



**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND FET PHASE LIFE
ORIENTATION TEACHER LEARNING: A CASE STUDY IN
UMKHAMBATHI CIRCUIT**

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in the discipline Teacher Development Studies.

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DECLARATION

I, **Thandokuhle Prince Magwanyana** declare that:

The research reported in this thesis (**Professional Learning Communities and FET Phase Life Orientation teacher learning: a case study in Umkhambathi Circuit**), except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

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Student Signature

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Supervisor Signature

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my darling parents:

Velaphi and Bonisiwe

Whose love and admiration have inspired me to continuously strive for success.

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- My brothers, Mhlonishwa and Ngosho genius, for coming to my rescue and saving me in my time of distress.
- The principals and teacher participants at the schools within which the study was conducted and all people who contributed to this study directly or indirectly.

PREFACE

The research project described in this dissertation was carried out with three Life Orientation (LO) teachers teaching in the FET Phase. This school falls under the UMkhambathi Circuit in the UMgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal. The project commenced in February 2017 and concluded in December 2017 under the supervision of Dr J. Naidoo at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

This study represents the original work completed by the author and has not been submitted in any form for any diploma or degree to any other tertiary institution. Where the author has made use of the work of other authors, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the learning experiences of three FET Phase Life Orientation (LO) teachers in Professional Learning Communities in one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. In addition, the purpose of this study was to examine how FET Phase Life Orientation teachers learnt in Professional Learning Communities.

The study was located within the interpretative paradigm and a qualitative approach was adopted. Semi-structured interviews and a collage were used to collect data. Three participants were interviewed. The study was based on one district, circuit and one school in KwaZulu-Natal.

The findings show that two major activities take place at FET Phase Life Orientation meetings. Firstly, assessment is a major activity, which includes the setting of question papers, the moderation of scripts, discussing previous question paper standards, and developing memoranda together. Secondly, content discussions are based on the content knowledge of Life Orientation. This FET Phase Life Orientation PLC reflects the characteristics of effective professional learning communities that were based on the ideas put forward by Stoll et al. (2006). Furthermore, the following positive characteristics were evident: collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and group work, as well as individual learning. However, not all of the characteristics of Stoll et al. (2006) were evident, as shared values and vision were not observed. Consequently, the FET Phase Life Orientation PLC in this study can be viewed as a PLC because four out of five of the characteristics set out by Stoll et al. (2006) for PLCs were evident. Consequently, as drawn from this study, it is imperative for the Department of Basic Education to give teachers an opportunity to lead and strengthen their PLCs.

Keywords: FET Phase; Life Orientation; Professional Learning Community; Assessment; Content discussions

ACRONYMS

CoP	Community of Practice
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EMS	Economic and Management Sciences
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
LO	Life Orientation
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme Grant
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored the learning experiences of three Further Education and Training (FET) Phase Life Orientation (LO) teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. This chapter outlines the focus, purpose of the study, rationale, background information, and the research questions posed in this study. The theoretical framework and the methodology used will also be discussed. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters that structure this thesis.

1.2 FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to explore the learning experiences of three FET Phase LO teachers in Professional Learning Communities in one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. In addition, the purpose of this study was to examine how these teachers learn in PLCs.

1.3 RATIONALE

Over the past decade, teacher learning has become an important concern in teacher professional development. Borko (2004, p. 4) defines teacher learning as a “process of increasing participation in the practice of teaching and becoming knowledgeable in and about teaching.” Correspondingly, Kelly (2006) defines teacher learning as the crusade of teachers from being a beginner teacher to an expert teacher. Although there is agreement amongst scholars that teachers learn by engaging in equally formal and informal learning programmes, numerous studies show that beginner teachers come into schools with a gap in their knowledge, which impedes their teaching (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). This means that formal teacher training does not adequately equip teachers. This gap seems to be occupied by teachers who are engaging in informal learning at their schools regularly within PLCs.

As an LO teacher, I was interested to examine how LO teachers learn in a PLC since it seems that LO is one of the subjects that aims to redress societal ills such as teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other important societal issues (Vesely, Wyatt, Oman, Kegler, Marshall &

Mcleary, 2004; Rooth, 2005). I found teacher learning to be a key part of my own professional development as a teacher. Reflecting on my professional development, I realised how vital such a study can be for both professionals and those responsible for the professional development of teachers. As the Deputy Principal at my school, I was also responsible for the development of the teachers under my supervision. One way of facilitating the professional development of the teachers was through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006) define Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a pool of people who are competent in a specialised arena, who have understanding and knowledge, and those who are keen to improve their expertise with the objective of refining their training, which will ultimately profit learners.

Congruently, Sargent and Hannum (2010) affirm that PLCs provide a setting in which teachers frequently talked to each other about the matters of teaching and learning, and share capability that would advance their day-to-day practices and their pupils' learning. Likewise, Schmoker (2005, p. 140) adds that "teachers learn best from other teachers, in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching." Moreover, Lieberman (2000, p. 222) maintains that PLCs "meant that teachers pursued a clear and shared purpose for all student learning, engaged in collaborative activity to achieve that purpose, and took collective responsibility for their students' learning."

Teacher learning must consequently be entrenched in the day-to-day life of the school and offer chances to probe teaching practices analytically, their influence on learners, and explore other issues of teachers' work. Bruce (2011, p. 89) contends that "the examples of different types of activities that support teacher learning comprise of both formal and informal teacher learning."

The societal matters in this country deserve highly qualified and expert LO teachers who learn formally and informally, particularly when they are anticipated to enhance the well-rounded growth of learners. Likewise, Van der Riet and Knoetze (2005) point out that poverty, child abuse, violence, HIV/AIDS, a lack of access to facilities, family collapse, loss of caregivers and dangerous surroundings are shared problems of many people. Furthermore, Vesely, Wyatt, Oman, Aspy, Kegler, Rodine, Marshall and Mcleary (2004) argue that LO serves as a response in controlling such difficulties. The knowledge, skills, and characteristics of LO teachers are vital

as these will help learners to know their rights and the best possible way to handle matters faced on a daily basis. Therefore, my personal motivation as a Deputy Principal was to understand how LO teachers learn formally or informally in PLCs, as well as the importance of LO teachers in addressing societal issues. Moreover, I was interested in understanding the impact of a lack of research on the teacher learning of LO teachers in the FET Phase. This all served as the rationale for this study.

1.4 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This study was conducted in the Umkhambathi circuit in the Umgungundlovu district at Apple secondary school (pseudonym). This secondary school is situated in the Umkhambathini area, which is a rural area. Apple secondary is a developing school that has limited resources. Apple secondary consists of five School Management Team members, and 15 post-level 1 teachers. To be specific, the study was conducted with three teachers in the FET Phase who were teaching LO. For the past five years, the matric results of Apple secondary school were between 65% and 78%. Most of the learners came from poor families and lived with their grandparents due to different reasons, such as their parents working away from home, parents not being married, or it not being their biological parents, while some were orphans.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What learning activities do FET Phase LO teachers engage with in PLCs?
2. To what extent does this PLC reflect the characteristics of an effective PLC?

1.6 BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The literature review examined research on teacher learning and Professional Learning Communities. The literature review was structured according to the following topics: teacher learning, the professional development of teachers, theories/approaches to teacher learning, Wenger's (1998) Community of practice, the importance of LO, PLCs, empirical studies in the field, and the conceptual framework. This study used the work of Opfer and Pedder (2011) to analyse teacher learning in PLCs, as well as Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics of

PLCs. There are various approaches to understanding and analysing teacher learning (Bruce, 2011; Borko, 2004; Knight, 2002; Kelly, 2006). Opfer and Pedder (2011) define the Complexity Theory as the methodology for teacher learning that assumes that professional learning takes place in a range of different places and spaces, both formal and informal, and not only as a result of formal professional development activities. In addition, Opfer and Pedder (2011) propose that teacher learning is influenced by three key systems: the teacher's orientation of learning, the learning activity, and the school context. Likewise, Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics of PLCs are: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and group work, as well as individual learning.

1.7 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This case study was located within the interpretivist paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) define the interpretive paradigm as the process of examining the situation through the eyes of the participants instead of the researcher. Likewise, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 75) assert that interpretivist researchers are individuals who want “to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomenon as they occur in the real world, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting.” In order for the researcher to make sense of the context in which the teachers worked, the aim was not to predict the actions of the teachers, but rather to explore the teacher learning of three FET Phase LO teachers in PLCs at one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. Seeing the phenomenon of teacher learning in PLCs through the interpretive paradigm permitted clarification of the global experiences of the teachers who were the central source of data in this study.

This study used a qualitative approach. Creswell (2007, 2011), Maree (2007) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) assert that qualitative research focuses on the lived experiences of people. Moreover, Slavin (2007) contends that qualitative research stresses meticulous explanations of the societal settings anticipated to explore social phenomena. A qualitative approach was suitable for this study since it allowed for the examination of the phenomenon of teachers' professional learning by collecting data that comprised comprehensive descriptions, experiences, and the insights of the teachers.

This study adopted a case study approach. A case study is defined as a systematic and in-depth study of one particular group or individual. In the same way, Yin (1994) defines a case study as empirical inquiry that examines a present phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not obviously evident. The case in this study was Apple secondary school. All of the data collection was conducted in a “real-world context” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2010, p. 36). This study adopted a descriptive case study to give the reader a shared experience of the context of the three participating teachers.

I conducted individual semi-structured interviews as these have a fairly open framework, and require no set questions that have to be answered in a uniform manner. Semi-structured interviews are defined “as those organised around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth” (Morse, 2005, p. 292). According to Creswell (2012), semi-structured interviews can give dependable, comparable qualitative data. The second data collection method that was best for this study was collages. Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2011) define collages as the procedure of using the remains of found pictures or materials and pasting them onto a smooth surface to represent phenomena. The purpose of using collages in this study was to understand how the teachers learnt both formally and informally by using an artistic and creative way. I anticipated that by using collages as a data collection method, this would allow me to acquire more data, which the participants may not certainly have shared in dialogue. Some of the participants frequently found difficulty in sharing their experiences verbally, however, they found it easier to express their feelings with pictures and words in the collage.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

The study was organised into five chapters as follows.

Chapter 1 presents the introduction, focus, purpose of the study, rationale, background information of the study and the research questions posed in this study. The chapter gives indicators of the literature review, theoretical framework and the methodology used. Chapter one concludes with an outline of the chapters in this thesis.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature in the field. It examines the concepts of teacher learning, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and the theories of teacher learning, Wenger's (1998) community of practice, the professional development of teachers, and Life Orientation as a subject. It also describes empirical studies done by other scholars around these concepts. Furthermore, the conceptual framework is described.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. It explores the research paradigm, the research style or approach, methods of data generation, which were semi-structured interviews and collages in this study. The chapter also explains the sampling, ethical issues, and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the data and explains the analysis and findings based on Research Question 1; and Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for Research Question 2. Herein the key research questions are answered, which are: "What learning activities do FET Phase LO teachers engage with in PLCs?" and "To what extent does this PLCs reflect the characteristics of an effective PLC?" Finally, Chapter 4 summarises the findings, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an introduction to this study. Furthermore, the focus, purpose of the study, rationale, background information, and the research questions posed in this study were briefly given. The literature review, conceptual framework, and the methodology used were also described. The next chapter focuses on the reviewed literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter gave a synopsis of the study, outlining significant issues such as the background information, research questions, focus, purpose and rationale of the study, as well as a brief review of the related literature, as well as the conceptual framework for this study. This chapter reviews the literature and theoretical framework in greater detail. The literature presented in this chapter was drawn from international and local sources. The purpose of this study was to explore the learning experiences of three FET Phase Life Orientation (LO) teachers in Professional Learning Communities in one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. In addition, this study aimed to examine how these teachers learnt in Professional Learning Communities. The literature review in this chapter examines research on teacher learning and Professional Learning Communities. The literature review begins with an outline of teacher learning, followed by a discussion of the professional development of teachers. Next, theories/approaches to teacher learning are described, including Wenger's Theory of Community of Practice. This is followed by a discussion of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Thereafter, the importance of Life Orientation (LO) is outlined. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Opfer and Pedder, and Stoll et al.'s (2006) work as the conceptual framework.

2.2 DEFINING TEACHER LEARNING

Teacher learning over the past decade has become an important concern in educational progress (Bruce, 2011) and one of the most important pillars in education. Borko (2004, p. 4) defines teacher learning as a "process of increasing participation in the practice of teaching and becoming knowledgeable in and about teaching." Correspondingly, Kelly (2006) defines teacher learning as the movement of teachers from being a novice teacher to an expert teacher. Moreover, Guskey and Yoon (2009) confirm that teacher learning is a professional process that happens both formally and informally in the school context, where teachers are personally motivated to learn from colleagues. Likewise, Knight (2002) affirms that during the teacher learning process, teachers agree to take larger accountability for their individual learning and

development, and develop a better sense of teamwork to increase teaching and learning in schools, which eventually increases learners' performance. Moreover, Opfer and Pedder (2011) state that teacher learning needs to be theorised as a complex system rather than as an event. Furthermore, Samuel (2008) contends that teacher learning is a process that can happen formally or informally in a school, for example, teachers help one another with a certain aspect of the subject without involving the officials from the department. From my perspective, teacher learning is where a teacher decides to improve or empower himself/herself without being forced to; this means that it is a decision based on personal reasons.

Teacher learning "is usefully understood as a process of increasing participation in the practice of teaching, and through this participation, a process of becoming knowledgeable in and about teaching" (Adler, 2000, p. 45). For teachers, learning happens in diverse spaces of practice, involving their classrooms, school communities, and professional development courses or seminars/workshops. It can happen in a short dialogue with a colleague, or after school when counselling concerned learners. To comprehend teacher learning, we must study it within these numerous environments, considering both individual teacher-learners and the social systems in which they are partakers. Teacher learning cannot happen in school classrooms, separated from practice or knowledge about how to interpret practice (Ganser, 2001). The settings for teacher learning in both universities/colleges of education and schools offer many opportunities. When teachers debate subject content issues and their individual classroom experiences, knowledge-in-practice is created (Ndlalane, 2006).

During informal teacher learning, teachers learn unconsciously from each other and may even learn from their learners. They learn in school corridors and in staffrooms, and even at home with the help of technology like television, the internet, magazines, the radio and newspapers (Ganser, 2001). Teachers are the ones who lead this process, they are self-motivated and are willing to learn new skills and knowledge to improve their practice in their own time. Teachers do not depend on the government to provide for them as they learn how to solve and deal with challenges in their own contexts. In contrast to professional development viewpoints, teacher learning is currently commonly theorised in the literature as active, continuing, and established in teachers' day-to-day lives. Illeris (2009) argues that teachers need to be motivated in this process of teacher learning. Bruce (2011, p. 89) sums up that "teacher learning should, therefore,

be entrenched in the daily life of the school and provide opportunities to inquire systematically about teaching practices, their impact on learners and about other issues of teachers' work.” Shulman (2004) states that one of the most effective principles of teacher learning (the development of teachers in their professions) is collaboration, where effective learning communities share their expertise in support of each other. Furthermore, he contends that examining the school’s ethos is an additional example of an activity that supports teacher learning. In this study, I intended to examine the teacher learning experiences of LO teachers and how they learnt in PLCs.

