



**EXPLORING FOUNDATION PHASE STUDENTS'
EXPERIENCES OF THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME:
A CASE IN A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY**

BY

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**This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the academic
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ABSTRACT

Students are the recipients of the curriculum, thus listening to their voice on their experiences is of paramount significance to effective learning, productivity and success in performing their teaching role. To understand learning and why some university graduates are void of professional required skills, student reflection or viewpoint on the curriculum is of importance. Much research has been conducted on reflective practices in teacher education. However, exploring students' reflections on their experiences of the curriculum as it prepares them to practice in the field, especially in South African context has not been widely researched. Hence, this study explores students' reflections on Foundation Phase Life Skill curriculum as it equips them to carry out their teaching role to foundation phase learners. The study employs qualitative approach and adopted interpretive paradigm to conduct a single case study researched in a South African university. The study is framed around Biggs theory of constructive alignment supported with concepts of curriculum spider web designed by Van der Akker. Thereafter, the instrument of data collection such as reflective essay writing and focus group structured interview was used to explore twenty-fourth-year Foundation Phase students' who are purposively and conveniently selected to reflect on their experiences of the Foundation Phase curriculum as it relates to a Life Skill programme. The generated data was analysed thematically using inductive and deductive reasoning approach, the results are analysed and discussed in detail.

The findings are that many of the participants lacked implementation skills during the teaching practice due to the listed reasons below: the educators' implementation strategies were not efficient enough to help the students achieve their learning goals; disparity in the medium of language of communication in the university and the language of communicating to Foundation Phase learners; incoherence of content learnt at the university and what they were expected to teach Foundation Phase learners; uninteresting and unappealing learning environment; lack of awareness of the importance of a Life Skills subject in public and private schools. Hence most of the schools laid emphasis on mathematics and science subjects while they relegate a Life Skills subject; insufficient teaching aids and insufficient time to cover the syllabus. However, findings revealed that there is alignment of content and assessment task in

foundation phase life skills modules. This disproves certain scholars' allegation that stated that learning outcome, teaching strategies and assessment method in higher education are in disarray.

Therefore, the study recommends that the curriculum be redesigned to include relevant contents to Life Skill Foundation Phase university students; creating a micro teaching centre in the university where students will practice before going to the field; inclusion of the basics of IsiZulu component of Life Skill in Foundation Phase curriculum. Lastly, organising workshops for educators to improve on their implementation strategies. The key terms in this research work are students' reflection, curriculum alignment, Foundation Phase and Life Skills programmes.

DECLARATION

I, Deborah Avosuahi Arasomwan affirm that this project work is entirely mine and not a duplicate of any previous work in any higher institution. All the sources used have been duly indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Supervisor's Signature

Date

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All honour, glory, adoration, praise be to God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit for all He has done for me. He will be my God forever.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God, also to my beloved husband, Dr. Martins A. Arasomwan who has given me all the support needed to be where I am today. Thanks a million, darling.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CA	Curriculum Alignment
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FP	Foundation Phase
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
LS	Life Skills
LO	Learning Outcomes
NHE	National Plan on Higher Education
NQFHI	National Qualifications Framework for Higher Institution
NRC	National Research Council
THE	Times Higher Education
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

In an attempt to desist from apartheid education enforced on South African citizens and to keep pace with educational standard globally, the National plan on Higher Education (NHE) in South Africa versus Department of Basic Education (DBE) provide the context and a system (McDonald & Horst, 2007). This reformation of the educational system is to help raise well-skilled students. To achieve the goal, the councils made it mandatory for universities to employ new ways of preparing graduates for the reality of teaching in South Africa (Ntshoe, 2002). Thus, the need for effective student-teacher training programmes in the preparation of a highly qualified teaching workforce, capable of inculcating Life Skills to foundation phase learners (Darling-Hammond, 2008). However, Kuhn and Rundle-Thiele, (2009) reported that to understand learning, student reflection or viewpoint of the curriculum is important. Hence, this study intends to explore students' reflections on Curriculum Alignment in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme.

However, much work done on reflections focused on pre-service teacher's experiences and how they construct meaning from it but exclude their voices on how the curriculum equips them with the experience. This study aims at including the voices of Foundation Phase Life Skills students on how they believe that the curriculum enhances their productivity in their teaching career. In addition, this study aims at ascertaining how the curriculum equips students with problem-solving skills that will make them competent to teach life skills to Foundation Phase learners. Hence, the student reflections were explored, the types of reflection methods employed, how it enhances their learning, and subsequent lessons based on their reflections. In this chapter, the following points shall be addressed: the focus of the study, the rationale, summary of literature review, the research questions, research methods, data generation methods, data analysis, data production, limitation, delimitations, sampling.

Key terms: students' reflection, curriculum alignment, Foundation Phase and Life Skills programmes.

1.2 Significance /focus of the study

Students are viewed as the recipients and the primary stakeholders in the curriculum. Thus, to understand if they have internalized the curriculum that could make them effective in impacting the curriculum to the learners, their reflection or viewpoint of the curriculum is important. Therefore, focus of this study is exploring students' reflections on their curriculum in the foundation phase of teacher education as it relates to a life skills programme. The findings will help in identifying gaps in the programme and will result in strengthening the life skills modules.

Furthermore, the findings from the study may thereby contribute to the effort of the National plan on Higher Education in South Africa and the Department of Basic Education in their attempt to ensure quality and excellence in the educational system.

1.3 Rationale of the study

My unpleasant experiences during my undergraduate years due to poor alignment or integration of assessment with the curriculum prompted my engaging in this study. During both my B.Ed. Honours degree and presently Master in Curriculum studies at one of the universities in South Africa, I discovered the huge success I made academically. My engaging with curriculums has broadened my horizon on how they can either mar or make students. During the researcher's undergraduate years, the lecturers' focus was to ensure that they covered the syllabus. Thus, they glued to summative assessment for grading rather than employing effective implementation strategies to assist students to construct their own learning. This resulted in many of the students memorising and regurgitating which we termed 'back to sender'. Thus, the researcher graduated as a 'half-baked' teacher which ultimately affected her performance in effective implementation of the curriculum in her teaching profession and as head teacher, having other teachers under her to mentor. More also, as a contract lecturer teaching the students, her interaction with them demands that their voice on their experiences must be heard. The researcher felt that students who are the recipients of the curriculum must express their reflection on how the curriculum prepares them to become effective teachers. Hence the need for more research to be conducted on student

reflections on the curriculum as it prepares them to perform their teaching roles. I believe that this study may profit the academia, student teachers and other thereby adding to the body of knowledge.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Education is viewed as a fundamental tool for national development be it political, economic, social and all-inclusive well-being of the society. To ensure quality, excellence and to keep pace with educational standard globally, the National plan on Higher Education in South Africa and the Department of Basic Education provide the context, and systems for reformation of the educational system to help raise well-skilled students (McDonald & Horst, 2007). However, in 2011 international ranking of South African universities in terms of producing high-level skilled students, only one South African university achieved a ranking in the top hundred universities in the world (Meyer, Bushney & Ukpere, 2011). In addition, Times Higher Education (THE 2016) reported that in the recent world university ranking; only three South African universities were among the top 500 universities in the world. To unfold the riddle behind this, Ogude (2005) discovered from a qualitative study conducted on challenges of curriculum responsiveness in South Africa that many of the curriculum implementers in the higher institution focus on teaching merely prescribed knowledge and skills, rather than guiding students to construct their learning, which could lead to their productivity nationally and globally.

Furthermore, Ogude, Oosthuizen and Nel (2005) opined that raising students equipped with problem solving skills that will in turn equip learners to adjust to volatile and unpredictable society, should be the focus of our higher institutions. In support of Ogude et al (2005), Mooi (2010) declared that the efficacy of a teacher training programme is fundamentally determinant of quality education to the learners, and that effective facilitation of Life Skills curriculums will not only upgrade students academically but ensure the enhancement of their total well-being (Perez, 2015). In addition, international scholars such as Boud and Falchikov (2008); Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009); Harman and McDowell (2011) researched into curriculum alignment in higher education. Their findings indicate that, curriculum alignment in higher education does not capture in its entirety its complexity as the learning outcome,

teaching strategies and assessment method are in disarray. Students' learning increases when curriculum is coherently designed and effectively implemented.

Studies from South African and international scholars on students' reflection or perception on teacher education reveals that the training given is incapable of equipping students with skills to keep pace with globally demanded standards for teacher proficiency (Mooi, 2010). Other scholars reported that, lecturers engage in research at the expense of effective implementation of the curriculum (Malechwanzi, Lei & Wang, 2016). While some stated that students complained about certain educators who only create awareness of the importance of the recommended skills in the curriculum rather than guiding them on how to construct their learning to acquire the skills (Viviers, 2016). In addition, practicing teachers confess to their lack of knowledge of the intended curriculum as well as theory underpinning their curriculum (Mpungose, 2015; Khoza, 2015). Hennemann and Liefner (2010) as well as Rasul and Mansor (2013) stated that university graduates are not well equipped for the world of work as there exists a gap between the skills acquired in schools and globally required skills. This resulted in too many graduates with good grades finding it difficult to gain employment because companies were not only mindful of academic success but skilful employee (Confederation of British Industry, 2011).

Furthermore, researchers such as Pedro (2005), Yang (2010), Khoza (2015), Mpungose (2015) to mention a few, carried out research on practicing teachers and pre-service teacher's reflections on their practices and experiences. However, exploring students' reflections to hear their voices on how they experience the curriculum has not been widely researched. Students are the recipients of the curriculum thus listening to their viewpoints on their experiences is of paramount significant to effective learning thereby leading to productivity in their practice. In view of the listed challenges, it becomes evident then that the curriculum spiderweb concepts and application of constructive alignment concept is of crucial importance for successful and sustainable implementation of curriculum that assists students in constructing their own learning (Van der Akker, 2009; Biggs, 2014). The possibility of achieving the goals stated by Council for Higher Education in ensuring quality and excellence in higher education will be defeated if the curriculum (intended, enacted and experience) is not critically examined.

In addition, to the points mentioned, was my unpleasant experiences during my undergraduate years due to poor implementation of assessment of the curriculum. The lecturers' focus was to ensure that they covered the syllabus, thus they adhered to summative assessment for grading rather than employing effective teaching to assist students to construct their own learning. This affected my performance in effective implementation of the curriculum in my teaching profession. This suggests that there is a need for more research to be conducted on effective curriculum alignment and implementation to actualize the desired outcome in our educational system.

1.5 Literature review

In the context of transformation in education in South Africa, Department of Basic Education is undergoing rapid change; thereby making it mandatory for universities to employ new ways of preparing graduates for the reality of teaching in the South African context (Koen & Ibrahim, 2013). Policy on Assessment (2013) for Higher Education Life Skills programmes in the Foundation Phase is making new demands on teacher education in the field. However, Hennemann and Liefner (2010) as well as Rasul and Mansor (2013), stated that university graduates are not well equipped for the world of work as there exists a gap between the skills acquired in schools and globally required skills. This is the basis upon which this study explores students' reflections on Life Skills Foundation Phase curriculum to discover how it equips them with the required skills to effectively teach life skills to Foundation Phase learners. Life Skills such as money management, personal hygiene, study skills, social skills, effective communication skills, problem solving skills, emotional and stress control skills are positive behavioural skills that assist one to cope with daily challenges of life (World Health Organization, 1997). Freitas, Gibson, Du Plessis, Halloran, Williams, Ambrose, and Arnab (2015), stated potential benefits of these skills to Foundation Phase learners as it goes a long way to build them up to become healthy adults and parents in their later lives. Thus, student-teacher training programmes play a significant role in the preparation of a highly qualified teaching workforce, capable of inculcating Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners (Darling-Hammond, 2008). To understand learning, student reflection or viewpoint of the curriculum is important (Kuhn & Rundle-Thiele, 2009).

Van der Akker (2009) and Biggs (2014) opined that curriculum be designed comprehensively as an integral part of the learning process to ensure full alignment with academic programmes in terms of the purpose and learning content of the programme and its modules, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment opportunities and strategies. The constructive alignment theory by Biggs (2014) is elaborated into ten curriculum concepts by Van der Akker (2009), which embrace rationale, content, teaching, goals, activities, teacher role, accessibility, location, resources, time and assessment which are aligned in a web for successful and sustainable implementation of curriculum that leads to achieving the set learning and teaching outcome. Van der Akker stated that rationale for engaging in any educational activities may be to equip students with relevant knowledge, to profit the society, for personal development and to meet a demand of certain discipline. These rationales are used by lecturers to drive teaching learning activities. Student reflections on curriculum to explore what transpires in the classrooms as to whether the rationale for learning life skills module are clearly stated and revolve around the learner. Pedro (2005) argues that the rationale for teacher education is tailored towards preparing students to effectively carry out their teaching practice.

Comprehensible and explicit set goals by both educators and students lead to desirable learning and teaching outcome. Khoza (2013) declared goals as set learning outcomes that serves as guide to enable students to construct their own learning. Contents are the outline of subjects to be taught in schools. Pedro (2005) listed three types of reflections which are written, verbal and self, how do they reflect on the curriculum contents, are the contents well understood? Schön (1983, 1987) gave two types of reflections as reflections in action and reflections on action. During the teaching and learning activities does the lecturer create time for students to reflect in action so to examine if learning is taking place? Which learning activities are most suitable for learning life skills module? According to Akker (2009), learning can only take place when teaching activities are made appealing and interesting. He also admonished that teaching and learning activities must be reinforced with educative and innovative materials or resources. Teaching resources ease students of boredom and anxiety thereby making teaching and learning interesting and productive. Reflection is created on personal opinions, are they of the opinion that the resources aid their learning? These could be hardware, software and ideological-ware (Khoza, 2015).

The lecturers (Teacher's role) are to use their pedagogical efficiency with relevant resources to facilitate learning. If the students engage in written reflection on a lecturers' role, can they clearly say that the enacted curriculum addresses the intended curriculum? How are they guided to construct their learning according to Biggs (2014) admonition? In addition, Akker (2009) further stated that the lecturers are to ensure that every student have equal access to the teaching and learning activities regardless of their gender, economics, or social background. Beside these, is the learning location which is explained as conducive geographical area where teaching and learning activities were carried out (education reforms 2013). There must be evidence to show that learning has taken place, thus different forms of assessment must be employed. Assessment is described as the means of evaluating how much of the set goals are achieved (Giles & Earl, 2011). Exploration of students' written, verbal and self-reflection will reveal if these 10 curriculum concepts are feasible in teaching and learning activities.

