learners explore and identify their strengths, interests, and values as part of the career guidance process?
6. What challenges, if any, do you encounter when providing career guidance and counselling to Grade 11 learners? How do you address these challenges and ensure that students receive the support they need?
7. How do you personally stay updated on current trends and developments in the field of career guidance and counselling? How does this ongoing professional development impact your ability to support Grade 11 learners effectively?
8. How would you describe the relationship between career choices and self-development of Grade 11 learners? What is your role in the self-development of the Grade 11 learners you teach or have taught in the past?

9. Have you witnessed any significant positive outcomes in the lives of Grade 11 learners because of the career guidance and counselling support you have provided? If so, how did it contribute to your perceived sense of meaning and purpose as a LO teacher?
10. Can you describe any instances where you have faced personal or professional challenges in finding meaning and purpose in your career as a Life Orientation teacher? How did you overcome these challenges?



APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GRADE 11 LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

The following questions will be asked during the semi-structured focus-group interview. However, follow-up questions may also be asked based on the participants' responses in order to clarify and expand on their answers.

1. How would you describe your overall experience as a Life Orientation (LO) teacher? What aspects of the subject do you find most meaningful and purposeful in your career?
2. When you think about finding meaning and purpose in your teaching career, what personal values or beliefs do you feel align with your role as a LO teacher?
3. Can you share any specific examples or experiences that have impacted your sense of meaning and purpose as a LO teacher? What effect did these experiences have on your motivation and dedication to your students?
4. Are there any specific resources, tools, or techniques that you find particularly helpful in fostering a sense of meaning and purpose in your career as a Life Orientation teacher? How do you incorporate them into your teaching practice?
5. How do you perceive your role in providing career guidance and counselling for Grade 11 learners who need to make career choices? What strategies or approaches do you employ to support students in this process?
6. When it comes to career guidance and counselling, what challenges do you encounter in supporting Grade 11 learners? How do you address these challenges and ensure students receive the guidance they need?
7. How do you envision the future of career guidance and counselling for Grade 11 learners?
8. How do you foster a sense of self-reflection and self-awareness in Grade 11 learners through the LO curriculum? Can you provide any examples of activities or discussions you facilitate to promote self-development?
9. In what ways do you believe your role as a Life Orientation teacher contributes to the self-development of Grade 11 learners? Can you provide any specific examples?

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE RESEARCH SITE AND SAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM: PRINCIPALS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Principal

I am Carmen du Plessis, a Master's student in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria. The title of my research towards my Master's degree is "Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives." The aim of the study is to explore and describe how Life Orientation (LO) teachers perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in teaching LO as a subject. By doing this, the researcher will potentially contribute to the knowledge of how teachers experience LO as a subject, how they present the content and how their classroom instruction influences the career choices and self-development of specifically Grade 11 learners.

I am working under the supervision of Prof. Jacobus Gideon Maree, from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria.

I kindly want to invite a teacher/teachers at your school to participate in this research. This research has two parts: an individual interview (using semi-structured interview questions) and two focus group interviews (consisting of the 10 participants partaking in this research). The individual interview will be scheduled as per the teacher's availability and will take place at a venue convenient to them. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes. The focus group interviews will be 60 minutes each. The aim of the focus group interviews is to allow the participants to share their subjective perceptions, attitudes, and experiences on the shared phenomenon. Please note that the researcher may request one follow-up individual interview, to provide both the researcher and participant with the opportunity to reflect upon the matters addressed during the initial interview and focus group, allowing the emergence of new insights.

When the teacher agrees to participate in this research, they will have the opportunity to do the following:

- Through sharing narratives about their career, do introspection and reflect on the degree to which they perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in teaching the LO subject providing the opportunity for self-awareness and personal growth.
- Through reflecting on teaching LO, identify and utilise intrinsic motivators to help improve their perception of meaning and purpose in their career lives.
- Through sharing their career story, could potentially assist them in identifying areas requiring

further career development, especially in their career counselling proficiencies.

- Through participating in a focus group interview, will allow the teacher to gain insights into different perspectives and approaches to finding meaning and purpose in their teaching career. This exposure to new ideas and strategies can inspire professional growth and provide valuable insights that can be applied to their own teaching practices.

Their participation in the research is voluntary and confidential. They have the right to withdraw at any point during the research study without any explanation or consequences. They can be assured that their decision will be respected. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed always by using pseudonyms for the participants during the transcription phase. No participant names or personal information will be reported in my findings.