2.3 EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON TEACHER LEARNING

Several studies have been done on the phenomenon of teacher learning. Ono and Ferreira (2010) conducted a study in the South African context. They suggest that teacher learning has been overlooked due to financial problems and greater stress on pre-service education, which involves “training-the-trainer.” In South Africa, Mbatha (2010) conducted a study that involved 14 student teachers studying for a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The student teachers were provided mentors. The results showed that the teachers were in favour of the early introduction of Literacy in English without considering the advantages of a mother tongue-based bilingual training observation. Mbatha (2010) focused on identifying how the teachers learned and understood the role and function of mother tongue literacy teaching.

Murugaiah, Azman, Thang and Krish (2012) conducted a study in Malaysia on teacher learning through communities of practice. They studied teacher learning during the development of the English Online Communities of Practice. Their study was conducted with 20 teachers of English, mathematics, and science. The results of the study showed that formal, planned professional development activities that are mandated, as in the case of workshops, cluster meetings and phase meetings, had not contributed much to professional learning. It did, however, address the functional aspect of development wherein the teachers developed their technical skills.

Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, and Olivier (2008) conducted a study that examined the link between Professional Learning Communities and school society. In the study, they found that school society results from the interpersonal relations among the teachers, group of teachers, and managers (supervisors). In addition, Sargent and Hannum (2010) conducted a study in a Chinese

context which showed that there is a link between the competency of teachers to set up and sustain Professional Learning Communities and the availability of financial resources in their schools.

In England, Cajkler, Wood, Norton and Pedder (2014) conducted a study based on lesson study as an opportunity for teacher learning in secondary schools. Their study revealed that learning during the lesson is the key to teachers' pedagogic development. The purpose of Cajkler et al.'s (2014) study was to examine the potential of the lesson study to advance professional practice and teachers' learning in the English secondary school context.

2.4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

Villegas-Reimers (2003, p. 53) defines professional development "as the development of professionals in their professional roles which includes both formal and informal experiences." Formal experiences comprise aspects such as attending workshops, professional meetings and seminars (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Professional development, in a comprehensive sense, refers to the growth of a person in his or her professional role. Particularly, professional development is the professional growth of a teacher as a result of gaining better experience and examining his or her teaching analytically (Glatthorn, 1997). Professional development involves formal experiences such as the attendance of workshops and professional meetings, as well as mentoring. Moreover, professional development involves formal/informal experiences, for instance, reading professional publications, and watching television and movies linked to academic disciplines (Ganser, 2001).

In order for teachers to be fully effective in teaching learners at all levels, this will require that teachers become well-developed. Mundry (2005) asserts that teacher professional development requires growth in knowledge, skills, and classroom-related decisions. Leithwood, Chapman, Corson, Hallinger and Hart (1992) recommend that programmes that promote professional development must centre on developing survival abilities/skills and becoming expert in the basic skills of teaching, increasing one's instructional flexibility, contributing to the professional growth of co-workers, exercising leadership, and contributing to decision-making.

Day (1999) suggests that professional development involves all natural learning experiences as well as those mindful and intended activities that are planned to be of direct or indirect advantage to the individual, group or school, and that contribute to the excellence of education in the classroom. These tools are gained and utilised in a lifelong process. Bubb and Earley (2008) contend that professional development is central to organisational development and school improvement. Similarly, Bubb and Earley (2008) maintain that the personal and professional development of teachers within a school has most effect on learners in terms of abilities/skills development, self-assurance and classroom behaviour.

Opfer and Pedder (2011, p. 386) assert that we must increase our fundamental expectations about the features of professional development by “recognising that features may collectively work together in different ways under different circumstances in different contexts.” Therefore, it is valuable and important to know what kinds of professional development activities are more likely to support teacher learning; their usefulness will change depending on the individual teacher and the school system in which they teach. Teachers should attend workshops that meet the criteria for effective professional development, but should also be encouraged to learn informally at school level. The relationship between professional development and teacher learning is that both are equally important in teacher growth and development. Therefore, this study focused on teachers who were teaching in the FET Phase (Grades 10-12) Life Orientation, and aimed to explore both formal and informal teacher learning in their Professional Learning Communities.

2.5 THEORIES/APPROACHES TO TEACHER LEARNING

Kelly (2006) argues that there are two broad approaches to teacher learning, namely, the cognitive and socio-cultural approaches. The cognitive approach or model suggests that teachers gain skills, understanding, and information in one setting, then use this knowledge in the classroom context. Learning is assumed to be an individual attempt that does not involve other people. Learning does not consider the broader social context or background of the school, and does not involve teachers’ personalities or professional identities. The cognitive approach puts more emphasis on the knowledge-for-practice or knowledge that can be made clear.

For beginner teachers to develop into specialists, they must acquire a precise body of useful knowledge and then use this in their practice (Kelly, 2006). For this reason, developmental workshops are significant. However, in terms of the relevant theory, there is extensive criticisms of Cognitive Theory, one of them being that learning is not easily transferred to a different site (Armour, 2004). The Cognitive Theory expects the knowledge to be transferred (Schön, 1987). Furthermore, Anderson (1983), Wenger (1987) and Hutchins (1995) assert that the linear model assumes that when a teacher has attended a workshop for professional development, the teacher will change and there is going to be an improvement or achievement in the way he/she delivers the subject content. Alternatively,, Resnick (1989) claims that it is very hard for learners to obtain knowledge in one setting, even when teachers try to achieve it. Cognitivism seems to fail to recognise other factors when obtaining knowledge, for example, learners, teachers, and teaching aids. Moreover, cognitivism overlooks social circumstances like HIV/AIDS, domestic abuse and the identities that teachers bring with them to work (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002).

The socio-cultural approach or model is the second Theory of Teacher Learning (Kelly, 2006). A key assumption of this model is that it is required for teachers to obtain skills, information, and understanding in their place of work. In other words, the learning and teaching must be located at their place of work, and learning is assumed to be a collaborative effort. The socio-cultural approach also elaborates on knowing-in-practice, which refers to what you learn while you are working. In addition, it is not vested within individuals, but rather shared across teachers, learners and resources/artifacts. Identity includes how teachers recognise their role, responsibilities, and determination as teachers, as well as their opinions, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about schooling and learning.

The socio-cultural approach includes teachers participating in the manner of knowing-in-practice so as to permit their full involvement in classroom activity (Kelly, 2006). This refers to the knowledge established by teachers through experience, and is what teachers learn while they are working or teaching. This knowledge is often unspoken or not easily understood or expressed. Borko and Putnam (1996) believe that this approach permits teacher expertise to develop within a network of circulated knowing and collaborative learning. There are also critiques of the socio-cultural approach, one of which is that schools are not automatically sites of best practice; they

are often traditional places that only concentrate on knowledge-in-practice, which means that research-based knowledge may be overlooked (Borko & Putnam, 1996).

Both the cognitive and socio-cultural approaches are equally important in teacher learning. Schools must attain an improved stability among activities that integrate philosophies of distributed understanding, and those that stress only a person's proficiency (Borko & Putnam, 2000). Teacher learning can be equally individual and collaborative, and can occur through both formal and informal activities. Furthermore, Borko and Putnam (1996) state that in order to be prosperous, attempts to support teachers' learning need to be recognised and encouraged. Thus, teachers' knowledge and beliefs about teaching, learning, learners, and subject matter will play a serious part in defining whether and how they implement new instructional concepts.

Several academics have claimed that learning has both individual and socio-cultural structures, and have characterised the learning process as one of enculturation and construction (Cobb, 1995; Driver, 1994). Cobb (1995) contends that learning must be seen as both a process of active individual construction and a process of enculturation into the practices of broader humanity. Likewise, learning as the gaining of knowledge and skills is assumed to be useful in a wide range of settings. The physical and social settings in which an activity takes place are a vital part of the activity, and that activity is an important part of the learning that takes place. How an individual studies a specific set of knowledge and skills, and the situation in which an individual learns these become a central part of what is learned.

In addition, while traditional cognitive viewpoints centre on the individual as the basic unit of analysis, situative perceptions emphasise collaborative methods that include individuals as participants who collaborate with each other, as well as materials to learn from such as computers and textbooks. Teacher learning must consequently be entrenched in the regular life of the school and provide chances to enquire systematically about teaching practices, their influence on learners and about other concerns in terms of teachers' work. Bruce (2011, p. 89) asserts that "the examples of different types of activities that support teacher learning comprise the analysis of the school's culture, peer observations of practice; small-scale classroom studies about learners' written work and analysis of learner data and study groups."

The view of social learning that characterises current teacher learning practices and supports the development of PLCs concurs with the work of situated theorist Wenger (1998), who suggests a Social Theory of Learning. This creates the basis for understanding teacher learning as a community of practice. At the core of Wenger's (1998) notion of Community of Practice (CoP) is collaboration or collective learning, which expresses social learning practices. This engagement of individuals is characterised by common activity that results in a Community of Practice. Wenger (1998, p. 10) distinguishes individual learning from community learning as follows, "For individuals, it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities, for communities, it means that learning is an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generations of members." This suggests that learning is viewed as a collective activity that happens intentionally or unintentionally, and is a central part of our daily lives.

The origin of this theory is embedded in the process of learning as a social system (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) furthermore contends that learning is a social practice and knowledge is taken from participation in complex social learning systems. According to this theory, "participation in these social systems is characterised by four structuring basics:

1. Meaning: a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively to experience our life and the world as meaningful.
2. Practice: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.
3. Community: a way of talking about social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence.
4. Identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities" (Wenger 1998, p. 6).

A diagram representing Wenger's Social Theory of Learning is presented in Figure 2.1 below.

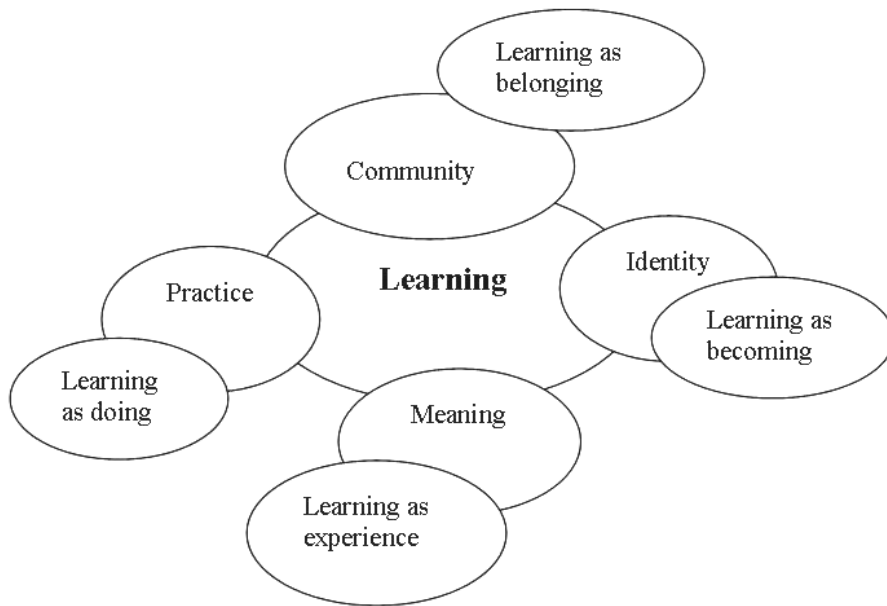


Figure 2.1: Components of a Social Theory of Learning (Wenger, 1998, p. 5)

2.6 IMPORTANCE OF LIFE ORIENTATION

Life Orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge, and values about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, societal engagement, recreation and physical activity, careers and career choices. These include opportunities to engage in the development and practice of a variety of life skills to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices and to take appropriate actions to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly changing society (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 8).

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011) LO is one of the mandatory subjects essential for the National Senior Certificate (NSC), which means that it is required by all pupils in Grades 10-12. It is an exceptional subject in that it relates a rounded method to the individual in terms of the societal, logical, emotional, divine, motor and physical development and growth of learners. This inspires the growth of a stable and assertive learner who can add to an unbiased and democratic society, a prolific economy and an enhanced excellence of life for everyone. Correspondingly, LO can be defined as a subject inside the educational circumstance that endorses the rounded growth of teenagers (Cornbleth, 1990; Engelbrecht & Green, 2001;

Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2013). Rooth (2010, p. 57) maintains that “the concern of Life Orientation is the holistic societal, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical development of learners with its focus on self-in-society.” Van Deventer (2008, p. 132) concurs that “the central theme of Life Orientation is life in society.” I was interested to examine how LO teachers learn in a Community of Practice (CoP) since it seems that LO is one of the subjects that aims to redress societal ills such as teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other important societal issues.

Van der Riet and Knoetze (2005) point out that poverty, child abuse, violence, HIV/AIDS, a lack of access to facilities, family collapse, the loss of caregivers, and dangerous surroundings are shared problems experienced by many people. Furthermore, Vesely, Wyatt, Oman, Aspy, Kegler, Rodine, Marshall and Mcleary (2004) view LO as a response to controlling such difficulties. Nevertheless, Van Deventer (2012) contends that it is not just LO as a subject that is required to make a change inside schools, but also the skills and characteristics of LO teachers that are vital as these will help learners to know their rights and the best possible way to handle the matters that they face on a daily basis.

In addition, Van Deventer (2012) claims that LO teachers need particular attitudes, values, skills and knowledge if they are to create progressive assistance in their schools. Basically, my viewpoint is that LO teachers must be the cornerstone in schools. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2013, p. 68) believe that societal concerns range from the “disadvantages of social context and how these affect learning and development, to social and interpersonal problems, such as unsafe sex, unemployment, violence, divorce, teenage suicide and substance abuse.” Berns (2010, p. 156) asserts that “the best teachers are interesting, competent, caring, encouraging and flexible, yet have demanding standards.” Similarly, teachers inspire learners to learn and strengthen their determination (Van Deventer, 2012). It is equally anticipated that subject content knowledge is an essential element for teachers to be fruitful in their teaching (Palmer, Stough, Burdenski & Gonzales, 2009). Subject content knowledge and experience are vital aspects in terms of LO teachers. Particularly, challenges and problems may be experienced if teachers are not qualified to teach Life Orientation (Pillay, 2012). Similarly, Rooth (2010) maintains that 45% of all of the teachers who participated in her study were not specially qualified to teach LO.