1.6 Objectives

In view of the above stated problem, the following aims and objectives are framed for this study:

- (i) To explore students' reflections on their experiences in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme.
- (ii) To explore students' reflection on how Curriculum in Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme is facilitated to enhance their performance in teaching life skills to learners.
- (iii) In addition, to explore students' reflections on why they feel the way they do about the Curriculum in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme.

1.7 Questions to be asked

The three critical questions the study wishes to answer are listed as follow:

- (i) What are the students' reflection on their experiences of the curriculum in Foundation Phase Life Skills teacher education?
- (ii) What are the students' reflection on their experiences of how Curriculum in Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme is facilitated to enhance their performance in teaching Life Skills to learners?

- (iii) What are the students' reflections on why they feel the way they do in Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme?

1.8 Clarification of Key concepts

1.8.1 Students reflections

Students' reflection is a vital aspect of their learning process as it enables them to measure their successes, weaknesses and the reasons for their performance. Since Dewey's (1933) innovative writing on the importance of students' teacher reflections on their learning, other researchers such as Pedro (2005), Yang (2010) as well as Khoza (2015) have written on the vital roles it plays in education. According to Dewey (1998, p.9) reflection is an 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends'. Dewey's definition places emphasis on critically and constructively reflecting on one's experience that leads to self-development. In supporting Dewey, Meierdirk (2016) an international researcher - stated that reflective activities should enhance student teachers' growth and development of experiences in their practices later in life. Reflective activities avail the student teacher the opportunity to grow and rise to greater insight of personality or practice. The purpose of student teacher engaging in reflective activities is to enable them to learn, grow and developed. All the concepts tend to aid the growth of reflective practitioners. Student teachers are to systematically reflect on the efficiency of the curriculum and the implementation strategies that could lead to their growth and development (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2012).

Pedro (2005) stated three major types of reflection that could promote students' learning when engaged with, namely written reflections, oral reflections and self-reflections. Schon (1983) further explained reflections as reflection in actions and reflection on action. Reflection in action is done when a student examined the implementation of the curriculum as it is being carried out to meet their rationale or the set learning outcome (Yang, 2010). The student can identify what works best during the current lecture time, while reflection on action is examining one's previous action to discover the area which needs improvement for future action (Schon, 1987).

1.8.2 Curriculum alignment

Curriculum is viewed with different perception based on the users and developers. Van den Akker (2009) gives it a short definition as a ‘plan for learning’. This expresses that curriculum does not have a universal or a single definition, but the term is explained based on the context of which it is used. Thus, the term curriculum in the context of this study is defined as recommended course of studies, which students must accomplish to pass a certain level of education. Biggs (2014) has been significant in the field of higher education with his focus on the term ‘curriculum alignment’. This concept of curriculum alignment implies that lecturers set clear learning outcomes, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits and thereby integrate assessment with the content to address the set outcome (Suskie, 2009). A comprehensive outcome should be guided by questions such as: What do you want the student to be able to do? What knowledge, skills or abilities should the ideal student participant demonstrate? How will students be able to demonstrate what they learned? Tyler (1971) supported this idea when he argued that educators must plan education with specific objectives and goals intended to achieve, logically organized educational experience to achieve the purpose set and evaluation to determine whether the purposes are attained. Biggs (2003) further stated that effective teaching is in the teachers’ ability to define the learning objectives, integrate relevant forms of assessment to the set objective and guide students to actively participate in the learning processes, thereby helping them to construct their learning.

1.8.3 Foundation Phase

Foundation phase, according to South African curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) spans from grade R-3. Foundation phase takes care of early years of childhood which is the fundamental stage of human life where the development of vital organs occurs. At this stage children develop traits and domains such as social behaviour, intelligence and positive personality that help them cope with daily challenges of life and to eventually become responsible adults (UNICEF, 2013). Taylor, Rhys and Waldron (2016) stated that the major aim of Foundation Phase education as promoting children’s standards of attainment; improve and inculcate in them good study habits that will expose them to available educational prospects; and assists them to become useful to themselves and their society. In view of the significance of this Foundation Phase to the well-being of children, the 2008 South African minister of

Education highlighted that giving effective education to Foundation Phase learners demands that the Foundation Phase pre-service teacher be well nurtured and equipped in the discipline area in which learners are to be taught. In addition, Bruce (2011) suggested that due to the complexity of this phase, Foundation Phase teachers must be well trained; matured, equipped with problem solving skills, have understanding and knowledge of child characteristics and developmental stages so that they can affect profitable education to the children. According to Piaget (1936), major developmental stages in human beings, such as ‘sensorimotor stage, concrete operational stage, formal operational stage and pre-operational stage’ take place at the foundation stage of human life. The foundation for what is to occur in adolescent and adulthood is laid in early childhood. Hence providing them with quality education and efficient educators must be given a top priority.

1.8.4 Life Skills programme

The ultimate aims of South African National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grade R-12 is as follows: ‘Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively as individual and others as a member of a team; organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect analyse, organize, and critically organize information; communicate effectively, using visual symbolic and/or language skill in various models and more’. The master keys in achieving these goals is raising high-level skilled teachers that will in turn impart these valuable skills to learners. The World Health Organization (WHO) define Life Skills as ‘abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life’ (Munsi & Guha, 2014).

World Health Organization (WHO) further listed Life Skills such as money management, personal hygiene, study skills, social skills, effective communication skills, problem solving skills, emotional and stress controlled skills, sociability and tolerance skill as desirable characteristics that make one useful to oneself and the entire society. In addition, if a child is not inspired to learn these vital skills early in life, the more likely it is that when the child becomes an adult, he or she will fail in social and economic life. Various economic difficulties and social anomalies such as juvenile delinquency, high rate of school dropout, teenage pregnancy and poor health conditions are connected to inadequate acquisition of Life Skills (Heckman, 2008).

Hence, South African Minimum Requirement for Teacher Education (MRTEQ) provides the context and systems for reformation of the educational system to help raise well-skilled students (McDonald & Horst, 2007). When these positives skills are imparted to learners at the foundation stage of their life, they will grow up to become healthy youths and adults that will help build a strong and sane society. Munsu and Guha (2014) indicate that Life Skills education in a tertiary institution enhances students' effective study skill, personal living skills and prepares them to become effective teachers to impact Life Skills to learners. They further stated that students should be encouraged to examine and evaluate the programme on how it improves and prepares them academically, as this will lead to the improvement of the programme.

1.9 Location of the Study

The location of a study is made up of several locations, which includes research participants, settings as well as background (Legg-Jack, 2015). The study will be conducted in one of the South African universities situated in Durban metropolis. The location of this study was specifically in the School of Education and on one of the campuses of the selected university in KwaZulu-Natal. The domain of the study is the Foundation Phase department of the university. Thus, I believe that relevant information to answer the research question can be obtained from there. Data generation was done in August 2017.

1.10 Research Design and methodology

1.10.1 Qualitative research

The study adopted qualitative design. Qualitative research is the type of study that tends to explore the real-world setting in-depth so as to generate rich narrative description and interpret phenomena in view of the explanation giving to them by the people (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Qualitative design, unlike quantitative research works with textual and image data. The reason for the choice of this research method is to enable the researcher to gather in-depth information from the participants on their reflection on curriculum alignment in their day-to-day learning activities. Besides, employing qualitative design enables the researcher to exist in the real world of the participants, thereby acquiring deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Richardson, Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Myers, 2013). Furthermore, engaging directly with the participants in this study, using collaborated method afforded

the researcher the privilege of knowing and having a clear understanding of effective curriculum alignment, as is being experienced by the participants. The researcher interviewed twenty-fourth-year Foundation Phase Life Skills students were to elicit in-depth information on their opinions and experiences Life Skill o curriculum as it affects them either positively or negatively.

1.10.2 Research paradigms

This study is a qualitative case study. According to Rule and John (2011), a case study is a systematic and in-depth study of one case in its context. A case study focuses on a limited number of events and their relationship to describe and interpret occurrences in a particular case. Thus, my choice of participants was final year foundation phase life skills students, to explore their reflections on the curriculum as it prepares them to teach life skills to learners. This qualitative study is situated within the interpretive paradigm. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), as well as Bertram and Christiansen (2014)), explained interpretive researchers as those that try to understand social behaviour, and how people make meaning of their experiences in the challenging context wherein they functioned. In view of this, this study explored students' reflection on Curriculum Alignment, as it is practice by the Foundation Phase lecturers and student teachers who have experienced curriculum alignment and practices.

Maxwell (2004) opined that interpretive paradigm is best for qualitative research as it enables the researcher to realize new philosophies and evidences from the real situation. The interpretivist does not attempt to falsify hypothesis, explain or predict situations but rather they tend to understand how knowledge and experiences are created. What informs their behaviour or motives? Thus, this study engaged the situation from the viewpoints of the participants through generations of authentic data from multiple sources, which include 20 out of 48 cohorts of fourth-year students from a Foundation Phase department and certain documents to be analysed.

1.10.3 Sampling Method

This study employed sampling methods such as purposive sampling and convenience sampling. According to Mohan Raj (2011), purposive sampling is an approach in which the researcher relates with participants who have the needed information necessary to provide answers to the key questions, thus the researcher purposively selected twenty

fourth-year Foundation Phase Life Skills students from a cohort of forty five students. The students are of different performance levels, the outstanding, the average and the underperformed. While Bertram and Christiansen (2014) defined convenience sampling as choosing a sample, which is easy for the researcher to reach, since she is a student in the same university as the participants, it will be easy to reach twenty Foundation Phase students. The students are Africans, greater percentage of them are very comfortable in their mother tongues, and they prefer the use of mother tongue to English language. They are mainly females and are within the average ages of 19 and 22. Furthermore, a good number of them are from poor economic background; hence, many are on different bursary schemes such as NSFAS, Skills bursary and Funza Lushaka bursary. They were fit to reflect on the curriculum alignment as it relates to life skills because they offered a life skills module in their third year and have practiced what they were taught during teaching practice. Hence, they could tell whether the curriculum enhances their teaching life skills to their learners or not.

1.10.4 Method of Data Generation

Data required to answer this research question was generated through the following: reflective essay (life history), focus group interview and document analysis. The students will be asked to reflect extensively on their experiences of Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum. They are expected to sincerely express their views, beliefs, ideas, and experiences as it relates to their curricula experience in an essay form (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The findings from this reflective essay will assist in identifying gaps in the programme and will result in strengthening the Life Skills modules.

Thereafter, a focused group structured interview was conducted. Fylan (2005) explained focused group interview as an avenue for enabling the participants to talk freely about their experiences, and what they think about the subject that the researcher is interested in. The participants were engaged in focus group discussion to enable them to critically reflect on their experiences of the curriculum. These dual approaches allow for triangulation of information generated. Data generation was eventually done in August 2017.

1.10.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a frame of approaches that help a researcher to define facts, identify patterns, and provide details on the data generated to get answers to the research questions (Smith, Levine, Lachlan, & Fediuk, 2002). Generated data was analysed thematically, using deductive and inductive reasoning approach. Inductive analysis involves selecting codes and categories based on data while deductive involves using theoretical or conceptual framework to structure the study in the analysis of data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Thematic analysis was performed through the process of coding in six phases to create established, meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

Familiarisation with data: This entails that I read through the data generated from students' reflection to ensure it is well understood. Generating initial codes: The second step is generating patterns and regularity with salient points from data set that have a re-occurring pattern and organising the pattern as it relates to research questions. The data will be scrutinized to ensure that only relevant information is used. Searching for themes among codes: the emerging theme from the data will be clearly identified. Themes that identify what the data means from the information given by the students will be sieved. Patterns from data generated from focus group interviews, reflective essay writing shall be detected as it emerges. Reviewing themes: The theme shall be critically examined so to extract relevant information.

Defining and naming themes: the identified topics shall be clearly sorted out as it emerges from different data collections. The data shall be structured using the theoretical/conceptual framework to confirm the emerging categories. The elaborate curriculum concept (curriculum spider web) by Van der Akker (2009) as well as theory of constructive alignment designed by Biggs (2014) shall be employed to define the themes. And lastly, the result was produced. The theme that provides relevant information in answering the research question was discovered and developed later as concluding theme.

1.11 Ethical Issues

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained ethics as norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in research. Tangwa (2009) stated the three ethical principles as autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence, which was duly observed in this study. Autonomy implies that the researcher gets the consent of every person who will participate in the study. While non-maleficence is ensuring the confidentiality of the participants' information and personality to avoid emotional, social and physical harm. And beneficence is ensuring that the research should be of benefit, either directly to the research participants, or more broadly to other researchers or to society at large. The consent of the participants was duly sought for in writing and verbally; their opinion, ideas or information given shall be kept confidential. The name of the participants and the description of the school shall be kept anonymous when publishing the result. In addition, the devices for recording during interviews shall be pass- worded to ensure the confidentiality of their information. The participants are free to withdraw should they feel uncomfortable in participating in the study. The researcher will also ensure that all ethical measures specified by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee is strictly adhered to.

1.12 Trustworthiness

Lisa and Kristie (2006) describe trustworthiness as all effort made by qualitative researchers to ensure that credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability are apparent in their investigation. Credibility in interpretive research is a measure taken by a researcher in data generation and analysis to ensure that the results replicate the exact practice of the participant, that is the data generated describes the actual situation in the natural setting that is being explored (Creswell, 2012; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To ensure the credibility of this study, recording device will be used to record the interview verbatim, transcribed and allow the participant to check through to ascertain that it accurately reflects their information.

Furthermore, confirmability according to Shenton (2004), as well as Bertram and Christiansen (2014), is all the measures taken by the researcher to prove that the findings are transparent, authentic and not their own prejudice. In this study, confirmability shall be enhanced by generating data from more than one source; reflective essay (life history), focus group interview and document analysis method are

the planned sources for data generation. In addition, concise evidence of data generated in this case study was done by including direct quotations of participants' responses.

On the other hand, dependability is ensuring that the processes involved in conducting the study is clearly shown as in data collection, data analysis and the research procedures employed. This will allow a future researcher to repeat the study, if not essentially to gain the same outcome (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). Hence, the report of this study was done to include the research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data gathering and reflective appraisal of the study to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Transferability in interpretive research is the extent to which the research can be used on other situations having the same features (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011). To ensure transferability of this study, inductive and deductive data analysis method shall be employed in analysing and interpreting the data to avoid unsubstantial claims. However, there is an understanding that findings from a qualitative case study inquiry are limited to small groups within a context. Hence, I will provide a clear description of the context in which the study is undertaken so that lessons from the study may be applied to schools that share the same contextual realities with the context of this study.

