

**FROM OBE TO CAPS: EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES  
OF THE NEW LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM IN THE  
FOUNDATION PHASE**

**by**

**AFSANA RABI KRISHNA**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR LINDA JAIRAM**

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# **DECLARATION**

**I. Afsana Rabi Krishna** declare that

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**Afsana Rabi Krishna**

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## **ABSTRACT**

South Africa has undergone many changes in the past decade in terms of political, economic and educational transformations. The year 1994 was the turning point in which our education system underwent a major paradigm shift. The sands have been shifting in education ever since, beginning with the National Curriculum Statement, then the introduction of OBE and Curriculum 2005 and the most recent, CAPS. The question that intrigued me about curriculum change was how educators experienced these changes. This study therefore explored how educators experienced curriculum change in South Africa, particularly how they experienced the new Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

- 1) What are grade one educators' experiences of the new CAPS Life Skills curriculum?
- 2) Why do educators experience the new curriculum the way they do?

A qualitative research approach was used, making use of a case study design. Participants were purposely selected using non-probability sampling. Semi-structured interviews and diaries were used as data collection methods.

The data from this study revealed that educators experienced challenges in terms of the content, planning and preparation, assessment and dealing with contextual factors in the classroom. It was also found that educators experienced a lack of training and support in implementing the new Life Skills curriculum. A positive experience was that educators enjoyed teaching Life Skills. It was also found that educators welcomed and embraced curriculum change.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

From 1994, the South African education system has implemented a number of changes in its schooling curriculum. Curriculum change directly affects educators who are at the forefront of curricular innovations. The question that intrigued me about curriculum change is how educators experience these changes. This study therefore served to explore how educators experience curriculum change in South Africa.

In this chapter, the background to this study will be presented and the core concepts of 'Life Orientation' and 'Life Skills' will be discussed. The purpose and rationale for this research study will also be discussed and the core research questions will be presented.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Eighteen years have lapsed since South Africa became a democratic country. With democracy in 1994, came many changes to the country's social, political, economical and educational landscape. Education was seen as a priority due to the many injustices of the apartheid education system and thus received the most amount of attention. Continuous change in educational policies has since occurred. The curriculum under the apartheid system was replaced with Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in 1998 in an attempt to remediate the injustices of the past through an outcomes-based curriculum reform (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2002, p.1). C2005, which was later revised to form the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), was the vehicle through which OBE was introduced in South Africa (Rooth, 2005, p. 36). Outcomes-based education (OBE) being a new approach, required a paradigm shift in teaching and learning styles, as well as a change in the approach to teaching and learning (Rooth, 2005, p. 31). Educators had to re-orientate their thinking, teaching methods and practices in line with the demands of an OBE framework for education.

After the implementation of an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning, policy makers had a vision of a new curriculum which aimed at replacing OBE and its tenets. The Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) is currently a revised design of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to improve the quality of teaching and learning in South Africa. The NCS is a policy document designed to inform curriculum and assessment

in South African schools. To improve the implementation of this document, a new Curriculum and Assessment policy document was designed which replaced the previous Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) document. This policy document is now called CAPS. The implementation date for CAPS is as follows:

- January 2012 in the Foundation Phase (grade R-3) and Grade 10
- 2013 in the Intermediate Phase (grade 4-9) and Grade 11
- Grade 12 in 2014

### **1.3 DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN THE TERMS ‘LIFE ORIENTATION’ AND ‘LIFE SKILLS’**

There is often confusion with the term “Life Orientation” and “Life Skills”. Life Orientation was a learning area within the OBE context whereas Life Skills was a term used in the Foundation Phase in the OBE curriculum to describe a learning programme (Rooth, 2005, p.224). According to the Department of Education (2002a, p.15), “Learning Programmes are structured and systematic arrangements of activities that promote the attainment of learning outcomes and assessment standards for the Phase”. This means that the OBE Life Skills learning programme in the Foundation Phase outlined the scope for teaching and learning, the tasks and activities for assessment purposes, work schedules indicating the pace and sequence of lessons as well as exemplars of lesson plans (Department of Education, 2002b, p.3). Life Skills has now become a subject in the CAPS curriculum.

Life Orientation was a learning area in the OBE curriculum. A learning area according to the Department of Education (2002b, p.3), stipulates the concepts, skills and values that were to be achieved in every grade.

For the purpose of this study, Life Orientation will be used when speaking about the OBE curriculum and Life Skills will be used when speaking about the CAPS curriculum.

### **1.4 LIFE ORIENTATION IN THE OBE CURRICULUM**

OBE introduced eight learning areas and one of them being Life Orientation. According to Prinsloo (2007, p.15), “The development of the Life Orientation learning area is one of the most successful accomplishments in the construction of a new education dispensation in South Africa.” Life Orientation in the OBE grade one curriculum focussed on four core

outcomes rather than study areas. An outcome can be defined as the result that is achieved at the end of a learning process (Department of Education, 2002b, p.62). The outcomes for Life Orientation in OBE were health promotion, social and personal development and physical development.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Description</b>
1) <i>Health Promotion</i>	Learners will be able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health.
2) <i>Social Development</i>	Learners will demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities, and to show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.
3) <i>Personal Development</i>	Learners will be able to use acquired Life Skills to respond effectively to challenges in his/her world.
4) <i>Physical Development and Movement</i>	Learners will demonstrate an understanding of and participate in activities that promote movement and physical development.

(Department of Education, 2002b, pp. 9-10)

The OBE curriculum was focused on continuous assessment. According to the Department of Education (2002b, p.54) the choice of assessment was subjective and unique to the educator, grade and school. Assessments were informed by assessment standards. Common tasks were also given as a form of assessment and were set either nationally, provincially, at district level or at cluster level. These assessments were conducted at school level and moderated externally (Department of Education, 2002b, p.54). Four national codes were used for recording and reporting as indicated in the table below:

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
4	Learner's performance has exceeded the requirements of the Learning Outcome for the grade.
3	Learner's performance has satisfied the requirements of the Learning Outcome for the grade.
2	Learner's performance has partially satisfied the requirements of the Learning Outcome for the grade.
1	Learner's performance has not satisfied the requirements of the Learning Outcome for the grade.

(Department of Education, 2002b, p.56)

With OBE, twenty five percent (25%) of the total teaching time per week was allocated to Life Skills in the Foundation Phase (Department of Basic Education, 2002b, p. 17).

## 1.5 LIFE SKILLS IN THE CAPS CURRICULUM

In the Foundation Phase, Life Skills in the CAPS curriculum has replaced the previous Life Orientation learning area and has become one of the core subjects in the Foundation Phase. “The Life Skills subject is aimed at guiding and preparing learners for life and its possibilities including equipping learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society” (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 8). The aim of the Life Orientation learning area was to empower learners to use their talents to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal and social potential (Department of Education, 2002b, p.4).

The Life Skills subject is concerned with the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of learners, and with the way in which these are integrated (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.8). This subject is the only subject in the new curriculum that has taken a major facelift in terms of its content, teaching and learning. This subject has now been organised into four new study areas namely: beginning knowledge, personal and social well-being, creative arts and physical education as illustrated in the table below:

Study area	Description
1) <i>Beginning Knowledge and Personal Wellbeing</i>	The content of this area has been drawn from the Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Technology learning areas.
2) <i>Personal and Social Wellbeing</i>	Learners are taught how to take care of themselves and their bodies. This study area includes content from social health, emotional health and personal relationships.
3) <i>Creative Arts</i>	Learners are exposed to four art forms i.e dance, drama, music and visual arts. Learners are taught to be creative in various forms.
4) <i>Physical Education</i>	Emphasis on physical and motor development.

(Department of Basic Education, 2011a, pp.8-9)

Learners are expected to learn the following knowledge, skills and values through the new Life Skills curriculum:

- Physical, social, personal, emotional and cognitive development
- Creative and aesthetic skills through dance, music, visual art and drama
- Knowledge of personal health and safety
- Understanding the relationship between people and the environment

- Developing awareness of social relationships, technological processes and elementary science.

In the CAPS curriculum , assessment involves four steps:

- 1) Gathering and collecting evidence of achievement
- 2) Evaluation of evidence
- 3) Recording of the findings of the evaluation and
- 4) Using this information to understand and assist the learner’s development in order to improve the process of teaching and learning (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 66).

The CAPS Life Skills curriculum requires both formal and informal assessments. Formal assessments for Life Skills takes place once per term. However, in the Foundation Phase, the emphasis is on continuous observation of learners in an ongoing yet planned manner. For Creative Arts and Physical Education, discussion, role play and demonstration are suggested. Written recording of observations is suggested for Beginning Knowledge and Physical and Social Wellbeing. According to the CAPS policy document (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 66), the purpose of assessing Life Skills in the Foundation Phase is to assess the development of concepts, skills and values that will help to prepare learners for more formal assessments that will take place in the Intermediate Phase.

There has been a change from OBE to CAPS with regards to the rating codes. Below is the new revised rating code for recording and reporting in the Foundation Phase:

<b>RATING CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF COMPETENCE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
7	Outstanding achievement	80-100
6	Meritorious Achievement	70-79
5	Substantial Achievement	60-69
4	Adequate Achievement	50-59
3	Moderate Achievement	40-49
2	Elementary Achievement	30-39
1	Not achieved	0-29

(Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 67)

The time allocated to the CAPS Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase is as follows:

SUBJECT	GRADE (HOURS WEEK)	R PER	GRADES (HOURS WEEK)	1-2 PER	GRADE (HOURS WEEK)	3 PER
Life Skills:						
Beginning Knowledge	1		1		2	
Creative Arts	2		2		2	
Physical Education	2		2		2	
Personal and Social Wellbeing	1		1		1	
TOTAL	6		6		7	

(Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.6)

In most schools, the duration of a single period is thirty minutes thus indicating that the total number of Life Skills periods in the Foundation Phase ranges from twelve to thirteen periods per week. This means that twenty six percent (26 %) of the total teaching time per week is allocated to Life Skills. There has therefore been a small increase in the amount of periods allocated to the CAPS Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase.

## 1.6 RATIONALE

My schooling career as a learner began in 1990 and ended in 2002. My schooling career as a learner also introduced me to subjects such as 'Right Living' and 'Guidance'. In the year 1994, a review committee was placed with the task of reviewing the subject of School Guidance. With the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and OBE, these subjects were replaced with the 'Life Orientation' learning area in the Intermediate Phase and 'Life Skills' learning programme in the Foundation Phase. During my tertiary education, one of my specialisation subjects was Life Orientation due to my interest in the content, teaching and relevance of the newly introduced learning area. As a novice educator entering the profession with all the knowledge and skills to teach Life Orientation, I was appalled at the status and practice of Life Orientation (LO) in schools. In 2011, a new curriculum framework was under construction with implementation date being 2012. With the implementation of the new CAPS curriculum, new study areas of learning have been introduced in the Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum and through my conversations with educators teaching Life Skills, they have expressed uncertainty with regard to this new curriculum. The new Life Skills CAPS curriculum has placed new demands on educators in terms of the content for teaching, assessment, lesson planning and resources.

Being a qualified Life Orientation educator, I have a deep interest and enthusiasm for this subject. The rationale for this study was thus personal as I attempted to understand the experiences of the Foundation Phase educators in the implementation of the new Life Skills CAPS curriculum. Also, with the CAPS curriculum being a recent implementation, literature on the CAPS curriculum is mainly located in Departmental documents and policies. There has been no research conducted thus far on educators' experiences of teaching the CAPS Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase. This study, therefore, sought to provide a space for adding to the knowledge base of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase.

### **1.7 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

Since the inception and introduction of CAPS, there have been workshops and training sessions conducted by the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Department of Education to equip educators to teach Life Skills, a subject in the CAPS curriculum. However, being the acting head of department in the Foundation Phase at my school, I have listened to grade one educators voice the challenges they experienced with Life Skills. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

### **1.8 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY**

The Life Skills subject as the name suggests, teaches skills for life and involves the holistic development of learners in which they develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to make informed decisions regarding their health, social development, personal and physical development (Department of Education, 2002b, p. 4). This means that learners are equipped with the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours that will assist them in their daily living. The job of a Life Skills educator is to equip learners to take their rightful place in society with these acquired skills. In order to teach these skills, educators need to be empowered in teaching the Life Skills subject and implementing curriculum requirements effectively. A study of this nature therefore provides insight into the implementation of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum by grade one educators which can be beneficial to school managers and policy makers who are in a position to implement proper structures and procedures to assist these educators to cope with challenges around curriculum change. In

this way, educators can be empowered to effectively teach skills for life and equip their learners to take their rightful place in society with these acquired skills.

## **1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

- 1) What are grade one educators' experiences of the new CAPS Life Skills curriculum?*
- 2) Why do educators experience the new curriculum the way they do?*

## **1.10 CONCLUSION AND OVERVIEW OF THIS THESIS**

This chapter presented a background to this study with respect to curriculum changes that have and are still occurring in South Africa. The CAPS curriculum was discussed with particular reference to Life Skills in the Foundation Phase. A comparison was made between the Life Skills subject in the CAPS curriculum and the Life Orientation learning area in the OBE curriculum. The purpose, rationale, significance and the research questions of the study were outlined.

The next chapter provides a review of literature on the importance of Life Orientation and Life Skills in the curriculum, the roles that educators play in teaching these areas, the qualities and skills that they should have in teaching these areas, their qualifications in teaching these areas, educators' perspectives and experiences of the Life Orientation learning area as well as educator's experiences of curriculum change.

Chapter three describes the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Chapter four outlines the methodology used in this study. The research approach, research design, methods, sample and participants are presented.

Chapter five presents an analysis of the findings of this study.

Chapter six presents a summary of the research study, recommendations and limitations of the study.

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, the Life Orientation learning area in the OBE curriculum and the CAPS Life Skills subject were discussed based on documented departmental literature together with a comparison of the two areas. Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 64) describes a literature review as theoretical perspectives and previous research findings that are related to the problem at hand. Since the CAPS curriculum is a recent implementation, when reviewing the literature on this subject at hand, I noticed that there is very little literature on the subject which limits my review to departmental documents and policies on the CAPS curriculum and to the following related areas:

1. The importance of the two areas of Life Orientation and Life Skills in the curriculum,
2. The roles that educators play in teaching these areas,
3. The qualities and skills that educators should have in teaching these areas,
4. Educator qualifications in teaching these areas,
5. Educators' perspectives and experiences of the Life Orientation learning area and
6. Educators' experiences of curriculum change.

### **2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE ORIENTATION AND LIFE SKILLS IN THE CURRICULUM**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought about many changes in the way we live our lives. In addition to this, our country as a whole is undergoing drastic socio-economic, political and social transformation. The environment in which learners live influences their growth and development. There are many environmental issues such as crime that affect learners directly or indirectly and this warrants the knowledge to deal with environmental issues that will bring about changes to their environment. Through a subject such as Life Skills and Life Orientation, learners are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and values to prepare them to face the reality of their environment, their community, their society and the world at large. Panday (2007, p. 3) stated that "Learners must find a place for themselves in a world increasingly different from the one in which their parents lived."

Learners' personal lives are flooded with various challenges and obstacles that they have to deal with on a daily basis. Some of these challenges include rape and abuse. According to Prinsloo (2007, p.155), many learners due to their social circumstances, develop a negative self concept, are unable to realise their potential, lack dignity and self-respect and refuse to accept authority. If children's authoritative structures are weak, children never learn the value of discipline and self-discipline (Prinsloo, 2007, p.156). Learners need to be equipped to deal with these challenges and emotions through this subject. The CAPS Life Skills curriculum therefore aims at strengthening learners' social, emotional, personal and cognitive development.

According to Van Deventer (2007, p. 132), "schools are responsible to educate children regarding healthy lifestyles." A healthy lifestyle includes eating a healthy diet, participating in physical exercise, developing healthy relationships and making healthy choices in life. It is therefore the responsibility of the school through the subject of Life Skills, to educate learners on how to live a healthy lifestyle.

Being South African citizens, it is important for learners to know and understand their constitution as well as their rights and responsibilities. Knowing their rights will be of no benefit if they are unable to make responsible decisions that will infringe on their rights. "As South Africa is characterised by diversity some people call it a 'rainbow' nation. The CAPS Life Skills curriculum also speaks about teaching learners the values that are embedded in the constitution (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.9). This is taught in the study area of Personal and Social Well-Being in the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

According to Rooth (2005, p. 58) words such as 'values, attitudes, morality and beliefs' are words commonly heard of through the Life Orientation curriculum. "Life Orientation is hence a value-laden learning area" (Rooth, 2005, p. 58). Prinsloo (2007, p.1) further adds that the Life Orientation curriculum forms an excellent basis for equipping learners to respond positively to social demands, take on responsibilities as well as optimising their life chances. As with the CAPS Life Skills curriculum, there is an emphasis on the teaching of values and attitudes that will develop their personal and social well-being.