2.7 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCs)

Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006, p. 220) define Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) “as a group of people who are qualified in a specialised field, who have knowledge and experience who are keen to develop their expertise with an aim of improving their practice which will eventually benefit learners.” Correspondingly, Sargent and Hannum (2010) affirm that Professional Learning Communities are settings in which teachers frequently talk to each other about the issues of teaching and learning, and share expertise that would advance their daily practices and learners’ learning. Moreover, Lieberman (2000, p. 222) maintains that Professional Learning Communities “meant that teachers pursued a clear and shared purpose for all student learning, engaged in collaborative activity to achieve that purpose, and took collective responsibility for their students’ learning.” In addition, Brodie (2013) defines Professional Learning Communities as a group of teachers who are analytically cross-examining their teaching in continuing, reflective and collaborative ways in order to promote and enrich pupils’ learning. Professional Learning Communities are primarily about learning for learners, as well as learning for teachers, learning for management, and learning for schools. Moreover, Mphahlele (2014) argues that Professional Learning Communities have enhanced the quality of teacher learning through the democratic sharing of teaching knowledge. Furthermore, Stoll et al. (2006, p. 223) highlight that in a professional learning community:

Teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for the students’ benefit; thus, this arrangement may also be termed communities of continuous inquiry and improvement.

When a team/group of teachers frequently meet as a team/group or phase, Professional Learning Communities are established. Teachers discuss what learners need to learn and how they can improve their practice. Additionally, teachers learn techniques to measure their teaching and learning, examine the previous and current accomplishments, set feasible objectives, and then share and generate lessons and approaches to advance these levels (DuFour, 2012). PLCs offer a continuing process through which teachers and school management can work together. Moreover, PLCs strive, share, and relate learning capabilities to advance the aims of enhanced and effective teaching (Hord, 2003; Stewart, 2014). Likewise, according to Farrell (2012), PLCs

are executed to explore the joint powers and qualities of the staff in sharing information to advance learner accomplishment (Protheroe, 2008). Similarly, PLCs offer the chance for teachers to pinpoint desires, pursue responses and apply outcomes, mirror, and share through endless learning (Hord, 2003; Hung & Yeh, 2013; Stewart, 2014).

In a PLC, teachers work jointly to advance their learning and develop learner accomplishment through collaboration (Feger & Arruda, 2008). PLCs are composed of teachers who are eager to share and comment on their learning constantly through inquiring and readdressing to encourage merit in their field (Shernoff, Martinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobson, Atkins & Bonner, 2011). PLC members' understanding progresses by collecting proof from working with other teachers collectively as a team (Reichstetter, 2006). Consequently, studies show that PLCs are operational in engaging learners in advancing their knowledge through coaching, modelling, collaboration, sharing, maintaining support, and reflecting (Prothero, 2008; Reichstetter, 2006; Shernoff et al., 2011).

Continuous professional learning has been fundamental for many years in teachers advancing their work (DuFour, 2014). Lieberman and Miller (2008) argue that PLCs are the main foundation for teachers to advance their practice. Louis and Kruse (1993) assert that teachers work together in PLCs to make decisions on the current difficulties that they face so as to develop significant outcomes from the data gathered, which advances their learning.

In a PLC, teachers discuss learners' performance and other challenges to pinpoint ways to accommodate other teachers in meeting learners' needs. As a result,, teachers continuously learn through meaningful collaboration, which leads to insights and new perspectives on the content and purposes of inquiry and dialogue. This benefits student outcome and teacher knowledge (Burke, 2013). As a result, when PLCs are in place, teachers are connected, and instructions show relevance, while professionals are experiencing ongoing professional learning. Likewise, PLCs show why the lessons are taught, how to use each lesson, and how to make the lesson important for the learners to promote engagement and motivation, all while the teachers are learning through support from other teachers (Buchanan, 2012; Burke, 2013; DuFour, 2014; Lieberman & Miller, 2008; Louis & Kruse, 1993). PLCs are preferred for their potential not only to offer support and build trust among members in the community, but also for their ability to

foster confidence in teachers (DuFour, 2014). Furthermore, Graven's (2004) research shows that "active participation in Professional Learning Communities resulted in the manifestations of trust and confidence building between teachers" (p. 182).

Stoll et al. (2006, p. 226-227) describe five main characteristics of effective PLCs, which are: "shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and group, as well as individual learning." With regard to shared values and vision, the sense of purpose is important in particular as there is a loyal focus on all learners. Collective responsibility refers to members of a PLC constantly taking shared accountability for learners' learning. It is expected that such shared accountability helps to endure promise, puts peer pressure and responsibility on those who do not do their reasonable part, and eases separation. Reflective professional inquest comprises thoughtful dialogue, discussions about serious educational matters or difficulties including the application of new knowledge, regular investigation of teachers' practice through common observation and case examination, and mutual design and curriculum development.

According to DuFour (2004), collaboration refers to staff participation in developing activities with significance for numerous people, going beyond artificial exchanges of support, assistance, or help, mutual feedback, and review. The connection among joint activity and the success of joint purpose is stressed. Feelings of interdependence are vital to such association; which is an objective of improved teaching practices. Lastly, since it is a group effort rather than individual learning, education is enhanced. The sharing of information becomes easy, making everyone efficient and better teachers while the learners benefit the most.

Brodie (2013) presents the following characteristics of Professional Learning Communities: teachers have a challenging focus; teachers create productive relationships through trust; teachers collaborate for the joint benefit, which requires moderate professional conflict, although not personal conflict; and teachers engage in rigorous inquiry. Teachers feel safe enough to admit to weaknesses but challenged enough that they can grow, where professional conflict is cheered but personal conflict is reduced. I have noted that although there were studies conducted on teacher learning, there was a gap in the South African literature on teacher learning in the FET Phase Life Orientation PLCs. For this reason, I believe that this study addresses this gap and will

contribute to the current South African body of literature. In essence, learning is observed as a collective activity and is a central part of our daily lives, which occurs consciously or unconsciously. This study focuses on the PLC in the department of humanities, which comprised three FET Phase teachers who were teaching Life Orientation in Grades 10-12 at the time of this study. The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which this PLC was effective based on Stoll et al. (2006) and Brodie's (2013) characteristics of effective PLCs, as mentioned above.

There are various approaches to understanding and analysing teacher learning (Bruce, 2011; Borko, 2004; Knight, 2002; Kelly, 2006). Opfer and Pedder (2011) define Complexity Theory as an approach to teacher learning that assumes that professional learning takes place in a range of different places and spaces, both formal and informal, and not only as a result of formal professional development activities. In addition, Opfer and Pedder (2011) propose that teacher learning is influenced by three key systems: the teacher's orientation to learning and to the profession, the professional development activity, and the school context. Furthermore, Opfer and Pedder (2011, pp. 393-394) suggest that:

To comprehend and explain why and how teachers learn, we must ponder how a teacher's individual learning orientation system interacts with the school's learning orientation, and how both of these systems together affect the activities in which teachers participate and then are reciprocally affected by the changes that occur from participation in these activities

The first system that influences teacher learning is the teacher professional learning activity, which focuses on the elements of effective professional growth (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Desimone 2009). For instance, constant time, engagement, logical learning activities, activities included into teachers' daily work, focus on eloquent content knowledge, and the collaboration of teachers from the same school are all necessary. For teacher learning to happen, change must happen in several areas of influence (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

Moreover, for the professional learning activity to be successful, both the cognitive approach/model and socio-cultural approach (Kelly, 2006), which are equally important, must be applied. Schools may attain stability through events that integrate ideas of circulated acceptance and those that stress only a person's capability (Borko & Putnam, 2000). Teacher learning can be equally individual and collaborative, and can occur through both formal and informal activities.

Opfer and Pedder (2011, p. 386) assert that we must increase our fundamental expectations about the features of professional growth by “recognizing that features may collectively work together in different ways under different circumstances in different contexts.” Therefore, it is, of course, valuable and necessary to know what kinds of professional growth activities are more likely to support teacher learning, as their usefulness will move and change depending on the individual teacher and the school system in which they teach.

Opfer and Pedder (2011) also describe the second system that influences teacher learning, which is the teachers’ orientations to learning. The teachers’ previous practices and beliefs impact their learning, as does their knowledge base and proficiency level. The knowledge that teachers carry over in the course of teacher learning is also significant. It is systematically beneficial to differentiate between three dissimilar fields of teacher knowledge: personal knowledge, which contains beliefs and identity; propositional knowledge, which contains teachers’ disciplinary knowledge and knowledge of the education field such as models of inspiration and learning; plus practical knowledge, which includes knowing how to use the propositional knowledge in the classroom to create learning opportunities (Eraut 2000; Bertram 2011). Teacher learning courses need to involve all these fields of knowledge, even though the focus may move from one aspect to another at different periods. Illeris (2009) argues that teachers need to be motivated in the process of teacher learning.

In addition, the third system that Opfer and Pedder (2011) describe as impacting teacher learning is the school. This includes the norms of the school, its practices, and structures, which both allow and/or limit the opportunities of teachers’ professional learning and their practices (Bertram, 2014). Furthermore, Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that schools need to develop the practices and processes of learning organisations if they are to develop the conditions that sustain and enhance teacher learning. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) have asserted that schools are more than just collections of teachers, but at the same time, schools cannot exist without a collection of teachers. Likewise, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) have concluded that organisational learning is more than just the sum of the learning of individuals in the organisation, even though organisations can learn only through the experiences and actions of their members. Research indicates that the context within the working environment determine what and how teachers learn (Putman & Borko, 2000). Anderson (1996) asserts that learning is

determined by context and thus is specific to context. Putman and Borko (2000) propose that physical and social environment support acquiring knowledge and insight through engaging with people and resources. This lends to a more enlightened perception in investigating the ways in which teachers learn. Value and emphasis are positioned within the situated approach. This is contrary to the cognitive approach, which understands that learning happens in a linear way (simple and straightforward) and ignores the context within which it happens. Creating systems of support and norms that encourage both individual and organisational learning, and getting the balance right between internal and external sources of learning are difficult for most schools (Kumar, 2011).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The literature presented in this chapter explored issues related to teacher learning, teacher professional development, and Professional Learning Communities. This chapter also described the theories/approaches to teacher learning, namely, the Cognitive and Socio-Cultural theories and, in particular; Wenger's Social Theory of Learning in terms of Communities of Practice was explained. Moreover, Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) were presented. In addition, Opfer and Pedder's work as used in this study was explained. The next chapter provides a detailed description of the research design and methodology that was utilised in this study.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided a synopsis of the literature reviewed, as well as the conceptual framework. The intention of the previous chapter was to outline the theoretical base on which the study was built. This chapter presents the methodological approach of the study. The focus and purpose of this study was to explore the learning experiences of three FET Phase Life Orientation (LO) teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. In addition, the intention of this study was to examine how these teachers learnt in Professional Learning Communities. This chapter explains the methodological approach and the research design used in this study. It further expounds the sampling procedure used, followed by a detailed discussion of the methods of data generation and data analysis. The chapter ends with a discussion of issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations and the role of the researcher.

3.2 INTERPRETIVIST PARADIGM

This study is located within the interpretivist paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) define the interpretivist paradigm as the process of examining the situation by means of the viewpoint of participants instead of that of the researcher. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 6) argue that an interpretative paradigm gives suitable detail to the researcher in terms of “subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action.” Through the interpretivist paradigm, attempts are made to get inside the individual and comprehend from within. Wellington (2000) acknowledges that the interpretivist scholar admits that the observer makes a differentiation between truth that is observed and truth that is human made.

Additionally, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 128), assert that interpretivist scholars need “to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomenon as they occur in the real world, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting.” Interpretivists aim to comprehend the social world, and identify various interpretations as equivalently valid. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2007, p. 22) maintain that interpretivists “begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them.”

Interpretivist methods of carrying out research have the aim of accepting “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.37), proposing that “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 2007, p. 13). The interpretivist researcher mostly depends on the “participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p.8). Furthermore, interpretivist researchers identify the impact of their own context and episodes on the research. This research was well-suited to the interpretivist paradigm. In order for this research to make sense of the context in which the teachers worked, the aim was not to predict the actions of the teachers, but rather to explore the teacher learning of the three FET Phase Life Orientation teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. Correspondingly, Willis (2007) believes that the background in which the research is carried out is influential in understanding the data that is gathered. He further states that the core belief of the interpretivist paradigm suggests that reality is socially constructed. Using the interpretivist paradigm to frame this study assisted me to understand how the context within which the participants learnt influenced their learning.

Ontologically, the interpretivist research paradigm is grounded on the assumption that there is no single truth (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). In terms of epistemology, in this paradigm, knowledge is socially constructed (Maree, 2007). In this study, it was expected that understanding about PLCs would be different for different participants and such meanings and/or knowledge was unique to each of the participants. This is consistent with the epistemological positioning that there is not just one single reality that exists outside of the comprehension of the researcher or the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The interpretivist paradigm is supported by certain epistemological and ontological expectations, which work as distinctive categories when likened to other paradigms. In elucidating the bond between ontology and epistemology, Krauss (2006, p. 407) contends that “ontology includes the philosophy of truth; epistemology addresses how we come to know that truth.” Ontologically, the interpretivist paradigm disproves the existence of a specific truth and is grounded on the notion that numerous truths exist (Maree, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2012). Each participant in the study had their own standpoints centred on their individual understanding of learning in a Professional Learning Community, thus disputing the reality of a single truth.

According to Krauss (2006), each individual understanding depends on an individual's viewpoint, consequently, every individual's understandings is dissimilar to reality. In terms of epistemology, the interpretivist paradigm is centred on the supposition that knowledge is socially created (Maree, 2007; Merriam, 2009). I draw on this paradigm since it stresses the viewpoint of the individual and the sense that is in-built in their background (Cohen et al., 2011). Seeing the phenomenon of teacher learning in PLCs through the lens of the interpretivist perspective permitted an understanding of the world as a result of the background/experiences of the teachers, who were the principal source of data collection in this study. The socially created knowledge obtained from the participants endorsed a profound understanding and clarification of their lived experiences. However, Merriam (2009) maintains that the interpretivist paradigm is mostly found in qualitative research.

3.3 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

This study used a qualitative approach. Anderson (1998, p. 119) defines the qualitative approach as a “form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings and uses multi-methods to interpret, understand and bring meaning to them.” The qualitative approach accepts that human behaviour is swayed notably by the situation/context in which it happens. Qualitative research focuses on the lived experiences of people (Henning, Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Creswell, 2007, 2011; Maree, 2007; Cohen et al., 2011). It is a kind of educational research in which the researcher has faith in the understandings of the participants; asks comprehensive, broad questions; collects data containing largely spoken words/written texts from the participants, and then “describes and analyses these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner” (Creswell, 2007, p. 176). Moreover, qualitative research emphasises in-depth descriptions of the social background, which the researcher must go over with a fine-tooth comb in analysing the social phenomenon (Slavin, 2007). The qualitative approach was proper for this study since it allowed for the exploration of the phenomenon of teachers learning in the FET Phase Life Orientation Professional Learning Community by collecting data that comprised the comprehensive descriptions, opinions, and experiences of the teachers.