1.13 Anticipated Problems/Limitations

The study is confined to just 20 Foundation Phase Life Skills final-year students at a South African university. The findings and results are subjective and contextual thus the generalizability of the study may be unfeasible. However, the objective of the researcher is to explore the reality of the participants' lived experiences, ideas and thoughts about a situation. In addition, it is envisaged that this study may be constrained in its bid to generate rich and authentic data. This may be due to availability of some of my participants that are students and are busy with their academic activities.

1.14 The overview of the chapters

1.14.1 Chapter one

Chapter one of this study addresses salient points such as title, focus, rationale and the background to the study. The gaps discovered and my own personal experience that

prompted my engaging in the study are also stated. The study also explores the previous literature on the phenomenon of the study (student reflections), including the Biggs curriculum alignment as well as the 10 concepts of curriculum spider web designed by Van der Akker (2009). In addition, the research design, location of the study and ethical clearance are highlighted.

1.14.2 Chapter two

Chapter two of this study reviews the previous literature under the following theme: conceptualization of student reflections, student reflections on their experiences of curriculum, curriculum alignment issues (intended, enacted and experienced curriculum), curriculum implementation, curriculum concept and the theoretical/conceptual framework which is framed around Biggs (2003) Theory of constructive alignment and will be supported by the concept of curriculum spider web designed by Van der Akker (2009).

1.14.3 Chapter three

Chapter three of this study vividly analysed the methodology adopted to address the research objectives and the critical questions set to answer in this study. The research is situated within interpretivist paradigm and the sampling methods for extracting data from the fourth-year Foundation Phase Life Skill students are stated as purposive and convenience sampling. Thereafter, the procedure for data generated method, data analysis, steps taken to ensure issues of trustworthiness such as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability as well as ethical respect was explained.

1.14.4 Chapter four

The focus of this chapter is about analysing the generated data, its interpretation and presentation. Findings of how the fourth-year Foundation Phase Life Skills students of a South African university reflect on their experience of the curriculum and how they felt the curriculum prepares them to teach Life Skills to foundation phase learners - or how it did not - was presented and clearly discussed. In analysing the data, curriculum alignment theory as well as the ten concepts of curriculum spider web was used to arrange the themes from the raw data which will later form the categories. These

categories clearly stated the reflections of the research participants and meaning was made of it.

1.14.5 Chapter five

This chapter discusses concluding, discussions and recommendations for future studies. The chapter summarizes the overview of the study in relation to the reflections of fourth-year Foundation Phase Life Skills students' experiences of the curriculum.

1.15 Conclusion

Chapter one outlined the brief background of the study. The chapter clearly stated the purpose and rationale, the focus and significance of the study. Also, the objective of the study as well as the key research questions the study set to answer was discussed. Furthermore, summary of reviewed literature, the research design and methodology reinforcing the study was addressed. Chapter two deals with the literature review of the previous studies conducted on the topic of the study. In addition, the theoretical/conceptual framework underpinning the study was used as guide in the review of the literature.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the review of scholarly literature previously conducted on this research study area. The literature review will be divided into three sections, firstly the phenomena which include reflections, curriculum and curriculum alignment and life skills. The second section will review studies related to the questions the study intends to answer and lastly the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

2.2 Discussion of the phenomena: reflection, curriculum and Life Skills

This section reported reviewed literature on the three major concepts that form the phenomenon of this study. These include students' reflections, curriculum and curriculum alignment life skills education. The study is aimed at ascertaining how the life skills curriculum is implemented to equip higher institution students with life problem-solving skills that will make them competent to teach Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners.

2.2.1 Students' reflections

The word 'reflection' could be perceived as a thoughtful procedure of observing one's action, achievement, failure and one's future actions. Schön (1983), Eraut (1995), Pedro (2005), Ghaye (2010), Yang (2010), Blaik (2013), Mpungose (2015), Khoza (2015), as well as Meierdirk (2016), defined reflections as a programme in student teachers' education that enable students to reflect on the teaching activities so to attain their learning objectives. Dewey (1998) and Mann et al. (2009) view reflections as activities that enhance student critical thinking about all the happenings around them. Smith and Pilling (2007) on the other hand, examine reflections in the context of education as an action taking by students to evaluate their own learning activities that leads to development of self-assessment skills. The three definitions project reflections as purposeful and critical analysis of learning activities and experiences done by students to achieve deeper meaning of their setting. Also, a substantial body of literature has occurred that reports the importance of reflective practice to students. They posit that

reflection helps in broadening students' knowledge that leads to acquisition of information for enhancement of performance (Mann, Gordon & MacLeod, 2009; Paton, 2012; Richardson & Maltby, 1995; Schön, 1983). Effective implementation of curriculum leads to students' high performance and success. Furthermore, reflective scholars such as Schon (1987) and Ghaye (2010) gave four types of reflections that are prominent in teacher education, which are reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, reflection-for-action and reflection with action.

According to Schön (1987), reflection-in-action is a critical and mindful reflection done by students while teaching and learning activities are in progress, to identify what was going well or any unusual occurrence to amend or adjust to on the spot. However, some authors such as Moon (2004) as well as Etscheidt, Curran and Sawyer (2012), posits it is unfeasible to reflect on an action while engaging in it. Reflection-on-action on the other hand is a conscious and deliberate evaluation aimed at improvement of all the activities that transpire in the class (Yang, 2010). When a student engages in evaluating the curriculum as it affects him or her learning, he develops courage to challenge both his assumptions and those of others. There is constant improvement undertaken by students when engaged in reflections activities, as identified problems are reflected on and then means are devised on solving them. This leads to reflection for action based on what was discovered during reflection on action. To find a solution to the problem discovered during the previous reflections activities, the student collaborates with peers, mentors, lecturers, tutors and coaching groups to discuss strategies for improvement. This last form of reflection is what Meierdirk (2017) explained as reflection-with-action.

2.2.2 Curriculum

To keep pace with educational standard globally, the National plan on Higher Education in South Africa and the Department of Basic Education provide the context, and systems for reformation of the educational system to help raise well-skilled students (McDonald & Horst, 2007). Effective and productive education across the globe and at every level needs a guiding principle, policy, or document to prevent doing things haphazardly. This guiding policy or document is referred to as curriculum. Curriculum has its origin from a Latin verb called 'currere', meaning 'to run a course' or 'track' to follow (Akker, Fasoglio & Mulder, 2010; Hoadley & Jansen, 2013). The term

curriculum, is viewed from different perspectives based on the users and developers. Saban (2016) defined it as the backbone of any course of studies while Morris and Adams (2011) viewed it as a planned outcome for educational activities. Certain scholars explained it as designing a comprehensive educational plan for teaching and learning that leads to desired outcome set by both teachers and educators (Maheshwari 2011, Fortus & Krajcik, 2005). However, Van den Akker (2009) is particularly forthright in defining it shortly as a ‘plan for learning’.

Curriculum, in the context of this study is defined as the ‘complete process from the creation of the intended plan detailing standards and opportunities for learning to the actual implementation of learning experiences, followed by assessment to effectually determine student achievement’ (Ziebell, 2010). Biggs (2014) stressed the importance of curriculum as he declared it as the determinant factors for achieving the educational set goal in any institution, is having a dynamic curriculum, systematically planned and purposefully implemented by skilful educators (Biggs, 2014). Van der Akker (2009) further explained curriculum in three representations, namely: as intended that which is formal, written, designed or planned by curriculum experts and handed over to the practitioner; this is the curriculum in operation which is being implemented by educationists in the classroom; and the attained or received curriculum that which is experienced by students. Biggs (2003) argued that these three representations of curriculum, the intended, the implemented and the experienced must be coherence and well-integrated to enable the learner to achieve the learning outcome.

2.2.3 Curriculum Alignment

The word alignment has various meanings in educational context. Martone and Sireci (2009) stated two major types of alignment which include instructional alignment and curricular alignment. They describe instructional alignment as agreement that exists between teachers’ stated objectives, teaching and learning activities and appropriate assessment in the classroom setting to ensure that learning takes place. While the curricular alignment is explained as the organisation of the curriculum across the grades to complement or support what was learnt in the previous grade. The former is the focus of this study which is instructional alignment. According to McDonald and Horst (2007) the curriculum that is beneficial to the students is the one that aligns the teaching

strategies and appropriate assessment forms to the learning activities of the intended curriculum to assist students to construct their learning.

Similarly, Fallon and Brown (2010) advocated that a well aligned curriculum incorporates the official and informal teachings and learning activities, including, teachers' actions, groupings method, organisation strategies, opinions, and explanations of the contents. The importance of curriculum alignment to student learning is further affirmed by Biggs (2014) who has been significant in the field of higher education, enjoins curriculum designers and implementers to set clear learning outcomes, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits and thereby integrates assessment with the content to address the set outcome. Remneland (2017) supported the principle of aligning learning outcomes, activities and the assessment by stating that it makes education goals clear, purposeful and reasonable for the individual student.

Curriculum alignment is majorly done at micro level where teachers are admonished to employ the components of curriculum spider web for effective implementation (Akker, 2009). However, Sedio (2013) posits that curriculum alignment demands educator's sound experienced of all three components of the curriculum namely intended, enacted and achieved. Thus, Darling-Hammond (2008) and Akker (2009) advocate for teachers' empowerment to play the role of agency to enhance their productivity in curriculum implementation rather than handing over to them a document to implement which they had had no role in developing.

2.2.4 Life Skills curriculum

This study is an interface between Life Skills curriculum of foundation phase department teacher education and foundation phase learner (Grade R). The student teachers are being groomed to teach Life Skills to foundation phase learners. Hence the study addresses literature review on life skills in the university and life skills in foundation phase learners.

2.2.4.1 Life Skills in the higher institution

Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as 'abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life'. Srikala and Kishore (2010) supported by

(WHO), added that in a persistently changing environment, acquisition of Life Skills is an inestimable quality needed to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Beside the need of life skills for daily life, the dramatic changes in global economies over the past years have been matched with the transformation in technology and these are all impacting on education, the workplace and our home life (Ibararani, Ripani, Taboada, Villa & Garcia, 2014). Literature reviewed from South Africa declares that equipping higher education students with Life Skills education will not only prepare them to pass information on to learners but prepare them with strategies to impact on learners' behaviour (Schultz & Chweu, 2010).

Furthermore, South African Council on Higher Education (CHE 2013) declare that 'the distinction of a South African citizen will have a great deal to do with the quality of their education; skills they carry as the measure of their competence; the quality of the institutions within which they live and work; the measure of their awareness of the solemn calls of citizenship; and the longevity of their lives to sustain the impact of their contributions to the commonwealth'. Hence, Schultz & Chweu (2010) further posit that higher education in South Africa should endeavour to equip students with skills such as 'personal skills, academic skills, mentor relationships, facilitation skills, and assessments', which are vital and integral to their effectiveness and productivity in delivering. Mooi (2010), supporting Schuultz and Chweu, declared that the efficacy of teacher training programmes is fundamental determinant of quality education to the learners, and that effective facilitation of life skills curriculum will not only upgrade the student academically but also enhance the total wellbeing of the students' life (Perez, 2015).

Maxine Greene (2005), a human rights activist and an educationist, stated that we are dealing with dynamic and increasing changing society, ideas and people. Hence, it becomes imperative for schools to move along and explore any available opportunity to visualize and design education that builds on the life styles and interests of the students. Similarly, Munsu and Guha (2014) indicate that Life Skills education in a tertiary institution enhances students effective study skills, personal living skills and prepares them to become effective teachers to impact Life Skills to learners. Lawler (2013) raises a very pertinent point on the importance of raising effective student teachers to impact Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners. She declares that the

determinant factor of foundation phase learners' successes hinges on an experienced, passionate and well-equipped Life Skills teacher. In view of this, Agabi and Ogah (2010) asserted that a well-designed, planned and developed curriculum can only be productive when it is well implemented.

However, Lawler (2013) complained that both school management teams and Life Skills teachers are not committed to impacting life skills to learners. Thus, Cassim and Oosthuizen (2014) attached the high rate of youth unemployment in South Africa to absence of employability skills. They posit that South African youth are short of strong appropriate life skills required in the labour market. In view of this, Garcia (2014) emphasized inclusive non-cognitive skills in the educational policy of higher institution. The 21st century's educator needed to be exposed to all-round skills (cognitive and non-cognitive) such as 'critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, emotional health, social skills, work ethic, and community responsibility, academic confidence, teamwork, organisational skills, creativity, and communication skills' (Rothstein, Jacobsen, & Wilder 2008). Teaching student teachers and learners' non-cognitive skills education assists them to achieve positive outcomes in school and success in life after school, hence non-cognitive skills strengthen cognitive skills (Gabrieli, Ansel & Krachman, 2015).

2.2.4.2 The need of Life Skills education in foundation phase

Foundation phase according to South African curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) spans from grade R-3. Foundation Phase takes care of early years of childhood which is the fundamental stage of human life where the development of vital organs occurs (Albino & Berry, 2013). The foundation for what is to occur in adolescent and adulthood is laid in early childhood. Taylor, Rhys and Waldron (2016) stated the major aims of Foundation Phase education as promoting children's standards of attainment; improve and inculcate in them good study habits that will expose them to available educational prospects and assist them to become useful to themselves and their society. In view of the significance of this phase to the well-being of children, the 2008 South African minister of Education as well as Bruce (2011), highlighted that Foundation Phase teachers must be well trained, matured, equipped with problem solving skills, have understanding and knowledge of child characteristics and developmental stages so that they can impart profitable education to the children. The

necessity of Life Skills in early childhood and adolescence is further confirmed by Sheldon (2015) as she added that learners must be equipped with skills such as ‘scientific, technological, numerical and linguistic’ skills to make them wholesome individuals. Hence, Life Skills basically involve virtually all the skills, knowledge, and values foundation phase learners need to be useful to themselves and the society.

Furthermore, Wellman and Gelman (1992) posit that major developmental stages in human beings such as ‘sensorimotor stage, concrete operational stage, formal operational stage and pre-operational stage’ take place at the foundation stage of human life. Thus, whatever educational activities or materials children are exposed to at this stage play a significant role in making them - if properly selected and implemented - or ruining them if otherwise. The alarming rate of juvenile delinquency among youngsters, such as substance abuse, child pregnancy, bullies, poor career decision, high school drop-out rate, and all anti-social behaviours are link to absence or faulty implementation of Life Skills curriculum in the schools (Lawler, 2013). Certain core sets of skills such as personal hygiene, study skills, social skills, effective communication skills, problem solving skills, emotional coping skills, empathy, stress controlled skills, decision making, self-awareness, creative and critical thinking skills have been identified by (World Health Organization, 1997) as integral to promotion of youngsters’ health and well-being and shall be discussed briefly.