### **2.3 EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES OF LIFE ORIENTATION**

Research conducted by Panday (2007, p. 16) , Rooth (2005, p. 181) and Van Deventer (2009a, p.466) reveal that educators viewed Life Orientation as being an important subject in the school curriculum. The following justifications were put forward by Panday (2007, p.17) to support educators' views:

- The Life Orientation learning area contributes to the holistic development of a child. "With the combination of life skills, physical education, health education, religion education, world of work, human rights education and personal development, the educators agreed that the learning outcomes of this learning area focus on all aspects of growth and development in the learner" (Panday, 2007, p. 17).
- Educators believed that the Life Orientation learning area builds learners' self esteem and helps learners to cope with life's challenges. Educators also stated that this learning area developed learners' morals, attitudes and values.
- The Life Orientation learning area can help curb the HIV/Aids pandemic. Educators believed that through this learning area, learners can be educated regarding diseases and pandemics that are affecting the people of our country as well as learn about ways to prevent diseases.
- Life Orientation can contribute to addressing societal problems. Educators in this study felt a responsibility as Life Orientation educators to help learners to deal with societal problems and life threatening issues.

In contradiction to the study conducted by Panday (2007), Jacob's (2011, p. 213) study revealed that educators found the effects of Life Orientation teaching did not last because whatever was taught in the classroom was not actually practised in reality. As a result educators did not take the teaching of Life Orientation seriously. Educators in Prinsloo's (2007, p. 165) study also believe that the content and knowledge that is taught in the classroom, is only used in the classroom or on the school premises. Once learners leave the school, they are influenced by their peers, media, and the general climate of licentiousness in their communities (Prinsloo, 2007, p. 165).

### **2.4 THE ROLE OF LIFE ORIENTATION AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATORS**

When the OBE curriculum was introduced, Life Orientation educators were placed under great pressure to plan and deliver a new syllabus. Once again, with the introduction of CAPS,

educators need to familiarise themselves with the content. The CAPS policy on Life Skills states that educators have to ensure that learners master and understand the skills at their grade level so that when they go to the next grade, those skills can be developed. According to Tlhabane (2004, p. 53), educators need to be experts in their learning areas in order for effective Life Skills teaching to take place. If educators are unable to deliver the curriculum successfully, learners will not be able to see the value of this subject in their lives (Tlhabane, 2004, p.2). The CAPS Life Skills policy therefore outlines the following roles of a Life Skills educator (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 10):

- The educator should provide opportunities for routine, structured and free play activities that will be enjoyable for learners.
- Provide a range of resources for learners so that they may be engaged in various activities.
- Provide an environment that is child friendly, well managed and conducive to learning.

Link (2008, p.3) further states that Life Skills educators need to be models of particular behaviours so that learners can observe and practise what is being modelled. Panday (2007, p.19) concurs with Link (2008) by stating that “Teachers need to be role models who see education as a calling” (Panday, 2007, p. 19).

## **2.5 THE QUALIFICATIONS OF EDUCATORS TEACHING LIFE ORIENTATION AND LIFE SKILLS**

Findings by Rooth (2005, p.235) showed that Life Orientation was taught by a broad spectrum of educators. Similar findings were related in Christiaans (2006, p.10) study where it was found that new or temporary educators were asked to teach Life Orientation because it was an easy subject. Christiaans (2006, p.138) also found that training, experience and knowledge were not considered when selecting Life Orientation educators. This resulted in a change of educators during the year which led to the subject being regarded as unimportant. Van Deventer (2009a, p.467) states that there were many schools in her study that did not have qualified physical education educators and this affected the status and practice of LO negatively and posed a risk to the growth and development of young children.

Findings by Van Deventer and Van Niekerk (2009, p.154) also reveal that educators who were not specialists in Life Orientation were teaching it. Rooth (2005, p.236) found that

being a specialist educator meant different things to different people and therefore defined a specialist educator as someone who has the necessary qualifications and experience to teach the subject.

According to the CAPS policy document, “Life Skills is a cross-cutting subject that should support and strengthen the teaching of the other core Foundation Phase subjects” (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 8). This means that educators in the Foundation Phase, and more specifically in grade one are expected to teach all three subjects which is Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. The CAPS Life Skills curriculum is therefore not taught in isolation from the other subjects but rather integrated within the three subjects and is taught by the same educator.

## **2.6 QUALITIES AND SKILLS OF LIFE ORIENTATION AND LIFE SKILLS EDUCATORS**

The Life Skills subject is the result of a transformed Life Orientation learning area. The skills and qualities of a Life Orientation educator would in essence be the same qualities and skills that Life Skills educators should possess. The personal characteristics of the educator are conveyed through his/her teaching practices. It is therefore important that Life Orientation and Life Skills educators possess characteristics that can be admired and imitated. “In many ways, the person of the teacher determines the degree of success with which all aspects of life, survival and communication skills are conveyed to and internalised by learners” (Prinsloo, 2007, p. 168). Prinsloo (2007, p. 168) further believes that the character of a Life Orientation educator is very important. “Teachers who themselves have no positive value system, who entertain little enthusiasm in the teaching task, who show no diligence and are unpunctual should not be allowed to present the LO programmes” (Prinsloo, 2007, p. 168). The same should apply to Life Skill educators who should possess a positive value system, be diligent in their job as a Life Skills educator, be punctual and maintain a good character.

Tlhabane (2004, pp. 56-59) identified skills that Life Orientation educators need to have. These skills would therefore also apply to educators teaching Life Skills in the CAPS curriculum:

- a) Life Orientation and Life Skills educators need to develop effective counselling skills and be trained as school counsellors. Currently, in South Africa, Guidance

Counsellors are absent in most public schools, and the Life Orientation and Life Skills educator is expected to fulfil this role. In order to fulfil this role, there needs to be a sense of trust between educator and learner.

- b) “Listening is the first and indeed the most important act in communication” (Tlhabane, 2004, p. 56). Life Orientation and Life Skills educators therefore need to show an interest in what learners are saying. Learners need to feel that they are being heard and that their words are not in vain.
- c) Educators need to be empathetic to the learner’s background and needs.
- d) Respect is crucial between educator and learner. In order for one to gain respect, one has to give respect. The Life Skills classroom should be based on this principle.
- e) Communication helps to develop relationships. Life Orientation and Life Skills educators need to develop good channels of communication with their learners.
- f) The ability to assess and notice distress is important. Life Orientation and Life Skills educators therefore need to have knowledge of the psychological nature of children. Educators must be able to identify various emotions experienced by learners as well as how to help them deal with emotions. “Children are fighting to establish themselves as autonomous, confident and competent human beings, and they therefore need someone to be passionate about what they are going through” (Tlhabane, 2004, p.58).
- g) There must be confidentiality between educator and learner. With confidentiality comes the issue of trust. Learners must be able to trust their educators enough to feel confident that confidentiality will be maintained. If this is not maintained, then the trust between educator and learner is automatically broken.
- h) Human beings are faced with making decisions on a daily basis. Learners need to be taught how to make responsible decisions on a day to day basis.
- i) Educators must have the ability to teach learners study skills. The new South African curriculum requires learners to take control of their own learning. In order to do this, one needs to have effective study skills. It is the task of the Life Orientation and Life Skills educator to teach learners how to study.
- j) Educators need to know when and how to intervene when it comes to issues pertaining to learners. Educators need to be aware of their words and action which impact on the learners.

- k) Educators need to be sensitive to multiculturalism. In South Africa we have a diversity of learners, each coming from a unique background. Life Orientation and Life Skills educators in particular need to be sensitive to issues of gender, race, prejudice, religion etc.
- l) Life Orientation and Life Skills educators need to have in-depth knowledge of inclusive education as well as barriers that affect teaching and learning. Educators must be remedial educators and be able to provide appropriate support and intervention when needed.
- m) Educators need to be competent to deal with learners' behaviour problems and other challenges in the classroom.

Van Deventer and Van Niekerk (2009, p.148) believe that the epistemology and skills of educators determine the status and practice of the subject. With CAPS being a new dispensation, educators need to have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach the subject to ensure the successful delivery of the curriculum.

Christiaans (2008, pp.31-33) states that there are certain competencies that Learning Area specialists should have:

- a) Practical competence- "The teacher is able to demonstrate their ability, in an authentic context, to consider a range of possibilities for action, and to make considered decisions about which possibility to follow, and then to perform the chosen action" (Christiaans, 2008, p. 31). Christiaans (2008) believes that practical competence comes with experience and can only be achieved by educators who are confident in teaching the subject.

Life Skills educators therefore need to display practical competence in the following ways:

- Being able to adapt general educational principles to the subject.
- Select, sequence and pace the content and teaching of the lessons. The lessons should therefore be appropriate and contextualised to meet the learners' needs.
- Be able to select appropriate methods to teach the content
- Teach Life Skills in a way that allows learners to transfer the knowledge and skills learnt in the classroom to different contexts.

b) Foundational competence- “The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the knowledge and thinking which underpins the actions taken.” (Christiaans, 2008, p.32).

Life Skills educators therefore need to display foundational competence in the following ways:

- Know and understand the content of the subject.
- Be aware of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners need to demonstrate whilst learning the content.
- Understand the role and importance of the subject in learners’ lives.

c) Reflexive competence- “The teacher demonstrates the ability to integrate or connect performances of decision making with understanding and with the ability to adapt to change of unforeseen circumstances and explain the reasons behind these actions” (Christiaans, 2008, p. 33).

Life Skills educators therefore need to display reflexive competence in the following ways:

- Reflect and assess one’s own teaching practice. Christiaans (2008) believes that educators cannot continue to plan lessons without reflecting on strengths and weaknesses of previous lessons.
- Being able to analyse lesson plans, methods, techniques and strategies for teaching and assessing.
- Identify and evaluate what counts as knowledge that can be undisputed, necessary skills and important values.
- Make educational judgements on educational issues.

Research by Panday (2007, p. 19) showed that most educators believe that Life Orientation educators need to have passion and empathy in order to effectively teach the subject. Wood and Olivier (2007, p.170) stated that educators need to develop good Life Skills themselves in order to impart these skills to their learners. Skills that have been identified by Wood and Olivier (2007, p.170) are good time management, an awareness of and empathy for the difficult circumstances of the learner, creation of an open and trusting relationship with learners and colleagues, possession of the ability to handle conflict, ability to accept and learn from mistakes, solving problems and the use of their own positive life experience to advise and guide the learners.

## **2.7 EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING LIFE ORIENTATION**

### **2.7.1 Lesson Planning**

Lesson planning as defined by Magano (2009, p.13) is the systematic development of instructional requirements, arrangements, conditions, materials and activities that are used for teaching and learning. According to Magano (2009, p. 16), the planning process for OBE involved educators identifying the outcomes and assessment standards, the theme, the purpose of the lesson, learner's prior knowledge, sources of information, methods of teaching, resources and learning activities. Rooth's (2005, p.252) research study found that educators lacked creativity and innovation in lesson planning. Participants in Maphalala's (2006, p.65) study stated that the training that they received merely provided background information and guidelines on lesson preparation which was not sufficient. Christiaans (1996, p.167) found that educators required training on how to plan lessons. The CAPS Life Skills policy does not provide any details of how to plan and prepare Life Skills lessons.

### **2.7.2 Teaching methods**

There are various methods and techniques used by educators in the teaching of this subject. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (1997 p. 5) alludes to the idea of using the tenets of social learning theory in order to teach Life Skills. This theory is based on the idea that learning is acquired through social experiences. Teaching Life Skills "...builds upon what is known of how young people learn from their own experiences and from the people around them, from observing how others behave and what consequences arise from behaviour" (WHO, 1997, p. 5). It is further suggested that Life Skills teaching should be based on participatory learning methods which includes an active exploration of a skill, observation of the skill through modelling, practice of the skill and feedback about individual practice of the skill (WHO, 1997, p.5).

Rooth (2005, p. 289) believes that experiential learning, facilitation and group work are the core methods that should be used when teaching Life Orientation. The World Health Organisation (1999, p.6) is also in favour of experiential learning whereby learners are given opportunities to engage in practical learning. Rooth (2005, p.289) states that creative methods should be used for teaching so that learners enjoy learning. Participants in Christiaan's (2006, p.142) study stated that they required training on teaching methods for the OBE curriculum.

It is also important for educators to know how to use inclusive methods of teaching Life Skills. Inclusive education has become mandatory in South Africa and the Department of Education (2005, pp.88-89) has stated that all teaching methodologies should be based on the following inclusive principles:

- The learner is the focal point of all teaching, learning and assessment that occurs in the classroom.
- All learners are equally valuable.
- Lessons encourage full or partial participation of all learners
- Educators need to identify learner differences
- All teaching learning and assessment should be adapted to suit the needs of learners, and not the other way round. Educators should also know the cognitive level at which learners are functioning.
- Educators should show an appreciation of children who are from different backgrounds.
- High and clear expectations for all learners
- The interests of the learners are considered.
- Knowledge of how learners learn and the pace that they learn.

The CAPS policy also emphasizes the importance of using inclusive methods for teaching Life Skills. It is stated that educators will only be able to use inclusive methods of teaching if they have a good understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning and be able to plan to accommodate diversity (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.5).

### **2.7.3 The content of Life Orientation**

Van Deventer's (2009a, p. 472) research findings revealed that the subject matter of Life Orientation programmes was one of the main problems encountered by educators. Tlhabane (2004, p.3) believes that many educators are not conversant with the learning material of Life Orientation. Tlhabane's (2004, p.91) research findings further revealed that educators experienced problems with the content, structure and skills for implementing the Life Orientation programs and were uncertain about how to identify relevant concepts for each learning outcome in Life Orientation. According to Wood and Olivier (2007, p. 161) educators have a low self esteem regarding the delivery of Life Orientation. Educators are

therefore not empowered enough in order to teach this learning area. Educators in Christiaan's (2006, p.141) study stated that they found the content of Life Orientation programs to be relatively easy and in cases where they were unsure, their life experiences compensated for their lack of knowledge. In essence, educators were not equipped to interpret the content of Life Orientation programmes.

According to Link (2004, p.3), a significant barrier in the teaching of Life Orientation was understanding the multitude of assumptions, interpretations and attitudes of educators, the community and families towards this learning area. Life Orientation was therefore a subject that could be interpreted and taught in many ways.

The CAPS Life Skills curriculum being a new curriculum has different content to that of the previous Life Orientation curriculum. This would mean that educators need to familiarise themselves with new content material. The curriculum is now organised according to topics. It is suggested that educators adapt the content to the context of their school (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 14). This therefore gives the educator freedom to explore the topic on a level that is suitable to the needs of the learners. There is also the option of educators being able to choose their own topics should they feel that it would be more appropriate for their school setting (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 14). Never before were educators given this opportunity to choose and select the content and level of content to be taught. The OBE Life Orientation curriculum was very prescriptive and rigid in comparison to the CAPS curriculum. The new curriculum is also focused on sequencing and progression of topics and skills so that learners are taken from the familiar to the unfamiliar. This is a unique feature of the CAPS curriculum.

According to Jones (2012, p.1), educators at a training session indicated that the new CAPS curriculum have made teaching and learning much simpler and more effective. A primary school educator who also assisted with the training of educators in Cape Town stated that the new documents left no room for misunderstanding and that even a novice educator would be able to teach the content (Jones, 2012, p.1).

#### **2.7.4 Resources**

Panday's (2007, p.20) research study reveals the significance of resource materials. Educators expressed the belief that successful implementation of this learning area is dependent on teaching and learning support materials. Rooth (2005, p.256) adds that "Adequate and relevant learning support material and equipment for Life Orientation will greatly enhance the teaching and learning of this learning area." Rooth's (2005, p.256) research study also found that educators who did receive resource materials were not entirely satisfied with the content of the material.

Before the CAPS curriculum could be implemented, the Department of Basic Education (2011b, p. 17) stated that the new system of education is focused on two crucial aspects which is making sure that schools have only high quality material and to ensure that all learners and educators have the support material they need. The CAPS curriculum requires certain resources that are necessary for the teaching and learning of Life Skills. According to the Department of Basic Education (2011b, p. 17), schools would have to select materials from a nationally approved catalogue. An article by Bertram (2011, p,1) states that past experiences have shown that publishers were placed on a very tight deadline to meet the requirements from the Department of Education and this is once again happening with the introduction of CAPS.

#### **2.7.5 Time allocation**

Rooth (2005, p. 196) found that the amount of time given to Life Orientation was far less than the required time. The time that was supposed to be used for Life Orientation was used to teach other 'important learning areas' (Christiaans, 2006, p. 10). Van Deventer (2009a, p. 468) states that some of the reasons why educators thought that the time allocation was not sufficient was due to the Life Orientation curriculum being too weighty for two hours per week, insufficient time on the school timetable, classes were too large and there was too much of focus on the other learning outcomes of Life Orientation.

The time allocated to the CAPS Life Skills curriculum in grade one is six hours per week. Educators are told exactly how much of time to be spent on each of the study areas which will eliminate the problem of educators having too much time or too less time to complete the syllabus.

### **2.7.6 Assessment**

Rooth's (2005, p.204) and Makhwathana's (2007, p, 52) research findings indicated that educators were experiencing challenges when it came to assessment of outcomes in Life Orientation. Educators were unsure of how to assess learners. Vandeyar and Killen (2003, p. 133) state that educators cannot be expected to apply assessment principles that they don't understand. Educators in Van Deventer's (2009a, p. 469) study indicated that they did not know how to assess the physical education aspect of Life Orientation. Another finding by Tlhabane (2004, p.88) revealed that educators were uncertain of how to assess learners that have learning barriers.