According to Ulin, Robinson and Tolley (2005), the qualitative research methodology regularly depends on the interactions between the researcher and the individual(s) being studied over some

period of time. This creates a favourable relationship with study partakers, which could lead to more profound understanding of the background/context under study, accumulating sufficiently and comprehensive data. Therefore, “qualitative methodologies are inductive, that is, pitched toward encounter and process, have high validity, are less concerned with generalizability, and are more concerned with the profound understanding of the research problem in its single setting” (Ulin, Robinson & Tolley, 2005, p. 78).

3.4 CASE STUDY APPROACH

This study employed a case study approach, which is defined as a structured and comprehensive study of one specific case group or individual. In the same way, Yin (1994) defines a case study as a practical review that examines a present occurrence within its actual background/context, particularly when the borders between the phenomenon and background/context are not obvious. In addition, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 353) contend that case studies “provide a unique example of real people in real situations enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with principles.” Similarly, Lindegger (1999, p. 107) affirms that “case studies are intensive investigations of particular individuals and that they are usually descriptive in nature and provide rich longitudinal information about individuals or particular situations.”

According to Yin (2003), there are three forms of case studies, namely: descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. Cohen (2007, p. 254) suggests that “case studies involve observing a case or phenomenon in a real-life context.” Case studies are descriptive and detailed, combining subjective and objective data. Stake (2005, p. 438) maintains that “a case study has a form of conceptual structure and is organized around a small number of research questions which must fit the purpose of the study.”

Lindegger (1999, p. 142) further states that case studies can have limitations such as “problems with the validity information to test and generalizations cannot be made from single case studies.” A case study is a particular example that is typically intended to clarify a more general principle. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2007) maintain that case studies can create causes and effects; one of their strong points is that they observe an effect in actual contexts knowing that the context is a solid element of both causes and effect. Case studies put strong emphasis on reality. Like all other data collection methods, a case study has limitations, one of which is reliability. A

case study can be argued to lack reliability as another researcher might come to different conclusions.

A case study offers a distinctive example of actual people in actual situations, which allows readers to have a perfect comprehension of the ideas being conveyed (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case study is a structured and comprehensive study of one certain case in its background/context (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Case studies enable the researcher to explore and describe the real-life, complex, vibrant and clarifying connections of proceedings, human relationships and other elements in unique contexts (Niewenhuis, 2007; Yin, 2009). The application of a case study design was appropriate for the purposes of this study, as discussed earlier.

There are diverse definitions of case studies, however, there seems to be a consensus amongst all scholars that case studies are time and context bound. For Yin, a case study is “an empirical inquiry within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomena and the context are not clearly evident” (1984, p. 23). In this study, the case was exploring the context of the three participating LO teachers in a PLC.

Case studies are the “study of the particularity and complexity of a single case come to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 2005, p.443). To me, this suggests that Stake’s perspective of case studies is interpretative as he describes the case as a bounded system. Stake (2005, p. 444) asserts that “a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry.” Different case studies have different purposes. Stake (2005) differentiates between intrinsic case studies, where the purpose is to illuminate in-depth information about a specific case, and instrumental case studies, where the purpose is to showcase general phenomena. Instrumental case study research is generally used in comparison case studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study adopted a descriptive case study approach to adequately provide detail on the context of the participating teachers.

The context or milieu in which the case is located is of paramount importance. Creswell (1998) maintains that the site chosen for the research should be appropriate for the research aim. In this study, the case was the phase, and included participating teachers who were deemed suitable to answer the research questions. A case study is a complex entity located in a background or situation entrenched in a number of contexts (Cohen, 2007). Stake (2005) consequently advises

the researcher to consider the political, cultural, physical, historical and socio-economical dimensions of the context when interpreting the results.

Yin (2003) advocates that a researcher must use the case study methodology when the researcher intentionally wants to discover the contextual conditions of the phenomenon. Additionally, these may be of great relevance to the phenomenon under study. Taking Yin's (2003) recommendation into account, choosing case study methodology was the most appropriate methodology to answer the research questions posed in this study. Stake (2005) contends that qualitative case studies require that the researcher spends extended time at the research site.

One of the strong points of the case study methodology is that it can use both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The researcher capitalised on this strength and used a qualitative approach to explore the learning experiences of the three participating FET Phase Life Orientation teachers. Moreover, the advantage of the case study methodology is that it acknowledges the complexity of the social truth as it can represent conflicts and discrepancies between the viewpoints of the participants (Cohen, 2007). Similarly, Bell (1991) contends that a case study gives readers a comprehensive picture and shows the relationships, and impact in a specific background/context, as well as highlighting any micro-political issues. Cohen (2007) believes that the significance rather than the frequency of the events is the symbol of case study research. Similarly, Neuman (2000) is of the opinion that large amounts of information in one or a few cases permit the researcher to go more in-depth and get extra detail on the case being studied. Taking these strengths into account, and considering that one of the aims of the study was to explore the learning experiences of the participating LO teachers, this approach was the most appropriate methodology to use in this study. However, there are weaknesses in case study research as well, for example, restricted generalisability, danger of distortion and a lack of cross-checks, the influence of sources, bias, the positionality of the researcher, and the danger of fixing reality (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

3.5 RESEARCH SETTING OR CONTEXT

This study was conducted in the Umkhambathi circuit in the Umgungundlovu district at Apple secondary school (pseudonym). This secondary school is situated in the Umkhambathini area, which is a rural area that is situated 70 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg. The roads are not

tarred, and livestock roam freely around the school. The majority of the learners walk to school. At the time of this study, Apple secondary school was a developing school that had inadequate resources. There were 15 classrooms, five bathrooms for female learners, four bathrooms for male learners, and one bathroom for female teachers and one bathroom for male teachers. The school had an administration block, which comprised five offices and the staffroom. The classrooms were insufficient and the school was in need of renovation. Apple secondary school is currently ranked as Quintile 3, which means that it is subsidised by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Apple secondary school is categorised as a non-fee paying school. It has a feeding scheme provided by the Department of Basic Education, which is known as the National School Nutrition Programme Grant (NSNP), which supports needy learners. Therefore, the Department of Basic Education allocates around R 2 024 12.00 per year to the school but the School Governing Body (SGB) is instructed very clearly on how the money should be spent.

At the time of this study, Apple secondary school consisted of five School Management Team members and 15 post-level 1 teachers. The SGB was unable/lacked funds to hire any additional teachers; hence all of the teachers carried a full teaching load. Apple secondary had a community of 691 learners. This study was conducted with three teachers in the FET Phase who were teaching Life Orientation, namely, Mrs Mkhize, Mr Shozi and Miss Ngcobo (these are pseudonyms, and not their real names). The Life Orientation (LO) classes had approximately 60 to 70 learners in the FET Phase per classroom. For the past five years, the matric results of Apple secondary school were between 65% and 78%. The first period started at 7:50 and the last period ended at 14:40, and the duration of each period was an hour. The school offered 12 subjects in the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase and 9 subjects in the General Education and Training (GET) Phase. The FET Phase was divided into three sections, which were Humanities, known as General subject packages including IsiZulu Home, English Second Additional, Life Orientation (LO), history, geography, Mathematical Literacy and Life Sciences. The Commerce department comprised IsiZulu Home, English Second Additional, Life Orientation (LO), accounting, Business Studies, economics, and mathematics. The science department comprised IsiZulu Home, English Second Additional, Life Orientation (LO), Physical Sciences, mathematics, Life Sciences, and geography. In the GET band, that is, Grade 8 and 9, Apple secondary offered IsiZulu Home, English Second Additional, Life Orientation (LO),

mathematics, Natural Science, Creative Art, Social Sciences, technology, and Economic and Management Sciences (EMS).

The functionality of Apple secondary school was affected by the high rate of late coming and the absenteeism of learners. Furthermore, it was affected by societal ills such as poverty, child abuse, violence, HIV/AIDS, the absence of access to facilities, family collapse, loss of caregivers and dangerous surroundings, factors pointed out by Van der Riet and Knoetze (2005). Moreover, Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2013, p. 68) assert that societal concerns range from the “disadvantages of social context and how these affect learning and development, to social and interpersonal problems, such as unsafe sex, unemployment, violence, divorce, teenage suicide and substance abuse.”

3.6 SAMPLING

According to Webster (2013), sampling is the selection of a set of research participants from a large population. This study used purposive sampling. Creswell (2012) defines purposive sampling as a technique of selecting cases that are rich in information for an in-depth study of the phenomenon. In addition, purposive sampling is frequently a component of qualitative research where scholars choose the cases to be incorporated in the sample based on the criteria set out, due to their typicality, or control of the certain characteristics being sought. In this manner, scholars build up a sample that is suitable to their exact needs and that has been selected for an exact purpose (Cohen et al., 2007). Likewise, Cohen et al. (2007) elucidate purposive sampling as an exercise through which the “researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought” (p. 115).

Purposive sampling is employed in order to get well-informed people who have comprehensive knowledge about certain subjects, possibly in terms of the quality of their professional character, access to networks, power, and capability or experience (Bell, 1991). The sampling in this study was purposive in the sense that it targeted three Life Orientation teachers in the FET Phase at one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. The secondary school selected was located in a rural area and was also not too far from where the researcher lived in order to reduce traveling costs. Furthermore, the advantage of this form of sampling is that the researcher can reach the

target group easily and conveniently (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Through purposive sampling, three teachers were selected as the sample of the Life Orientation FET Phase teachers to be interviewed. Nevertheless, this sample is not representative of the larger population and their remarks may not be generalised. However, this is not the focal concern in purposeful sampling; rather, the concern is to get comprehensive proof from those who are in a position to give it (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

This section covers the two data collection methods used in this study, namely, semi-structured interviews and collages. In addition, this section outlines the potential strengths and limitations of semi-structured interviews and collages, the tools of which are attached in Appendix 3 and 4.

Potter (1996, p. 96) defines interviewing as a “technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally.” The motivation of interviews is to acquire in-depth information from the participant on their background/experience under study. Furthermore, Kvale (1996, p. 5) contends that the interview’s “purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.” The corner-stone of the research interview is to undertake the researcher’s objective of acquiring data from the participants.

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to examine the background, concerns, understandings, and attitudes or views linked to a clearly elucidated topic as “semi-structured interviews are defined as those organized around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth” (Morse, 2005, p. 292). According to Creswell (2012), semi-structured interviews can give dependable, qualitative data. I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the three teachers as such interviews have a fairly open framework. The interview questions were used to make sure that all issues were covered. Furthermore, De Vos et al. (2005) suggest that not all the questions have to be asked by the interviewer if they are not needed. However, as I was both the researcher and the interviewer, I decided on the amount of deviation that was necessary. This meant that I managed to probe as I needed clarity or more information from the participants. The interview process began with

general questions and then was narrowed down to more specific questions. This is described as a funnel (probing) approach by Cohen et al. (2007).

Semi-structured interviews have been shown to be a valid means of data collection; however, there are weaknesses that need to be addressed. These weaknesses include aspects such as response bias and incomplete recollection by the interviewees, who in this case were colleagues of mine. At this point, it seems prudent to draw attention to the issues of reflexivity as there seem to be confusing interpretations thereof. Yin (1995, p. 80) implies that “reflexivity may mean that the participants express what they think that the researcher may want to hear, thereby reducing the validity of their responses.” However, to reduce this possibility, I spent some time discussing the need for authentic views and stressed that there were no correct or incorrect answers in the interviews with the participants.

In contrast, I believe that this aspect of reflexivity is limited, and agree with Cohen et al. (2007) that reflexivity includes more complex concerns such as the researcher being constantly aware of his subjectivity. Attempting to be continually aware of my own interaction with the participants and being aware that my reactions could affect the data collection was important. For instance, I simply nodded my head in agreement to encourage the participants to continue providing similarly insightful and deep answers. As my questions could also limit or bias the responses, I tried to keep them as broad as possible to allow each participant to interpret and answer them as they wished. I continuously questioned and checked my interpretations to ensure the validity thereof.

Cohen et al. (2011) assert that as interviews are personal, it is expected that the researcher will have some effect on the interviewee and may, therefore, influence the data being produced. In addition, Cohen et al. (2007) contend that an interview is a social, interpersonal encounter. Thus, power-relationships could have influenced the interview process. The participants may have perceived me, as a Master’s student, as having more knowledge and hence more power. I listened considerately, kept my tone of voice and questioning at a level that contributed to a relaxed atmosphere, and avoided academic jargon (Hager, 2001). During each interview, I remained neutral towards the participants (Hager, 2001). Another cross check that I put in place to reduce subjectivity was to transcribe the interviews and make them available to each

participant to review. The participants were interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to one hour at the times convenient to them, which did not disturb teaching and learning at the school.

The second data collection method that was most suited for this study was collages. Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2011) define collages as the procedure of using remains of found pictures or materials and pasting them onto a smooth surface to show phenomena. Correspondingly, Diaz (2002) defines a collage as a research tool used to blend images and text to create a reality and find meaning, using the art as a symbol and metaphor. Moreover, Vaughan (2005) claims that a collage is a way to create new meanings from selected images, and views collages as a method of gathering, selecting, analysing, and presenting information. In addition, Diaz (2002) posits that the visual arts can open up conversation between different people, giving new understanding and thinking, and offering new methods to analyse a subject. Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) use the method of gathering collages to explore visual tools for experimental research approaches: “Collaging can also be helpful in conceptualizing a phenomenon by fleshing out different facets in order to get a nuanced understanding of it” (p. 3).

Collages permit the scholar to work in a spontaneous and non-linear way by organising image pieces that bring networks to life and add new comprehension. However, the linear method indicating that a particular teacher development activity will lead to a change in teachers’ practice, which will then lead to improved learner achievement (Guskey, 2002) does not always hold true, no matter how much we wish it were so. Alternatively, “[A] collage reveals the very way we experience the world with objects given meaning not from something within themselves, but rather through the way we perceive they stand in relationship to one another” (Robertson, 2002, p. 2). Similarly, Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2011) assert that collages can be scanned jointly based on colour, space, size, shape, directionality, content, or any other compositional sizes to see if there are unintentional similarities that take place across the collages. When recognised, these common aspects assist to advance the analysis and offer a profounder clarification of the phenomenon in question.