- **Decision making skills:** Decision making is the ability to appraise the obtainable solution by comparing and trying them to select the best option for application (Dietrich, 2010). This skill assists learners to constructively make right choices in life, as it is often said that decisions determine destiny. In addition, Munsu and Guha (2014) declare that the children at foundation level are the next generation of youth and adults that will eventually join the workforce hence the need to inculcate decision-making skills. Mettas (2011) presents six clear steps to consider in effective decision-making. These are identifying and describing the problem; secondly, clearly identifying all appropriate criteria; next, assess the criteria; create alternatives; measure the criterion and the consequences; and lastly choose the solution with highest priority.

- **Effective communication skills:** Communication is central to the totality of a child's development. The ability of children's cordial relationship with others depends on their ability to communicate their feelings emotionally, socially and physically. Thus, Wilczynski (2009) opines that Foundation Phase educators should start the teaching of communication skills with basic communication etiquette such as 'Thank you', 'I am sorry' and 'Please'.
- **Critical thinking skills:** This is a skill that enables one to examine, interrogate ideas, views and assumptions of oneself and that of others (Lai, 2011). Critical thinking skills can lead to learners living a healthy lifestyle as they assess and examine their experiences and action with the aim of adjusting to valuable attitudes and behaviour. Likewise, Costello (2013), in his book, thinking skills and early childhood education, declares the essence of imparting critical thinking skills into learners. He stated that the means of developing this skill is by giving learners the opportunity to freely express themselves in the class about their work, play, story and all that interests them.
- **Emotional coping skill:** Coping with emotions is having the ability to express your feelings, be it negative or positive in a controlled and relaxed manner based on the acquired knowledge of effect of emotion on our behaviour and others. World Health Organization states that extreme emotions such as worry, anger, sadness, anxiety, joy, surprise can lead to breakdown of health if not handled appropriately. Likewise, Babarin and Sterrett (2015) warn that failure to keep unruly emotions and impulses under control can affect mental well-being. Furthermore, the impartation of emotional coping skills in early childhood will help the child to grow up to become an adult who is stable and coordinated emotionally and psychologically (Compas, Watson, Reising, & Dunbar, 2013).
- **Coping with stress:** Stress can be said to be our response to overwhelming situations (Goyal, Singh, Sibinga, Gould, Rowland-Seymour, Sharma, & Ranasinghe, 2014). They further gave the possible causes of stress in children as rejection by peers, poor communication in the family and school, academic failure or loss of loved ones. Coping with stress therefore is having the ability to identify

the sources of stress, its effect on lives and taking certain action to overcome the causes. Stress coping skills in learners assists them to develop good self-esteem, self-confidence, sense of humour and ability to enjoy good rapport with friends.

- **Creative thinking skills:** It is the ability to take resolute and intelligence decisions in approaching life issues that lead to generation of new ideas (Wright, 2010; Robinson, 2009). Creative thinking skills equip learners with varieties of ideas that can be useful in any life situations that demand analysing, reasoning, planning, reflections and problem solving (Settouf, 2017). In addition, Settouf, declares that acquisition of critical thinking skills makes learners to think clearly and reasonably.
- **Problem solving skills:** These skills can be explained as an ability to proffer solutions to sensitive, complex or difficult problems. Problem solving skills empower learners to approach life problems as well as learning problems constructively. Pennant (2014) enjoins teachers to support learners in acquiring problem solving skills through the choice of tasks, organising the phases of the problem-solving procedures and avail the children the opportunity to develop crucial problem-solving skills. This is in line with the constructivist idea of teachers guiding learners to construct their own learning which can lead to development of problem solving skills (Malan, Ndlovu & Engelbrecht, 2014).

2.3 Students' voices on the curriculum; their experiences, the implementation strategies and their assessment of the curriculum

This section discusses students' reflection about their experiences of the curriculum. The implementation, the alignment of the assessment task, content and lecturers' pedagogical strategies as well as how the curriculum prepares them for their teaching roles. Lucas and Tan (2013) stated that student reflection on their experiences of the curriculum, the lecturer's pedagogical strategies and the activities that transpire in the school community must be considered significant, as it increases student knowledge that provides a more reliable setting for students' teachers learning. Additionally, Briggs (2014) wrote that student reflection on their learning has three possible advantages which are as follows, 'Enhancing assessment of learning outcomes, fostering student learning, and engaging faculty in professional development'.

Students' reflection leads to improvement of the curriculum. However much has not been done on hearing higher education students' voices on their experiences of the curriculum as it improves their teaching skills in performing their roles.

2.3.1 Students' experiences of their curriculum

There are positive as well as negative commentaries from the students on their experiences of the curriculum. Aregbeyan (2010) as well as Su and Wood (2012) researched into students' perceptions of effective teaching at the university. The findings indicate that students appreciate lecturers that are efficient in aligning all the components of the curriculum for learning to take place. They also reported that maintaining good lecturer-individual student interactions during and after curriculum implementation increases student interest in their learning. Similarly, they reported their findings on their research students' perceptions of teaching excellence. In addition, they declared that students appreciate the lecturer that exhibits the ability of integrating academic theory with real life experience and creates avenues for students to engage in the teaching discussions. This will lead to students mastering teaching and learning skills.

Complaints were pointed out by Brooman, Darwent and Pimor (2015) on their research on students' voices on higher education curriculum design and implementation. They reported that students complained about the rigid attitude of the lecturers to the prescribed outcome, thereby hindering students from flexibly engaging in the learning activities. Another student complained about the monopolizing lecturing style of lecturers rather than creating an avenue for them to go to the library to research by themselves. Thus, reports on an interpretive research conducted on students' reflections on their practices of the curriculum and assessment policy statement by Khoza (2015), may be attached to faulty implementation of curriculum. Khoza stated that some of 'the pre-service teachers do not have clear understanding of setting outcomes for teaching and learning activities. Another of his participants confesses to her lack of understanding of the theory underpinning the curriculum. Similarly, Smardon and Waikato (2007) explore teaching and learning through students' perception about their learning. They reported that many students do not know what they are supposed to be learning, the learning outcomes are not clearly stated. It has often been said that

coherent and specific set goals by lecturers and students during teaching and learning activities will lead to productive outcome.

Furthermore, Australian researchers Hongboontri and Noipint (2014) conducted a research on 'Practical curriculum inquiry: voices of students on their curriculum'. In their research, students talk about the boring atmospheres in the classroom as most of the educators just read from the text book. A student declared that he 'suddenly feel sleepy when they do that' and another confirmed it by stating that many of them lost interest in coming to the class. However, Hongboontri and Noipint also reported students' positive comments on lecturers that operate a democratic class as students are relaxed and able to participate in the teaching and learning activities. Hongboontri et al. (2014) concur with Meadows, Soper, Cullen, Wasiuk, McAllister-Gibson and Danby (2016) that listed some opinions of students on their curriculum in their article titled 'Shaping the future of learning using the student voice: we're listening but are we hearing clearly?' The students stated that some lecturers just read from the slides rather than engaging the students in discussions that will help them to construct their learning. In Meadows (2016) report, some students decry the lack of experience of some of the educators, they complained that the management is citizen conscious rather than employing capable and qualified educators.

Braxton, Milem and Sullivan (2000) asserted that students are not only interested in dynamic teaching and learning activities but also in participating in their learning by asking questions and getting answers to their questions. Thus, it is not a surprise that research conducted in China on Students' Perceptions and Faculty Measured Competencies in Higher Education', revealed students' dissatisfaction and displeasure with their learning experiences (Malechwanz, Lei & Wang, 2016). These scholars disclose that students complained that lecturers occupied themselves with research work at the expense of effective implementation of the curriculum. The literature indicates that the younger lecturers with experience of less than 10 years are more committed to the lecturing activities than the lecturers in the field above 10 years. Poor implementation strategies and low content knowledge of some lecturers as stated by the students, lead to loss of interest or class participation or even truancy of the students. In somewhat the same vein, another scholar wrote on students 'experience of their curriculum, his findings revealed that students complained that certain educators only

create awareness of the importance of the recommended skills in the curriculum rather than guiding them to construct their learning that leads to acquisition of those skills' (Viviers, 2016). On this point, findings from students' voices suggest dissatisfaction and displeasure about teacher education curriculum. The best information about the curriculum and the schools are obtained from the students since they are the recipients of the curriculum.

2.3.2 Students' reflection on curriculum alignment for enhancement of learning

Council on Higher Education (2013) posit that effective educational process is a coherence in the content, teaching strategies, and assessment method to impact substantial skills into learners that South Africa requires. Waldrip, Fisher and Dorman (2008) argue that good assessment involves students while setting goals and criteria for assessment and performing tasks that measure meaningful instructional activities. However, in their research conducted on students' perceptions of assessment process, questionnaire development and validation, they reported that students are not fully engaged in decision-making on the choice of assessment method and procedure.

From their findings, students professed that the assessment conducted was congruent with planned learning and are clear, however, students are not consulted on choice of forms of assessment tasks being employed. Furthermore, Campbell, Eland, Rumpus and Shacklock (2009) in their book titled 'Hearing the student voice: Involving students in curriculum design and delivery', wrote that students' responses help to push the module planners and implementers into thinking 'out of the box' in terms of evaluations or assessment. They reported from their findings that students are glad and motivated to learn their views were being considered and could use their learning style to maximum advantage. Others declared that giving them opportunity to direct their lessons' assessment and bring their own experiences to class, make learning exciting and interesting. To buttress Campbell's view, Nicole (2015) asserted that educators should dialogue with students concerning their learning as it relates to the content, teaching strategies and product of learning. In addition, Malechwanzi, et al. (2016) stated that offering students the opportunity to participate in their learning processes will help them to gain the skill of self-confidence that will make them accountable to themselves and the society at large. To illustrate further, students see engaging in their

learning as an exercise that aids their exploration, investigation and understanding of their feeling about their learning experiences (Harvey & Baumann, 2012).

2.3.3 Students' reflections on how curriculum prepares them for their roles

This point explores literatures on how the curriculum has assisted pre-service teachers to carry out their teaching roles. In a qualitative research conducted on the experiences of foundation phase teachers in implementing the curriculum by Makeleni (2013), the finding indicated that foundation phase teachers lack implementation experience of the curriculum during teaching and learning activities. Besides the lack of implementation skills was their lack of content knowledge, skills and appropriate assessment method, hence they found it difficult to implement the recommended curriculum efficiently. Mkhwanazi (2014) supported Makeleni as she reported that majority of the foundation phase public school teachers lack effective knowledge and skills of different forms of assessment practice, hence they stuck to just one method of assessing learners for grading instead of using varieties of assessment for learning. The causes may be because of Ogude's (2005) discovering from a qualitative study conducted on challenge of curriculum responsiveness in South Africa. He reported that many of the curriculum implementers in higher institutions focus on teaching merely prescribed knowledge and skills, rather than assisting the students to construct learning base on their interest and need. Students were being indoctrinated, hence the benefit and the positive effect on pre-service teachers are minimal or none.

Furthermore, Mooi (2010), a Malaysian author wrote on "Teacher education: innovative, effectiveness and global". In his findings students complained that the training given is incapable of equipping them with skills to keep pace with globally demanded standards for teacher proficiency. Mooi (2010) findings was obtainable in the South African educational system during the apartheid period where the education practised was Christian National Education (CNE) which employed traditional standardized assessment methods and rote learning (Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Another researcher reported that one of the participants confessed that she does not understand the curriculum she was implementing and was not sure whether she was doing the right things or not (Pillay, 2012). Educators are viewed as a basis of effectual and proficient curriculum implementation at every stage of the educational system,

hence the need for them to be grounded in their areas of specialization as they cannot give what they do not have. Furthermore, Hennemann and Liefner (2010) as well as Rasul and Mansor (2013), stated that university graduates are not well equipped for the world of work as there exists a gap between the skills acquired in schools and the globally required skills. Further research on students' views of their curriculum was carried out by Dos Reis (2012) on challenges pre-service teachers face while learning to teach accounting in the context of mentoring. His findings revealed that the student teachers confessed that their content knowledge was insufficient to meet the learners' learning needs. The participants declared that they were ill-equipped to implement the curriculum. However, Hennemann et al. mentioned that some of the participants confessed that they resorted to personal studies, so they could implement the curriculum effectively.

Overall, it is apparent that the curriculum alignment in the higher institutions needs to be improved. The literature reviewed pointed out certain gaps and shortcomings that demand attention and improvement by curriculum designers as well as implementers. Two major themes are identified; implementation strategies and assessment methods which leads to poor impartation of skills to students. Under implementation strategies students lament the rigid and crude ways by which the curriculum is being implemented, thereby rendering the pre-service and in-service teachers ineffective during their teaching activities. On assessment conduct students complained that they were not involved on the relevant forms of assessment suitable for their learning. KZN Department of Education declared that 'Teachers must understand the curriculum and its elements for effective implementation'. In addition, South African higher education seeks to develop and enact curricular that promote innovative education thereby enabling students to acquire critical thinking skills and improve their employability opportunities or prospects (CHE, 2013). To achieve the stated objectives by Council on Higher Education, the chosen teaching methods by educators need to engage students in activities that are likely to require them to perform in the way nominated in the curriculum objectives.

2.4 Theoretical/conceptual framework

Anfara and Mertz (2014) defined theoretical framework as 'any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels (e.g.,

grand, mid-range, and explanatory), that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena' (p. xxvii). This research work is in the area of Foundation Phase/curriculum studies and is framed around Biggs (2003) theory of constructive alignment and will be supported by the ten concepts of curriculum spider web designed by Van der Akker (2009). Both address the effective maximising of the curriculum that leads to achievement of teaching and learning outcome; hence I found it necessary to use both to unfold this study.

2.4.1 Constructive alignment

Biggs (2003) expanded on Tyler (1949) work by designing constructive alignment model which involves alignment between the three significant areas of the curriculum, namely, the intended teaching and learning outcomes, what the student and lecturers do in the class to achieve the outcome and how the student is assessed. Biggs emphasis is that, educators must ensure coherence between assessment, teaching strategies and the intended learning outcome. He opines that curriculum be designed and implemented to enable learners to construct their own learning rather than being indoctrinated. Similarly, this concept, curriculum alignment implies that lecturers set clear learning outcomes, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits and thereby integrate assessment with the content to address the set outcome (Suskie, 2009). Furthermore, Biggs (2003) enlightens that the blueprint for effective teaching and learning depends on describing the objectives, integrating assessment to those objectives and supporting students to involve in appropriate teaching and learning activities, by teaching them effectively.