In participating in this research study, the teachers will be asked for permission by the researcher to make use of audio recordings for the semi-structured interview. The purpose thereof is to make the transcription of data valid and authentic. The recording will be safely kept at the University of Pretoria. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the audio recordings. All data collected will only be used for academic purposes. The participants may ask questions before or during the time of participation. As a participant, they will have the opportunity to access and verify the recorded views and the transcriptions of interviews made in case there is a need to do so.

Participating in this research will be free of charge. Should you have any inquiries, you are welcome to contact me (Carmen du Plessis, carmenduplessis135@gmail.com) or my supervisor (Prof Kobus Maree, kobus.maree@up.ac.za).

If you are willing to allow your teacher(s) to participate in the proposed research study, please complete the *Informed Consent* slip on page 3 as a declaration of your consent.
I thank you in advance.

Carmen du Plessis



APPENDIX E: LETTER OF INFORMATION OF RESEARCH STUDY AND SAMPLE LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Educator

I am Carmen du Plessis, a Master's student in Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria. The title of my research towards my Master's degree is "Life Orientation teachers' perceived sense of meaning and purpose in their career lives." The aim of the study is to explore and describe how Life Orientation (LO) teachers perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in teaching LO as a subject. By doing this, the researcher will potentially contribute to the knowledge of how teachers experience LO as a subject, how they present the content and how their classroom instruction influences the career choices and self-development of specifically Grade 11 learners.

I am working under the supervision of Prof. Jacobus Gideon Maree, from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria.

As one of the participants, I kindly invite you to participate in this research. This research consists of two parts: an individual interview (using semi-structured interview questions) and two focus-group interviews (consisting of the 10 participants partaking in this research). The individual interview will be scheduled as per your availability and will take place at a venue convenient to you. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes. The focus group will be 60 minutes each. The aim of the focus group is to allow the participants to share their subjective perceptions, attitudes and experiences on the shared phenomenon. Please note that the researcher may request one follow-up interview, to provide both the researcher and participant with the opportunity to reflect upon the matters addressed during the initial interview and focus group, allowing the emergence of new insights.

When you agree to participate in this research, you will have the opportunity to the following:

- Through sharing narratives about your career, apply introspection and reflect on the degree to which you perceive a sense of meaning and purpose in teaching the LO subject providing the opportunity for self-awareness and personal growth.
- Through reflecting on teaching LO, identify and utilise intrinsic motivators to help improve your perception of meaning and purpose in your career lives.
- Through sharing your career story, could potentially assist you in identifying areas requiring

further career development, especially in your career counselling proficiencies.

- Through participating in a focus group interview, will allow you to gain insights into different perspectives and approaches to finding meaning and purpose in your teaching career. This exposure to new ideas and strategies can inspire professional growth and provide valuable insights that can be applied to your own teaching practices.

Your participation in the research is voluntary and confidential. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the research study without any explanation or consequences. You can be assured that your decision will be respected. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed always by using pseudonyms for the participants during the transcription phase. No participant names or personal information will be reported in my findings.

In participating in this research study, you will be asked for permission by the researcher to make audio recordings of the semi-structured interview. The purpose thereof is to make the transcription of data valid and authentic. The recording will be safely kept at the University of Pretoria. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the audio recordings. All data collected will only be used for academic purposes. You may ask questions before or during the time of participation. As a participant, you will have the opportunity to access and verify the recorded views and the transcriptions of interviews made in case there is a need to do so.

We would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Participating in this research will be free of charge. Should you have any inquiries, you are welcome to contact me (Carmen du Plessis, carmenduplessis@gmail.com) or my supervisor (Prof Kobus Maree, kobus.maree@up.ac.za).

If you are willing to participate in the proposed research study, please complete the *Informed Consent* slip on page 3 as a declaration of your consent.



APPENDIX F: EXTRACT FROM THE FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS

The table below represents the focus group interview transcripts where the initial codes and sub-themes are indicated with the correct colour and code number.

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW	INITIAL CODE
Researcher	The first question is, how would you describe your experience as a Life Orientation teacher? What aspects of the subject do you enjoy the most? How do your personal values align with your role as an LO teacher?	
Participant 9	My experience, uh teaching LO is nice cause you get to interact with different learners and then it's... They can come back to you like it's, it's a....It's not only a teacher and it's not only a learner... All of us, we are interacting, so it's nice that way and you get to know more personality of the learners. The second question was?	CO 3.1 Factors enhancing LO teachers' job satisfaction 3.1 Enhanced learner engagement during LO lessons: CO 3.1.2
Researcher	What aspects of the subject do you enjoy the most?	
Participant 9	Yeah, right. The interaction and sometimes you get to deal with the real issues and you get to know the real person cause with LO you deal with social issues, gender-based violence, substance abuse. So, then we get learners who deal with horrific situations.	CO 1.1 The role of an LO teacher 1.1.3 Addressing real-world problems during LO lessons CO 1.1.3
Researcher	What are your personal values that align with your role as an LO teacher?	
Participant 9	I think my personal values. I needed to be an LO teacher. I was in business, but it didn't do justice. So as a LO teacher, I think I fit very well and I get to teach learners morals, ethics, and then get to show them right and wrong.	CO 1.1 The role of an LO teacher 1.1.1 LO teachers' role as mentors or role models to learners CO 1.1.1