CAPS in comparison to OBE has introduced a guide for assessment entitled 'The National Protocol for Assessment (Grades R – 12)'. This document contains all the guidelines for assessment as well as the necessary records for assessment, marking codes and reporting.

### **2.7.7 Successes Of Teaching Life Orientation**

Success or failure of curriculum change is linked to the circumstances and social context in which the school operates (Prinsloo, 2007, p. 165). It was found in Prinsloo's (2007) study that some educators in former Model C schools found a high degree of success in the delivery of Life Orientation programmes. These educators had developed strategies that assisted them in achieving the outcomes. In addition to this they had the support from team members who gave them self assurance.

Some educators in Rooth's (2005) study indicated that they received job satisfaction when teaching Life Orientation (LO). They found the subject to be worthwhile and meaningful. Added to this success is the high incidence of confidence and respect that was developed in learners (Rooth, 2005, p. 259). Some learners according to Rooth (2005, p. 259) did show an interest in the subject and responded positively. It was also found that learners responded well to participatory and interactive methods used to teach LO (Rooth, 2005, p.260).

### **2.7.8 Barriers to teaching Life Orientation**

Research by Tlhabane (2004, p. 88) found that educators lacked the skill of identifying learners that are challenged. It was also found that educators lacked expertise in inclusive education (Tlhabane, 2004, p. 7). Participants in Panday's (2007, p. 21) study also revealed

that they felt ill-equipped to handle the emotional challenges that learners are faced with. Prinsloo (2007, p. 165) also found that educators were struggling to understand the life world of learners from different cultures. “They felt that they did not succeed in realising the aims of the outcome, personal well-being, because they could not empathise with or understand the frame of reference of many learners in the class” (Prinsloo, 2007, p.166). Participants in Tlhabane’s study (2004, p. 80) stated that they were uncertain of how to incorporate health subjects in the curriculum and how to teach Life Orientation to learners with barriers to learning. It was also found that educators seemed to lack counselling skills.

The CAPS Life Skills policy mentions the importance of early identification of barriers so that support structures can be put in place to assist with these barriers.

### **2.7.9 Training**

Research by Panday (2007), Mogari and Onwu (2004), Rooth (2005), Prinsloo (2007) and Christiaans (2006) have found that educators were not given adequate training on implementing new curriculum programmes. The training that was received was in the form of a 3-4 day course. Participants in Prinsloo’s (2007) research study discussed the competence of the instructors at the workshops attended. “Their key criticism was that these trainers had little teaching knowledge, little knowledge of didactic methods in a learning area like Life Orientation, and little knowledge of the current conditions in schools and classrooms” (Prinsloo, 2007, p.164). Participants in Tlhabane’s (2004, pp.71-80) research study also indicated that they needed training in order to teach Life Orientation confidently as they were not certain about their knowledge of concepts and learning outcomes. Educators in Van Deventer’s (2009b, p. 142) study revealed that educators are not very movement-orientated to teach the movement aspect of Life Orientation.

According to an article by Nkosi (2012, p.1), there was a worry that there was not sufficient time to train educators for the CAPS curriculum. This article also expressed the view of teacher unions with regards to the quality of the training programmes that were held already and therefore held their own training programmes to compensate for the ones that were held provincially. According to the Department of Education (2011b, p.15), the preparation for the training of CAPS was based on the following aspects:

- A mix of interactive activity-based and discursive presentations
- Modelling of participatory, collaborative and cooperative learning practices;

- A focus on strengthening participants' content and conceptual knowledge of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for Grades R-3;
- An emphasis on classroom practice, pedagogy and teaching methodology
- Lesson planning and school based assessment practices in Grades R-3.

### **2.7.10 Support**

A lack of support was one of the challenges experienced by educators in Christiaans (2006, p.142) research study. Educators in Makhwathana's (2007, p.54) research identified the kinds of support they received in implementing curriculum change. The support included teamwork, teaching aids and workshops. Rooth's participants (2005, p.253) further added that there was not enough support from the education department as well as collegial support. Educators did not feel competent teaching a learning area that is fairly new. Research findings by Rooth (2005, p. 243) also show that educators did not mention the support given by non-governmental organisations (NGO), communities, clinics and other support structures probably due to educators not knowing the potential value of these support structures in the teaching of Life Orientation. Jansen (1998, p.329) stated that without proper support, curriculum innovations are unlikely to succeed.

The CAPS policy document alludes to the fact that educators need to make use of the support structures available when implementing the new curriculum. It is stated that there are support structures within the school, within the community, district based support teams, institutional level support teams, parents and special schools (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 5). All of these support structures are not new structures and were available even when OBE was implemented.

### **2.7.11 Challenges with teaching Life Orientation**

Large class sizes can lead to poor discipline which can affect the teaching and learning of this subject. This poses a challenge especially at times when discussions, role-plays and debates are being held. Large classes often forced educators to use transmission methods (Rooth, 2005, p. 257). Prinsloo (2007, p. 167) states that educators find it difficult to create an atmosphere of trust between themselves and their learners as the class size is too large. Prinsloo's (2007, p.166) research findings concur with the issue of poor discipline whereby educators complained that parents were not interested in instilling respect and obedience for

educators. “The disruption and disintegration of family life and the decline of Life Orientation programmes, values and norms in communities had led to a total lack of respect for educators and for school rules” (Prinsloo, 2007, p.167).

Prinsloo (2007, p. 167) found that poverty in communities caused a barrier to teaching and learning. Rooth (2005, p.253) further adds that poverty is a problem affecting all learning areas and not just Life Orientation. The following statements were made by participants in Prinsloo’s (2007, p.167) study:

*“These learners have shut themselves off from their own world to such a degree that it is impossible to reach them.”*

*“They completely shut down their emotions and don’t even listen in class.”*

Naicker (1998, p.1) also stated that poverty hampers the process of curriculum change. Educators therefore need to be aware of the effects of poverty on the social, cognitive and emotional development of young children. The Department of Education (2005, p.14) identifies the following barriers that are created as a result of socio-economic factors:

- Poor reading and print background (learners do not have pre-school exposure to literacy and print)
- Lack of exposure to numerical concepts.
- Sensory deprivation resulting from a lack of opportunities in their environment.
- Poor oral language due to a lack of communication and interaction.
- Poor self –image
- Dysfunctional and anti-social behaviour patterns
- Mobility of families creates lack of continuity in learning as a result of school hopping.

A lack of parental involvement was a challenge identified in Prinsloo’s (2007) and Panday’s (2007) study. Principals in Prinsloo’s (2007) study struggled to get parents involved in school activities. Possible reasons as identified by Prinsloo (2007, p.162) were:

- Parents felt that they were disempowered to assist their children.
- Parents were not interested in exerting themselves in matters related to their children’s education.

- Parents struggled to make ends meet at home and lacked the energy to deal with school matters.
- Some parents were too busy making money that they didn't have time for their children.
- Guardians of children seldom troubled themselves with schoolwork.
- Some children live in child-headed homes without any adults at home.

Van Heerden (2008, p.23) believes that parental involvement can improve academic performance and therefore suggests that in order for the school to get parents involved, the school has to create a more welcoming environment for parents, provide training and enrichment programmes for parents, conduct an outreach programme for parents and resolve any tension that exists between parents and administration of the school.

Language was also a barrier according to Prinsloo (2007). Learners struggled to understand instructions that were not in their mother tongue language. Prinsloo (2007) also found that educators who were teaching children who were not proficient in the language of instruction, found teaching very difficult.

The language barrier, lack of parental involvement, poverty and large class sizes are all social factors that affect teaching and learning in the South African context and will probably continue to affect teaching and learning irrespective of the curriculum that we are following.

## **2.8 EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES OF CURRICULUM CHANGE**

Changes evoke emotions and emotions affect our behaviour . Pillay (2006, p.65) stated that people experience a sense of comfort and security and a feeling of importance with familiar routines and surroundings. If we are taken out of this comfort zone, we immediately feel insecure and uncomfortable. Rooth (2005, p.48) agrees with this statement by stating that change is a process that may be uncomfortable for some people. New routines and changes threaten the feeling of comfort and security (Pillay, 2006, p.65). People then become resistant to change due to their emotional state. A change from a familiar curriculum to an unfamiliar curriculum can therefore lead to discomfort and insecurity. This may even lead to resistance to change. Makhwathana (2007, p.7) further states that whenever there is a curriculum

change, educators often develop certain behaviours in order to defend themselves from the changes that need to occur. “ They become anti everything and everyone who talks about the new curriculum” (Makhwathana, 2007, p.7). This leads to rebellious behaviour. According to Wood and Olivier (2007, p. 182), educators who have a high level of self efficacy are more open to change, and are willing to change. Educators with low self efficacy levels are resistant to change.

Pillay (2006, p. 65) believes that change and stress are related. Educators, especially in the South African context experience high levels of stress due to various contextual factors facing the schooling sector. In addition to this, constant change in the curriculum adds to this stress. Confusion is an emotion caused when educators are unsure of how to implement a curriculum change. This confusion then leads to stress which results in a negative attitude towards the process of change.

Research conducted by Makhwathana (2007, p.50) revealed that a high number of educators believe that there is sometimes a need for curriculum changes. A study conducted by Naicker (1998, p. 103) revealed that educators felt that curriculum change was inevitable and significant in a progressive society. Makhwathana’s (2007, p.51) study also revealed that educators felt good upon hearing about curriculum changes that were going to occur. Findings by Panday (2007, p. 19) revealed that educators saw themselves as change agents and had to force themselves to think about the practical aspects of curriculum change in order to successfully implement the curriculum. Participants in Naicker’s (1998, p. 104) study stated that they were unsure of how to make sense of curriculum changes because of everything happening so quickly. The main concern for participants in Russel’s (1998, p.2) study was that they needed more time to understand the language of change. A drastic change in curriculum such as the introduction of new subjects often leave educators feeling unconfident in the teaching of the subject due to them not being trained to teach the subject. “They are afraid of starting new things which may result in failure to reach the expected standard” (Makhwathana, 2007, p.8). The change from OBE to CAPS can be seen as a drastic change for many educators and can thus lead to many feelings and emotions which can affect their experience of the new curriculum.

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a literature review of the importance of the two areas of Life Orientation and Life Skills in the curriculum, the roles that educators play in teaching these areas, the qualities and skills that they should have in teaching these areas, their qualifications in teaching these areas, their perspectives and experiences of the Life Orientation learning area as well as educators' experiences of curriculum change. Despite the significance attached to this subject, educators are faced with many challenges in the implementation of this learning area as well as changes to the curriculum. The change from OBE to CAPS may not be a smooth transition for many educators as change is not an easy process for many people and can lead to mixed emotions which have an effect on educators' attitudes and behaviour towards curriculum change.

The next chapter provides a theoretical framework to understand how educators experience the Life Skills curriculum as well as the processes that occur with curriculum change. It will look at Markee's (1997) model of curriculum change in an attempt to understand the approach used in implementing the CAPS Life Skills curriculum and how this approach affects educators' experiences of curriculum change. It will also look at Dewey's (1938) theory of experience to understand grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided a literature review of the importance of the two areas of Life Orientation and Life Skills in the curriculum, the roles that educators play in teaching these areas, the qualities and skills that they should have in teaching these areas, their qualifications in teaching these areas, their perspectives and experiences of the Life Orientation learning area as well as educators' experiences of curriculum change.

This chapter provides a theoretical framework to understand how educators' experience the Life Skills curriculum as well as the processes that occur with curriculum change. To do this, I will look at Goodson's (2001) framework of the processes of change. I will also look at Markee's (1997) model of curriculum change in an attempt to understand the approach used in implementing the CAPS Life Skills curriculum and how this approach affects educators' experiences of curriculum change. I will also look at Dewey's (1938) theory of experience to understand grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A research paradigm as defined by Ponterotto (2005, p.3) sets the context for the research study. My research study will be located in the interpretivist paradigm whereby the nature of truth is subjective. This study is focused on educators' experiences which is subjective in nature thus making this paradigm appropriate for this study.

The ontological assumption of the interpretivist paradigm is that there are multiple realities and that realities differ amongst time, place and context. Schutt (2006, p. 430) explains interpretivism by stating that reality is socially constructed and that the goal of research is to understand the meaning that people give to reality. In the case of my research study, the multiple realities of educators will be researched in terms of their experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

Since this study is primarily concerned with educators' experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum, the interpretivistic paradigm therefore forms the framework for understanding

educators' experiences of the change from the OBE Life Orientation curriculum to the CAPS Life Skills curriculum. In order to understand educators' experiences of change, it is important to discuss the model used to implement the curriculum change to CAPS, the processes that take place whenever there is a change in curriculum and how change affects our experiences.

### **3.3 PROCESSES OF CHANGE**

According to Goodson (2001, p.45), three processes occur whenever a change occurs. These processes occur internally, externally and personally. The internal process involves change agents within the school setting. This can be the principal, head of departments or any other stakeholder involved in the life of the school. These change agents initiate and promote change within an external framework of support and sponsorship (Goodson, 2001, p.45). From a curriculum perspective, internal changes occur within the school setting whereby the policies of the school are changed to accommodate the change in curriculum. This means that there needs to be a change from OBE to CAPS within the school and its practices.

The external process of change involves the top down approach of implementing change. This is done through the introduction of policies and procedures. The external process of change has already occurred whereby the Department of Education has made the CAPS policy compulsory in all schools. This was done using a top down approach.

The process of personal change "refers to the personal beliefs and missions that individuals bring to the change process" (Goodson, 2001, p.45). Personal change involves changing one's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in order to undergo the process of change. In order for the change from OBE to CAPS to occur, educators have to re-align their thinking, their beliefs about teaching and learning, their attitude towards the curriculum as well as their behaviour.

### **3.4 MARKEE'S (1997) MODEL OF CURRICULUM CHANGE**

Curriculum changes are most often based on a model and Markee's (1997) models of curriculum change will be used as a lens to understand the approach used in implementing the change to CAPS in South Africa.

Markee (1997) identified five models of curriculum change namely: Social Interaction Model, Problem Solving Model, The Centre Periphery Model and the Linkage model. For the purpose of this research study, Markee's (1997) Research Development and Diffusion model will be discussed in order to understand the approach used in implementing the curriculum change to CAPS.

### **3.4.1 Research Development and Diffusion Model (RDD)**

This model commonly known as the RDD model makes use of a top down approach to innovation. This model follows a linear pattern whereby a curriculum innovation is researched, new curricular materials are then developed and diffused to educators for implementation. Thus the name Research, Development and Diffusion Model as it has an empirical basis. This model employs an open-mechanistic leadership style as opposed to a mechanistic style of leadership. This model is based on the idea that change is initiated by some central agency which is then introduced to the target audience who are expected to implement the change (Naicker, 1998. p.35). The RDD model involves an external process of change whereby change occurs externally through policies.

OBE and CAPS are examples where an RDD model of curriculum innovation was used. OBE was a mandated curriculum introduced by the Department of Education based on empirical research that OBE would be a successful curriculum. OBE was researched, planned and developed, piloted and then implemented. Educators did not have a choice in whether or not they wanted to implement this curriculum thus leaving educators with no power and no voice. The introduction of the CAPS curriculum was done using the expertise of a Ministerial Task team who reviewed the old curriculum and designed a new curriculum that will address the gaps and problem areas of the previous curriculum (Department of Basic Education, 2011b, p. 3). The newly designed curriculum was then introduced to all schools using a top down approach. Top down approaches are not readily accepted by educators which makes the RDD model not suitable for effective curriculum change in the South African context.

#### Limitations of this model

According to Davis (2009, p. 17), this model assumes that the teaching content is transferable from one situation to the next. In the South African context we are faced with a diversity of learners who come from various backgrounds and teaching and learning occurs in various

contexts. What works for one school may not necessarily mean that it will work for all schools.

#### Advantages of this model

Naicker (1998, 37) points out that this model also has its advantages in that it allows for structure and uniformity in all South African schools. Naicker (1998, p.37) also states that “It can be an efficient way to ensure that the central government is in control of the happenings at grassroots level.” The OBE Life Orientation curriculum was taught by all schools in the country using the same policy document, however there is no certainty with regards to the standardisation of the content from school to school.

### **3.5 JOHN DEWEY’S (1938) THEORY OF EXPERIENCE**

Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience forms the framework for understanding educator’s experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum in this study. Dewey (1938, pp 44-45) identifies two principles of experience namely continuity and interaction. Continuity is based on the idea that all current experiences influence future experiences. Interaction refers to the situational influence on a person’s experience.

If an educator had a bad experience with the OBE curriculum, the principle of continuity states that this bad experience will have an impact on how the educator deals with the CAPS curriculum (Dewey, 1938). A bad experience of curriculum change in the past, will lead to the idea that future changes will also be bad. Change is therefore resisted. In the same way, a good experience of curriculum change will lead to the idea that future curriculum changes will also be good. Change will therefore be welcomed. Continuity also refers to the knowledge base of an individual (Dewey, 1938). The knowledge that one gained in the past, can still be useful in the future however if knowledge has changed it affects one’s experience with new knowledge. From a curriculum perspective, all the teaching habits that were used in the past, may not necessarily be effective for new curricular. The continuity principle also attempts to discriminate between experiences that are educationally worthwhile, and those that are of value (Dewey, 1938, p.44). Those experiences that added value to one’s personal growth as an educator, will continue to add value to one’s current practices.