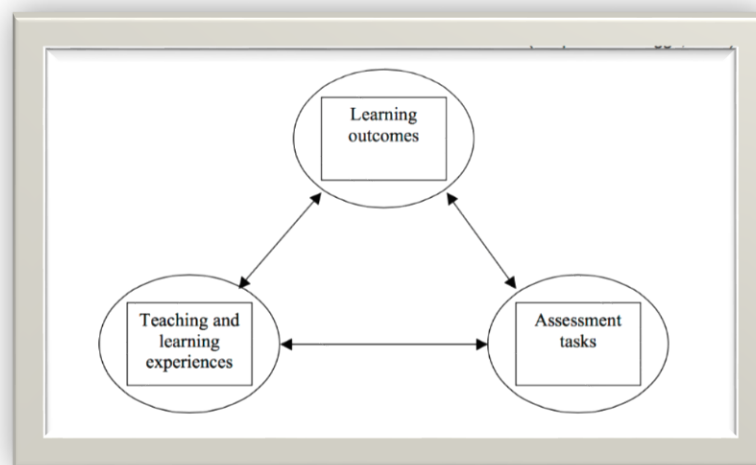


Figure 1. Biggs theory of constructive alignment adapted from Biggs (2003)

2.4.1.1 Learning outcome

Learning outcomes according to Biggs theory describe what a student is expected to know and to be able to do by the end of the subject or course (Biggs, 2003). Clear learning outcomes should benefit students in many ways. Statements of learning outcomes should explain to students what they will have learnt on successful completion of a subject or course. They are also an indication to students of what they may be expected to demonstrate in assignments and examinations.

Teaching is an intentional activity because it is directed at the achievement of educational and learning results. Thus, the results intended must be specified and clearly stated so that the success thereof (by means of assessment) can be checked (Van Rooy, 1993 p111). These learning outcomes are named differently by different authors, such as intended aims, goal, learning objective (Galbraith, Green & Johnson, 2011; Russell, 2011). Learning outcome according to Sebaste (2011) plays a significant role in teaching and learning activities as it serves as guide on what to teach and what students should expect to achieve, leading to purposeful instruction and assessment.

In writing learning outcomes' statements, it is important to focus foremost on what a student should know and be able to do and the ways in which this knowledge and skill might be demonstrated through assessment. This demands that educators bear the following in mind, the kind of knowledge, experience, behaviour and skills that are involved, and the level of understanding desirable for students to achieve and how this learning is to be demonstrated. In phrasing learning outcomes, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) suggest the use of higher-level verbs such as analysis, evaluation or creation. However, there is a challenge that sometimes teachers become too engrossed or dependent on achieving the learning outcome and leave little or no room for innovation and creativity (Apple, 1992).

2.4.1.2 Teaching and Learning Experiences

Twenty-first century students are quite different from the students we taught 15 or 20 years ago, hence the need for educators to employ thoughtful and sensible methods of organizing instructions to address student differences (Joseph, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Biggs (2003) further stated that effective teaching is in the teachers'

ability to define the learning objectives, integrate relevant and various forms of assessment to the set objective and guide students to actively participate in the learning processes, thereby helping them to construct their own learning. At the end of the lecture, both the learner and the teacher should be able to critically reflect on the total activities and confirm whether the learning that occurred matches the intended outcome.

2.4.1.3 Assessment Task

The suggested curriculum alignment by Biggs encompasses all components in the teaching system. That is, the coherence in the curriculum and its intention, the pedagogical methods, the learning activities, the assessment tasks and resources to support learning (Biggs, 2010). The National Qualifications Framework for higher institution provides the lecturer with guidelines to develop and implement a coherent and integrated assessment (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013).

The council suggested the following steps for effective assessment practice:

- (i) clearly stating the outcome to be assessed;
- (ii) selecting the appropriate or suitable evidence;
- (iii) matching the evidence with a compatible or appropriate method of assessment;
and
- (iv) selecting and constructing an instrument(s) of assessment.

According to Biggs (2014), when curriculum is implemented this way, it will be difficult for students not to attain the intended curriculum. Darling-Hammond (2010) argued that the traditional standardized assessment employed in the 20th century is not suitable for 21st century learning demands. Hence, the lecturers need to employ varieties of assessment to support student learning and adjust teaching activities to meet students' interest and needs. This National Research Council (2013) specified four types of assessments which include base line assessment, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment.

- (i) **Baseline assessment:** At the beginning of a level or learning experience, baseline assessment establishes the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that

foundation phase life skills students bring to the classroom. This knowledge assists lecturers to plan learning programmes and learning activities.

- (ii) **Diagnostic assessment:** This assessment diagnoses the nature and causes of learning barriers experienced by specific foundation phase life skills students. It is followed by guidance, appropriate support and intervention strategies. This type of assessment is useful to make referrals for students requiring specialist help.
- (iii) **Formative assessment:** This assessment monitors and supports teaching and learning. It determines student strengths, weaknesses and provides feedback on progress. Formative assessment is the determinant of student's readiness for summative assessment. Hence Sambell and Price (2011) posit that administering formative assessment to track students' achievement in the higher institution is a must for every university lecturer. In addition, the practice of formative assessment enables lecturers to cater for all the students in respect of their cognitive level (Adjogri, Adu & Adelabu, 2014).
- (iv) **Summative assessment:** This type of assessment gives an overall picture of student progress at a given time. It determines whether the student is sufficiently competent to progress to the next level.

Furthermore, the assessment plan indicating the Subject Outcomes and Assessment Standards to be assessed, assessment method or activity and the time of the assessment must be made known to the students.

2.4.2 Curriculum spider web

This Biggs Constructive Alignment theory is further expatiated into 10 components that are aligned in a web and referred to as curriculum spider web design by Akker (2009).

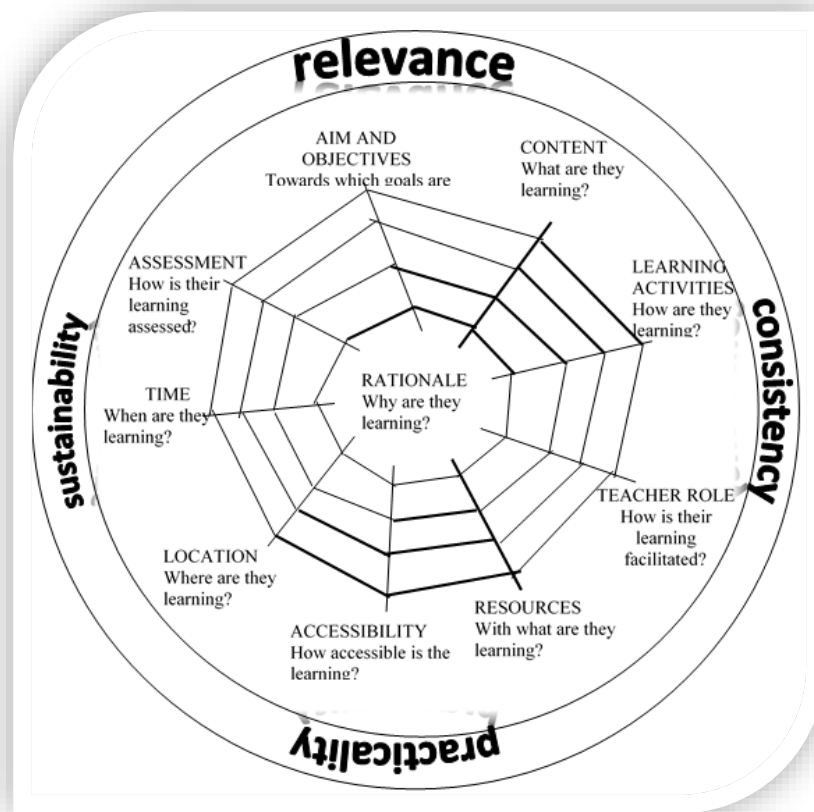


Figure 2. Curriculum Spider web adapted from Van den Akker (2009)

Van der Akker (2010) places emphasis on the importance of improving and creating equilibrium and consistency amid all the components of curriculum in development and implementation. Initially, Bickley, Donner and Walker (1990) gave three basic areas of planning in curriculum as content, purpose and organisation of learning. Conversely, challenges encountered in effective implementation of the curriculum demands for more elaboration of the components (Akker, 2010). Thus, he designs a framework containing 10 components that address areas on preparation of student learning.

The ten components are rationale, goals, content, teaching activities, resources, teacher role, grouping, location, time, and assessment. For more comprehension these components are further framed into question form which are as follows: Rationale or vision: Why are they a learning Life Skills module? Aims and objectives: Towards which goals are they learning Life Skills module? Are goals clearly stated before engaging in learning activities? Content: What are they learning? Learning activities: How are they learning, did the lecturer employ a learning method that will enable them

to construct their own learning? Teacher role: How experienced is the lecturer in facilitating the life skills module, aligning the curriculum to address the stated outcome? Materials and resources: With what type of resources are they learning the Life Skills modules? Grouping: With whom are they learning? Location: Where are they learning, how conducive is the lecture location for students? Time: When are they learning, do they have enough time to cover all the life skills intended curriculum, is time allotted for reflections? Assessment: How to measure how far learning has progressed, how did the students assess their learning? The 'rationale' (referring to the central mission of the plan) serves as a major coordination point, and all other nine components are perfectly connected to that rationale, and preferably also consistent with one another.

At the higher institution and at the lecture room during teaching and learning almost of the components play a role, thus, overall consistency is of crucial importance for sustainable and successful teaching and learning activities. The spider web image highlights both the interconnectedness of the components as well as the vulnerability of the arrangement of which tampering with one leads to the rupturing of the web (Kuiper & Bervkens, 2013).

These ten components must be taken into consideration by curriculum planners, implementers and students who are the recipients of the curriculum during teaching and learning processes. In addition, four curriculum quality criteria revolving around curriculum spider web emphasizing on relevance, consistency, practicality and sustainability were stated. According to Berkvens, Van der Akker and Drugman (2014) each of the criterion is to be applied to each concept of the curriculum spider web during teaching and learning activities. This implies that all the curriculum components must be relevant, structured consistently and logically, practicable in the setting for which it is meant and effective in leading students to achieve the desired outcome. Thus, efficiency of a curriculum depends on its relevance, consistency, practicality and sustainability.

Van der Akker (2009) advocated for curriculum spider web which is made up of 10 curriculum concepts that are aligned together to form the web, thus it can be referred to as conceptual framework. Akker (2009) and Biggs (2014), opined that curriculum be designed comprehensively as an integral part of the learning process to ensure full

alignment with academic programmes in terms of the purpose and learning content of the programme and its modules, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment opportunities and strategies.

2.4.2.1 Rationale for teaching and learning Life Skills

A considerable number of literature reviewed both locally and internationally discloses rationale or reasons for teaching and learning. The rationale could be that students needed to master their subject so to be productive in the society (Akker, 2009). While Khoza (2013) opined that reasons for engaging in any curriculum including Life Skills module could either be personal, societal or institutional demands. This implies that there must be a clear stated reason behind every decision in teaching and learning activities. Sidhu (2012) stated that teaching and learning is a process and for to focus on that process, we need a precise rationale to avoid wasted energy, time and resources. Thus, both students and lecturers have rationale for engaging in Life Skills module. Definitely, Ogude, Oosthuizen and Nel (2005) gave another rationale for teaching and learning Life Skills for both students and educators as upgrading personality and the society. The scholars declare that raising students equipped with problem solving skills that will in turn equip them to adjust to volatile and unpredictable society is of paramount importance in our higher institutions.

In support of Ogude et al (2005), Mooi (2010) as well as Perez (2015), declared that the efficacy of a teacher training programme is fundamentally determinant of quality education to the learners, and that effective facilitation of Life Skills curriculum will not only upgrade students academically but ensure the enhancement of the total well-being of students and the society. Similarly, Earl and Giles (2011) stated in their article that, clearly stated teaching and learning rationale using formative assessment activities provides students with information which they can use as feedback to modify their teaching to foundation phase learners, thereby leading to student and society well-being.

Furthermore, John (2009) conducted a qualitative research on Study on the Nature of Impact of Soft Skills Training Programme on Development of Management Students; stated institution, society and student development as rationale for students' learning life skills. John declared that equipping student with only professional skills and

experience are not sufficiently satisfactory for 21st century demand of students. Prajapati, Sharma and Sharma, D. (2017) further emphasized that employers prefer to hire and promote those persons who are resourceful, ethical, and self-directed with good communication and soft skills hence the need for life skills education. Furthermore, in an interpretive study conducted on Exploring Foundation Phase Lecturers' Experiences in Using Formative Assessment to Assess Student Teachers, society and students were mentioned as the major reasons why teaching is being done. The first participant stated that the reason for teaching is preparing student teachers to become productive in the field of teaching and learning, most especially with foundation phase student-teachers that are being prepared to go and take care of children in their embryonic stage. She emphasized that her focus is to ensure that students are well groomed, thus her rationale is focused on students. Findings reveal that the participants all stuck to the three-suggested rationale for teaching Life Skills to student teachers, which are personal, society and the institution. In addition, World Health Organization (WHO) stated rationale for teaching student's Life Skills as for the benefit of the students and the entire society.

The rationale for including Life Skills in the curriculum is to help produce students that would be equipped to make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner (National Research Council, 2013). Student reflections on curriculum to explore what transpires in the classrooms as to whether the rationale for learning and teaching are clearly stated and revolve around the learner. Hence, Schultz (2012) opines that students should be given the opportunity to reflect and give their opinions about their experiences in the curriculum sessions to obtain a general impression of their satisfaction level.

2.4.2.2 Goals toward which students are learning (Aims, objective and learning outcome)

Clearly stated **goals** and objective to achieve before engaging in teaching and learning activities will lead to tremendous outcome and huge academic achievement. Thus, all educational activities must be channeled toward a set goal. Khoza (2013) stated that goals are learning outcome that students are expected to achieve or comprehend at the end of a specific period of teaching and learning activities. However, in an interpretive

case study of six facilitators and two groups of post graduate students conducted by Khoza (2015), it was stated that aims and objective were relevant when lectures are driven by teacher-centered approach. Thus, aims and objective has been replaced with learning outcomes since lectures are to be more of a student-centered approach; although, the lecturers still need to design aims and objective in terms of their responsibilities.

In classroom practice, the aims and objectives of engaging in any curriculum are generated according to the lecturers' and students' intention. Thus, lecturer and student must have a set of objectives to achieve before engaging in lecturing and learning activities. Also, they are to ensure that they reach the goal set by employing different means, strategies, and activities to serve as engines to drive them there. Hence, the importance of clearly stated intended curriculum and the learning outcome for students in teaching and learning activities. An aim is an overall or a general specification of the intention or purpose and management of learning of a programme of study; a project; a policy, and so on. It is a broad statement of what the lecturers are expected to teach. It clearly states what the student should be taught; this implies that an aim enables students to understand the scope of the syllabus or subject content they are expected to cover.