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW	INITIAL CODE
Participant 2	So, it's a very fulfilling experience for me. I really enjoy offering career guidance to learners because it allows you to connect with them on a more personal level and allows also the learners to share aspects of themselves with you that are important, important to them .	CO 3.1 Factors enhancing LO teachers' job satisfaction 3.1.3 Skills, abilities and approaches LO teachers use to form personal connections with learners CO 3.1.3
Researcher	And then what personal values align with your role as an LO teacher?	
Participant 2	So, I think LO is very focused on the relationship between the teacher and the learners because you are responsible for modelling to them what a healthy relationship should look like. So, I think that that's really important if that makes sense	CO 1.1.1 LO teachers' role as mentors or role models to learners
Participant 7	Good afternoon. Apologies for the slight delay. No development of self in society. I was really enjoying that. Also, to attest to the lady that just spoke about, you know, really relating the conversations and the topics into the reality of life where our kids, they really need to you know, expand that into their lives when they grow up. So, development of self in society is quite an amazing topic to discuss because in terms of development and social development and respect and self-awareness and self-reflection.	CO 1.1.3 Addressing real-world problems during LO lessons CO 1.1.4 Resources and strategies utilised to facilitate Grade 11 learners' self-development
Participant 8	Yeah definitely. Well, I've got a few topics that I actually enjoy because I feel like they're all linked up. So, one of them will be development of self in society which goes on to relationships and friendships, and the reason why is because these kids, especially the teenagers, you get so lost in the deep end and you you're trying to find yourself, you're trying to find what you are rooted in, and there's also a lot of peer pressure as well. So, there's a lot of peer pressure, while you need to know who you are, so you can stay rooted in that. So, with that, we can also assist the scholars to understand who they are and to also route them into the pathway that peer pressure is not the way to go into. The true self is yourself. So, learning that about themselves is very important and relationships and friendships because they're also	CO 5.1 Challenges learners in the FET phase encounter 5.1.1 Social and economic challenges learners are confronted with CO 5.1.1 CO 1.1.4 Resources and strategies utilised in facilitating Grade 11 learners' self-development

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW	INITIAL CODE
	<p>at that stage where their relationships and friendships are also a big part of their lives as well, and that's what also roots them, of finding growth in themselves. So that is one of my aspects that I enjoy to also to get to know them. How they deal with situations in friendships and relationships as well. Conflict as well. I think the question was the values right?</p>	<p>CO 3.1.3 Enhanced learner engagement during LO lessons</p>
Researcher	Yes	
Participant 8	<p>Okay, so for me honesty and respect is very important to me because I believe respect goes both ways as well. I need to show respect to my scholars for them to be able to show respect to me and honesty as well. I feel like that is also a big value that I would also want to accumulate throughout my subject teaching.</p>	<p>CO 1.1.1 LO teachers' role as mentors or role models</p>
Participant 1	<p>If I think about my experience over the last, let's say 15 years, I think honesty creates trust. But what I find most engaging is that these children have problems, and we get a chance to explore what they experience from day-to-day. Then, also, creating excitement for the future. In that we can steer them in the right direction with regards to a career and keeping them excited about the future. That part is in essence what I would like to add. Thank you.</p>	<p>CO 1.1.3 Addressing real-world problems during LO lessons</p> <p>CO 1.1.5 Resources and strategies utilised in providing Grade 11 learners with career guidance</p>
Researcher	Can you just tell me which of your personal values align with your role as an LO teacher?	
Participant 1	<p>I think, my role as a teacher, a caring individual able to sympathise and empathise with what they experience from day to day. So, I think characteristics such as sympathy, empathy and understanding their situation .</p>	<p>CO 3.1.3 Skills, abilities and approaches LO teachers utilise to form personal connections with learners</p>
Participant 6	<p>I don't really have specific areas that I enjoy most. I enjoy teaching LO in general. Um... I love to... I love it when the kids participate, so when we do topics where I can find out their viewpoints and I can find out what is happening in their surrounding areas and in their environment. I love that, and then sometimes we teach different classes, and then the whole lesson is different from one class to another. So, in one class, kids</p>	<p>CO 3.1.2 Enhanced learner engagement during LO lessons</p>