The principle of interaction is based on the idea that experiences occur through our interaction with people, objects and our environment. An educator's interaction with the curriculum will influence the experiences they have in the delivery of the curriculum. An educator that has good knowledge of the curriculum will have a good experience of delivering and teaching the curriculum. The curriculum change from OBE to CAPS requires educators to interact with the policy and the curriculum and thereafter interact with the learners in order to create a teaching experience.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the interpretivistic paradigm was identified as a framework for this study. Markee's (1997) models of curriculum change, which is a top-down approach, was used to assist in understanding the approach used in implementing the CAPS Life Skills curriculum and how this approach affects educators' experiences of this curriculum change. It also looked at Goodson's (2001) framework to understand the processes of change and Dewey's (1938) theory of experience to understand grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

Chapter four will provide a description of the methodology and research methods used to obtain data for this research study.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to explore grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

- 1) What are grade one educators' experiences of the new CAPS Life Skills curriculum?*
- 2) Why do educators experience the new curriculum the way they do?*

In order to explore grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum, appropriate research methods and instruments were used to obtain the data. This chapter will describe the methods used to obtain data including the research approach, research design, the sample and participants of this study. Ethical issues concerning this research study will also be discussed.

### **4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

The qualitative research approach is the most appropriate for a study of this nature. Flick (2007, p. 1) explains qualitative research as an intention to approach the world 'out there', and to understand, describe and explain social phenomena 'from the inside'. According to Flick (2007, p.1) this can be done in the following way:

- Analysis of experiences of individuals or groups. This is what was done in this study whereby educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum were analysed.
- Analysis of interactions and communications in the making. An analysis was done of the interaction and communication between the researcher and the participant during the interview process.
- Analysis of documents or similar traces of experiences or interactions of individuals. The document analysed in this research study was the diary of participants.

This study thus attempted to understand, describe and explain the phenomenon of educators' experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum using methods that provided rich data for this study. The belief in qualitative research is that truth is not absolute. Qualitative research thus involves examining multiple realities and the goal of qualitative research is to reveal the nature of these multiple realities (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.133). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2011, p.219) qualitative research gives a voice to the participants and

has the capability to probe for information that lie below the surface of presenting behaviours and actions.

Ontology refers to the nature of reality (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130). The ontological assumption of qualitative research is that knowledge is socially constructed by the individual and that there is no objective reality. The aim of this study is to explore educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum which are largely subjective in nature. 'Soft' data is collected in qualitative studies (Neuman, 2006, p.151). This is in the form of sentences, words, impressions, phrases etc.

Neuman (2006, p. 151) maintains that qualitative research speaks a language of 'cases' and 'contexts'. "They emphasize conducting detailed examinations of cases that arise in the natural flow of social life" (Neuman, 2006, p.151). This study involved a detailed exploration of educators' experiences in its natural setting, being the school.

#### **4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Case study design was used in this research study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p. 485) define a case study as a study that "examines a bounded system (i.e. case) over time in detail, employing multiple sources of data found in the setting." Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 289) state that case studies are a study of real people in real situations, can be used to establish cause and effect and one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts. A case study was appropriate for this study due to the fact that this study aimed at obtaining data from grade one educators who formed the case for this study. Two methods of data collection allowed the researcher to get an in depth account of educators' real life experiences of the CAPS Life Skills Curriculum. Case study design also allows the data that is produced to be contextualised to the school setting. Grade one educators' experiences were thus contextualised in their school.

For the purpose of this study, a single case design was used. Yin (2009, p.46) defines this as a study that is focussed on a single, unique, critical or revelatory case. The single case design used in this study was grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum, which is largely revelatory since this is a new phenomenon in South African schools. Since this research study focused on a selected group of individuals and how they experience a new phenomenon, a case study design was appropriate.

The strength of case study research as identified by Merriam (1998, p.32) is that it can investigate complex social units which consist of multiple variables that can assist in understanding the phenomenon better. The school can be seen as a social setting and there are many variables in a school setting that affect the experiences of educators. This strength of the case study design can work in favour of this research study whereby the variables that affect teaching and learning will be brought forth through looking at grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum. Another strength is that a case study design can provide rich and holistic accounts of the phenomenon studied (Merriam, 1998, p.33). For a study of this nature, rich and holistic data was required in order to fully understand the experiences of educators which are subjective in nature.

According to Denscombe (2003, p.38) the advantages of case studies are:

- It enables the researcher to deal with “subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations.” The researcher is thus able to dig deeper into relationships and social processes which can add to the richness of the data. The use of two data collection methods in this study will allow the researcher to dig deeper into the educator's experiences and the reasons for educators experiencing the curriculum the way they do.
- The case study approach is primarily concerned with the investigation of a particular phenomenon in its natural setting, thus there is no pressure on the researcher to alter the circumstances or modify the setting. This study is primarily concerned with educators' experiences within the school setting and therefore does not require any alterations or modifications to the school setting. The idea is to investigate educators' experiences in the natural setting.

#### **4.3.1 Limitations of case studies**

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001, pp.8-10) identify the following limitations of case study research:

- Case studies produce too much data which makes it difficult to analyse. In order to overcome this, the researcher selected the data of most relevance to the research study and research questions.
- The complexity examined is difficult to represent simply. According to Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001, p.9), writing is done in a linear form and consists of a beginning, middle and end. However the data produced in a case study cannot be

written in a linear fashion. Data analysis thus becomes difficult to summarise. The data produced in this study was summarised according to common themes to make the analysis easier.

- Case studies cannot generalise. Thus, the data is not representative of the larger population. The subjective data that was produced in this study cannot be generalised to other settings and this is therefore a limitation of the study as a whole.

#### **4.4. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

When qualitative researchers speak of reliability and validity they are usually speaking of research that is credible and trustworthy (Maree, 2007, p. 80). Trustworthiness according to Maree (2007, p. 113) is of utmost importance in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified the following four aspects as the key criteria to ensure trustworthiness in a research study:

- Credibility

Credibility according to Shenton (2004, p. 64) ensures that the measuring instruments measure what it actually set out to measure and that the results are trustworthy and credible. Credibility in this study was ensured by using more than one data collection method namely interviews and diaries. Five participants were used in this study in order to increase the credibility of the findings. A model of change and a theory of experiences were used to validate the data and a thick description of the data was also given to ensure credibility. During the interviews, the same questions using the same wording were asked to all participants so that each participant understood the question the same way (Silverman, 1993 cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.150). This enhanced the reliability of the measuring instrument.

- Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results obtained from the research study can be generalised to a wider population, case or situation (Cohen et al, 2002, p.109). Maree (2007, p. 298) states that interpretive studies aim at providing a rich description of perceptions and therefore the aim is not to generalise. This research study is embedded in the interpretive paradigm and therefore aimed at understanding the subjective realities of participants in a particular setting and therefore generalisations could not be made to other

contexts thus ensuring transferability of the data. Data collected through diaries do not allow for generalisations to be made. It is thus important to state that the data presented in this study is not fixed and will vary from person to person as well as situations.

- Dependability

Dependability according to Shenton (2004, p. 71) is the extent to which a piece of work can obtain similar results if the work was repeated, in the same context, with the same methods. In order to ensure dependability in this study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the processes involved in the research, therefore enabling future researchers to conduct studies of a similar nature in order to get the same results (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). Shenton (2004, p.71) suggests the use of ‘overlapping methods’ to ensure dependability. This study employed the use of semi-structured interviews and diaries in order to obtain data about educators’ experiences. These two methods measured the same phenomenon thereby ensuring that the findings were reliable. The data produced by the measuring instruments were also organised into common themes to provide reliable findings.

- Confirmability

Confirmability according to Shenton (2004, p.72) is the qualitative investigator’s concern about objectivity in the study. Shenton (2004, p.72) further states that findings of the study must be a result of the experiences and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. The researcher tried to eliminate any bias that may have been brought to the study through constantly reflecting on the research process.

## **4.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

The following data collection methods were used in this research study:

### **4.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

A semi-structured interview is characterised as an interview that consists of open ended questions which are developed in advance, along with prepared probes (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 91). Kumar (2005, pp. 134-135) outlined the following advantages and disadvantages of using open ended questions:

- Open ended questions provide in-depth information. For a study of this nature, open ended questions that produce in-depth data were required in order to explore the

experiences of educators. The disadvantage of this is that the analysis of open ended questions becomes difficult. The researcher normally has to go through a process known as content analysis in order to arrange the data. Although the analysis of the data is time consuming and difficult to analyse, this method of data collection was chosen merely because of its ability to produce large amounts of data irrespective of the time factor in analysing the data. Open ended questions do not restrict the participants in their responses which allow the researcher to get as much information as the participant is willing to disclose.

- Open ended questions allow the respondents to express themselves freely. The disadvantage of free choice questioning is that some respondents may have difficulties in expressing themselves orally thus leading to the loss of information. This limitation was overcome with the use of the diary as an additional method of data collection to accommodate for individuals who are unable to orally express themselves.

A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to be flexible in terms of the questioning and responses given by participants. This is therefore the motivation of this instrument whereby the researcher could be flexible in the questions asked and could re-phrase the questions if required. The respondent is also given the freedom to speak widely on any issue raised by the researcher. Another justification for the use of interviews was that it allowed the use of an interview schedule which assisted with the interview process. The interview schedule is a semi-structured guide for the researcher and allows the development of the interview to be focused on the topic. An interview schedule according to Maykeit and Morehouse (1994, p.83) consists of a detailed set of questions together with possible probes. Probing was done so that the participants were given the chance to elaborate on what was said which meant that the researcher was able to get as much data as possible and at the same time get a greater understanding of educator's experiences.

#### 4.5.1.1 Advantages and disadvantages of using interviews

According to Denscombe (2003, p. 189), interviews have the ability to produce in depth data through probing. The depth of information that is produced therefore allows the researcher to gain valuable insights into a particular phenomenon. Another advantage is that interviews don't require specialised equipment. A cellular phone was used to record the interviews with

participants in this study. As the data was produced, the researcher was able to validate the data by asking questions to verify what was said. Interviews generally have a high response rate in comparison to other data collection methods such as questionnaires and was therefore a suitable data collection method for this study.

Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 102) stated that a disadvantage of an interview is that in order for an interview to be successful, co-operation is essential. Participants may feel uncomfortable in sharing information or may withhold pieces of information. It is for this reason that a successful interview is also dependent on the skills of the interviewer. He/she must possess good personal interaction skills, listening skills, questioning skills and gentle probing skills.

The use of two data collection instruments eliminated the possibility of not being able to get sufficient data if participants withheld information. In qualitative studies of this nature, having lots of data is better than having insufficient data which will impact negatively on the outcome of the research study.

#### 4.5.1.2 Procedure for conducting interviews

Respondents were consulted in order to determine a time and place in which to conduct the interview. Respondents were notified of the role of both the researcher and the respondent during the interview process. An interview schedule was drawn up and was used to conduct the interview. Educators were probed where necessary. The interview was recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

#### 4.5.1.3 Analysis of the data

Since open ended questions were used in the interview, the data produced had to first be coded. A code according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.559) is “a name or label that the researcher gives to a piece of text that contains an idea or a piece of information.” Each code was based on a particular theme. Analysis of the content was then done using content analysis. Content analysis according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 563) is the process of summarising and reporting the main contents of the data.

#### **4.5.2 Diary**

A diary is a written document in which personal experiences, emotions and reflections are recorded. It is a document which gives the researcher personal insight into the lives of the participants. The purpose of a diary was to record personal experiences which was required in this study. Through the use of the diary educators in this study were able to reflect on their teaching experiences in a written and private form. De Vos et al (2005, p.316) stated that personal documents such as the diary, is an account of the participant's environment and thus contains a subjective perception and interpretation of his or her own life events and the events of the world around him or her. This study was embedded in the interpretivistic paradigm due to the nature of the data that was required. Experiences are subjective in nature and the use of diaries provided subjective perceptions and interpretations of the experiences of educators in this study. According to Flick (2006, p. 249) documents such as a diary contains a specific version of a reality constructed for a specific purpose. Educators in this study provided their version of reality in terms of their experiences of the CAPS curriculum. Denscombe (2003, p.216) stated that diaries are important when one wants to record things that have already happened. Denscombe (2003, p.216) refers to this as a 'retrospective account' of things that have happened. CAPS has already been implemented and educators have already had the experience of teaching the new curriculum. The diary merely required educators to record their experiences over a period of time.

##### 4.5.2.1 Advantages and disadvantages of diaries

Creswell (2008, p.231) states that documents such as diaries provide a good source of text (words) for a qualitative study. "They provide the advantage of being in the language and words of the participants who have usually given thoughtful attention to them" (Creswell, 2008, p.231). Experiences cannot be better expressed in the form of words thus making the diary suitable for this research study. Morse and Richards (2002, p.92) further adds that diaries are a good source of data as it can be retained and studied in detail or summarised. Bailey (1994, p.295) stated that many confessions may be revealed in a diary which may not be revealed in interviews or questionnaires. This was also my justification for choosing diaries as a second method of data collection as whatever information that may have been omitted during the interview process could have been recorded in the diary. During the interview, educators were placed on the spot to answer questions without giving it a lot of thought. The diary allows educators to think before they responded thus adding to the

reflective richness of the data. De Vos et al (2005, p.318) further stated that another advantage of personal documents such as diaries is that it is a relatively low cost method of collecting data.

Marshall and Rossman (2006, p.119) stated that one of the disadvantages of using diaries as a method of data collection is that the data may be misinterpreted by the researcher as the words and phrases used may mean different things to the participant and the researcher. In order to overcome this, the researcher did not analyse the data from the diaries in isolation. The data from the diaries was used to validate the data that was collected during the interviews. According to De Vos et al (2005, p.319), another disadvantage of using personal documents is that it is not intended to be used for research purposes and this can have an influence on the objectivity of the document. This once again justifies the use of two data collection methods in this research study.

De Vos et al (2005, p.319) also stated that a researcher is dependent on the respondent's linguistic skills in order to interpret the data. A lack of linguistic skills on behalf of the participants can lead to a negative influence on the contents of the documents. In some cases, the handwriting may be difficult to read thus making it difficult to decipher the data (Creswell, 2008, p.231). In order to overcome this problem, educators in the study were asked to complete the diaries in print handwriting that is readable so that the data could be analysed.

#### 4.5.2.2 Procedure

The purpose of the diary in this research study was for participants to record their experiences of teaching Life Skills. Educators were given the diaries and was briefed on how to complete the diary. They were told to record their reflections for five Life Skills lessons that they taught. Educators were given a time frame of one week to complete the diaries.

#### 4.5.2.3 Analysis of data

The data collected from the participant's diaries were coded using themes. Content analysis was done and a summary of the findings was then compiled.

#### **4.6 SAMPLING**

A sample is a group of participants from whom data is collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). Flick (2007, p.27) further added that sampling is not only focused on selection of participants, but also on the selection of the sites in which the participants can be found. The selected site for the selection of participants was a Primary School in the Ethekewini Pinetown District. I am currently an educator at this school and it was convenient for me to conduct this study using the available educators from my school. This school currently has 1900 learners and sixty five educators. There are seven grade one units at this school (Grade 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F and 1G) therefore allowing me to use a bigger sample of participants. There are very few primary schools in the Pinetown district that have so many grade one classes.

For the purpose of this research project, non-probability sampling was used. “In non-probability sampling, the researcher has no way of forecasting or guaranteeing that each element of the population will be represented in the sample” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.206). Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling whereby researchers ‘handpick’ the participants that will serve an important ‘purpose’ in the study and are chosen based on the needs of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p.103). The sample in this research study comprised of five out of seven grade one educators who are currently teaching the CAPS Life Skills curriculum. This was done as a precautionary measure as in the event of an educator withdrawing from the study, a replacement was available. The reason for selecting grade one educators is that these educators serve a pivotal foundational role in the education of children. A grade one educator is responsible for moulding and developing learners as they begin their schooling career. Since CAPS has only been implemented this year, grade one educators were one of the first to experience this curriculum change. The current grade one learners would be the first group of learners to complete twelve years of schooling under the CAPS curriculum. It was therefore appropriate to explore the experiences of the first cohort of grade one educators in implementing the CAPS curriculum.

#### **4.7 ETHICAL ISSUES**

Whenever human beings are the focus of investigation, a closer look at the ethical implications is required (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 101). There are four broad categories of ethical issues to be considered in research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.101):

#### a) Protection from harm

Participants in this research study were not exposed to any form of harm, risks or situations that disadvantaged them. The identity of the participants was kept confidential throughout the entire process of the study.

#### b) Informed consent

Participants were asked to provide written consent. The consent form outlined the topic, the aims and purpose of the research, the participant's role in the research, the data collection procedure as well as personal details of the researcher. Participants were also informed that their participation is voluntary and that they may at any time during the course of the research terminate/withdraw their consent.

Permission was also obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education to conduct research at the selected site. Written permission was sought from the school principal in order to conduct research at the selected school.