One of the strengths of using a collage is that it is uncomplicated to make because every person, whether a beginner or expert, can cut and paste and eventually get a sense of logic with the artifact. It is charming to see how researchers who never realised that they had creative talent are

able to gain self-trust by using this visual medium, and how some have gone on to create pleasing instances of collages (Promislow, 2005). However, on the one hand, it must be said that anybody who desires to can employ a collage, while a somewhat restricted view, on the other hand, is that a collage should be controlled to those scholars who have developed the required creative skills. The central ground is that scholars desiring to use collages in official and community products need to grow the needed skills to produce theoretically sound work and grow artistic talent so that the advances that have been made in the arts-informed inquest in the last few years are not lost through the propagation of poor-quality work. Moreover, this still offers lots of flexibility in using a collage as part of the reasoned process to observe the types of comprehension that result from this approach, which might not develop otherwise. In contrast, there is yet inadequate leadership on the copyright matters around using found images from well-known magazines in collage inquests (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2011).

The purpose of using collages in this study was to understand how teachers learn both formally and informally by using an artistic and creative way. The participants were required to use diverse pictures from magazines, books, and newspapers and paste them together with a specific idea in mind. The collage comprised both photos and words. Raht, Smith and MacEntree (2009) contend that creativeness and types of creative art have the ability to influence the life of both the drawer and the audience. This type of creativity has deep consequences, and can awaken feelings and encourage action, endow, inspire and change the lives of individuals. Raht, Smith and MacEntee (2009) claim that it is a reflection of creativity when images are generated from books, magazines, newspapers and are bonded together to produce a story or image. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (2000) observe that collages inspire participants and scholars to comprehend ideas in a new way. Moreover, they affirm that participants would be more focused on the topic at hand. Butler-Kisber (2009) concurs that craft methods are able to give information that would usually be hidden, particularly if there is poor communication between the researcher and the participants.

Butler-Kisber (2008) asserts that “the use of collage gives voice to the study and multiplies our understandings by selecting art forms; we can give meaning to who we are” (p. 258). Collages can prompt memories that have been overlooked, and have an aptitude for both graphic and sensual experiences that can be explained in an image story. When making a collage, the

participants are not just pasting together a photograph or story, but are also making data to be examined and understood by the researcher. Norris (2009) concurs that examination, clarification and a group of images are part of working with collages. Atkinson (1996) maintains that much discipline is desirable when reading and inspecting art forms. He further comments that precise procedural knowledge will improve texture, size, colour, space and three-dimensional consciousness.

Robertson (2009) claims that collages show the actuality of our being and the items are given sense from our insights rather than the way in which they occur in relation to one another. Raht et al. (2009) clarify how the use of representations, pictures, and symbols in collages help to communicate messages and permit engagement with the subject. Frequently, messages that would be challenging to get across seem to be communicated more simply over images and pictures. I anticipated that by using a collage as a data collection method, it would allow for acquiring more data that the participants may not certainly have shared in their dialogue. Some people frequently find difficult in sharing experiences in dialogue; however, they may find pictures or words that would sufficiently express their feelings.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis process involves “organizing, accounting for and explaining the data, in short, making sense of data” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537). Furthermore, it is “the process of identifying, disaggregating, categorizing, comparing and relating something in order to better understand it” (Newsome, 2016, p. 134). I used thematic content analysis to identify categories from the transcribed data that related to ideas or concepts in the research questions, ascribing labels, topics or themes to describe them. Thematic content analysis is a procedure in which many words of the text are coded and classified into fewer categories (Cohen et al., 2011). Ezzy (2010) argues that researchers carrying out a thematic content analysis know in advance what they are looking for in a text, as well what the categories for analysis will be. Another reason for employing a thematic content analysis is “its flexibility in analyzing data” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 507). While inductive approaches may not occur during the early stages of thematic content analysis, they can be accommodated by content analysis later on in the analysis process as new themes and interpretations emerge (Ezzy, 2010). I categorised and classified the data that emerged from

these themes. In addition, I used Opfer and Pedder's (2011) work, and Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), which formed part of the key framework used in this study. Opfer and Pedder (2011) define Complexity Theory as the professional learning that takes place in a range of different places and spaces, both formal and informal, and not only as a result of formal professional growth activities. Likewise, Opfer and Pedder (2011) propose that teacher learning is influenced by three key systems: the teacher's orientation to learning, the learning activity, and the school context.

The first system that influences teacher learning is the teacher professional learning activity, which focuses on the elements of effective professional growth (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Desimone, 2009). For instance, constant time, constant engagement; logical learning activities; activities included in teachers' daily work; focus on eloquent content knowledge, and the collaboration of teachers from the same school are all needed. For teacher learning to happen, it is essential for change to occur in several areas of power (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

Moreover, for the professional learning activity to be successful, both the cognitive approach/model and socio-cultural approach (Kelly, 2006), which are of equal importance, must be applied. Teacher learning can be both individual and collaborative, and can occur through both formal and informal activities. Furthermore, Borko and Putnam (1996) suggest that in order to be successful in supporting teachers' learning, the teachers' views and knowledge about learners, learning, teaching, and subject matter play a central role in influencing whether and how they implement new instructional ideas. However, these styles may be used jointly in different ways under different settings.

According to Opfer and Pedder (2011), the second system that influences teacher learning is the teachers' orientation to learning. The teachers' previous practices and beliefs impact their learning, as does their knowledge base and proficiency level. The knowledge that teachers bring to the course of teacher learning is also significant. Personal knowledge refers to beliefs and identity; propositional knowledge describes teachers' disciplinary knowledge and knowledge of the education field such as models of inspiration and learning; and practical knowledge includes knowing how to use propositional knowledge in the classroom (Eraut, 2000; Bertram, 2011). Teacher learning courses need to incorporate all these fields of knowledge, even though the

focus on different aspects may change at different periods. Illeris (2009) argues that teachers need to be motivated in this process of teacher learning.

In addition, the third system that Opfer and Pedder (2011) describe as impacting teacher learning is the school context. This includes the norms of the school, its practices and structures, which both allow and or limit the opportunities for teachers' professional learning and improvement of their practices (Bertram, 2014). Furthermore, Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that schools need to develop the practices and processes of learning organisations if they are to develop the conditions that sustain and enhance teacher learning. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) assert that schools are more than just collections of teachers, but at the same time, schools cannot exist without a collection of teachers. Likewise, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) have concluded that organisational learning is more than just the sum of the learning of individuals in the organisation, even though organisations can learn only through the experiences and actions of their members. Moreover, Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), which are shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and group, as well as individual learning, were used.

3.9 VALIDITY/RELIABILITY/TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is a term used by Lincoln and Guba (1994) for interpretivist research. Shenton's (2004) explanation of Guba's constructs reflects four criteria to determine if trustworthiness exists: dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability. Based on these four principles, I developed and implemented strategies in my study to ensure trustworthiness.

3.9.1 Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1994); Hord (2008); Carlson (2010); and Cohen et al. (2011) contend that credibility is the analysis of whether or not the research findings characterise a reliable conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data. Furthermore, "Credibility refers to the degree to which a study's findings represent the meaning of the research participants" (Lietz & Zayas, 2010, p. 191). Moreover, Drisko (1997, p. 191) states that qualitative "interpretations must be authentic and accurate to the descriptions of the primary participants." I made sure that all of the participants were aware that there were no deceitful

promises on my part about what they would receive if they participated in the research. Their participation was voluntary, and no force or deception of any kind was implemented. To address credibility, I used more than one method to produce data, which comprised collages and semi-structured interviews. Likewise, for credibility, the researcher used mechanical means to record the data, “For example, using an audio-recording device to record interviews verbatim, means that the transcripts was more accurate than if the researcher simply jots down notes during the interview” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 189)

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability usually refers to the “degree to which findings can be applicable or useful to theory, practice and future research” (Lietz & Zayas, 2010, p. 121). Moreover, Lincoln and Guba (1994) explain that transferability refers to the extent to which the research can be transferred to other similar background/contexts. Likewise, Rule and John (2011) find that transferability happens when the academic acknowledges that the case is associated with other related cases. To address transferability, I provided a detailed description of all of the steps I took in carrying out the study. I provided the context of the schools and the participants, and a detailed description of the selection methods, how I gained access to the research site, and how I performed the analysis of the data. All of these steps were taken in order to ensure that any researchers who want to conduct a similar study in the same context would understand the context of this particular research and thus enhance the opportunities for credible replication. The deliberation encompassing the transferability of qualitative data has been given much credit in the literature (Rule & John, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004). As stated previously, this was a case study on teacher learning in this PLC’s Life Orientation FET Phase, which was understood and interpreted in one particular school. The unique results of this study, consequently, could not be useful in other equivalent cases. Conversely, as noted by Merriam (2009) and additionally repeated by Rule and John (2011), thick descriptions of the setting, the participants of the study and the findings of the data reinforce the transferability of qualitative research. Geertz (2014) explains that “thick description provides outside observers with contextual information to sort information into a meaningful frame” (p. 40). I provided a detailed description of the data collection environment since transferability refers to the same methods used in a different environment.

3.9.3 Dependability

According to Rule and John (2011, p. 107), dependability “focuses on methodological rigour and coherence towards generating findings and case accounts which the research community can accept with confidence.” To address the issue of dependability, I depended on an independent audit of the research method by critical colleagues. Dependability was additionally guaranteed by ensuring that the findings derived from the primary sources of data (educators) in the form of semi-structured, interviews, were combined with the data acquired from the collages. Furthermore, to ensure dependability, I consulted empirical studies (Bolam et al., 2010; Grossman, Wineberg & Woolworth, 2008; Horn & Little, 2012; Newmann & Youngs, 2008; Strahan, 2010) related to PLCs in school environments as references. Additionally, I also ensured the dependability of the findings through the recommendations of scholars such as Cohen et al (2007) that an audit of all activities that were conducted should be kept. In addressing dependability, I ensured that I described any action that was embarked on, including the manner in which I introduced the study to the potential participants, providing the description of the school and the participants’ contextual factors, sharing my thoughts of what was emerging from the research site with my peers, and crosschecking for various inconsistencies that might exist. I even used the services of a critical reader in order to ensure that only accurate information emerged and that the findings had undergone the scrutiny of various people. The methodological rigour and logic that was preserved in this study reinforces the issue of dependability.

To triangulate the data, I also used the collages to allow the participants to tell their story by using pictures or artistic expressions. I encouraged the participants to speak honestly because their thoughts or views will not and cannot be traced directly or indirectly back to them when the research report is written. I used pseudonyms for the school and teachers’ names (Bertram & Christiansen, 2010) in the written report. I gave the participants the raw data to check for accuracy. In other words, I took the interview transcripts back to the teachers to check and comment on whether these were a precise replication of what they had said in the interviews (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is vital that all studies follow specific values, “These values are autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence” (Durrheim & Wessenaar, 2008, p. 69). Furthermore, the researcher is expected to observe many ethical issues during the course of the study, including data generation, data analysis and reporting the findings (Creswell, 2012). Vithal and Jansen (2010) categorise ethical issues into informed consent processes, avoidance of dishonesty in research, confidentiality with regard to the participants, benefits of the research to the participants over risk, and the participants’ requests that go beyond social norms. Coleman (2009) and Creswell (2012) contend that scholars must obtain informed consent from gatekeepers and participants before the study is conducted.

Correspondingly, in order for the research to be undertaken in an ethically sound manner, it was essential for the participants to consent to the research. It was necessary that the researcher honour the autonomy of all participants who took part in the research. This suggests that all of the participants must participate freely (without fear or favour) in the study, and they must have the liberty to retract their participation at any time (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Since all of the participants were professionally educated adults and of sound mind, informed consent was required. A clear description and clarification of the research question, design, and methods of data collection were offered to the participants and their autonomy in participation was respected. Letters were written to the participants and gate keepers to request permission to conduct the study.

Non-maleficence means doing no damage, specifically, “The research should do no harm to the research participants or to any other people. Researchers need to think about whether their study will do any physical, emotional or other harm to any person” (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 66). Throughout the research process, the participants were unharmed. When presenting the data, the participants remain blame-free in terms of the findings; and their participation in the study will yield research findings that may be of benefit to themselves as well as those wishing to conduct research in a similar context in the future. All members of the research process were carefully considered beforehand, and all were deemed suitably competent to undertake the research (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The participants’ real names were not disclosed when

the report was written and pseudonyms were used to protect the participants (Bertram & Christiansen, 2010).

Moreover, the research must be of profit, either directly or indirectly, to the research participants or more broadly to other researchers or to the public in general (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Copies of the draft and final Master's thesis will be made available to the participants. I have noted that although there were studies conducted on teacher learning, there was a gap in the South African literature on teacher learning in the Life Orientation FET Phase of PLCs. Based on this information, I hoped that this would contribute to the current South African body of knowledge with the aim of improving teachers' practice, which will eventually benefit learners (Stoll et al., 2006).

3.11 POSITIONALITY OF THE RESEARCHER

On the one hand, I acknowledge that being the Deputy Principal, interviewing post-level 1 teachers may have influenced the honesty of the responses to a certain degree. On the other hand, the participants and I shared mutual trust and respect. Therefore, I do not think that my positionality has greatly influenced the honesty of the interviewee's responses. As an interpretive researcher, trying to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of teachers' learning in Life Orientation in the FET Phase within PLCs, I maintain that my subjective role is not a key concern.

3.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology that was adopted in this study. The interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach were discussed, followed by an outline of the case study research design. Furthermore, a description of the research setting/context, sampling, data collection, and data analysis followed. In order to establish rigour in the study, I outlined trustworthiness and how it was guaranteed in this study. Moreover, I also explained the importance of considering ethical issues, and my positionality when carrying out this study. Chapter 4 presents the data and explains the analysis and findings based on the research questions posed in this study.

CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher learning of three FET Life Orientation teachers in PLCs. The data was elicited through semi-structured interviews and collages, as discussed in-depth in the previous chapter. This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the findings, which are presented according to the research questions. For Research Question 1 (RQ1), the findings are discussed according to themes. Moreover, for Research Question 2 (RQ2), the findings are discussed according to Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics, which are: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and group work, as well as individual learning. The analysis was done based on the framework of Opfer and Pedder's (2011) systems on teacher learning, which are: the teacher's orientation to learning, the learning activity, and the school context, as well as the literature reviewed.

4.2 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Mr Shozi held a Bachelor of Education Degree (B. Ed), majoring in Information Technology and Mathematical Literacy. He had been teaching for 15 years, and had eight years' experience in Life Orientation. Mr Shozi decided to become a teacher because he wanted to bring about change in the community. He valued education and regarded it as an important mechanism to improve people's lives. He believed that teaching is a noble profession that requires passion, commitment, tolerance, perseverance, character and the dedication to make a difference in the lives of a diverse group of young and older children. Mr Shozi chose to become a Life Orientation teacher because he had realised the importance of the subject in shaping the lives of the youth as Life Orientation encourages them to be responsible citizens. The aspect that he liked most about his work was changing people's lives for the better and making a contribution to the community. He also liked his work because the spirit of Ubuntu always prevailed amongst his colleagues, management and the parents. Mr Shozi understood Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a practice of shared vision that involves the skills of unearthing shared pictures of the future that encourage genuine commitment rather than compliance. He viewed PLCs as an approach and a strategy that encourages an effective staff development team for

school improvement. It is a reflective process where both individuals and community growth are achieved, and are connected with the school's shared vision for learning. He added that professional learning communities are mainly about learning for learners, as well as learning for teachers, learning for leaders, learning for our schools, and learning for our nation.