In short-term, aims are overall statements concerning the broad goals, ends or intentions of teaching and learning. On the other hand, objective is a specific statement of the intention of learning (Kennedy, Hyland, & Ryan, 2006). It specifies what the teacher intends to teach and what the students are expected to learn or can do as they engage in life skills curriculum. Objectives by their nature are assessable or detailed breakdowns of the broad aims normally referred to as learning objectives. Therefore, it can be summarized that learning objectives are specific and concrete statements of what students are expected to learn, and be able to do or understand because of having engaged with the syllabus (Ho & Mueller, 2011). While aims and goals are long- and broad-term, objectives on the other hand are narrowed to what students should know and be able to do, hence an objective is agreeable to assessment, which is observable and measurable (Khoza, 2015).

The importance of goals in education is imperative, hence Carl (2012) suggested the specification of the learning outcome schools want students to achieve that will make them successful and productive citizens in respect of their gender, status and culture. This implies that educational goals, aims and objectives must be designed to accommodate all students' needs. Similarly, Schiro (2012) as well as Darling-Hammond opine that the designer of educational goals and objectives at all levels of education must involve students who are viewed as the recipients of the curriculum.

2.4.2.3 The Life Skills subject contents for students

A well-defined goal in teaching learning activities will inform the appropriate subject content to be taught to the students. Thus, Hoadley and Jansen (2009) opined that Tyler's approach to curriculum suggests that the educational institution must select appropriate content to be taught based on the curriculum designed for the subject. Content is the presentation of information through a design channel for a purposive group or audience. This definition encompasses five elements such as information, purpose, audience, form, and channel. What types of knowledge are the students expected to acquire? In addition, for what purpose? What is the subject content? Is the information purposeful and beneficial to them? What form will the information take? Finally, how proficient is the channel through which the information will be transmitted? This implies that the lecturer must be well informed of the subject content if the students are going to benefit. However, Darling-Hammond (2014) stated that curriculum should be designed in a systematic, logical and comprehensive way to make it easier for lecturers to implement - that will enable students to maximally benefit. Similarly, Hoadley and Jansen (2013) as well as (Akker, 2009) implored curriculum developers to engage in designing subject content that enhances proficiency in students, thereby making them useful to themselves and profitable to the society.

World Health Organization (WHO) defined Life Skills as 'abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life', hence the selection of content that will lead to achievement of this goal. The importance of subject content for Life Skills students was further emphasised by Finn (2012), who states that there is paradigm shift in respect of educational aims worldwide, hence the need for non-academic subject content in school curricula to meet the needs of a growing varied and globalised community. The value

of non-academic subject matter is recognised and subsequently addressed by the inclusion of Life Skills.

The South African government's commitment to the development of young children and adolescents necessitated the inclusion of Life Skills as a subject. The new curriculum (DBE, 2012) describes Life Skills as a subject that is pivotal to the holistic development of students. The subject is concerned with the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of learners and it comprises the following study areas: beginning knowledge, creative arts, physical education, and personal and social well-being. Students are to reflect on this intended curriculum to ascertain their comprehension of the subject contents and how much they have learnt of what was intended. Higher education scholars advocate that if we are to comprehend learning, a student's reflection is imperative.

2.4.2.4 Teaching and learning activities for Foundation Phase Life Skill students

Activities are varieties of plans put in place that arouses the interest of students during teaching and learning processes. In the context of this study, teaching activities could then be said to be different forms of teaching pedagogies aligned with varieties of formative assessments in the process of lecturing, such as quizzes, debates, diagnostic tests, classwork, group work, writing assignments, and presentations to assist the students to achieve the learning outcome (Billing & Halstead, 2015). For example, Romo (2010) stated that employing relevant teaching activities enables lecturers to facilitate effectively thereby aiding students' understanding of the concept thought. Beside Romo's view, interesting learning activities stir up, arouse and motivate students in teaching and learning activities. However, to gain maximally from teaching and learning activities, an educator must have the following questions in mind before selecting any learning activities. The questions include 'What is the topic of the lesson? What do I want students to learn during this activity? How do I go about achieving the aims and objective? Any alignment between the topic, assessment and the teaching and learning activities? Every activity must have a central focus or purpose; thus, it implies that every school activity whether procedural in nature or instructional in nature follows a certain pattern which describes the role of its actors (teacher and learner).

Khoza (2015) revealed in the qualitative study conducted on student teachers' reflection on their practices of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, the importance of teaching activities. However, it was discovered in the study that CAPS document only linked teaching activities to the content without specific objectives and learning outcomes. Effective lecturers in their lecturing activities use formative assessment during instruction to identify students' achievement and weakness on the subject content taught based on the set goal. Then provide feedback to students to help them correct their mistakes and identify and implement instructional correctives (Sass-Henke, 2013).

Formative assessment activities are conducted primarily through informal observations and questions posed to students while the content is being taught or reviewed. Thereby the lecturers check the response from the observations and questions to students to confirm that the goal has been achieved; from there the lecturer identifies instructional adjustments that can further help to enhance the student's performance. However, they are to identify and select activities in which all the students can participate in an organised way. Furthermore, learning activities according to Chou (2011) are various experiences that students need to attain the level of behavioural proficiencies. Also, Van der Akker (2009) opines that for learning to take place, learning activities must be carried out in an inspiring and motivating way. This implies that lecturers should operate a democratic class, create space for students to reflect on the learning activities to ensure that the learning outcome is achieved. Similarly, Biggs (2014) enjoins lecturers to introduce high level teaching and learning activities that require students to be active in their learning, as uninteresting learning activities create room for student's inactiveness.

Teaching and learning activities have a link with students' success or failure in attaining the intended curriculum (Taole, 2013). In addition to the above, when making choices of learning activities, it is expected that lecturers take cognizance of diverse needs of students by ensuring that the necessary learning activities are used to enhance the students' success and to meet the learning goals. In addition, Milkova (2016) stated that learning activities must be designed in an organised form. Every activity has a central focus or purpose; thus, it implies that every school activity whether procedural in nature or in structural in nature follows a certain pattern which describes the role of its actors

(teacher and learner). Some learning activities stimulate experiential learning, others mobilize conceptual thinking, while still others prompt learners to engage in analytical discussions. It is expected that teachers use this knowledge to select the appropriate learning activities in line with learners' cognitive level as well-articulated and constructive activities ignite student interest in learning. The teacher must be mindful and purposeful in selecting learning activities. Life Skills subject is not based on a traditional field of study such as history and mathematics but experience, activities, skills and values.

2.4.2.5 Teacher's role in student's learning of Life Skills

A teacher's role is significant and vital in teaching and learning activities. Study has revealed that teaching and learning activities in many higher institutions focused on what students can do, what they know or how they behave, thus some of the lecturers employed only do summative assessment in facilitating their curriculum which results in little achievement of the stated learning outcome (Fry, Ketteridge & Marshal, 2009; Mkhwanazi, 2014).

According to Sharples, de Roock, Ferguson, Gaved, Herodotou, Koh, and Weller, (2016) lecturer is the central resource in teaching and learning activities. He sets the stage for the activities, facilitates and makes it interesting for students to achieve the expected learning and teaching outcome. Kemp and Scaife (2012); Knight and Yorke (2003); Alexander & Alexander (2015); as well as Westervelt, Adams and Pierce (2014) conducted surveys. All these scholars researched into lecturers' experiences in conducting teaching and learning activities in higher education recommended for the 21st century. The findings indicate that teaching and learning in higher education do not capture its complexity as learners are not well informed by their lecturers of what is expected of them, and assessment is rather based on summative and peer assessment than formative assessment. However, in an interpretive case study conducted by Khoza (2015) on student teachers' reflections on their practices of curriculum and assessment policy statement, it was revealed that certain participants used a teacher centred approach to cover their syllabus from CAPS documents. Although some other participants used the three-teaching approach - teacher-centred (that is the teacher or facilitator bases his or her lecture on aims and objective as prescribed by the curriculum with little or no interest of the student in mind). Hoadly and Jansen (2013) pointed out

Ralph Tyler's method of teaching as teacher-centred approach that focuses on the prescribed curriculum which does not provide the student with wholesome knowledge but school based knowledge. However, Booyse and Du Plessis (2008) stated Lawrence Stenhouse's view of curriculum as teaching towards achieving the learning outcome - which is in contrast to Tyler's view. Thus, Stenhouse's suggested approach is descriptive which is learner-centred.

Furthermore, Hoadley and Jansen (2013) pointed out Paulo Freire's approach to curriculum as political, that is teaching the student the needful experiences that are applicable to real life issues. Hence, curriculum should be taught to accommodate students' diverse needs and interests regardless of their background. In my opinion, I want to suggest that lecturers adopt the three teaching approaches, which include teacher-centered, learner-centered and content-centered to conduct their lesson – this will ensure that learning takes place. Bantwini (2010) also voiced out her opinion that teachers play a significant role in curriculum implementation, as their experience, belief, and insight play a fundamental role in the use of various forms of teaching strategies. Crosby (2000), who stated that a lecturer is the figure model and a key connection between curriculum and practice, supported Bantwini. Hence their role cannot be over emphasized, they set the stage for learning activities. Thus, teachers need to acquire the skills of creativity, extra effort, diligence, and courage to perform their role. They should employ different work styles, resolution, openness, and understanding to drive their lesson.

Teachers who possess these qualities and add them to the curriculum will succeed in creating a multicultural classroom that will advance the educational goals of all students. Furthermore, Elizondo-Montemayor (2008) and Eisner (1985) declared that a holistic approach to education is one that enables teachers to play a central part in not only curriculum implementation but also in development. This enhances their sense of responsibility thereby enabling them to play an active role in achieving the curriculum goals and objective. Van der Akker (2009) further establishes the importance of a teacher's role by stating that teachers accomplish a vital role in curriculum innovation in schools. In addition, Earl and Giles (2011) state that lecturers are to be experiential in administering Life Skills module, be sensitive to students' mood, and have good rapport with them.

Furthermore, to achieve the expected result from teaching and learning, it must be carried out meticulously, systematically with varieties of assessment and constructive feedback. When curriculum implementation is systematically done, learning is bound to take place (Biggs, 2014).

2.4.2.6 Resources for aiding Life Skills teaching to students

In addition to the curriculum concept mentioned above, in teaching and learning activities, it is expected that the lecturer takes cognizance of diverse need of students by ensuring that the necessary learning resources are used to enhance the student's success and to meet the learning goals. Khoza (2012) explained resources to be all things used to process, facilitate, enhance, or aid teaching and learning activities to achieve teaching and learning set goals. He further stated that resources can be human materials or anything that make teaching and learning operational. Also, Nakpodia (2013) suggested three forms of teaching resources that may be used in conducting formative assessment such as: Cinematographic (movies, films, etc.), Pictorial (moveable pictures), and acoustic resources (listening activities). Khoza (2013) in agreement with Nakpodias' idea, listed three major resources that could be helpful to both lecturers and students when engaging in teaching and learning of Life Skill modules. These include hard-ware - all the materials that one can see and touch which are used in the class to materialize learning, soft-ware resources that are part of teaching and that one cannot see (different kinds of information from the internet aid teaching and learning), ideological ware - has to do with lecturers' experiences, and methods of implementation).

However, Amory (2010) argued that it is not just enough to include technology in teaching and learning but the lecturer must be experiential, having mastered the subject content, an ideologist in using the three forms of resources to communicate learning. Thus, lecturers must be immersed in these third resources before they can effectively use hard-ware and soft-ware in conducting formative assessments. Resources are materials that make learning and teaching functional and productive. The greatest of these resources is ideological which enable the educator to engage all the students during the implementation of life skills curriculum. The proficiency of the educator leads to productivity that will thereby ensure the achievement of the stated learning and teaching goal. According to Foot (2014), the actions that comprise an active system are

tools facilitated. Tools can be either materials or conceptual, and in every activity system, participants draw upon existing tools and use cultural-historical resources to create new tools with which to engage, enact and pursue the object of their activity. Similarly, Khoza (2013) admonishes teachers to engage in an authentic teaching activity that enable students to explore the real-world. This will allow life skills students to enthusiastically participate in the activities. This implies that life skills educators should associate their formal task to real-world activities such as role play, storytelling, and creative songs which will enable students' active participation.

Maxine Green (2003), a social activist who contended for a democratic curriculum, stated that teaching and learning activities should be made interactively, giving the students freedom to express their view during the teaching processes. And to ensure that all the learners are treated with equity and love regardless of their gender, culture or class. Maxine further stated that when students felt loved and their view about their learning is valued and appreciated, they learn fast and the learning and teaching outcomes are achieved.

2.4.2.7 Grouping of Life Skills students

The concepts, grouping is a vital part of curriculum spider web to be looked into when facilitating Life Skills modules. The major participants involved in the context of this study are the lecturer and the students. In Khoza (2015), in a qualitative case study conducted on student teachers' reflections on their practices of the curriculum and assessment policy statement, the participants declared that CAPS do not categorically state who should be part of the teaching group or the specific environment for teaching. However, Motshekga (2011) pointed out the two major aims of curriculum as providing the student with knowledge in local context and to also expose them to the wider world by introducing e-learning to the education system whereby the student can connect to other educationists for learning purposes. Thus, he suggested that internet resources be introduced to the students to enable them to connect to other groups of educationists.

Furthermore, in an interpretive qualitative study conducted by Arasomwan (2016) on 'exploring foundations phase lecturers' experiences in using formative assessment to assess student teachers, the lecturers stated that they do not confine themselves to the

students alone, they involve other groups such as professionals in certain areas where they see needs. This then suggests that foundation phase Life Skills lecturers should endeavour to seek out groups of professionals to support them in the areas they discover needs. Life skills is aimed at guiding and preparing students for life and opportunities which entails impacting students with relevant skills necessary for successful living in the 21st century - hence the needs for involvement of professionals from different fields.

2.4.2.8 Location and time for Life Skills teaching and learning activities

Location and time is another curriculum concept that plays a vital role in teaching and learning activities. Khoza (2013) described location as a place where teaching and learning activities take place. Meier (2005) further explained that teaching and learning is basically the undertakings of school and universities, he described teaching and learning that take place in the classroom as formal learning, while outdoor activities are informal. From this scholar's view, conducting teaching and learning activities is not limited to the classroom, it can be anywhere but ensuring that learning takes place. Mpungose (2015) added that location or space can have a physical influence on learning and can encourage assessment and group work among students. He further stated that conducive and favourable environments make teaching and learning interesting and productive. In addition, the choice of location for teaching and learning depends on the topic to be taught (Arasomwan, 2016). She further declares that lecturers do not limit themselves to the classroom alone, but any place conducive to teaching and learning activities.