#### c) Right to privacy

Participants were assured of their right to privacy in terms of their responses. Pseudonyms were used for the participants as a means to protect their identity. Findings from the research study were used solely for the purpose of the research study. All data collected during the study will be destroyed after a period of five years.

#### d) Honesty with professional colleagues

All findings were presented in an honest fashion. All data gained from participants were acknowledged as their own to eliminate the issue of plagiarism.

### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a review of the methodology used in this study. A qualitative research approach was used, making use of a case study design. Participants were purposely selected using non-probability sampling. Semi-structured interviews and diaries were used as data collection methods. Ethical issues were also outlined in this chapter.

The next chapter will present the research findings of this study as well as an analysis of the findings.

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter provided a description of the research approach, design, methodology and sample used in this research study. A qualitative research approach and case study design were used to obtain data from five grade one educators. Participants were selected using non probability purposive sampling. Semi- structured interviews and diaries were used to produce data in this study.

In this chapter, the researcher will present the findings on:

- 1) Grade one educators' experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum.
- 2) The reasons for educators experiencing the new curriculum the way they do.

The following categories were used to analyse the data that emerged from this study:

- The influence of qualifications and experience on educators' teaching experiences
- Educator reflection and teaching experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of lesson planning in the new Life Skills curriculum
- Experiences of contextual challenges in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of training and support in implementing the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of curriculum change from OBE to CAPS

### **5.2 THE INFLUENCE OF QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE ON EDUCATORS' TEACHING EXPERIENCES**

Educator qualifications and teaching experience in the Life Skills area played a significant role in this study as it provided rich data for the second research question addressing the reasons for educators experiencing the curriculum the way they did. If educators are not specialists in teaching Life Skills, then they are bound to have different personal and classroom experiences than those that are qualified and experienced.

Only one of the educators interviewed indicated that she is a specialist Life Skills educator. Whilst conducting interviews, the interviewer also found that educators were unsure of whether they are specialist educators in the subject of Life Skills. This meant that educators were unsure of the term ‘specialist educator’ as is reflected by participants’ responses below:

*Interviewer:* “Are you a specialist Life Skills educator?”

*Participant 1:* “What do you mean by that?”

*Interviewer:* “Are you a specialist Life Skills educator?”

*Participant 2:* “I’d say yes because with the Foundation Phase now you integrating Life Skills, Literacy and Numeracy. Integrating Life Skills in Maths and English.”

One of the participants in this study stated that the only reason that she is teaching Life Skills is because it is part of the curriculum as is reflected by the participant’s response below:

*Interviewer:* “Are you a qualified Life Skills educator?...Have you been trained to teach Life Skills?”

*Participant 1:* “No. I’m just teaching it...Because it’s part of the curriculum.”

Findings by Rooth (2005) and Christiaans (2006) revealed that Life Skills was taught by a spectrum of educators who were not specialists nor unqualified. The current status at schools is that educators are assigned to teach Life Skills not because of their qualifications, but because of the needs of the school. Rooth (2005, p. 198) provides the following reasons for educators being assigned to teach Life Orientation:

- They were qualified to teach it
- They were interested in this subject
- They were passionate about this subject
- They had free periods to fill up
- Nobody else was available to teach it

Christiaans (2006, p.137) questioned the effectiveness of assigning any educator to teach Life Skills and whether these educators would be able to teach positively and develop an interest in this learning area. Assigning unqualified and inexperienced educators to teach Life Skills

creates the impression that Life Skills is not important. This lowers the value of this subject in the curriculum. An educator who teaches Life Skills and Life Orientation should have certain knowledge, skills and values that are essential when teaching skills for life. Thlabane (2004) identified skills that educators should have and Christiaans (2008) identified three kinds of competencies that educators ought to have. These are practical competence, foundational competence and reflexive competence. Undoubtedly, educators without these knowledge and skills will experience difficulty in effectively implementing the CAPS curriculum.

With regard to educators' years of experience in teaching Life Skills in this study, the data revealed that their years of experience ranged from 4- 14 years. Three of the five educators have previously taught the OBE Life Skills curriculum. The remaining two educators do not have any experience in teaching the OBE Life Skills curriculum. The data also revealed that those educators that taught the OBE Life Skills curriculum were able to make a comparison to the CAPS Life Skills curriculum as compared to those that are teaching Life Skills for the very first time. These educators were able to relate their experiences of the new curriculum without making any comparisons.

When viewed through the theoretical lenses of the theory of experience, particularly the principle of continuity, three of the educators in this study were able to use their past teaching experience in the OBE curriculum and adapt it to the new curriculum. Educators trained in the Foundation Phase and who are specialists in the field would be able to use, modify and adapt their specialised skills in the teaching of any curriculum. In this study, educators that taught the OBE Life Skills curriculum were in a better position to implement the CAPS curriculum by using, modifying and adapting their OBE knowledge and skills to the CAPS curriculum.

### **5.3 EDUCATOR REFLECTION AND TEACHING EXPERIENCES**

Through the use of a diary, educators reflected on their experiences of teaching Life Skills. The results revealed that some educators did not fully understand the term 'reflection.' This is evident in their diaries whereby some educators wrote out a description and content of the lesson instead of a reflection, as illustrated below:

*Participant 1:*

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Beginning Knowledge</b>
<b>Lesson Topic: Family Life/ now and then</b>	<b>Duration: 30 min</b>
Reflection:	
The experiences (e.g. food, clothing, transport) of older members of the family.	
Explain to learners- types of foods → dry beans then, corn beans now.	

<b>Day 2</b>	
<b>Lesson Topic: PE Balancing</b>	<b>Duration:</b>
Learners were able to balance a ball on a bat and walk. If it fell they were told to do it again. All learners were given a chance.	

Based on the work of Schon (1987), three types of reflection occur i.e.:

- Knowing in action refers to tacit knowledge of the educator. “We reveal it by our spontaneous, skilful execution of the performance, and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit” (Schon, 1987, p. 25).
- Reflection in action refers to reflection that occurs whilst the action is taking place. Educators reflect on their behaviour in the classroom and the impact of their behaviour on learning. According to Mustafa (2005, p. 4), reflection in action is an intuitive immediate response to an error or surprise whilst one is teaching.
- Reflection on action refers to reflection that takes place after teaching has taken place. The educator reflects and evaluates the outcomes of his/her actions on students’ learning (Mustafa, 2005, p.4).

Educators in this study reflected only on their actions after teaching had taken place. In their diaries, educators specifically reflected on the outcome of the lesson but did not reflect on their teaching methods and strategies. Educators did not evaluate how their teaching methods and strategies affected the outcome of their actions on their learners’ learning. Educators also did not make attributions for their successes or failures. This is illustrated in the diary excerpts below:

*Participant 4*

<b>Day 1</b>	
<b>Lesson Topic: Stranger danger</b>	<b>Duration:</b>
Reflection:	
Stranger danger was discussed, and learners were aware of not talking to strangers, locking up doors and gates etc and not entertaining any strangers. Learners listened attentively to a story based on stranger danger. They were able to answer questions related to the story. I found that learners were unable to really express themselves as I was mainly talking (during the discussion) and asking questions, the learners were just answering e.g.: must we jump into a stranger’s car → Learners: No.	

## Participant 2

<b>Day 1</b>	
<b>Lesson Topic: My senses</b>	<b>Duration: 60 min</b>
Reflection:	
Learners were excited when they had to use their five senses and imagine what they would like to see, hear, smell, touch, taste. Learners took turns to say what they would like. Learners were experimental with their senses.	

It would appear from this study that educators did not holistically reflect on their teaching and learning experiences in the classroom. Holistic reflections after every lesson can lead to growth and development in teaching and learning. If educators do not reflect on teaching and learning, they would be grounded in their current practices without being able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Educators need to be able to explain the decisions made in the classroom as well as the actions taken. Reflective practice as defined by Lyons (1998, p.115) is the way in which educators interrogate their teaching practice, question the effectiveness of their teaching as well as how it can be refined to meet the needs of learners. As an educator, it is important to reflect on one's teaching methods, styles, and approaches, the content of the lesson, resources used, relevance of the lesson and the success or failure of the lesson as a whole. Reflection of this nature will allow the educator to assess the success or the failure of the lesson as well as determine strengths and weaknesses of his/her teaching. When viewed through the lens of Dewey's (1938) theory, those educators who do not attempt to reflect and, in so doing, discriminate between past teaching experiences that were educationally worthwhile and those that were of value (Dewey, 1938, p. 44), face the risk of their experiences not leading to personal growth.

### **5.4 EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING THE CAPS LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM**

When exploring whether educators experienced enjoyment in teaching Life Skills, all the participants indicated during the interviews that they enjoyed teaching the subject. Two out of the five educators indicated during the interviews that they liked the new Life Skills curriculum.

*"I like the fact that it gives learners variety in the day. They not chained to their desks the entire time. They get to go outside...you know, more freedom."* (Participant 5)

*"I think there's music and dance, there's different things. You not just teaching Life Skills."* (Participant 4)

Data revealed the following aspects that were enjoyed by educators:

- Creativity in lesson planning whereby educators could do different things with learners.

*“It’s not the same boring stuff as with OBE.” (Participant 5)*

- Learners were interested in the lessons. Learners found Life Skills to be an exciting subject unlike Literacy and Numeracy.

*“You can see that they are excited when it comes to singing and clapping and drawing.” (Participant 2)*

*“Life Skills seems to be more exciting for them than the ordinary Numeracy and Literacy.” (Participant 3)*

- Life Skills allow educators to teach concepts in relation to their learners’ environment thus making it relevant and of a personal nature.

*“You touch a personal button in them.” (Participant 3)*

- The content is liked by educators especially the new areas introduced in CAPS (i.e. Creative Arts, Personal Wellbeing, Beginners Knowledge and Physical Education).

*“I think the music and dance, there’s different things. You not just teaching Life Skills.” (Participant 4)*

- Educators teaching Life Skills that will empower their learners for life.

*“It’s getting the children to learn Life Skills in life...empowering them with Life Skills.” (Participant 2)*

Semi-structured interviews also revealed the following positive experiences of teaching Life Skills:

*“When I did the senses with the children, and I did sound. I told them to close their eyes and I had a ball. So when I dropped the ball, so I asked them was it the right hand or the left hand side, where did you hear the ball fall? And they were so interested in this because they couldn’t figure out if that was the right ear or left ear they heard something. And also with*

*the senses, I took the blindfold and they had to taste different things. That was also very good. They enjoyed that.”* (Participant 1)

*“The good experience was that half the class showed an understanding about care of the body. They were really interested.”* (Participant 3)

Educators’ diaries also revealed that learners also thoroughly enjoyed lessons in which they were actively involved such as movement, visual arts, music and crafts. Most learners were not shy to participate in activities and most learners seemed confident in their ability to perform tasks. Educators also indicated in their diaries that learners responded eagerly to questions asked by the educator. All the educators indicated that the children enjoyed their lessons because they were very attentive, responsive and excited to engage in various tasks as illustrated by participant 4 in the statement below:

*“They have fun especially with movements and stuff.”* (Participant 4)

Interviews with educators in this study have also revealed that educators enjoy interacting with the new curriculum. They have found the structure and the content appealing and enjoyable. They also enjoy the response from learners. If educators enjoy teaching the lessons, learners will enjoy learning from the lesson. At grade one level, the task of any educator is to ensure that learning is fun and enjoyable. It is important that educators find enjoyment in their teaching. Panday (2007, p.8) states that “Emotions are dynamic parts of every individual and teaching is no exception.” Enjoyment can be regarded as a positive emotion. Some educators in Rooth’s (2005) study indicated that they received job satisfaction when teaching Life Orientation (LO). They found the subject to be worthwhile and meaningful. Added to this success is the high incidence of confidence and respect that was developed in learners (Rooth, 2005, p. 259). Some learners according to Rooth (2005, p. 259) did show an interest in the subject and responded positively. It was also found that learners responded well to participatory and interactive methods used to teach Life Orientation (Rooth, 2005, p.260). “One can thus conclude that if teachers feel positive about the expected changes, they will be eager and committed to implement these changes” (Panday, 2007, p.9).

Data in this study also revealed that educators experienced the new Life Skills curriculum negatively as reflected in the responses below:

*“I think it was using plasticine and paint. It was very messy. So hot, the plasticine just melted in our cabins. So that was the one bad. The paint, the children started to paint each other rather than the page. I think it was their first experience of paint so it was a learning experience.”* (Participant 5)

*“I think the bad was just that they don’t really understand all the time..”* (Participant 4)

*“A bad experience of teaching Life Skills is that...you tell them to bring maybe equipment from home, and most of the time we make projects like if we doing material- cotton, wool, silk. We cut little strips and stick them on a page and this is the chance for the children to display behaviour problems.”* (Participant 3)

When viewed through Dewey’s (1938) theoretical lenses of experience, particularly the principle of interaction, good experiences for educators are formed through the kind of interaction they have with their learners. The theory of experience identified interaction as a core principle in the quality of our experiences. The kinds of interactions the educator has with the learners, impacts positively or negatively on the educator’s experience of teaching. A positive response from learners results in a good experience for educators. A negative response from learners thus results in a bad experience for educators. The school environment and contextual factors also play a role in the kind of experiences that educators have. The interaction that educators have with learners whilst teaching, determines the enjoyment of his/her experience of teaching. The kind of interaction that learners have with their educator, determines their enjoyment of the learning experience.

## **5.5 EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES OF LESSON PLANNING IN THE NEW CURRICULUM**

Lesson planning forms the foundation for teaching and learning and therefore plays a crucial role in determining educators’ experiences of the new curriculum. The following challenges were identified by educators with regards to planning Life Skills lessons:

- Searching for tasks and activities
- Obtaining resources for teaching and learning
- Finding content for the lessons

The excerpts below confirm these challenges:

*“Its finding the correct information for the lesson and sticking to the content that they gave us.” (Participant 5)*

*“It is difficult because we don’t have it in our books, we have to research it, go internet, library and have to look at other books... They just give one guideline example my family, it’s for you now to break it down and work on that.” (Participant 1)*

*“We don’t have enough resource material.” (Participant 3)*

Four out of the five respondents felt that the process of planning and preparation was a difficult task. They indicated that planning was not a straight-forward process and was time consuming. Educators had to research topics through the library or internet to find suitable content to plan their lessons. Educators also had to come up with their own teaching aids as is revealed by educators’ statements below:

*“It’s not too easy. You can’t just look at it and plan. You have to do a little bit of work.” (Participant 4)*

*“It is difficult because we don’t have it in our books, we have to research it, go on internet, library and have to look at other books...it takes a bit longer because you are researching it.” (Participant 1)*

*“It is difficult because you have to go and find additional information. Whatever the topic is, or your theme, you have to find the content for it and make up your lesson...it takes a lot longer than before.” (Participant 5)*

*“No, it’s a bit difficult because its different from the normal mundane thing. Like you have to come up with more teaching aids...it’s difficult cos you have to look out for more teaching aids, more research.” (Participant 3)*

Lesson planning and preparation is pivotal for effective teaching and learning. In planning, educators need to design tasks, obtain resources and content for the lesson taking into consideration learners needs, learning styles, prior knowledge and inclusivity. Magano (2009,

p.13) stated that the quality of educators' decisions and efforts in lesson planning are largely dependent on creativity of educators and their ability to apply learning and instructional theories. If educators don't have the knowledge of learning and instructional theories, they will be unable to plan effective lessons that accommodate for various learners' needs. Magano (2009, p.15) stated that lesson planning and preparation does take a lot of time because there are a lot of decisions to be made about the sequence, content, methods, activities and the time for activities. Educators in this study felt that the CAPS policy document was somewhat helpful when planning lessons.

### **5.5.1 Lesson Content**

When exploring educators' experiences of the lesson content in the new curriculum, data revealed that educators experienced a variety of content and enjoyed the flexibility of content. There are, however aspects of the curriculum that educators did not like. The data revealed that educators' in this study felt that the content was appropriate but the level of the content was too high for that particular grade. The content was also not found to be contextually relevant. Data revealed that educators had negative experiences in the following areas:

- The Life Skills curriculum has too many abstract areas. (Participant 3)
- The content is too difficult for children to understand. Dinosaurs and extinct animals are examples of difficult topics as identified by educators. Learners are unfamiliar with these topics and therefore have difficulties learning the content. This is illustrated in the excerpts below:

*“Out of the 20 topics there, I think about 15 is appropriate...maybe we should do current things, topics that children can understand...maybe make it things that happen in their environment.”* (Participant 2)

*“I think they don't really understand....you can try and explain to them but you have to use pictures and really explain to them.”* (Participant 4)

*“It's a bit too difficult...for grade one.”* (Participant 4).