Miss Ngcobo held a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), majoring in Travel and Tourism and Life Orientation. She had been teaching for 13 years, and had eight years' experience in Life Orientation. Miss Ngcobo decided to become a teacher because she realised that the only thing that you need in order to survive is education in this country. She wanted to assist the child of a Black person so that such children will have the possibility of living a happy life. She suggested that for our country to be successful, it needs teachers who will educate the future leaders of this country and make this country a developed one, amongst other reasons, to fight poverty. The people of this country need to be aware of different diseases that may attack our future leaders. Miss Ngcobo chose to become a Life Orientation teacher because she wanted South Africa learners to be aware of their behaviour and to be aware of the diseases that are spreading all over the country. She believed that these diseases have a negative influence on the economy because if people who are supposed to do a certain job fail to do so, productivity decreases and the economy collapses. The aspects that she liked most about her work were socialising with learners who came from different homes having different behaviours, and working with different teachers who came from different places as she found that diversity created a strong bond in her work. She recognised that a teacher must play a pastoral role, be a nurse and also a parent. Miss Ngcobo understood Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as being based on teaching and learning, and focusing on the improvement of learners' performance. Teachers need to improve their knowledge so that they can deliver quality lessons as there are changes that must be made over time.

Mrs Mkhize held a Bachelor of Education Degree (B. Ed), majoring in Business Studies and Life Orientation. She had been teaching for 10 years, and had seven years' experience in Life Orientation. Mrs Mkhize decided to become a teacher because she was disappointed in the education that she received. She described her experiences of teachers arriving late to school and leaving early, some came drunk to school while some had affairs with learners. Moreover, some of the teachers did not go to class. From a fairly young age, around eleven or twelve, she knew

that there was a better way. Mrs Mkhize wanted to make a difference in learners' lives. To her, teaching is a noble profession as in her community teachers were respected and trusted. Furthermore, she decided to become a teacher because she loved gaining knowledge. Mrs Mkhize loved to learn and it gave her great joy to share this passion with others. Not everyone always appreciated it, but she felt that inspiring even one child was a great feeling and worth every second. Mrs Mkhize chose to become a Life Orientation teacher because she loved to make a contribution to the country as there are many social issues in the youth and the country as a whole, for example HIV/AIDS, poverty, fraud and corruption, woman and child abuse, violence, a lack of access to facilities, family collapse, loss of caregivers and the abuse of drugs. Alternatively, she contended that Life Orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge, and values about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, societal engagement, recreation and physical activity, careers and career choices. The aspects that she liked most about her work were that it gave her an opportunity to interact with different learners; to see young people developing into adults; to make a contribution to the education of learners; to communicate with parents, community leaders, community members, the officials of the different departments, and the South African Police Service. Mrs Mkhize understood a Professional Learning Community (PLC) as a space where it is expected that knowledge is located in the daily lived experiences of teachers, and which is best realised through critical thinking with others who share the same experience. She suggested that actively engaging teachers in PLCs will enhance their professional knowledge and improve student learning. Professional learning communities are mainly about learning for learners, as well as learning for teachers, learning for leaders, learning for schools and learning for the nation. She explained that teachers deliberate about what learners need to learn, teachers learn strategies to measure learning, test previous and current achievements, set achievable goals, and then share and generate lessons collaboratively.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This study aimed to address two key research questions, namely: "What learning activities do FET Phase LO teachers engage with in the PLC?" and "To what extent does this PLC reflect the characteristics of an effective PLC?" The following section outlines how the data related to RQ1 was grouped into themes.

4.3.1 Research Question 1 (RQ1)

1. What learning activities do FET Phase Life Orientation teachers engage with in the PLC?

Table 4.1: Aligning the responses to RQ1 with the themes and theoretical framework

Descriptions from text	Themes	Theoretical framework
We learn as a team/group, group where we discuss what learners need to learn, teaching strategies to measure our students learning, test the previous and current achievement, set achievable goals, and then share and generate lesson plan collaboratively. Sharing of ideas through discussion. Instilling a strong culture of learning. Collaborative method. Develop assessment instruments, share progress and challenges, deal with the subject content.	Collaborative learning activities	Opfer and Pedder (2011)
To read professional publications, watch television and movies, share information. Reading articles, magazines, and documentaries, observing colleagues, watching television and listening to the radio, reading books, conversations with colleagues.	Conversation with colleagues	Opfer and Pedder (2011)

4.3.2 Collaborative Learning Activities

The data shows that the element of collaborative learning activities between teachers in this FET phase Life Orientation PLC prevailed. In Miss Ngcobo words, “*Sharing of teaching strategies to measure our students learning, test the previous and current achievement, set achievable goals, and then share and generate lesson plan collaboratively.*” Furthermore, Mr Shozi indicated that “*we as teachers share progress, difficulties, ideas, issues, and our needs. It enables us (teachers) to discuss Life Orientation concepts and problems that arise during the staff development*

activity.” Alternatively, Mrs Mkhize revealed, “*I am not comfortable to work with all my colleagues and to share content information because I like to work independently.*”

In the above discussion, two out of three participants stressed that collaborative learning activities were applied in this Life Orientation PLC, working together to ensure and promote teacher learning activities. In most of the discussions, the participants showed that teachers need to share information, learn from one another (co-learning) and come up with teaching strategies. The teachers in this Life Orientation PLC had an opportunity to work together to discuss and solve problems in a team/group of teachers rather than being isolated in their classrooms. Brodie (2013) emphasises that one of the characteristics of successful professional learning communities is collaboration among the teachers. Furthermore, You and Craig (2013) found that through collaborative learning, teachers get the opportunity to get to know one another better. In addition, DuFour (2014) contends that collaborative learning is a situation in which two or more people learn or try to learn something together. Moreover, the data from the participants seems to resonate with the literature, for example, “*the activities we do it collaboratively.*” Sargent and Hannum (2010) affirm that collaborative learning in a PLC describes a situation in which particular forms of interaction between teachers are expected to occur. Furthermore, this reply links to the views articulated by Schmoker (2005, p. 140) that “teachers learn best from other teachers, in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching.”

It is evident that there is a link between the above theme ‘collaborative learning activities’ and the framework of Opfer and Pedder’s (2011) work regarding learning activities. Likewise, Opfer and Pedder (2011) state that one of the systems that influence teacher learning is the teacher professional learning activity that focuses on the elements of effective professional growth (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Desimone, 2009). For instance, constant time, constant engagement; logical learning activities; activities included into teachers' daily work; focus on eloquent content knowledge and the collaboration of teachers from the same school are all needed. For teacher learning to happen, change must happen in several areas of influence (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

On another note, Opfer and Pedder (2011) warn that collaboration must not be seen as a solution, as excessive teacher collaboration can impede creativity, while less collaboration can impede

growth and create isolation. “For the general principle, teacher collaboration enhances their learning – to hold, we must understand collaboration as a collection of specific patterns across individuals and schools that hold in a variety of situations” (Bertram, 2014, p. 98). Brodie (2013) contends that in South Africa, there is growing agreement that these Professional Learning Communities need to have an expert to accelerate the process.

4.3.3 Conversation with colleagues

Two out of three participants showed evidence of learning as a result of conversation with their colleagues. Miss Ngcobo’s views were, “*From my colleagues I have learnt that I need to read professional publications, watch television movies that are connected to academic discipline that will improve my professional development.*” Mrs Mkhize also strengthened the theme ‘conversation with colleagues’ by indicating that, “*[In] this PLC we encourage one another to learn formally/informally which means we take a lead and came up with ideas that enriched our teaching which will benefit our learners, even during the break we free to share information about Life Orientation.*”

The element of teacher conversation amongst the participants was one of the main features of this Life Orientation PLC. Putnam and Borko (2000) explain that the conversation or dialogue that arises within communities of practice are crucial to what and how teachers learn. Stoll et al. (2006) contend that conversation is one of the vital features of a PLC, where teachers are expected to share knowledge, information and common values. For teachers, learning happens in diverse spaces of practice, involving their classrooms, school communities, and professional development courses or seminars/workshops. Moreover, learning can happen in a short dialogue with a colleague, or after school when counselling concerned learners (Adler, 2000).

Guskey and Yoon (2009) argue that teacher learning is a professional process that happens both formally and informally in the school context, where teachers are personally motivated to learn from colleagues. Moreover, professional development also involves formal/informal experiences, for instance, reading professional publications, watching television and movies linked to academic disciplines (Ganser, 2001).

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 2 (RQ2)

2. To what extent does this PLC reflect the characteristics of an effective PLC?

Table 4.2 Aligning the responses to RQ2 with the themes and theoretical framework

Descriptions from text	Characteristics	Theoretical framework
Not interested, achieving our common goal, which is to increase learners' performance and learn in the process, cater for all learners needs, reflect, and share their findings to deepen their understanding, don't like these PLC meetings. Share and comment on learning.	Shared values and vision	Stoll et al. (2006)
All share accountable when things go wrong, assess our progress, make corrections, and hold ourselves accountable. Agree to take larger accountability for their individual learning. It is the teacher who has assumed responsibility and accountability, If learners fail, the teacher has also failed.	Collective responsibility	Stoll et al. (2006)
We are liable for what the learners learn and strategies or methods. Depend on each other for expertise, sharing of knowledge, reflect, and share their findings to deepen their understanding, Study new methods, strategies, interventions and approaches to improve our professional practice together as a team. Indicate why the lessons are taught, how to use the lesson, and how to make the lesson meaningful. Share and comment on learning continuously through questioning and redirecting to foster excellence in the teaching practice.	Reflective professional inquiry	Stoll et al. (2006)
Joint work together, sharing of knowledge, team teaching, collective effort. Teachers work and learn together, improve our professional practice together as a team, incidental learning.	Collaboration	Stoll et al. (2006)

Descriptions from text	Characteristics	Theoretical framework
Joint work together. Agree to take larger accountability for their individual learning, team teaching, collective effort. Teachers work and learn together, improve our professional practice together as a team.	Group, as well as individual learning	Stoll et al. (2006)

4.4.1 Shared values and vision,

Shared values and vision need to be demonstrated in PLCs. This feature emphasises that PLC members agree on the same vision, and the shared values that guide the Community of Practice (CoP) (Stoll et al., 2006). To be members of one CoP, teachers must share similarities that identify each one as members. Shared values develop from one vision of student learning (Brodie, 2013). Shared values and vision will ensure that all community members behave in an adequate manner, in line with the aims of the school or the PLC. When asked if these FET Phase Life Orientation members shared a common values and vision, Miss Ngcobo responded, *“No. people have different vision, when it comes to this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC. Some see as way out from their classrooms to do their own things.”* In a similar manner, Mr Shozi said, *“I don’t think so, many don’t like these PLC meetings they think it’s a time off from their classroom. But this year in CAPS teachers have changed the way they do things, for example, when we discuss things they look more interesting because they gain some content then before.”* However, Mrs Mkhize indicated that, *“we cater for all learners needs, reflect, and share their findings to deepen their understanding.”*

The above two out of three participants agreed that in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC, none of the members shared the same vision. It sometimes resulted in making them reluctant to attend the PLC meetings. Some came and left early because they were not aware of the goals and values of these PLC meetings. Alternatively, Stoll et al. (2006) affirm that a shared value base provides a framework for shared, collective, ethical decision making. Having a shared vision and sense of purpose has been found to be crucially important in PLCs.

4.4.2 Collective responsibility

The component of collective responsibility seems to prevail in most of the participants' responses as one of the key features of a CoP is collective responsibility. Miss Ngcobo's views were, *"All share accountable when things go wrong."* Furthermore, in Mr Shozi words, *"It is the teacher who has assumed responsibility and accountability, if learners fail, the teacher has also failed."* Moreover, Mrs Mkhize explained, *"we assess our progress, make corrections, and hold ourselves accountable, agree to take larger accountability for their individual learning."*

There is link between the above data and Stoll et al.'s (2006) work. Moreover, it is expected that such collective responsibility helps to sustain commitment, puts peer pressure and accountability on those who do not do their fair share, and eases isolation (Stoll et al., 2006). One of the components of PLCs is collective responsibility among teachers (Brodie, 2013). PLCs are preferred for their potential, not only to offer support and building trust among members in the community, but also for their ability to foster collective responsibility in their members (DuFour, 2014). Furthermore, Graven's (2004) research shows that "active participation in professional learning communities resulted in the manifestations of collective responsibility between its members" (p. 182). This is one of the central features of teacher learning communities as indicated by researchers (Stoll et al., 2006; Steyn, 2013). Based on the data collected in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC, I can conclude that in this PLC there was an element of collective responsibility between all of the members.

4.4.3 Reflective professional inquiry

Stoll et al. (2006) have maintained that reflective professional inquiry includes: reflective dialogue, conversations about serious educational issues or problems involving the application of new knowledge in a sustained manner; frequent examining of teachers' practice through mutual observation and case analysis; joint planning; and curriculum development. Miss Ngcobo suggested that, *"We are liable for what the learners learn and strategies or methods that we use; depend on each other for expertise, sharing of knowledge, reflect, and we dialogues to our deepen their understanding about teaching."* Likewise, Mr Shozi expressed his views, *"we use new study methods, strategies, interventions and approaches to improve our professional practice together as a team. Indicate why the lessons are taught, how to use the lesson, and how*

to make the lesson meaningful.” Putnam and Borko (2000) point out that the conversation or dialogue that arises within CoPs is crucial to what and how teachers learn. Mrs Mkhize explained that, “in this Life Orientation PLC we Share and comment on learning continuously through questioning and redirecting to foster excellence in the teaching practice.”

From the above data, there is evidence that reflective professional inquiry did happen in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC. The link is shown as Stoll et al. (2006) argue that seeking new knowledge; tacit knowledge constantly being converted into shared knowledge through interaction; and applying new ideas and information to problem solving and solutions addressing learners’ needs is important. Moreover, Stoll et al. (2006) contend that dialogue is one of the vital features of a PLC, where teachers are expected to share knowledge, information and common values. Furthermore, afterwards, teachers continuously learn through meaningful collaboration to lead to new perspectives on the content and purposes of inquiry and dialogue to benefit student outcomes and teacher knowledge (Burke, 2013).