Furthermore, the participant in Khoza (2015) declared that time is allotted to the approved subject content which serves as a guide on how they should go about the implementation of their syllabus. Findings from a qualitative case study research conducted by Arasomwan (2016) on three Foundations Phase lecturers' experiences in using formative assessment to assess student teachers, discloses that the lecturers are in tune with Khoza (2015), who declared that their teaching and learning activities are being driven by the precise time allotted to the modules. However, Gillies and Boyle (2011), in their studies conducted on teachers' reflections on cooperative learning, issues on insufficiency time was mentioned as one of the challenges to effective implementation of the curriculum. Bennie and Newstead (1999) wrote that educators tend to be mindful of their limited time to cover the syllabus, thereby leaving little or

no time for students to reflect on their learning. Students are not of the same cognitive level, some are slow learners while others are not. Thus, time must be well managed to ensure that all students are progressing equally during teaching and learning processes.

2.4.2.9 Assessment

According to Akker (2009), assessment is described as an indispensable element of the curriculum practice. It is a process for obtaining facts in curriculum implementation to make decisions about student learning, curriculum and programmes, and on education policy matters. In my own opinion, assessment answers the question of - how much of the subject content has been taught and how much of the content curriculum have learners really grasped or comprehended? Lecturers' experiences in conducting assessments will determine its effectiveness in measuring what it is meant to measure. Assessment gives birth to feedback, thus assessment without feedback and comment is less likely to enhance learners' performance. Assessment is not just a means of measuring and evaluating learning, but to aid and enhance learning. It can be formative, summative, peer group, assessment as learning and assessment in learning. Connolly and Spiller (2016) stated that qualitative and quantitative on formative assessment has revealed that it is perhaps one of the most relevant interventions for aiding and enhancing high-performance ever studied, hence formative assessment produces desired feedback and greatly enhances learners' performance.

It has long been assumed that there are two main purposes of assessment. The first is to provide certification of achievement. This enables students to graduate with a validated record of their performance in the programme in which they have participated. Certification is used by employers and by educational institutions, typically to make judgements about acceptability for employment and further study. The second purpose of assessment is to facilitate learning. Through the provision of information about responses to various kinds of tests or assignments, students are enabled to more effectively judge their own achievements and what they need to do to learn more effectively within the programme.

2.5 The application of theoretical/conceptual framework in students' reflections

Curriculum spider web is a framework of 10 curriculum concepts often used as a guide for effective teaching and learning activities. Hourani (2013) labels reflection activity as a programme in student teachers' education that enable the pre-service teachers to analyse their learning activities and their underlying source and then deliberate on an alternative means of attaining their ends. Hence the choice of curriculum spider web concepts as guide for students' reflections on their experiences. The curriculum spider web has rationale with other nine components that link to the rationale. This implies that a clearly stated rationale why students engage in any educational activities, will influence their set goals and objectives. Students reflect on self, educator and teaching activities to explore what transpires in the classrooms, to discover whether the rationale for learning Life Skills module is clearly stated and teaching is done to address the outcome. Schultz (2012) opines that students should be given the opportunity to reflect and relate their opinions about their experiences in their learning to obtain a general impression of the student satisfaction level.

This goal will enable them to reflect on the subject contents, the relevance, the practicability and the sustainability of the content to them. Also, they reflect on the teaching activities, the educator's pedagogical style, the structure and the alignment with other teaching and learning components such as the content and assessment. Furthermore, the students are to reflect on the accessibility of the knowledge in respect of their culture, financial status and gender. This implies that every student counts, the activities must benefit all the students. Nwokedi (2016) asserted that South Africa is multicultural with people of different races, hence the teaching must be done to include and benefit all the students. Thus, the relevance of teaching resources, that will help the educator to reach all the students and enable them to understand the contents easily.

In achieving the rationale for studying Life Skills, duration for learning the module is a determinant factor. According to Jawarneh (2015) students can only benefit from teaching and learning activities when they are given enough time to reflect on their experiences. How much of the time did the students have to reflect on their learning? Curriculum spider web also mentioned the importance of teaching and learning environment to students' success. Khoza (2013) described location as a place where

teaching and learning activities take place. This suggests that teaching and learning is not only limited to the classroom but rather any conducive place for teaching and learning that allows students to construct their learning. On this point, students will best know how conducive the learning environment is. In addition, some lecturers mentioned content to be taught as the determinant for choice of location for teaching and learning activities (Arasomwan, 2016).

Lastly, conducting different forms of assessment to aid teaching and learning activities. Assessment, according to Akker (2009) is described as an indispensable element of the curriculum practice. Students are to engage in peer assessment. Peer and self-assessment are connected to reflective exercise as it enhances self-development. However, it was reported that majority of the Foundation Phase public school teachers lack effective knowledge and skills of different forms of assessment practice, hence they stuck to just one method of assessing learners for grading instead of using assessment for learning (Mkhwanazi, 2014). Hence, the need for the participants to reflect on the forms of assessment employed in their learning to ascertain their strengths and the weaknesses.

2.6 Critiques of the Theoretical/Conceptual frame work

Since Tyler's objective model which placed emphasis on coherence among learning objective, teaching activities, contents and assessment task to ensure that learning takes place, other scholars have expounded on it and renamed it as constructive alignment. Constructive alignment is viewed as the best educational approach for attaining 21st century educational demand (Biggs, 2014; Schleicher, 2012; Sebaste, 2012; Bower, Dalgarno, Kennedy & Lee, 2010). The named scholars believe that educators should encourage and guide students to actively engage in their learning rather than being indoctrinated. The curriculum spider web of Van der Akker (2009) are curriculum concepts that guide educators in the curriculum implementation process. Thus, the theoretical/conceptual framework is accepted as relevant and hence no critiques.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature reviewed in this chapter was basically divided into three segments. These include the research phenomena which are: students' reflection, curriculum and curriculum alignment and Life Skills education. The second segment

presented literatures on students' voices on their perception of the curriculum implementation as it affects them positively or negatively. And thirdly, the theoretical/conceptual framework upon which the study hinges were discussed. This is constructive alignment designed by Biggs (2003) which is further expounded into 10 curriculum components with rationale as the link connecting the other components (Van der Akker, 2009). The next chapter will therefore show how this study will set about answering the research questions by illustrating the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two of this study presents the relevant literature review underpinning the study. Thereafter, the theoretical framework/conceptual framework upon which the study hinges was explored. The theory of constructive alignment of Biggs (2003) supported by ten concepts curriculum spider web design by Van der Akker (2009), serve as check and basis for effective teaching and learning that assist students to construct their own learning, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in their practice. Thus, they are to explore on their learning experiences. Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology employed in carrying out this research to provide answers to the key questions highlighted in the research study.

3.2 The research designs

The research design refers to the entire approach chosen to ensure integration of the various components of the research study in an organised and comprehensible way to effectively address the research questions (Van Wyk, 2012). It is a systematic plan of what is to be done and how it should be done to achieve the goal and objective of the research. This encompasses research approach, the required data and the generation method, sampling size and sampling method, strategies for data collection and data analysis. The research work is a qualitative type situated within interpretivist paradigm. The sampling methods for extracting data from the fourth-year foundation phase life skills students are stated as purposive and convenience sampling. Thereafter, the procedure for data generated method, data analysis, steps taken to ensure issues of trustworthiness such as credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability as well as ethical respect shall be explained.

3.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is the type of study that tends to explore the real-world setting in-depth so as to generate rich narrative description and interpret phenomena in view of the explanation giving to them by the people (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011;

Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Qualitative design, unlike quantitative research works with textual and image data. This implies that rich information and expressive data are collected from participants' direct speech or pictures rather than mere numbers (Cohen et al., 2011; Nwokedi, 2016). Thus, my choice of interpretive research method to enable me to gather in-depth information from the participants' reflection on their experiences of life skills curriculum in their day-to-day learning activities. Besides, employing qualitative design enabled me to exist in the real world of the participants, thereby acquiring deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Myers, 2013). In addition, Maxwell (2004) opined that qualitative research enables the researcher to realize new philosophies and evidences from the real situation. Furthermore, engaging directly with the participants in this study, using a collaborating method will afford me the privilege of knowing and having a clear understanding of effective curriculum alignment, as is being experienced by the participants. According to Nwokedi (2016), 'qualitative research is used in understanding the process, the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns and mostly concerns with the "why" questions of research'. The researcher will be investigating final year Foundation Phase Life Skills students to elicit in-depth information on their opinions of curriculum alignment as it affects them either positively or negatively.

3.2.2 Research Paradigm

McKenna (2003) suggested four paradigms that provide useful guides in undertaking rich and educative research. These are positivist, interpretivist, critical paradigm and post structural. A research paradigm represents a particular world view that defines the course or pattern for the researcher who holds the view on what is acceptable to research and the procedure. Research paradigm, according to Guba (1990) has the following characteristics in question form: it starts with ontology - what the reality is? (How did the student experience life skills curriculum?) Then epistemology - how can I know the experiences? Theoretical perspective - what approach can I adopt? Methodology - what procedure can I use to acquire their experiences? Methods and sources which are about the tools to employ in acquiring the knowledge and data to be collected.

This qualitative study will be situated within the interpretive paradigm, also known as constructivist. This paradigm employed in this study contrasts the positivist paradigm that attempts to falsify hypothesis or predict situations and also differs from the critical

paradigm. The latter aims at liberating or emancipating the oppressed. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), as well as Bertram and Christiansen (2014)), explained interpretive researchers as those that try to understand social behaviour, and how people make meaning of their experiences in the challenging context where they function. They further stated that the interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to give meaning to the subjective world of the researched. In view of this, this study aims at exploring students' reflection on curriculum alignment, as it is practiced by the Foundation Phase lecturers and student teachers who have experienced curriculum alignment and practices.

Maxwell (2004) opined that interpretive paradigm is best for qualitative research as it enables the researcher to realize new philosophies and evidences from the real situation. The interpretivist does not attempt to falsify hypothesis, explain or predict situations but rather they tend to understand how knowledge and experiences are created. What informs their behaviour or motives? Thus, this study will engage the situation from the viewpoint of the participants which include fourth-year Foundation Phase Life Skills students.

3.2.3 Case study

This study is a qualitative case study situated within the interpretivist paradigm. Rule and John (2011) explain case study as a 'systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context to generate knowledge'. Nwokedi (2016) concurs with John and Rule's opinion which discloses that a case study is employed in research to examine a specific situation in in-depth. Hence, the purpose of a case study is to provide detailed explanation of a particular case or human experiences in the real setting. Similarly, Babbie (2013) reaffirmed the purpose of case study research by saying that it enables in-depth examination of a specific situation that eventually produces an explanatory background, thereby having a clue of the structure and procedures of the situation. In case study research, emphasis is placed on the context of participants' ideas and experiences. Case study produces an understanding of and deeper intuitions into a certain situation by given reliable and rich account of the case, thereby illuminating relative to its wider contexts (Rule & John, 2011). This implies that a case study can be used to describe a unit of study, such as a case study of a precise situation or to explain a research process (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Nieuwenhuis made researchers aware of the

multiplicity of case study research design which we need to understand. However, Rule and John gave two distinct types of case studies which include the 'intrinsic and instrumental case or a combination of the two'. An 'intrinsic case study focuses on the case because it is interesting and unique, hence the need for in-depth studying while an instrumental case study takes its focus on a particular issue and examines cases to explore this issue in depth' (Rule & John, 2011, pp.8-9). This research work employs intrinsic case study types that focus on a precise group which is the fourth-year foundation phase life skills students. These students engage with the life skill curriculum in their third and fourth year at the university, and have gone to the field twice to put into practice what they had learnt. Thus, the researcher found a case study appropriate to explore their reflection on how the curriculum had helped them to perform their teaching roles

3.2.4 Research context or Location

The location of a study is made up of several things, which includes research participants, settings as well as a background (Legg-Jack, 2015). This research study will be conducted in one of the South African universities. The principle and reason for the choice of the university as the location for the study is its convenience for me as a student and a contract staff lecturer teaching undergraduate students. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), convenience sampling is a non-random sampling chosen by a researcher based on availability, easy accessibility, and geographical nearness of the researcher and the research participants. Similarly, Struwig and Stead (2013) declared that the choice of convenience sampling is based on the accessibility and cooperation of the participants. The researcher and the participants are at the same university and the same geographical proximity, thus making access to them easy, hence the choice of convenience sampling as one of the means for data generation.

Convenience sampling enables the researcher to draw samples from population that are convenient for him or her and are close at hand (Nwokedi, 2016). The university has a proud and rich heritage of academic excellence; it ranks third most productive in South Africa in terms of research output. The domain of the study is the Foundation Phase department of the university situated around Durban Metropolitan. The university offers teacher training including foundation phase students, thus the location is deemed suitable for the research study. The answer to the research question which intends to

explore students' experiences of their curriculum and how they carried out their teaching roles is believing to be gotten from there. The university is an interracial and all-inclusive campus with black students as the majority, and other races which include Indians, coloured, and white students emerging from various parts of the country.

3.2.5 Research Sampling Method

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explain research sampling as making a selection of people, events, settings or behaviour to include in a research study. In this study, Maree and Petersen (2007) assert that convenience and purposive sampling methods are relevant in qualitative research as it avails the researcher's choice of participants that are convenient to reach and yet with relevant information. Teddlie and Yu (2007) stated that purposive sampling method in research involves making decisions of people, groups of people, or schools which have rich information which is needed to answer the research. Similarly, Kumar, Mohanraj, Sudha, Wedick, Malik, Hu and Mohan (2011), describe purposive sampling as an approach in which the researcher relates with participants who have the information necessary to provide answers to the key research questions. Rule and John (2011) further added that people are purposely selected in purposive sampling based on their experiences, knowledge and their awareness as it relates to the phenomenon to be explored. Thus, in this study, the researcher employs purposive sampling to deliberately select 20 final year foundation phase life skills students from a cohort of 45 students. These students have gone to the field twice to put into practice their experiences of the curriculum through teaching practice, hence, they could tell whether the curriculum prepares them to carry out their teaching role effectively. Furthermore, qualitative case study research focuses on a few cases since the intention is not to generalize the finding or predict a situation but rather to understand how knowledge and experiences are created. Hence the choice of Foundation Phase Life Skills students as my participants.