*“I think the content is appropriate but the level of the content is a bit too high in grade one...so maybe if the content could be basic and maybe in grade two you could go further with the same content.”* (Participant 5)

+ *“I think the bad was just that they don’t really understand all the time. Trying to get them to understand.”* (Participant 4)

*“It’s more difficult for the children to understand.”* (Participant 2)

*“It’s too hard.”* (Participant 3)

- Children could not relate to the content. This is illustrated in the excerpts below:

*“Learners were a little disruptive and bored as they could not relate to most appliances and homes.”* (Participant 2)

*“...they don’t have knowledge about it...if you teaching them about the fly or the butterfly, it’s a bit difficult because they don’t have knowledge about that.”*  
(Participant 1)

*“Learners were not really interested as they couldn’t identify with many animals...limited knowledge also resulted in no interest in the topic.”* (Participant 2)

*“This topic also did not capture too much interest. Learners could not identify with places like Table Mountain, Robben Island or Ushaka.”* (Participant 2)

*“When we discuss extinct animals, the children cannot identify.”* (Participant 3)

- The new curriculum is different to OBE (Participant 2).
- One of the educators did not like the Creative Arts area of Life Skills due to the large number of songs that are required in the syllabus (Participant 1).

These findings concur with Tlhabane’s (2004, p.91) research findings that revealed that educators experienced problems with the content, structure and skills for implementing the Life Orientation programmes and were uncertain about how to identify relevant concepts for each learning outcome in Life Orientation. The content of any curriculum is the most

important aspect to be considered when designing curriculum especially in the South African context where inclusive education has become mandatory.

The content of any curriculum needs to be meaningful, relevant, contextual and purposeful. According to Van Deventer (2009b, p.128), “Teachers will resent having to teach LO if they are not knowledgeable about the content.” A topic such as dinosaurs may not be contextually relevant to learners, however it adds to the learner’s general knowledge of the world. Educators need to find ways to contextualise the content.

However, educators in Christiaan’s (2006, p.141) study stated that they found the content of Life Orientation programmes to be relatively easy and in cases where they were unsure, their life experiences compensated for their lack of knowledge. This was not the case in this study. When viewed through Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience and his principle of continuity, educators did not utilise the knowledge that they had gained in the past in compensating for their difficulties experienced with regards to the new content in the CAPS curriculum.

### **5.5.2 Resources**

Data from this study revealed that educators experienced the use of a variety of resources. Resources that were used by educators when teaching Life Skills included balls, bean bags, skipping ropes, pictures, charts, jungle gym, crayons, scissors, music and concrete objects as is revealed by educators’ responses below:

*“I’ve got a bean bag, I’ve got a tennis ball, a soccer ball, a skipping rope. That’s the things that I have and that I use.”(Participant 1)*

*“We use the bean bags, ropes, balls and things. I think each educator gets their own, or otherwise within the grade we share.”(Participant 5)*

One of the educators indicated in the interview that she does not really use resources:

*“I just use like the ball, cos alot of it is like hopping and jumping over things and stuff outside on the grounds.” (Participant 4).*

Educators in this study also revealed that they experienced difficulty with regards to the provision of sufficient resources for teaching Life Skills. In areas such as art, educators don't have items such as paint brushes, paint and pastels. Some educators bring their own resources to use in the classroom and others share resources. One of the educators felt that the school should take the initiative to raise funds in order to purchase resources for teaching. From the responses in this study concerning educators' challenging experiences in the area of resources, it appears that the Department of Education's plan (Department of Education, 2011b, p. 17) to ensure that every school has resources to teach the CAPS curriculum has not materialised as yet.

Negative experiences around resources still remain a problem in many South African schools. Research conducted Rooth (2005), Van Deventer and Van Niekerk (2009) and Panday (2007) have shown that resources in the form of teaching and learning material is one of the major challenges faced by educators in the teaching of Life Skills. Educators in Panday's (2007, p.20) study believed that the proper implementation of Life Orientation and Life Skills depends to a large extent on the availability of good resource material. The literature review revealed that negative experiences of educators around resources were also a problem with OBE (Panday, 2007, p. 20, Rooth, 2005, p. 256). Findings from this study reveal that educators are still experiencing challenges around resources with the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

### **5.5.3. Teaching Methods**

Data from the diaries revealed that educators explored the use of various methods in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum as reflected by their responses below:

- Role-play- "*Learners role-played their actions e.g handshake, hug.*" (Participant 2)
- Visual aids- "*The different pictures grasped their attention.*" (Participant 2)
- Participatory methods- "*Learners spoke about themselves, likes and dislikes.*" (Participant 4)
- Discussion- "*Learners had a discussion on their homes.*" (Participant 4)
- Concrete objects- "*Learners were able to balance a ball on a bat and walk*" (Participant 1)

- Demonstration- *“I brought an old telephone to show learners what they used a long time ago.”* (Participant 5)
- Practicals - *“Learners painted designs using their fingers and a sponge.”* (Participant 5)
- Orals- *“They enjoyed singing and touching their body parts as they sang.”* (Participant 2)

Findings from the diaries reveal that educators experienced each lesson differently because of their use of a variety of different teaching methods. Data from the interviews, however, revealed that educators used mainly direct instruction and group work teaching strategies as is reflected in participants’ statements below:

*“First I teach the whole class... Ya direct instruction and then I go to each group and do group work and then with the weaker ones I have to sometimes sit there.”* (Participant 2)

*“Okay, firstly I give them the topic, and I see how much they already know and how much they can talk about from their own environment, their own experiences.... Yes, most of the time we use direct instruction.”* (Participant 3)

Similar findings in Rooth’s study (2005, p. 253) revealed that methodologies used by educators were one of the most serious shortcomings of Life Orientation and is therefore a call for further urgent action. Rooth (2005, p.289) suggests experiential learning, facilitation and group work as suitable teaching methods for Life Orientation and Life Skills. Although there may be various teaching methods that can be used for teaching Life Skills, not all educators experiment with these methods. The possible reasons for this could be:

- Educators don’t have knowledge of various methods and techniques for teaching Life Skills.
- Educators are too comfortable with their current methods and are therefore not willing to try other methods.
- Educators are afraid to use other methods as they are unsure of the possible outcome of using it.

- Contextual factors such as large class sizes don't allow for variety in teaching methods.

#### **5.5.4 Assessment**

Assessment forms a major part of teaching and learning. Data from this study revealed that educators in this study engage in assessment at least once a month or once a week in some cases. In addition to this, an assessment is conducted at the end of the term. Assessments are either written or oral or via daily observations. The following comments were made by educators in the interviews:

*“First orally, observation, checklist and then written work and with the workbook...weekly assessment but observation is every day.”* (Participant 2)

*“They given a monthly test and I think it's a term test...we also do projects.”* (Participant 5)

*“Sometimes you test them in class, you ask them things to see if they understand.”*  
(Participant 4)

*“Maybe they will write a small test or an exam at the end of the week.”* (Participant 3)

The CAPS Life Skills policy document (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 66) states that assessment in the Foundation Phase should consist of one formal assessment per term and continuous informal assessments. From the above responses, it appears that some educators may be engaging in far too many assessments per term which can be time consuming and daunting for the learners. Rooth (2005, p. 296) states, “An over-emphasis on assessment, especially of the factual type, and on product instead of process, can be detrimental to this learning area.” David, Lolwana and Lazarus (2006, p. 98) state that educators should not just assess for the sake of assessing but should rather consider its purpose and effect.

In addition, data from this study revealed that educators experienced assessment as challenging in the following areas:

a) Language as a barrier was identified as a challenge with assessment. This is evident in the following responses from educators in the interviews and diaries:

*“I found that learners were unable to really express themselves as I was mainly talking during the discussion and asking questions, learners were just answering.”* (Participant 4)

*“Learners could not really communicate as they do not speak good English so I had to simplify the topic.”* (Participant 5)

*“Some children don’t know how to write, some children don’t know how to speak in English.”* (Participant 1)

*“Some children don’t know how to write, some children don’t know how to speak in English.”* (Participant 1)

*“Because the children are IsiZulu speaking, it’s hard for them because they don’t even know like fairytales.”* (Participant 1)

*“I think they don’t understand the teacher because it’s a second language and unless you have a picture or something...concrete to show them then they are lost.”* (Participant 5)

*“Learners did not know English words for body parts such as chest, elbow, eyebrow.”* (Participant 4)

Prinsloo’s (2007, p.166) research study also found that learners could not really grasp what was being taught due to them not being proficient in the language of instruction. According to the Department of Education (2005, p.11) there are normally certain barriers that are associated with the language challenge i.e.:

- Learners are forced to learn a subject in a language that is not their home language and they are not competent in using.
- Learners experience difficulty with communication.

The selected school in this study comprised of a population of 1900 learners, of which 1760 are Black African learners. The home language of the school is English as well as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), hence communication is problematic for these

learners. Life Skills is being taught in English, thus creating a language barrier for these learners. As with OBE, language was a barrier for teaching and learning and will probably remain a barrier until mechanisms are put in place by the school and the government to curb this problem. Vandeyar and Killen (2003, p. 122) pointed out that assessments will not be meaningful to learners who don't have sufficient background knowledge or appropriate language skills. Findings by Tlhabane (2004, p.88) also showed that educators were uncertain of how to assess learners with barriers. The CAPS policy (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.67) states that educators need to accommodate all learners' needs and design programmes to engage all learners in assessment.

b) One of the participants felt that Life Skills in the CAPS curriculum has become very rigid. This educator also believes that Life Skills should be assessed practically rather than theoretically.

*“Now it's like an exam that children have to write and have to pass.”* (Participant 2).

*“What we are doing now is that we are testing them on theory instead of the practical part of it.”* (Participant 2).

Similar findings by Rooth (2005) showed that educators experienced uncertainty around how to assess learners in the OBE context and Van Deventer's (2009a, p. 472) research study found that educators experienced problems with assessment. From educators' responses in this study, it appears that they have an idea of what form assessments should take but they are unsure if their ideas and methods are in line with the policy. According to the policy document, the purpose of assessment in the Foundation Phase is to assess the development of concepts, skills and values that will help learners prepare for the more formal assessment in the later grades (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.66). Educators in this study believed that assessment in grade one should therefore not be focussed on theory, but rather on practical work such as demonstrations, discussions, role-play etc. Rooth (2005, p.296) also concurs with the practicality of this subject.

c) Another challenge experienced by educators is the attitude and commitment of learners towards assessment:

*“ I find during assessment time, some of them act as though they haven’t heard the topic. They do not even complete their work most of the time.”* (Participant 3).

Learner apathy could be caused by many factors. Testing and assessment practices can lead to student apathy. Thompson (2008, p.54 ) states that learners need to see the value of the test in order to take the test seriously.

d) Written assessments according to two participants is a challenge in the classroom as learners are unable to write proper sentences at grade one level as is reflected by educators’ responses below:

*“It had to be very basic like circle the correct answer, choose the correct word, match it etc.”* (Participant 5).

*“Some children don’t know how to write, some children don’t know how to speak in English”* (Participant 1).

According to the CAPS policy (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p.67), “The forms of assessment should be age and development level appropriate.” Writing is a developmental skill and should therefore not be a barrier to learning at grade one level. Learners should be assessed on the knowledge and skills that they have learnt rather on their ability to demonstrate their knowledge on paper.

## **5.6 EXPERIENCES OF CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES IN TEACHING LIFE SKILLS**

The contextual challenges that an educator is faced with has a major influence on their teaching experiences. The following contextual challenges experienced by educators in this study were revealed in the interviews as well as in the diaries:

- *Large class sizes*

*“You could not do PE with that entire class of 48 children. It was impossible.”* (Participant 5)

*“Because we expected to do Life Skills with a class of 48 and Life Skills needs to be hands on. One teacher can’t manage to do everything with all those learners.” (Participant 5)*

Research conducted by Rooth (2005) and Prinsloo (2007) revealed that large class sizes was a problem with OBE and findings from this study indicate that it is still a problem that has not been addressed. Research conducted by Blatchford et al (2007, p.158) revealed the following experiences of educators teaching large classes:

- Educators were unable to meet the needs of learners and provide individual attention. A disadvantage of not providing individual attention is that educators are unable to identify problems and difficulties early enough to remediate the problem (Blatchford et al, 2007, p. 158). It was also found that with larger classes, some groups don’t get enough attention.
- If an educator is unable to meet all learners’ needs, it produces negative feelings towards their own work and can lead to professional dissatisfaction.
- Large class sizes made it difficult to do group work. When the group is too large, educators feel that some learners are neglected or can ‘freewheel’ (Blatchford et al, 2007, p.159).
- Marking, planning and assessing becomes time consuming when educators have large classes. “When the class size gets beyond a certain point, the teachers feel the time spent on marking becomes disproportionate, and there are doubts about the value of it” (Blatchford et al, 2007, p.159).
- Educators have difficulties supplying resources for a large number of pupils.
- The space is limited therefore educators are unable to do certain activities. As a result of lack of space, some educators find that they engage in less active, practical approaches to teaching and learning.
- Behaviour and discipline of large classes becomes a challenge especially when learners cannot relate to the topic.
- Large class sizes also affect the effectiveness of teaching and the styles used for teaching. Educators are forced to adopt teaching styles that will accommodate more pupils (Blatchford et al, 2007, p.161).

However Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006, p.142) stated that having bigger class sizes does not mean bad teaching and learning. The responsibility lies with the educator in

exploring creative ways of dealing with this challenge. When viewed through Dewey's (1938) theory of experience and his continuity principle, educators' past experiences should equip educators with knowledge of what works and what doesn't work in a classroom with many learners. They can continue with teaching practices that worked in the past such as discipline strategies and do away with troublesome practices such as group work. They can use that knowledge in working with large numbers in implementing the CAPS curriculum.

- Classroom space

*"...just maybe space. We have to take them outside."* (Participant 4)

*"I think the large number of learners. It's difficult to work with each group."* (Participant 5)

The more learners there are in a classroom, the less learning space there is. Educators are expected to create classrooms that are conducive to learning. However, a classroom that does not have space for movement is not conducive for effective learning to take place. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006, p. 141) stated that the classroom space influences the possibilities for social interaction and active learning. In the South African context, classroom space cannot be controlled by the educator and is therefore a contextual factor that needs to be addressed by stakeholders in education. Life Skills is indeed a practical subject that involves movement. Classroom space is thus essential for Life Skills teaching and learning. A lack of classroom space limits the teaching methods that an educator can use and often educators resort to transmission methods due to a lack of space (Rooth, 2005, p.257).

- Learner interest and apathy

*"Sometimes you get learners on the other hand that feel that Life Skills is not important, because most of them focus on Numeracy and Literacy...When you go there for Life Skills, they feel like this is something they can have their own ways. They can relax. A relaxation subject."* (Participant 3)

*"...there were just a few that attempted to learn it."* (Participant 4)

Rooth (2005) stated that Life Skills and its previous constituents have always been given a low status in terms of its importance and priority in the education system.

- Learner discipline

*“There are children that wouldn’t want to listen, that become disruptive.”* (Participant 3)

*“And for example songs, when the class goes out of control, it’s uncontrollable. Because they scream.”* (Participant 1)

Discipline is one of the major challenges that many educators are faced with especially in public schools where there are larger class sizes. These findings are concurred in Prinsloo’s (2007, p. 167) research study where it was found that classes with forty or more children resulted in the educator finding it difficult to reach all the children in a short space of time. Mwamwenda (2004, p.276) stated that large class sizes can also lead to children feeling discomfort which can lead to them misbehaving. Discomfort can be due to poor ventilation or extreme temperature in the classroom. Mwamwenda (2004, p.275) also stated that poor discipline can be a result of immaturity. Learners at grade one level are still small, immature and playful which could be the reason for learners misbehaving.

- Lack of parental involvement

*“Most learners did not go home and discuss with older people.”* (Participant 3)

*“Learners were given a week to go home and ask parents to help teach this important information, however there were just a few that attempted to learn it.”* (Participant 4)

These responses from educators show the lack of parental involvement in their children’s education. Similar findings were presented in Prinsloo’s (2007), Rooth’s (2005) and Van Heerden’s (2008) research study. The selected school has a population of about 400 out of 1900 learners that are OVC’s (orphans and vulnerable children) and this is reflected in the response below:

*“Many learners also said that grandparents and aunts live with them. Some learners have no parents, but reside with grandparents.”* (Participant 4)

Nojaja (2009, p.19) defined parental involvement as “the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school-based activities which may be educational or non-

educational”. Nojaja (2009, p.22) further stated that parents are primary educators as they are involved in educating their children from birth.

- Poverty

*“Main challenge, especially when it comes to creative activities. They also need like cutting, they need like beads, glitter and stuff like that. Not everybody has it.”* (Participant 2)

*“Many learners come from different homes. It was difficult discussing various appliances as many learners do not have access to these.”* (Participant 2)

Prinsloo (2007) and Naicker (2008) also found poverty to be a barrier. Statistics from the selected school show that about 9% of school children pay school fees which validates the view that learners are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. For many years poverty has been identified as a barrier to teaching and learning. As discussed in the literature, socio-economic factors have been identified by the Department of Education (2005) as a major barrier affecting teaching and learning as well as the growth and development of learners.

The RDD approach that was used to design and implement the CAPS curriculum does not take into account various contexts and their challenges. It assumes that all contexts are the same and curriculum is transferable from one context to the next. However, Davis (2009) argued that whatever works for one context may not necessarily mean that it will work for all contexts. Top down approaches do not take into consideration the contextual factors affecting schools in South Africa.

## **5.7 EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT IN IMPLEMENTING THE NEW LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM**

The kind and form of training given to educators determine the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The responses revealed from the interviews revealed that four educators in this study did not experience any training in the CAPS Life Skills curriculum. One of the educators indicated that she had experienced a training workshop held externally as well as an internal workshop conducted by the school. According to Participant 2, the external workshop was two to three hours in duration and was not really useful.