4.4.4 Collaboration

Collaboration characterises the core of a PLC (Fullan, 2009; DuFour, 2004; Schmoker, 2005). Moreover, Wenger (1998, p. 7) maintains that for community learning is “an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generation of members.” When asked about how teachers go about learning when engaging with other teachers, Mrs Mkhize briefly expressed the nature of teacher learning when she said, *“I think its incidental learning. We don’t go out of our way to say today I am going to learn something; I think we just learn incidentally; teachers work and learn together, improve our professional practice together.”* This response links with the views expressed by Schmoker (2005, p. 141), who articulated that *“teachers learn best from other teachers, in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching.”* Mr Shozi also expressed his views, *“We jointly do work together, sharing of knowledge, team teaching, and collective effort.”* Moreover, in a PLC, teachers work jointly to advance their learning and develop learner accomplishment through collaboration (Feger & Arruda, 2008). Miss Ngcobo also expressed her sentiments regarding the collaboration when she stated, *“Teachers work and learn together for the Teachers work and learn together for the benefit of learners.”*

The data have clearly indicated that collaboration in this FET Phase PLC is evident. Likewise, for DuFour (2004), collaboration refers to staff participation in developing activities with significance for numerous people, going beyond artificial exchanges of support, assistance, or help, initiating mutual feedback, and review. The link between collaboration and the data is highlighted.

4.4.5 Group, as well as individual learning

Stoll et al. (2006) has indicated that group, as well as individual learning are part of the central characteristics of PLCs. Regarding this characteristic, in Mr Shoji's words, "*we joint work together and agree to take larger accountability for their individual learning.*" Miss Ngcobo suggested that, "*Teachers work and learns together; improve our professional practice together as a group.*" Nevertheless, Mrs Mkhize's view was that, "*Team-work is what we use, nevertheless independence is very much encourage, novice teaches are develop by expert teachers to be able to work independently when they are alone in class.*"

Two out of three participants indicated that they used group work to advance their profession. However, one participant indicated that independence in this FET Phase Life Orientation was allowed. Day (1999) suggests that professional development involves all natural learning experiences, as well as those mindful and intended activities that are planned to be of direct or indirect advantage to the individual, group or school and that contribute to the excellence of education in the classroom. There is a link between this data and the work of Stoll et al. (2006), for example, Stoll et al. (2006) indicate that all teachers become learners with their colleagues. Group learning was thus also evident in the data. The group's collage is presented in Figure 4.1 below.

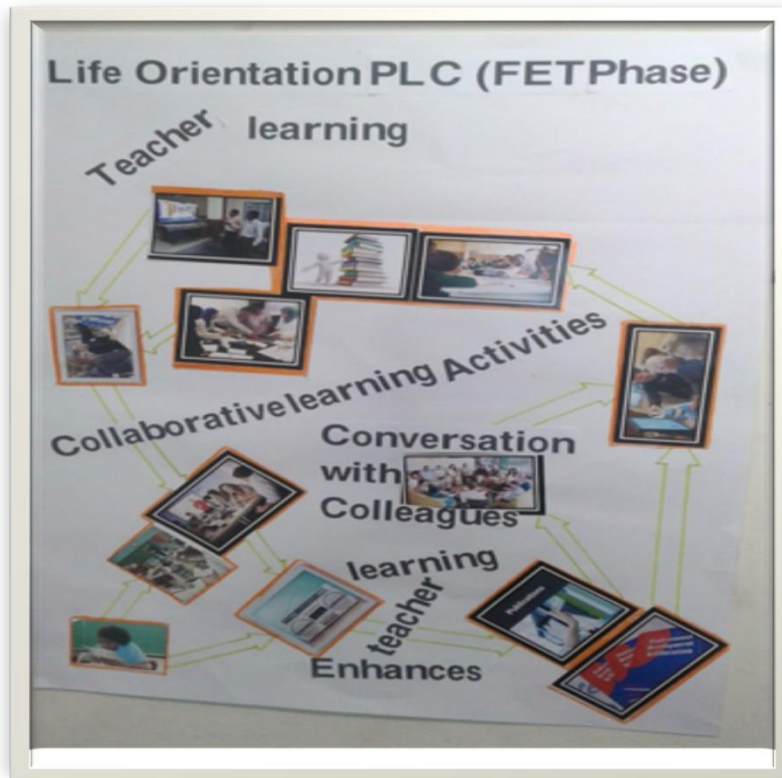


Figure 4.1: Participants' collage in their Life Orientation FET Phase (teacher learning)

All three participants presented one collage as a group. The participants explained the way that they learnt in this FET Phase PLC by using pictures. Miss Ngcobo, Mr Shozi and Mrs Mkhize disclosed different ways in which this Life Orientation PLC (FET Phase) enhanced their teacher learning through offering a range of activities. Miss Ngcobo indicated that *“these sessions focused on curriculum and learning issues and on the development of assessment instruments, for an example, class activity, homework, project and task for that week.”* When presenting their collage, the participants stated that collaborative learning and conversation with colleagues were predominantly their method of teacher learning. Most of these collaborative learning activities, and conversations with colleagues, developed around curriculum matters and enhanced their teacher learning. Mr Shozi also mentioned that they used resources to enhance their teacher learning, *“reading article, magazine, documentary, observing colleagues, watching television and listening to the radio are other teacher learning activities at this Life Orientation PLC.”* The participants seemed to help each other in their learning. Furthermore, Mrs Mkhize also indicated that *“these meetings form a platform for learning because we learn about how to analyse learner performance, how to come up with remedial strategies for poor performances our learners, how*

to do a teacher's file. We are expected to make the report about our subjects, how to set the question papers and memorandum and how to do the moderation, it can be pre-moderation or post-moderation." The truth that they shared teaching resources indicates collaborative work. Knight (2002) maintains that teachers who work collaboratively in PLCs support the perspective that teacher learning is situated. This suggests that the context in which these FET Phase Life Orientation teachers learnt supported their learning.

Alternatively, Miss Ngcobo, in this collage, indicated that, *"team-work is what we use, however independence is very much encouraged, novice teaches are develop by expert teachers to be able to work independently when they are alone in class."* Based on the participants' collage, it is evident that teacher learning was taking place in this Life Orientation PLC in the FET phase. It was also revealed that the participants (teachers) were prepared to be involved in numerous activities, as portrayed in this collage, to ensure that teacher learning becomes a success.

Mrs Mkhize signposted that when they were making the collage, *"The vision of our Life Orientation PLC underlies in Department of Basic Education agenda that requires most teachers to rethink their own practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about learner results, and to teach in ways we have never taught before."*

4.5 MISS NGCOBO, MR SHOZI AND MRS MKHIZE'S TEACHER LEARNING SHOWN THROUGH OPFER AND PEDDER'S SUBSYSTEMS

The teacher learning in this PLC is represented in the diagram in Figure 4.2 below.

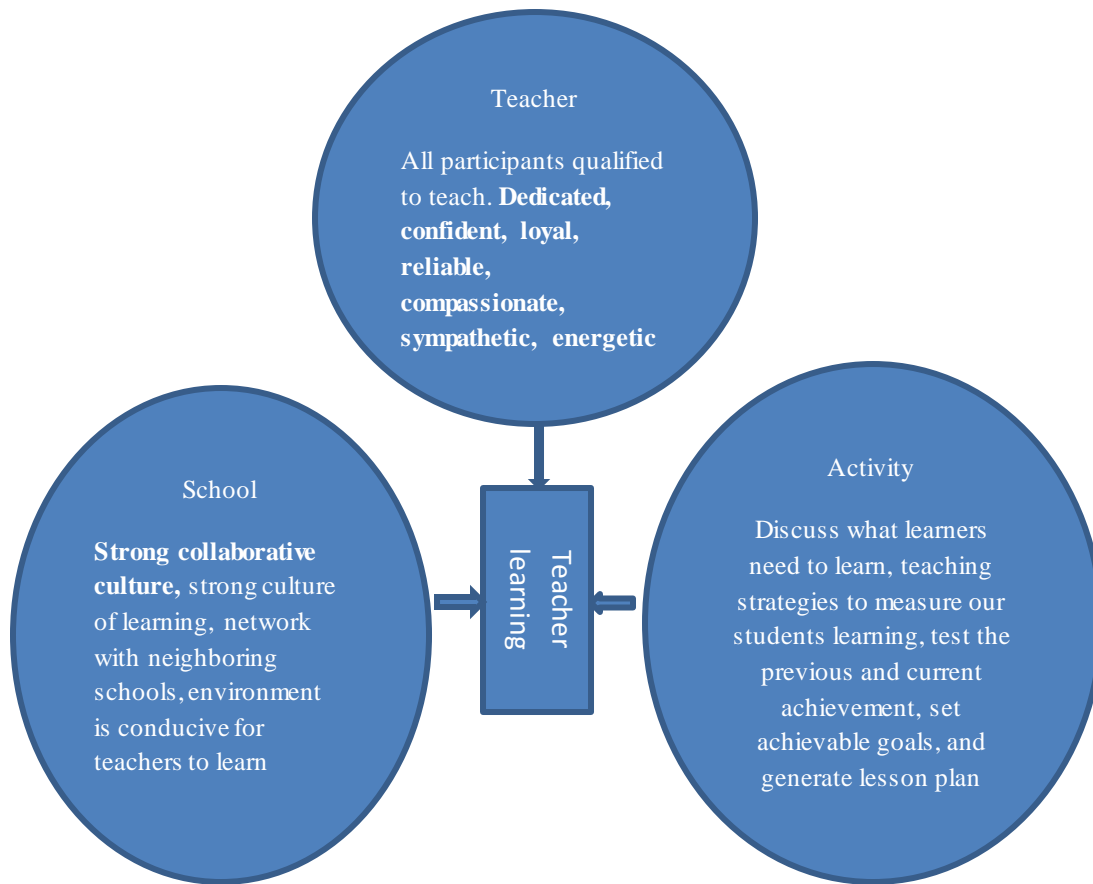


Figure 4.2: Using Opfer and Pedder’s subsystems to show teacher learning in the LO (FET) phase in the Umkhambathi Circuit in one secondary school

In Figure 4.2 above, the bigger outer circle within which the subsystems work reveals the complex system of teacher learning. The smaller three circles nested in a cyclical movement show the variables and the dynamics that influence teacher learning. The thinner arrows show the joint nature of the subsystems and their impact on each other, while the thicker arrow signs show that each subsystem adds to teacher learning. The nature of learning is dependent on the school context, the teacher (individual), and the learning activities for teacher learning. The participants’ school had a strong collaborative culture, networking with neighbouring schools; and an environment that was conducive for teachers to learn. There were many collaborative opportunities and teacher learning activities that supported learning for teachers.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in RQ1, the analysis was done based on the framework of Opfer and Pedder's (2011) complex systems of teacher learning, which are: the teacher's orientation to learning, the learning activity, and the school context. There is a clear link between themes and the framework of Opfer and Pedder's (2011) work, for example, collaborative learning activities link with the learning activity; and conversation with colleagues enhances teacher learning, which links with the teachers' orientation to learning; and building relationships and trust link with the school context. Likewise, RQ2 used Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics of PLCs, which are: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and group work, as well as individual learning. This was analysed in conjunction with the literature that was reviewed. The following chapter summarises the findings, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore the learning experiences of the FET phase Life Orientation (LO) teachers in Professional Learning Communities in one secondary school in the Umkhambathi circuit. The previous chapter presented and discussed the results that were elicited through the use of a collage and semi-structured interviews thematically. In this chapter, I discuss the key findings that emerged from the data analysis in Chapter 4 and elaborate on how these findings are linked to the literature and Opfer and Pedder's (2011) framework, which is divided into three sub-systems: teacher's orientation to learning, learning activities and school context. Moreover, the findings were also discussed according to Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics, which are: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and group work, as well as individual learning.

I have also discussed the limitations of the study. This is followed by recommendations and suggestions for further research studies. This study aimed to address the following two research questions:

1. What learning activities do FET Phase LO teachers engage with in the PLC?
2. To what extent does this PLC reflect the characteristics of an effective PLC?

The findings were centred on these research questions as I attempted to examine how FET Phase Life Orientation teachers learn in Professional Learning Communities. This is followed by highlights of the main findings of the study.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter one presented the introduction, focus, purpose of the study, rationale, and background information of the study. The research questions posed in the study were also explained. The chapter gave indicators of the literature review, theoretical framework and the methodology used. Chapter 2 presented a review of the related literature in the field. The concepts of teacher

learning, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), the theories of Teacher Learning, Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice, the professional development of teachers, and Life Orientation were discussed in detail. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of Opfer and Pedder's (2011) sub-systems, which are divided into three sub-sections: teacher's orientation to learning, learning activity and school context was described. Moreover, Stoll et al.'s (2006) effective characteristics, which are: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and group work, as well as individual learning were explored.

Chapter three presented the research methodology. The research paradigm, the research style or approach, methods of data generation, for example, semi-structured interviews and a collage were presented. Purposive sampling, ethical issues, and trustworthiness were explained. Chapter 4 presented the data and explained the analysis and findings based on the research questions. The data was also arranged into four themes.

The findings are presented and summarised under each research question. This is meant to show how the data positively responded to the main questions that guided this study. As part of the presented findings, the extent to which each research question has been addressed is also discussed.

5.3 WHAT LEARNING ACTIVITIES DO FET PHASE LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS ENGAGE IN IN THE PLC?

This section discusses the first research question, which was based on the learning activities that the FET Phase Life Orientation teachers engaged with in the PLCs. According to Brodie (2013), one of the characteristics of successful PLCs is collaboration among teachers as part of their learning activities. The data showed that the participants indicated different activities that took place in the FET Phase Life Orientation PLCs. All three participants agreed that assessment was a main activity. With regard to assessment, the teachers discussed different question papers and memoranda to analyse whether these were of an acceptable standard to assess learners. The participants also discussed activities from previous question papers and memoranda of Life Orientation based on the content that was expected to answer the questions.

Secondly, regarding moderation, each teacher was expected to bring 20% of their scripts from the previous test to be moderated by their colleagues. In moderation, the moderator was anticipated to comment on marks awarded for skill, that is, whether the learners were given accurate results and whether they met the quality stipulated by UMALUSI as the examination board in South Africa. Thirdly, with respect to subject content discussions, the teachers in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC were each sharing a topic based on subject content matter from the textbook. The participants were expected to discuss what was required by the topic and how the subject content could be delivered to the learners' best interest to ensure that they fully understood it. Conversely, amongst the three activities, Life Orientation content discussions were given more time. The teachers emphasised that there had been a change from the activities that they had been doing in the previous years. This is demonstrated by the time given to each activity and the level of participation from the participants. The participants' acknowledged that they began spending more time in the Life Orientation PLC meeting, and even got an opportunity to discuss matters concerning their teaching practices. They were able to share information with their colleagues. Sargent and Hannum (2010) confirm that collaborative learning in the PLC describes a situation in which particular forms of interaction between teachers are expected to occur. Likewise, this corresponds with the views expressed by Schmoker (2005, p. 140) who articulates that "teachers learn best from other teachers, in settings where they literally teach each other the art of teaching." It is evident in this Life Orientation FET phase PLC, the participants intuitively established a cycle of learning, planning, and changing as a part of their collaboration.