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW	INITIAL CODE
	<p>take one part of the lesson and then we go in that direction and in another class they have totally different questions so their needs are different and I love that part of LO where you... It's never the same because the kids are different, and their needs are different, and their viewpoints are different. Then also because I'm teaching a multicultural school, and also with Afrikaans and English kids, there's a big difference between them and I love seeing how sometimes when they understand some of the concepts that I teach them, and I realise that we are making a difference in South Africa by doing this. This is a passion that I have more than just teaching. So yeah.</p>	<p>CO 3.1.1 LO teachers' perceived sense of making a difference in learners' lives</p>
<p>Researcher</p>	<p>Thank you so much. Then what would you say are the personal values that align with your role as an LO teacher?</p>	
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>Honestly is definitely one. I like to teach the kids to be loyal and... yeah, loyalty and honesty. Those are... I also like excellence, to do their best in everything they try, especially in a subject like LO where they do not want to participate. I'm trying to get them to find the passion for it as well and to study for it. I've tried to boost them also to do their best, and also to have a balanced lifestyle. So, that's also one of the values I try to, to learn them. That they can have not only academically, but in all other areas of their life.</p>	<p>CO 1.1.1 LO teachers' role as mentors or role models to learners CO 4.1.2 Stakeholders' attitude toward the LO subject – Learners CO 1.1.1 LO teachers' role as mentors or role models to learners</p>
<p>Researcher</p>	<p>My next question will be: Can you share some specific examples or experiences that have impacted your sense of meaning and purpose as an LO teacher?</p>	
<p>Participant 9</p>	<p>It's a lot. I don't know which one to start, but... You know the school, it shows how the community lives, and then the same problem that is in the community comes to the school. Now, for example, the one that I want to highlight, parent involvement is not there, but then in my case we've got several learners whose parents passed away. Now the school has to 'adopt' them because social workers are not enough. For instance, we've got a great Grade 12 learners, the mother passed away in April. Then there are 4.</p>	<p>CO 5.1 Challenges learners in the FET phase encounter 5.1.2 A lack of parental involvement or support CO 5.1.2</p>

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW	INITIAL CODE
	<p>When they are found, she's the oldest, she has to take care of the other siblings and then she cannot... because what you are doing in Grade 12 and when you are at school and every teacher expects what? The activities, their workbook needs to be up to date. The learners when they get home has to cook, has to look after her siblings, has to be their mother now . Everything has shifted</p>	
<p>Researcher</p>	<p>And how do you think that impacts your motivation and your sense of meaning as an educator?</p>	
<p>Participant 9</p>	<p>Yes, about that... that's when we had to accommodate, that's when we have to help. That's why you're saying we had to become an LO teacher. If that learner is taking care of... there's no way she can pass. So, you involve other stakeholders together so that the learner can have a meal, she can have food, and then she gets to go to school because of other stakeholders. After us intervening. That's what I am saying, I want the connection with learners. Without LO, there's no school, because we get to look after the wellbeing of the learners. There's no way she can learn if her wellbeing is not taken care of. That's what I wanted to say</p>	<p>CO 1.1.2 Involving stakeholders to provide learners with support to improve their wellbeing</p> <p>CO 3.1.1 LO teachers' perceived sense of making a difference in learners' lives</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>I would agree also with her. LO is a subject where you have the opportunity to listen where kids can tell you about their problems at home. So, you teach them life skills and in the meantime they start trusting you, and sharing things with you and then you can start helping them, that is different from other subjects. Sometimes you have to go off the road of the curriculum a little bit. I agree with that. That's very... It's a challenge but that's when kids realise that they can share things and get help from you because of you being the LO teacher and because of the content we are discussing. That is then how we can help them also .</p>	<p>CO 3.1.3 Skills, abilities and approaches LO teachers use to form personal connections with learners</p> <p>CO 3.1.1 LO teachers perceive sense of making a difference in learners' lives</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>I'd just like to add onto what she said. I find that sometimes when learners are distressed and they have no idea where they can go for help, they come to us because we are the LO teachers and they expect help from us and it always makes me think about the huge responsibility we actually carry as LO teachers, to be responsible for the emotional wellbeing of the learners and to be able</p>	<p>CO 3.1.1 LO teachers perceived sense of making a difference in learners' lives</p>

PARTICIPANT NUMBERS	FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW	INITIAL CODE
	to, you know ... I can't always do something about their problems, but they come to me and I can help them to at least get to the right place to receive the help that they need.	CO 1.1.2 Involving stakeholders to support learners to improve their wellbeing