*“They didn’t really give you planning, on how to plan your lessons and stuff like that. They just read straight from the manual.”* (Participant 2).

This finding was also revealed in Prinsloo’s (2007, p.164) study where the competence of the facilitators at training sessions was questioned. All the participants in this study indicated that they did not receive adequate preparation to teach the new CAPS Life Skills curriculum. Educators were not adequately equipped with all the knowledge and skills to teach this subject. Some of the responses from the interviews were:

*“...we weren’t even given workshops on it”* (Participant 4)

*“We never went for the CAPS training on Life Skills. We went on Numeracy and Literacy”* (Participant 1)

*“There was more focus on Numeracy and Literacy than Life Skills and for a long time we wasn’t even teaching Life Skills”* (Participant 3)

*“We had to read and decipher how to go about teaching it”* (Participant 5)

Similar findings by Russel (1998, p. 49) showed that educators did not feel adequately prepared for implementing the OBE curriculum. Educators in this study felt that if more workshops or courses are offered on how to deliver the curriculum, it will help them in their planning and presentation of lessons. The following comment was made during the interview with the participant:

*“Maybe if the school could have more workshops on how do we go about delivering and planning the Life Skills lessons.”* (Participant 3)

Similar findings were related by Tlhabane (2004), Panday (2007), Rooth (2005), Christiaans (2006), and Prinsloo (2007) on the importance of training for the curriculum. One of the recommendations made by an educator during the interview was that a book of themes should be designed together with the content for each theme.

*“I would think if they could come up with a book of themes...and give us the content that is to be taught. That would make it much simpler.”* (Participant 5)

All the educators in this study expressed their views on the importance of receiving training to teach Life Skills. The following justifications were given:

- Educators can get directives on how to teach (Participant 4 and Participant 2).
- To gain a better knowledge of the curriculum (Participant 2)
- Training will ensure better knowledge on planning, presentation and teaching of the curriculum (Participant 2).
- It will provide clarity on the content to be taught (Participant 5).
- It will provide knowledge of methods to teach Life Skills (Participant 5)
- Educators will be skilled and equipped to deliver the Life Skills curriculum (Participant 3).

Dating back to the implementation of OBE, many researchers such as Rooth (2005), Makhwathana (2007), Tlhabane (2004), Naicker (1998), Panday (2007), Maphalala (2006) and many others, have emphasized the need for vigorous training to assist educators with curriculum changes. Research conducted by Christiaans (1996, p.167) also found that educators required training on how to plan effective lessons. Maphalala’s research study also showed that the training that was given on lesson planning was not sufficient. Before educators even begin planning their lessons, they need to have sound knowledge of the curriculum, subject and teaching methods to suit the content.

Magano (2009, p.18) identified three kinds of knowledge that are central to educators’ knowledge base and that can assist them with planning i.e subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge. Training is required in these three areas so that educators are equipped with the knowledge to plan and teach effective Life Skills. If educators are not equipped to implement an innovation, this could lead to the failure of the innovation. A study conducted by Makhwathana (2007, p.57) showed that 83.3 % of educators in that study believed that the quality of educators and their knowledge is what guaranteed success. An educator has to possess the knowledge in order to transfer the knowledge. Makhwathana (2007, p. 82) also stated that having little knowledge and remaining stagnant is harmful to educators and learners. Professional development and intense training is thus required to prepare, equip, motivate, educate and train educators to

implement new curricula. Prinsloo (2007, p.158) concurs by stating that educators have to be adequately trained to understand the content, aims, outcomes and didactic methods of the Life Skills programme.

When implementing new curricula, emotional, physical, educational and social support is required. Some educators in this study have revealed that they have experienced some support in terms of the new Life Skills curriculum. This support had come from management members, head of department, peers and school based committees. Two of the educators stated that they had not experienced any support. This was the response from one of the educators during the interview:

*“We just had to take the books and work through it ourselves.”* (Participant 5).

Research conducted by Makhwathana (2007, p.54) also showed that educators received limited support in the form of workshops, teaching aids and teamwork. Educators in this study stated in the interview that peer support is what they would like to receive in order to teach Life Skills effectively as revealed by their response below:

*“Maybe from other colleagues, if we work together.”* (Participant 4)

*“I think maybe grade planning, like as a grade we sit together and plan our lessons. We all do the same thing, maybe put our ideas together , we will come up with better ideas.”* (Participant 5).

*“Life Skills has really changed. It really brought back the fun into learning Life Skills. It’s just that we need more support to teach Life Skills.”* (Participant 5)

Pillay (2006, p. 69) argued that educators can become resistant to change if they are not given support. Findings by Wood and Olivier (2007, p.161) also revealed that educators are not empowered enough to teach effective Life Skills. Participants in Panday’s (2007, p.20) study held the Department of Education responsible for providing support to educators. Educators in this study felt that support is not only required from the Department of Education but also

from experienced personnel in the field of Life Skills either within the school or outside the school as revealed by their responses below:

*“Maybe if we could have a little workshop, meetings and guidance from somebody who is equipped and experienced.”* (Participant 3)

*“I think someone that has the knowledge and who has done Life Skills.”* (Participant 1)

## **5.8 EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES OF CURRICULUM CHANGE FROM OBE TO CAPS**

The purpose of this study was to explore educator’s experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum. In order to understand their experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum, it is important to understand these experiences in the context of how they experienced change from OBE to CAPS, including, but not apart from how they experienced change.

Data from the interviews revealed that all the participants in this study embraced curriculum change. Educators indicated that they liked curriculum change and gave the impression that they were prepared to embrace the change. All the educators have also expressed their agreement of the need for a change from OBE to CAPS in the South African Education System. Educators also expressed that CAPS was the preferred change that our South African Education system needed and that they were in favour of CAPS rather than OBE. The following reasons were given by educators:

- With OBE, the parent did most of the work at home. There were many take home tasks given to learners with the OBE system of education. This posed a problem for learners who did not have anyone at home to offer assistance.

*“The child worked the parent. How do we mark the child for that?”* (Participant 1)

- The OBE system of education was confusing for educators. They did not know what they were teaching. Educators found the CAPS curriculum to be more structured.

*“OBE was too broad. There were no guidelines. You could do anything with OBE.”* (Participant 5).

- With OBE, children were not given enough guidance and direction. It is believed that with CAPS, educators have closer interaction with learners.

*“Because with OBE, you found that children were not given the proper guidance and direction. Most of the time, the teacher was mainly like a supervisor in the class, and group work and so it’s too much of disruption. And CAPS is going back to the old system where you can have a close interaction with your learners.”* (Participant 3)

- OBE made children lazy whereas with CAPS they need to work much harder in order to learn.

*“...some of the children are going to struggle because OBE was for children that were weak...The children were lazy then and now they need to work harder.”*(Participant 3)

Jansen (1998, p.325) also expressed a similar view about OBE when he stated that the reason for the OBE curriculum failing was due to the flawed assumptions of what happens inside schools, how classrooms are organised and the kinds of educators we have in the system.

Educators in this study also expressed criticisms about the following aspects of the CAPS curriculum as revealed by their responses below:

- The CAPS curriculum should have catered for learners of all levels. (Participant 4)
- The CAPS curriculum is not considerate to public schools where there are large class sizes. (Participant 5)
- The CAPS curriculum has not taken into account second language learners and their ability to cope with the curriculum. (Participant 5)

According to Mangal (2007), change evokes many feelings and emotions and thus has an effect on our behaviour and which can affect their experiences of the anything new. People become resistant to change due to their emotional state. New routines and changes threaten the feeling of comfort and security (Pillay, 2006, p.65). If we are taken out of this comfort zone, we immediately feel insecure and uncomfortable. Rooth (2005, p.48) agreed with this statement by stating that change is a process that may be uncomfortable for some people. A

change from a familiar curriculum to an unfamiliar curriculum can therefore lead to discomfort and insecurity. This may even lead to resistance to change. Makhwathana (2007, p.7) further stated that whenever there is a curriculum change, educators often develop certain behaviours in order to defend themselves from the changes that need to occur. “ They become anti everything and everyone who talks about the new curriculum” (Makhwathana, 2007, p.7). This leads to rebellious behaviour.

Educators in this study did not experience any negative feelings towards curriculum change. Rooth (2005, p.48) stated that the process of change may be uncomfortable for some educators. None of the educators in this study indicated that the process of change from OBE to CAPS was an uncomfortable transition. It can therefore be stated that educators in this study have embraced change and experienced a positive attitude towards curriculum change.

According to Goodson (2001), three processes of change occur, namely personal, internal and external change. The process of personal change “refers to the personal beliefs and missions that individuals bring to the change process” (Goodson, 2001, p.45). Personal change involves changing one’s beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in order to undergo the process of change. In order for the change from OBE to CAPS to occur, educators have to re-align their thinking, their beliefs about teaching and learning, their attitude towards the curriculum as well as their behaviour.

On an external level, the CAPS curriculum has been designed and relayed to educators for implementation. On an internal level, change has already occurred internally within the schools as teaching and learning is now focused on CAPS. On a personal level, it would appear that educators have accepted the change.

## **5.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the findings of this study and analysed the data in relation to related studies, Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience, Markee’s (1997) model of curriculum change and Goodson’s (2001) framework of the processes of change. The following categories were used to analyse the data that emerged from this study:

- The influence of qualifications and experience on educators’ teaching experiences
- Educator reflection and teaching experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum

- Educators' experiences in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of lesson planning in the new Life Skills curriculum
- Experiences of contextual challenges in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of training and support in implementing the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of curriculum change from OBE to CAPS

Educators experienced challenges in terms of the content, planning and preparation, assessment and dealing with contextual factors in the classroom. It was also found that educators experienced a lack of training and support in implementing the new Life Skills curriculum. A positive experience was that educators enjoyed teaching Life Skills. It was also found that educators welcomed and embraced curriculum change.

The next chapter will present a summary of this research study, concluding thoughts as well as recommendations for Life Skills in the school curriculum.

# **CHAPTER 6**

## **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND**

## **LIMITATIONS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

South Africa has undergone many changes in the past decade in terms of political, economic and educational transformations. The year 1994 was the turning point in which our education system underwent a major paradigm shift. The sands have been shifting in education ever since, beginning with the National Curriculum Statement, then the introduction of OBE and Curriculum 2005 and the most recent, CAPS.

OBE and CAPS are examples where an RDD model of curriculum innovation was used. OBE was a mandated curriculum introduced by the Department of Education based on empirical research that OBE would be a successful curriculum. OBE was researched, planned and developed, piloted and then implemented. Educators did not have a choice in whether or not they wanted to implement this curriculum thus leaving educators with no power and no voice. In 2011, CAPS was introduced to all Primary Schools with the implementation date being 2012 for the Foundation Phase. The introduction of the CAPS curriculum was done using the expertise of a Ministerial Task Team who reviewed the old curriculum and designed a new curriculum that will address the gaps and problem areas of the previous curriculum (Department of Basic Education, 2011b, p. 3). The newly designed curriculum was then introduced to all schools using a top down approach. Top down approaches are not readily accepted by educators which makes the RDD model not suitable for effective curriculum change in the South African context. With CAPS being a new innovation in South Africa, there was a need to explore educators' experiences of the new curriculum and more specifically, the Life Skills curriculum.

The purpose of this study was therefore to explore grade one educators' experiences of the new CAPS Life Skills curriculum. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

*1) What are grade one educators' experiences of the new CAPS Life Skills curriculum?*

## *2) Why do educators experience the new curriculum the way they do?*

The research paradigm employed in this study was the interpretivistic paradigm which aimed at interpreting the subjective multiple realities of educators in this study. Experiences are subjective in nature and the interpretivistic paradigm was suitable for this study. Markee's (1997) model of curriculum change was used to assist in understanding the approach used in implementing the CAPS Life Skills curriculum and how this approach affects educators' experiences of this curriculum change. It also looked at Goodson's (2001) framework for understanding the processes of change and Dewey's (1938) theory of experience to understand grade one educators' experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum.

A qualitative research approach was used, making use of a case study design. Participants were purposely selected using non-probability sampling. Semi-structured interviews and diaries were used as data collection methods. The data was classified into themes and content analysis was done. The following categories were used to analyse the data that emerged from this study:

- The influence of qualifications and experience on educators' teaching experiences
- Educator reflection and teaching experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of lesson planning in the new Life Skills curriculum
- Experiences of contextual challenges in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of training and support in implementing the new Life Skills curriculum
- Educators' experiences of curriculum change from OBE to CAPS

This chapter will provide a summary of findings, concluding remarks as well as provide recommendations based on the findings. The limitations of this study will also be presented.

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Educator qualifications and teaching experience in the Life Skills area played a significant role in this study as it provided rich data for the second research question addressing the

reasons for educators experiencing the curriculum the way they did. If educators are not specialists in teaching Life Skills, then they are bound to have different personal and classroom experiences than those that are qualified and experienced.

With regard to educators' years of experience in teaching Life Skills in this study, the data revealed that their years of experience in teaching Life Skills ranged from 4- 14 years. Three out of the five educators have taught the OBE Life Skills curriculum with the remaining two educators not having any experience in teaching the OBE Life Skills curriculum. The data also revealed that those educators that taught the OBE Life Skills curriculum were able to make a comparison to the CAPS Life Skills curriculum and those educators that did not teach OBE, were able to provide their experiences of the new curriculum without making any comparisons.

When viewed through the theoretical lenses of Dewey's (1938) theory of experience, particularly the principle of continuity, three of the educator's in this study were able to use their past grade one teaching experience in the OBE curriculum and adapt it to the new curriculum. Educators who were trained to teach in the Foundation Phase and who are specialists in the field would be able to use, modify and adapt their specialised skills in the teaching of any curriculum. In this study, educators that taught the OBE Life Skills curriculum were in a better position to implement the CAPS curriculum by using, modifying and adapting their OBE knowledge and skills to the CAPS curriculum.

Through the use of a diary, educators reflected on their experiences of teaching Life Skills. The results revealed that some educators did not fully understand the term 'reflection.' Educators in this study reflected only on their actions after teaching had taken place. In the diaries educators specifically reflected on the outcome of the lesson but did not reflect on their teaching methods and strategies. Educators did not evaluate how their teaching methods and strategies affected the outcome of their actions on their learners' learning.

Educators also did not make attributions for their successes or failures. It would appear from this study that educators did not holistically reflect on the teaching and learning experiences in the classroom. Holistic reflections after every lesson can lead to growth and development in teaching and learning. If educators do not reflect on teaching and learning, they would be

grounded in their current practices without being able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. As an educator, it is important to reflect on one's teaching methods, styles, and approaches, the content of the lesson, resources used, relevance of the lesson and the success or failure of the lesson as a whole. Reflection of this nature will allow the educator to assess the success or the failure of the lesson as well as determine strengths and weaknesses of his/her teaching. When viewed through the lens of Dewey's (1938) theory, those educators who do not attempt to reflect and, in so doing, discriminate between past teaching experiences that were educationally worthwhile and those that were of value, face the risk of their experiences not leading to personal growth (Dewey, 1938, p. 44).

When exploring whether educators experienced enjoyment in teaching Life Skills, all the participants indicated during the interviews that they enjoyed teaching the subject. Two out of the five educators indicated during the interviews that they liked the new Life Skills curriculum. Data revealed the following aspects that were enjoyed by educators:

- Creativity in lesson planning whereby educators could do different things with learners.
- Learners were interested in the lessons. Learners found Life Skills to be an exciting subject unlike Literacy and Numeracy.
- Life Skills allow educators to teach concepts in relation to their learners' environment thus making it relevant and of a personal nature.
- The content is liked by educators especially the new areas introduced in CAPS (i.e. Creative Arts, Personal Wellbeing, Beginners Knowledge and Physical Education).
- Educators were teaching Life Skills that will empower their learners for life.

Semi-structured interviews also revealed educator's positive experiences in teaching their learners. Educators' diaries revealed that learners thoroughly enjoyed lessons in which they were actively involved such as movement, visual arts, music and crafts. Most learners were not shy to participate in activities and most learners seemed confident in their ability to perform tasks. It was also stated in educators' diaries that learners eagerly responded to questions asked by the educators. All the educators indicated that the children enjoyed their lessons because they were very quiet, attentive, responsive and excited to engage in various tasks. Interviews with educators in this study have also revealed that educators enjoyed the new structure, the content, teaching the content as well as the response from learners. If

educators enjoy teaching the lessons, learners will enjoy learning from the lesson. At grade one level, the task of any educator is to ensure that learning is fun and enjoyable. It is important that educators find enjoyment in their teaching. “One can thus conclude that if teachers feel positive about the expected changes, they will be eager and committed to implement these changes” (Panday, 2007, p.9).

Data in this study also revealed that educators experienced the new Life Skills curriculum negatively. The kinds of interactions the educator has with the learners, impacts positively or negatively on the educator’s experience of teaching. A positive response from learners results in a good experience for educators. A negative response from learners thus results in a bad experience for educators. The school environment and contextual factors also play a role in the kind of experiences that educators have. The interaction that educators have with learners whilst teaching, determines the enjoyment of his/her experience of teaching. The kind of interaction that learners have with their educator, determines their enjoyment of the learning experience.