The data also displayed that the participants showed evidence of learning activities as a result of conversation with their colleagues, for example, reading professional publications, watching television and movies, sharing information, reading articles, magazines, and documentaries, observing colleagues, listening to the radio, and reading books. Likewise, Ganser, (2001) asserts that professional development involves formal/informal experiences. Furthermore, Putnam and Borko (2000) point out that the conversation or dialogue that arises within communities of practice is crucial to what and how teachers learn. Moreover, Stoll et al. (2006) contend that conversation is one of the vital features of a PLC, where teachers are expected to share knowledge, information and common values. The data collected through this Life Orientation

FET Phase PLC confirmed the use of PLCs as a means to enhance teacher learning through collaborative conversations.

5.4 TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THIS PLC REFLECT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE PLC?

The second research question strived to examine the extent to which this PLC reflected the characteristics of an effective PLC. These characteristics were based on Stoll et al.'s (2006) work. Stoll et al. (2006, p. 226-227) describe five main characteristics of effective professional learning communities as “(1) Shared values and vision, (2) collective responsibility, (3) reflective professional inquiry, (4) collaboration, and (5) group, as well as individual learning.”

The data collected shows that this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC did reflect four out five characteristics of effective PLCs. The data indicated that PLCs are initiated by the school under the instruction of the Department of Basic Education, and not by teachers responding to their own professional development needs. It is a top down approach from national, provincial, district and circuits to school level. Therefore, teachers are not fully involved in the planning and organisation of these PLCs.

Firstly, one the characteristics of teacher learning communities is shared vision, values, and goals (Stoll et al., 2006). To ensure a successful PLC, one needs to share the important qualities of the same vision, values and goals. Borko and Putnam (1996), assert that, “When schools are organized to support the collaborative culture of a professional learning community, classroom teachers continue to have tremendous latitude” (p. 48). One participant indicated that the teachers in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC did not share the same vision and goals. Therefore, one cannot regard them as PLCs. Brodie (2013) views PLCs as a group of teachers who are committed to working jointly in ongoing processes of collective inquiry. Collective inquiry emphasises collegial effort among teachers. This ensures strong support between teachers in the same subject or school. One teacher in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC was not comfortable in sharing her understanding and experiences. It seems that the culture of isolation was demonstrated in these FET Phase Life Orientation PLC meetings. Furthermore, one participant was not willing to work while others appeared scared to voice their ideas in this PLC.

Nonetheless, one of the aims of a PLC is to create a sharing environment (Stoll et al. 2006; Brodie, 2013).

Secondly, the component of collective responsibility seemed to prevail in most of the participants' data in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC. Moreover, it is expected that such collective responsibility helps to sustain commitment, puts peer pressure and accountability on those who do not do their fair share, and eases isolation (Stoll et al., 2006). One of the components of professional learning communities is collective responsibility among teachers (Brodie, 2013).

Thirdly, there was evidence (three out of three participants) that reflective professional inquiry did happen in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC. Stoll et al. (2006) argue that seeking new knowledge; tacit knowledge being constantly converted into shared knowledge through interaction; and applying new ideas and information to problem solving and solutions addressing learners' needs are important; these were found in this PLC.

Fourthly, the data clearly indicates that collaboration in this FET Phase PLC was evident. Likewise, for DuFour (2004), collaboration refers to staff participation in developing activities with significance for numerous people, going beyond artificial exchanges of support, assistance, or help, mutual feedback, and review. Nevertheless, Opfer and Pedder (2011) warn that collaboration must not be seen as a solution, as excessively teacher collaboration can impede creativity, while less collaboration can impede growth and create isolation.

Lastly, two out of three participants indicated that they used group work to advance their profession. However, one participant indicated that independence in this FET Phase Life Orientation was allowed. Day (1999) suggests that professional development involves all natural learning experiences as well as those mindful and intended activities that are planned to be of direct or indirect advantage to the individual, group or school and that contribute to the excellence of education in the classroom. However, group, as well as individual learning seems to have occurred in this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC.

In conclusion, the teachers in this FET Phase Life Orientation engaged with Life Orientation content and assessment matters through collaborative learning. The participants were able to

share knowledge with their colleagues, and work as a group. However, not all of the teachers were comfortable in sharing their understanding and experiences. Regarding RQ2, the analysis of the data indicated that this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC reflected the characteristics of effective PLCs, as based on Stoll et al.'s (2006) work. Furthermore, the following positive characteristics were evident: collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and group work, as well as individual learning. However, not all of the characteristics of Stoll et al. (2006) were evident, that is, shared values and vision were missing. Consequently, this FET Phase Life Orientation PLC can be viewed as a PLC because four out of five characteristics from Stoll et al.'s (2006) PLCs were evident.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted over a short period of time, which might have prejudiced the results of the data collected. This study was conducted on a sample of three LO teachers from one school in a district; consequently, I cannot make generalisations about the results over the province or country. My position as a teacher teaching Life Orientation and as the Deputy Principal in the same school could have had a negative influence on the participants' willingness to respond trustingly and freely. Conversely, from the start of this study, I clarified my position as a Life Orientation teacher, researcher, and a Deputy Principal to ensure that the study was more dependable. I do not think that my positionality has greatly influenced the honesty of the interviewee's responses. As an interpretive researcher, trying to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of teacher learning in Life Orientation FET Phase PLCs, I maintain that my subjective role is not a key concern. Furthermore, the transcripts were returned to the participants for proofreading and to verify the accuracy of the transcripts.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section discusses the recommendations based on the findings of this study. I recommend that more research on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the FET Phase Life Orientation band should be done on a greater scale, comparing and exploring secondary schools in the FET Phases from different districts to get a deeper understanding and broader view. This study was based on the teacher learning activities of the FET Phase Life Orientation teachers in the PLC. Moreover, this study examined whether this Life Orientation FET Phase PLC reflected

the characteristics of an effective PLC according to Stoll et al. (2006). I recommend that more studies should centre on teacher learning and characteristics of effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

5.7 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research could also explore different subjects because this study centred on Life Orientation within the FET Phase. Moreover, it should be done in primary school since this is where Life Orientation begins. Also, the number of participants and schools that will be involved could be increased.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with the aim of addressing the two key research questions in this study, namely: “What learning activities do FET Phase LO teachers engage with in the PLC?” and “To what extent does this PLC reflect the characteristics of an effective PLC?” This study used a qualitative case study research design, using a collage and semi-structured interviews to generate the data. It was shown that the PLC in this study was an effective one as the participants were able to list several activities and characteristics belonging to successful PLCs.

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APPENDIX 1

LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

04 Lyndally Court
21 Levy Street
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201
6 December 2016

The Principal
Ngangezwe Secondary
P.O. Box 47
Cato Ridge
3680

Dear S.D Mtshali

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Thandokuhle Prince Magwanyana, a Bachelor of Education (Masters) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus). As part of my degree fulfillment, I am required to conduct research. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct this research at your school. The title of my study is: **Exploring teacher learning of FET phase Life Orientation teachers in professional learning communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in Umkhambathi circuit.**

This study aims to explore the learning experiences of FET phase Life Orientation (LO) teachers in Professional Learning Communities in one secondary school in Umkhambathi circuit. In addition, the purpose of this study is to examine how FET phase Life Orientation teachers learn in Professional Learning Communities. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes at the times convenient to them which will not disturb teaching and learning. Each interview will be voice-recorded. They will be required to do a collage as one the data collection tool. Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participants will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and they will be purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will always remain voluntary

which means that participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties. There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. The name of the school will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process. All the responses, observations and reviewed documents will be treated with strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used to represent the school and names of the participants.

You may contact my supervisor, the Research Office or me should you have any queries or questions:\

Supervisor:

Dr Jacqueline Naidoo

Tel. 033 2605 867

E-mail: naidooj@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Office

Mr P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office Ethics

Tel: 031 260 4557

E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za or hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

My contact number:

Cell: 072 194 4823

E-mail: tp.magwanyana@yahoo.com

Your positive response in this regard will be highly respected.

Thanking you in advance

Yours honestly

T.P. Magwanyana (Mr)

Declaration

I..... (Full names of the principal) of -----(School name) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study **Exploring teacher learning of FET phase Life Orientation teachers in professional learning communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in Umkhambathi circuit.** I have received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily for the school to be part of the study. I understand that the school is at liberty to withdraw from research at any time should the school so desire.

Signature of Principal

Date

.....

.....

School stamp

Thanking you in advance

T.P. Magwanyana

APPENDIX 2

LETTER TO PARTICIPANT

04 Lyndally Court
21 Levy Street
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201
06 December 2016

Dear Participant

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Thandokuhle Prince Magwanyana, a Master of Education (MEd) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus). As part of my degree fulfillment, I am required to conduct research. I therefore kindly seek permission to do a research to you. The title of my study is: **Exploring teacher learning of FET phase Life Orientation teachers in professional learning communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in Umkhambathi circuit.**

This study aims to explore the learning experiences of FET phase Life Orientation (LO) teachers in Professional Learning Communities in one secondary school in Umkhambathi circuit. In addition, the purpose of this study is to examine how FET phase Life Orientation teachers learn in Professional Learning Communities. You will be interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes at a time convenient to you which will not disturb teaching and learning. If necessary, you may be requested to do a follow-up interview. Each interview will be audio-recorded. You will be required to do a collage as one the data collection tool. Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. You will be contacted well in advance for interviews, and you are purposively selected to participate in this study. Participation will always remain voluntary which means that you may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if you so wish without incurring any penalties. There will be no financial

benefits that you (participant) may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance/s, during and after the reporting process. All the responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used to represent the school and your name.

You may contact my supervisors, the Research Office or me should you have any queries or questions:

Supervisor:

Dr Jacqueline Naidoo

Tel. 033 2605 867

E-mail: naidooj@ukzn.ac.za

UKZN Research Office

Mr P. Mohun

HSSREC Research Office Ethics

Tel: 031 260 4557

E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za or hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

My contact number:

Cell: 072 194 4823

E-mail: tp.magwanyana@yahoo.com

Your positive response in this regard will be highly respected.

Thanking you in advance

Yours honestly

T.P. Magwanyana (Mr)

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research Topic: To examine how Life Orientation teachers learn in Professional Learning Communities in the FET phase in one Secondary School in Umkhambathi Circuit.

Research Questions

1. What learning activities do FET Phase LO teachers engage with in the PLC?
2. To what extent does this PLC reflect the characteristics of an effective PLC?

Interview questions:

1. Why have you decided to become a teacher?
2. What teaching qualifications do you have?
3. What is your major subject in your qualification?
4. How long have you been teaching life orientation?
5. What made you choose to become life orientation teacher?
6. Can you briefly tell me the things you like most about your work?
7. What do you understand about PLC?
8. What methods of teacher learning are employed to learn in your Life Orientation PLC?
9. Does participation in your Life Orientation PLC enhance your professional development as a teacher?

[Probes: If yes, or no please elaborate?]

10. Tell me about the professional development activities offered at your PLC?
11. Describe the knowledge and skills that you learnt during these professional development activities.
12. How often do you have phase meetings? How do these phase meetings form a platform for learning?
13. Suggest ideas how teacher learning can be effective within your Life Orientation PLC context.
14. How would you describe the relationship between you and other teachers when you learn in the PLC?
15. What do you think were the most effective activities you have engaged in to contribute to your learning in your Life Orientation PLC? Why?
16. How often do teachers meet formally to engage in professional learning activities in the PLC?

(Probes: Do you think this is enough time, if yes, or no please elaborate?)

17. In what ways does informal learning take place in your Life Orientation PLC? Give examples.
18. How does this school support your learning? Elaborate.
19. Comment on the shared values and vision and focus on teacher learning in this PLC.
20. Describe the shared accountability and collective responsibility of teachers in this PLC.
21. Explain how teachers engage in reflective professional inquiry in this PLC.
22. Comment on how teachers collaborate in this PLC.
23. Describe how group and individual learning is promoted in this PLC.
24. Is there anything you would like to add about teacher learning in professional learning communities?

APPENDIX 4

Instructions for Collage

Firstly, I will show the three participants examples of collages and what it looks like. In order for participants to know what is expected of them, I will design my own collage using pictures, words or phrases from magazines. I will also supply participants with magazines so that they can cut out pictures and phrases.

All three participants will have to design a Collage on the topic of teacher learning of FET Life Orientation teachers in PLCs. Participants will be able to draw on my example of a collage so that they know what is expected of them. Teachers will cut pictures and phrases which reflects their teacher learning in PLCs. They will share the story behind each picture, word or phrase on their collage when they are presenting their collages.

APPENDIX 5

Letter from department of education



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1041

Ref.:2/4/8/1127

Mr TP Magwanyana
04 Lyndally Court
21 Levy Street
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Mr Magwanyana

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"EXPLORING TEACHER LEARNING OF FET PHASE LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHERS IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCs) IN ONE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN UMKHAMBATHI CIRCUIT"**, 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 09 December 2016 to 31 January 2019.
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 Miss Connie Kehologile 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 Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Ngangezwe Secondary School

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 14/12/2016

...Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa

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Facebook: KZNDOE... Twitter: @DBE_KZN... Instagram: kzn_education... Youtube:kzndoe

APPENDIX 6

Letter from UKZN



6 January 2017

Mr Thandokuhle Prince Magwanyana 213570702
School of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Magwanyana

Protocol reference number: HSS/0019/017M

Project title: Exploring teacher learning of FET Phase Life Orientation teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in Umkhambathi circuit

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 19 December 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

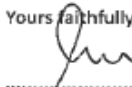
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Jaqueline Naidoo
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

APPENDIX 7

Editing certificate

Exclamation Translations

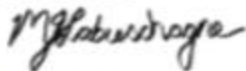
To whom it may concern

The dissertation titled, "Exploring teacher learning of FET Phase Life Orientation teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in one secondary school in Umkhambathi Circuit" has been edited and proofread as of 18 December 2017.

As a language practitioner, I have a Basic degree in Languages, an Honours degree in French and a Master's degree in Assessment and Quality Assurance. I have been translating, editing, proofreading and technically formatting documents for the past seven years. Furthermore, I am a member of the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) and the Professional Editors' Guild (PEG).

Please take note that Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for any content changes made to the document after the issuing of this certificate. Furthermore, Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for the reversal or rejection of the changes made to this document.

Kind regards



Melissa Labuschagne

Melissa Labuschagne trading as Exclamation Translations

<http://www.exclamationtranslations.co.za>

info@exclamationtranslations.co.za