Lesson planning forms the foundation for teaching and learning and therefore plays a crucial role in determining educators’ experiences of the new curriculum. The following challenges were identified by educators with regards to planning Life Skills lessons:

- Searching for tasks and activities
- Resources for teaching and learning
- Finding content for the lessons

Four out of the five respondents felt that the process of planning and preparation was a difficult task. They indicated that planning was not a straight-forward process and was time consuming. Educators had to do extra research via library or internet to find the content to plan their lessons. Educators also had to come up with their own teaching aids.

When exploring educators’ experiences of the lesson content in the new curriculum, data revealed that educators experienced a variety of content and a flexibility of content. There are, however aspects of the curriculum that educators did not like. The data revealed that educators’ in this study felt that the content was appropriate but the level of the content was too high for that particular grade. The content was also not found to be contextually relevant.

The content of any curriculum needs to be meaningful, relevant, contextual and purposeful. According to Van Deventer (2009b, p.128), “Teachers will resent having to teach LO if they are not knowledgeable about the content.” When viewed through Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience and his principle of continuity, educators in this study did not utilise the knowledge that they gained in the past in compensating for their difficulties experienced around the new content in the CAPS curriculum.

Data from this study revealed that educators experienced the use of a variety of resources. Resources that were used by educators when teaching Life Skills included balls, bean bags, skipping ropes, pictures, charts, jungle gym, crayons, scissors, music and concrete objects. Educators in this study also revealed that they experienced difficulty with the school not providing sufficient resources for teaching Life Skills. In areas such as art, educators don’t have items such as paint brushes, paint and pastels. Some educators bring their own resources to use in the classroom and others share resources.

Data from the diaries revealed that educators experienced the use of various methods in teaching the new Life Skills curriculum. Findings from the diaries also revealed that educators experienced each lesson differently because of their use of a variety of different teaching methods.

Data from this study revealed that educators in this study engage in assessment at least once a month or once a week in some cases. In addition to this, an assessment is conducted at the end of the term. Assessments are either written or oral or via daily observations. The CAPS Life Skills policy document (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 66) stated that assessment in the Foundation Phase should consist of one formal assessment per term and continuous informal assessments. From the above responses, it appears that some educators may be engaging in too many assessments per term which can be time consuming and daunting for the learners. In addition, data from this study revealed that educators experienced assessment as challenging in the following areas:

- Language as a barrier was identified as a challenge with assessment
- One of the participants felt that Life Skills in CAPS has become very rigid

- Another challenge experienced by educators is the attitude and commitment of learners towards assessment:
- Written assessments according to two participants is a challenge in the classroom as learners are unable to write proper sentences at grade one level.

The contextual challenges that an educator is faced with has a major influence on their experience of teaching. The following contextual challenges were experienced by educators in this study and were revealed in the interviews as well as in the diaries:

- Large class sizes
- Classroom space
- Learner interest and apathy
- Learner discipline
- Lack of parental involvement
- Poverty

The RDD approach that was used to design and implement the CAPS curriculum does not take into account various contexts and their challenges. It assumes that all contexts are the same and curriculum is transferable from one context to the next. However, Davis (2009) argues that what works for one context may not necessarily mean that it will work for all contexts. Top down approaches do not take into consideration the contextual factors affecting schools in South Africa.

The kind and form of training given to educators determine the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The responses from the interviews revealed that four educators in this study did not experience any training in the CAPS Life Skills curriculum. All the participants in this study indicated that they did not receive adequate preparation to teach the new CAPS Life Skills curriculum. Educators were not adequately equipped with all the knowledge and skills to teach this subject. Educators in this study felt that if more workshops or courses are offered on how to deliver the curriculum, it will help them in their planning and presentation of lessons. All the educators in this study expressed their views on the importance of receiving training to teach Life Skills. Educators in this study also stated in the interviews that peer support is what they would like to receive in order to teach Life Skills effectively. Educators in this study also felt that support is not only required from the

Department of Education but also from experienced personnel in the field of Life Skills either within the school or outside the school.

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

a) When designing new curricula, it is pertinent that educators are involved in the designing of the curricula and the content. The Department of Education needs to invite educators from public and private schools to serve on a curriculum committee where content of curricular can be discussed collectively.

b) Whenever a new curriculum is introduced, it is the task of the Department of Education to provide training and workshops for all educators in the country. Training should be done over a prolonged period of time and should address the following curriculum issues:

- Content of the curriculum.
- Methods of teaching the curriculum.
- How to plan lessons and activities using the policy document and other sources.
- How and when to assess the curriculum.
- The kinds of resources to use as well as how to deliver the curriculum should there be an absence of resources. Educators thus need to be trained on how to modify and adapt the lesson when there are no resources and still achieve the outcome of the lesson.
- How to use inclusive strategies when teaching the content. Emphasis should be placed on inclusive education at all training sessions so that educators have knowledge of barriers to teaching and learning as well as how to address these barriers in the classroom.

The facilitators conducting the training should be knowledgeable and skilled in that particular area of the curriculum.

c) Apart from providing training for educators it is also important for the Department of Education to provide opportunities for professional development. Bursaries are currently being offered for educators who want to pursue a career in teaching however bursaries need to be offered for post graduate studies as well. Incentives need to be provided so that educators are motivated to study.

d) The Department of Education also needs to develop a partnership with universities where short courses and training modules are offered based on curriculum, teaching, leadership, management and professional development. More emphasis should be placed on curriculum courses where educators can be given the opportunity to major in new subjects introduced in the curriculum. Educators can also become specialist educators in the subjects that they are currently teaching. Modernity has brought about an era of new knowledge where knowledge is constantly changing. In the same way, the curriculum is constantly changing. It is for this reason that educators need to update their professional qualifications to keep up with the trends in education.

e) Schools need to be pillars of support for educators implementing new curricula. Educators need to be trained on how to implement new curricula in their school setting. An example of this would be lesson planning and preparation.

f) The school needs to make every attempt to get resources to teach various subjects. Naicker (1998, p.31) states that “Unless change agents prepare the implementers adequately to function in the changing environment and provide them with the resources or the skills to produce the necessary resources, their attempts may fail hopelessly.”

g) The school needs to develop partnerships with schools in the area so that schools can work together in implementing new curricula.

h) The monitoring of curriculum should be done on a regular basis by the head of departments as well as the senior management team (SMT) through the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) process. Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) is a system of monitoring and evaluating educator performance at school. Through this process of IQMS, strengths, weaknesses, challenges and successes can be identified and remediated. Educators need to feel this sense of support when it comes to implementing new curricula.

The SMT should encourage peers to work together. Grade planning can be done whereby all educators in the grade decide on how a subject is going to be taught. Peer support is essential especially when implementing curriculum changes. The SMT should also be responsible for drawing up an assessment plan for the year. This should be in keeping with curriculum policies. If educators have a plan for assessment, it will eliminate the sense of confusion

when it comes to assessment. The plan should indicate exactly how many formal and informal assessments there should be per term as well as mark schemes.

i) Barriers to learning should be identified and mechanisms put in place to try and work around the barrier. Certain barriers such as language barriers and contextual factors cannot be removed from the system and will continue to be a barrier in the South African education system. However, structures can be put in place to deal with the barrier and ensure that teaching and learning still takes place.

#### **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

- This study focused only on grade one educators teaching Life Skills in a selected school. Generalisations could not be made to all grade one educators. The data gathered from this study cannot be generalised to educators in other grades who are currently teaching Life Skills.
- Only three educators out of the five participants taught OBE Life Orientation. Comparisons of experiences from OBE to CAPS could not be made by the two educators who did not teach OBE. Research on a larger scale with educators that have taught both the OBE and CAPS curricula is required in order to explore more deeply their experiences from the old curriculum to the new.
- Since CAPS is a fairly new curriculum, the study relied predominantly on departmental literature and related literature around the teaching of Life Orientation and Life Skills.
- Research is also needed to ascertain the views of parents, principals and learners regarding the new curriculum.

#### **6.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The purpose of this study was to explore educator's experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum. It was important to understand these experiences in the context of how educators experienced the change from OBE to CAPS including but not apart from how they experienced change in general. Data from the interviews revealed that all the participants in this study embraced curriculum change. Educators in this study did not experience any negative feelings towards curriculum change. Wood and Olivier (2007, p. 182) stated that educators who embrace change have a higher level of self-efficacy. It can therefore be stated that educators in this study have embraced change and experienced a positive attitude

towards curriculum change. On an external level, the CAPS curriculum has been designed and relayed to educators for implementation. On an internal level, change has already occurred internally within the schools as teaching and learning is now focused on CAPS. On a personal level, it would appear that educators have accepted the change. Life Skills as a subject has undergone many changes but it has not been removed from the education system. This indicates the importance of this subject as well as the power of this subject to change the lives of learners through the learning of core life skills that will empower them for life.

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# **APPENDICES**

**INFORMED CONSENT**

**(PRINCIPAL)**

**The Principal**

**Re: Permission to conduct research at your school**

I am a Masters student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I am specializing in the area of Educational Psychology . As part of the requirements for the degree, I am required to conduct a research study. I therefore seek permission from you to conduct research at your school . The title of my research study is:

*“From OBE to CAPS: Educators’ experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase.”*

**The aim of this study is to determine:**

- Grade one educator’s experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum.
- The reasons for grade one educators experiencing the Life Skills curriculum the way they do.

**The procedure for collecting data is as follows:**

- Five grade one educators from your school will be selected to participate in the research study.
- Educators will be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted after school hours. There will be no disruptions to the school and teaching time.
- Educators will be required to reflect on their experiences in the form of a diary
- The findings will be presented in my dissertation

**Ethical Issues**

- Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research study at any stage. The decision to not participate in this study will not result in any form of disadvantage.
- Anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be guaranteed.
- The name of the school will not be disclosed. A pseudonym will be used for your school and your educators.
- All the data collected from this study will be stored for a period of five years and will thereafter be disposed of.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely

Miss Afsana Rabi Krishna

Project Supervisor- Dr Linda Jairam(031 2601438)

-----  
**DECLARATION**

I, \_\_\_\_\_(full name of principal) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project. I hereby give consent for this research study to be conducted at my school.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

-----  
SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL

-----  
DATE

**INFORMED CONSENT**

**(PARTICIPANTS)**

**Dear Participant**

I am a Masters student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I am specializing in the area of Educational Psychology . As part of the requirements for the degree, I am required to conduct a research study. My study is entitled ‘*From OBE to CAPS: Educators’ experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase.*’ You have been selected to be a participant in my study.

**The aim of this study is to determine:**

- Grade one educator’s experiences of the new Life Skills curriculum.
- The reasons for grade one educators experiencing the Life Skills curriculum the way they do.

**This research study will entail the following:**

- A semi-structured interview will be conducted to gather data regarding your experiences of the CAPS Life Skills curriculum. Interviews will not interfere with your teaching time and will be conducted at a time suitable to you. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed.
- You will be required to complete a diary for a duration of five periods to reflect on your experiences of teaching Life Skills.

**Ethical Issues**

- Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research study at any stage. The decision to not participate in this study will not result in any form of disadvantage.
- Anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be guaranteed.
- Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants.
- The identity of your school will not be divulged.
- All the data collected from this study will be stored for a period of five years and will thereafter be disposed of.

Thank you for your time and co-operation

Yours Sincerely

Miss Afsana Rabi Krishna

Project Supervisor- Dr Linda Jairam(031 2601438)

-----  
**DECLARATION**

I, \_\_\_\_\_(full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project. I hereby give consent to participate in this research study.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

-----  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

-----  
DATE



13 August 2012

Ms Afsana Rabi Krishna 204508394  
School of Education Psychology

Dear Ms Krishna

Protocol reference number: HSS/0667/012M  
Project title: From OBE to CAPS: Educators' experiences of the new Lifeskills curriculum in the Foundation Phase

**EXPEDITED APPROVAL**

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Linda Jairam  
cc Academic leader: Dr Davids Davids  
cc School Admin: Mrs Sindhomoney Naicker

Professor S Collings (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za  
Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

Inspiring Greatness





**kzn education**

Department:  
Education  
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibisiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8/294

Afsana Rabi Krishna

Dear Mr Ntuli

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS**

Your application to conduct research entitled: **From OBE to CAPS: Educators' Experiences of the New Lifeskills Curriculum in the Foundation Phase**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

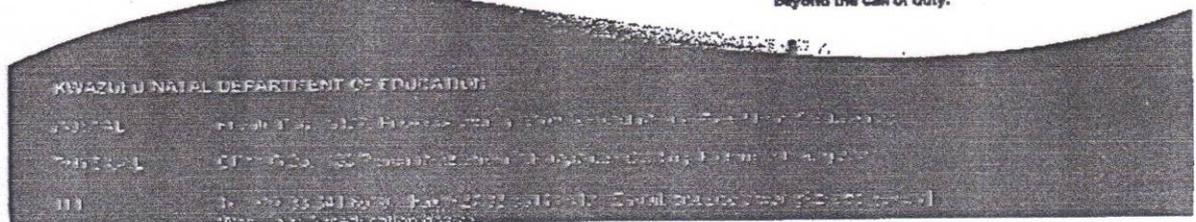
1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 August 2012 to 31 December 2013.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following schools and institutions:

10.1

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
Head of Department: Education

24 - 08 - 2012  
Date

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty.



## RESEARCH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### 1) General

- a) Are you a specialist Life Skills educator? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) For how long have you been teaching Life Skills in the Foundation Phase?
- c) Have you taught the OBE Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase?
- d) Do you enjoy teaching Life Skills?  
Probe: Why/why not?
- e) Do you like the new Life Skills curriculum?  
Probe: Why/why not?  
What do you like/dislike about the new Life Skills curriculum?

### 2) IMPLEMENTATION

- a) Do you feel that you were adequately prepared when you began to implement the CAPS Life Skills curriculum at the beginning of 2012?  
Probe: Why/why not?

### 3) LESSON PLANNING

- a) Describe the process of lesson planning and preparation for teaching Life Skills.  
Probe: Is it easy/difficult?  
Time taken to plan  
Is the policy document helpful when planning lessons?
- b) Do the children enjoy your lessons?  
Probe: How can you tell?
- c) What are the challenges you experience when planning Life Skills lessons?  
Probe: Why do you think you have these challenges?  
What can be done to assist you with these challenges?

### 4) RESOURCES

- a) The CAPS policy document outlines some standard material that every Life Skills educator should have. Some of these include dry media, bean bags, ropes, balls, recyclable materials, paint, play dough, beads, cd players, musical instruments and various other props.  
What resources do you use when teaching Life Skills?  
Probe: Does your school have sufficient resources?  
Do you have difficulties accessing the resources?
- b) What are your challenges/ problems in terms of resources for teaching Life Skills?

Probe: Why do you think you have these challenges?  
What can be done to assist you with these challenges?

### **5) TEACHING OF LIFE SKILLS**

a) What teaching methods do you use when teaching Lifeskills?

Probe: Do you vary your methods?  
Are your methods effective?

b) What challenges do you face when teaching Life Skills in the classroom?

Probe: Why do you think you have these challenges?  
What can be done to assist you with these challenges?

### **6) LEARNING OF LIFE SKILLS**

a) Do you think effective learning is taking place in your Life Skills lesson?

Probe: How do you know if learning is taking place?  
How do you assess if learning has taken place?

b) What are some of the challenges that learners experience in terms of learning the Lifeskills content?

Probe: Why do you think they have these challenges?  
What can be done to assist them with these challenges?

### **7) CONTENT OF LIFE SKILLS**

a) Do you think the content is appropriate for your grade?

Probe: Why/Why not?  
What should be changed?

(b) What are the challenges or problems you experience with the content of Life Skills?

Probe: Why do you think you have these problems/challenges?  
What can be done to assist you with these challenges?

### **8) ASSESSMENT**

a) How do you assess learners?

Probe: How often?  
Methods of assessment

b) What are the challenges/problems you experience with regards to assessment?

Probe: Why do you think you have these challenges?  
What can be done to assist you with these challenges?

### **9) TRAINING**

a) Have you been trained on CAPS Life Skills curriculum in the Foundation Phase?

Probe: When?

How long was the training?  
Was it useful?

b) Do you think that it's important for you to receive training to teach Life Skills in the Foundation Phase?

Probe: Why/why not?

How will it help you?

#### **10) SUPPORT**

a) Have you been given any support in terms of teaching the new Life Skills curriculum?

Probe: What forms of support have been given?

b) What kind of support would you like to receive with regards to Life Skills?

Probe: Who will be the best person to provide the support?

#### **11) EXPERIENCES**

a) Describe some of your good and bad experiences of teaching Life Skills?

Probe: How did it make you feel?

Why was it good/bad?

#### **12) CURRICULUM CHANGE**

a) What do you think about curriculum change?

Probe: Do you embrace it or are you resistant to change?

b) Do you think there was a need for a change from OBE to CAPS in the South African education system?

Probe: Why/why not?

c) Do you think that CAPS is the preferred change that our South African education system needed?

Probe: Why/why not?

Do you have anything else to say regarding the CAPS Life Skills curriculum?