3.2.6. Method of Data Generation

Christiansen et al. (2014); and Wahyuni (2012) explained research method as a systematic and logical approach employed by a researcher to generate and analyse data by using specific techniques and tools. Cohen et al. (2011) as well as Rule and John (2011), who are significant qualitative researchers refer to it as data collection method. But in this research study the researcher prefers the use of data generation method since

the aim is to generate facts from participants through questioning. Nwokedi (2016) mentioned different methods of data generation in qualitative research which include focused group interview, reflective activity (life history), observation method, interview method, focused group discussion method and visual media. In this study the researcher confined herself to two methods of data generation common to qualitative research, namely focused group interview and reflective essay writing (Cohen et al., 2011).

- **Reflective Essay writing:** Cohen et al. (2011); and Milam (2008) describes the reflective essay as a written essay required by the participants to sequences of questions about the phenomenon studied. In reflective essay, the participants sincerely express their views, beliefs, ideas, practices, approaches and experiences as it relates to their curricula in a narrative form (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Cohen et al. (2011) further stated that reflective essay assists the researcher to generate trustworthy data that reflect the experiences of all the interviewees. In addition, a reflective essay is a written document of personal experiences or account as recounted by the participants in their own words by means of their personal time lines (Morgan, George, Ssali, Theobald & Hawkins, 2015). Thus, in this study, students freely expressed their experiences of the Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum, how it is implemented to enhance their knowledge thereby preparing them to be effective teachers. Their essay writing served the basis for discussion during the focus group interview.

However, Bertram and Christiansen (2014) pointed out a possible weakness of reflective essay, namely that some of the participants may not be clear about the questions and may end up supplying information, which they felt would interest the researcher. This seems to be a challenge of reflective essay writing. To tackle the challenges, detailed explanation of the questions was done with the participants before they engaged in the reflective essay writing. In addition, enough time was also given to enable them to think critically before attempting the questions. Some of the students spent two weeks on the essay before turning it in. Nevertheless, the discussion during the interview helped to clarify any uncertain information from the reflective essay. The findings from this reflective essay will assist in identifying gaps in the programme and may result in strengthening the Life Skills modules.

- Focused group semi-structured interview:** The responses of the participants on the reflective activity served as basis for the focused group interview. The students were divided into five groups with four students in a group for focused group discussion. Fylan (2005) explained focused group interview as an avenue for enabling the participants to talk freely about their experiences, and what they think about the subject that the researcher is interested in. Cohen and Crabtree (2008); Smith, Levine, Lachlan and Fediuk (2002) described it as an instrument of data generation that is using to discover and extract people's opinion, feelings and actions during the process of conversations between the researcher and the participants. The focus group interview enables the researcher the opportunity of exploring the interviewee's feeling and opinion about their engaging with foundation phase Life Skills curriculum and how it equips them with required life solving skills for 21st century teachers. The questions to be discussed were structured in an open-ended form. This makes room for the researcher and the students to discuss, debate, argue out their feelings about how they experience their curriculum on this campus. The students were asked questions on their experiences, especially their encounters during teaching practice, what went well and also their challenges. They intensively reflected on their experiences of how the curriculum aids their improvement, performance and effectiveness. Each section of the interview lasted for 30 minutes to an hour. This focused group discussion enables the students who are the recipients of the curriculum to voice out their feelings about their learning activities at the university. For comprehension and to be explicit, the focused group interview questions were broken into different headings using Van der Akker (2009) curriculum spider web concepts as a guide.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a frame of approaches that help a researcher to define facts, identify patterns, and provide details on the data generated to get answers to the research questions (Smith & Levine, 2002). Similarly, Newton (2010) declared data analysis as the most vital aspect of research study since the data generated from different methods are critically examined before providing information to answer the research questions. This suggests that it is data analysis that explains the generated data to provide a comprehensive result and draws conclusion on the strength and weakness of the

phenomenon. The six stages of thematic data analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), which include familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report shall be employed. Thematic analysis is identifying, examining and reporting themes or patterns that emerge in generated data which help in describing the data set in detail, thereby leading to the interpretation of various features of the research phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The data was analysed thematically using deductive and inductive reasoning approach. Inductive analysis involves selecting codes and categories based on the collected data while deductive involves using theoretical or conceptual framework to structure the study into a theme during the analysis of data (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

Firstly, the researcher listened carefully and transcribed the tape-recorded information verbatim, read through the reflections activity of each participant discretely to ensure the data are well comprehended. After familiarising with both the written and recorded generated data, she went further to identify the reoccurring patterns that are relevant to the research questions. The points that address how students experience the Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum and how the curriculum enhances their performance were sort for. This coding process is done by using inductive reasoning approach. Furthermore, the researcher tried to identify how relationships emerge between codes and theme from the data. Thereafter, related codes are grouped together as they emerge and are categorised to form a theme. In the next stage, emerging themes from the data are identified, structured and classified using the theoretical/conceptual framework which is the elaborate curriculum concepts (curriculum spider web) by Van der Akker (2009), as well as theory of constructive alignment designed by Biggs (2014), which is inductive reason. Furthermore, the themes were critically examined to extract relevant information that provides answers to the research key questions which were eventually developed as concluding theme. The theme was arranged into meaningful coherence and discernible division. The identified themes were further enhanced and given workable definition and name using the curriculum spider web. Lastly, the result which relates students' experience of Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum and how it prepares them to teach Foundation Phase Life Skills to learners, was produced.

3.4 Ethical Issues

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) explained ethics as norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in research. Tangwa (2009) stated the three ethical principles as autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence, which are duly observed in this study.

Firstly, ethical permission was sought for and granted by the researcher from the university registrar and from the head of department of Foundation Phase/ECD discipline of the university where the study was conducted. Thereafter, the consent of the participants was duly sought in writing and verbally, explaining to them in detail the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw should they feel uncomfortable to continue with the study. The participants were also assured of their anonymity and confidentiality by not revealing their real names nor divulging their opinion, idea or information to the public. The devices used for recording during the interview were pass-worded so as to ensure the confidentiality of their information. Also, the copies of the completed interview transcripts, the memory stick in which the interviews are stored, as well as the written reflective essay from individual participants will be stored in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office. It shall be stored for the period of five years and thereafter it will be shredded and burnt.

Furthermore, the researcher ensured that this study is beneficial to the participants by taking her time to explain to them the importance of reflecting on their experiences of the curriculum, as it helped them to gain new understanding. They participated freely without been coerced. In this research study, I ensured that all ethical measures specified by the University KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee was strictly adhered to. Ethical clearance permit was obtained from the research office of the university registrar before the commencement of the research work.

3.5 Issues of Trustworthiness

Lisa and Kristie (2006) describe trustworthiness as all efforts made by qualitative researchers to ensure that credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability are apparent in their investigation, and thereby ensuring triangulation. **Triangulation** involves generating research data from more than a singular source to produce rich and deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe

and Neville (2014,) explained it as use of various procedures for gathering and/or managing data in a research to seek validation of apparent findings. To ensure triangulation of this study, data generation was done via reflective essay writing and semi-structured focused group interviews. The participants were given guided questions to freely narrate their experiences. Thereafter, a plan was made for semi-structured focus group interviews.

The focus group discussion helped the researcher to explore the participants' thoughts on how their experiences influence their teaching roles. Besides this, during the focused group interview, the researcher employed a Zulu speaker who assisted in interpreting any difficult areas to the students thereby enabling free flow of communication. However, the students are in their final year and claimed they have clear understanding of the interview questions. Moreover, I also had Indian students who are English speakers as participants in this study. Hence the IsiZulu speaker employed only participated during one focus group interview. These dual approaches allow for triangulation of information generated.

In qualitative research, measurement is not applicable, thus the issues of trustworthiness in handling data description in this study becomes imperative (Mack, 2010). Credibility in interpretive research is a measure taken by the researcher in data generation and analysis to ensure that the results replicate the exact experience of the participant, that is the data generated describe the actual situation in the natural setting that is being explored (Creswell, 2013; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To ensure the credibility of this study the following measure was put in place, namely the use of audio recording device to record the focused group interview verbatim, and the written reflective essay by the participants. In addition, the researcher sought for the assistance of IsiZulu speaker to allow for flowing communication between her and the participants. Thereafter, the transcript was taken back to the participants to enable them check for accuracy to ensure that it reflects their views and information.

Furthermore, confirmability according to Shenton (2004), as well as Bertram and Christiansen (2014), is all the measure put up by the researcher to prove that the findings are transparent, authentic and not their own prejudice. In this study, confirmability was enhanced by generating data from more than one source, reflective

essay (life history) and focus group interview methods are the sources for data generation. In addition, another measure put in place to address the issues of confirmability in this study, is the inclusion of direct quotations of participants' responses. On the other hand, dependability is ensuring that the processes involved in conducting the study are clearly shown as in data collection, data analysis and the research procedures employed.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) dependability in a qualitative study is the evaluation of the quality of the means or processes of data generation, data analysis, and theory interpretation. This will allow a future researcher to repeat the study, if not essentially to gain the same outcome (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). Hence, the report of this study includes a clearly stated research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data gathering and reflective appraisal of the study so to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Transferability in interpretive research is the extent to which the research can be used in other situations having the same features (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2011). However, there is an understanding that findings from a qualitative case study inquiry are limited to small groups within a context. To ensure transferability of this study, the theoretical/conceptual framework upon which this study hinges (constructive alignment/curriculum spider web) were used to structure and as guide for data generation, data analysis and the interpretation to avoid unsubstantial claims. Theory of curriculum alignment and curriculum spider web are essential curriculum concepts required for effective teaching and learning activities at any level of education. Hence, findings and lessons from the students' reflections on Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum may be applied to universities which prepare teachers of young children.

3.6. Conclusion

Chapter three stated and discussed the research design and methodology adopted and the rationalization for finding them relevant for the study. Thereafter, the data generation methods with data generation process, issues of trustworthiness of the data, the analysis strategy of the generated data, ethical consideration issues which are considered appropriate to qualitative research were employed and discussed in the

study. Lastly, the limitation of the study was also highlighted in this chapter. The next chapter discussed the analysis of data generated through focus group interviews and reflective activity.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Data analysis is a frame of approaches that help a researcher to define facts, identify patterns, and provide details on the data generated to get answers to the research questions (Smith & Levine, 2002). This chapter presents the analysis of the generated data, its presentation and interpretation in responding to the three key questions the research study hinges on. The data presentation was done by using theme and categories that occurred from the generated data. The raw data generated were examined, and then discovered the pattern and regularity in it before proceeding to analysis. The researcher transcribed the tape-recorded information verbatim, and read through each participant's idea discretely to ensure the data are well comprehended.

4.2 Data analysis and presentation

The data was generated through reflective narrative essay written by 20 final year Foundation Phase students of a South African university. The students wrote expressly about how they experienced the curriculum. These students were further grouped into four for semi-structured focus group interviews which were the follow-up mechanism to clarify issues that were not very clear in the reflection narrative essay. The data presented here was generated through a major theme that emerged from the data and are analysed under three sub-headings, namely; Theme one: students' experiences of the curriculum: the teaching and learning outcome; Theme two: student's experiences of their curriculum: the implementation processes; and Theme three: students' experiences of the curriculum as it prepares them to perform their teaching roles.

4.2.1 Theme one: Students' experiences of the curriculum: Teaching and learning outcome

In this theme, the students' responses gave rise to the following categories:

Rationale for studying Foundation Phase Life Skills module; the clarity of the course outline, learning goals and outcome and time allotted for curriculum implementation and students' reflection on the curriculum.

Teaching Life Skills for just two semesters is not sufficient to equip them to teach Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners. It was discovered that the participants want Life Skills to be extended from first year to their last years of studies.

4.2.1.1 Rationale for studying Foundation Phase Life Skills module

The researcher set the motion by asking the participants to expound on the reasons they wrote on the narrative reflective essay for engaging in Foundation Phase Life Skills module. The students were enthusiastic in their response. They gave various reasons for their choice of Foundation Phase Life Skills modules. From the students' responses three major significant rationales were depicted. These are society, personal and learner interest. Firstly, the society; the students seem to have society in mind, majority of them stated that the decadence in society can be reversed by starting to impart desirable skills in Foundation Phase learners. Some of them stated that they were afraid to teach in high school because of the learners' unruly behaviour, hence they believe that the sanitation can be done at Foundation Phase. The second fact from the finding is personal interest in a teaching profession. They claimed they need to acquire knowledge, strategies and an appropriate qualification to become an effective teacher.

Thirdly, they uniformly agreed that it is easier to teach Foundation Phase learners than other Phases, and because of their love for children, they chose Foundation Phase Life Skills module.

Participant one stated that:

“My reasons for studying this Foundation Phase is because I love working with young children and I believe that if the mind is properly taught Life Skills at an early stage they will grow to become great.”

This student has love and concern for the young ones, and believes that whatever the children will become in future is built into them at this foundation stage. She believes that more attention should be given to them at this stage of their lives for formation and imparted certain delightful skills into them. Children equipped with life problem solving skills from a tender age grow up to become responsible to self and the society.

On the similar note another student says that:

“It gives you insights into child development and the basic skills of everyday life needed by children.”

This participant declared the importance of knowledge of child development to foundation phase prospective teachers that will enable her to give her best to the child. Studying Foundation Phase Life Skills module, according to her, widen her horizon on child development and the basic skills children need for their daily activities. She added that a Foundation Phase teacher will be more productive if she has clear understanding of a child's developmental milestone.

Another participant excitedly declared that:

Life Skills gives us an insight of how children develop, what to teach and how to teach them to understand better." (participant 2).

This student argued that the mode of learning of foundation phase learners is quite different from other phases. Hence the need for adequate knowledge to assist in effective implementation of Life Skills modules to Foundation Phase.

This student has society in mind:

"Eish! there is a lot of problem in the society and I felt I could contribute to see how to be of help I want to make a change, many children are into drugs, I felt it is better to start with Foundation Phase children."

This student's rationale for the choice of Foundation Life Skills module is her concern for the moral decadency in society among the youngsters, especially the high school learners. She believes that starting with the foundation phase learners is the solution to the problem. She stated that the children are still malleable, and this stage of their lives is the best time to impact into them valuable skills that will help them become desirable and well-behaved children.

Another participant was passionate about foundation phase learners - she said:

"I love children and want to touch their life, and as a mother I felt I need more information for me to be effective and to feed them with the right and quality information." (Participant 8).

This view was supported by participant five who says:

"I want to be an agent of change; our society is sick; hence I want to start with the foundation pupils."

This participant is passionate about the wellbeing of the society. The social ill, juvenile delinquency, high rate of teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, teenage school dropout, and

many others that make the society unhealthy and uncondusive to dwell in are of great concerns to her. She believes that imparting desirable norms and values into Foundation Phase learners will help resuscitate the society back to normalcy.

However, some students have different reasons why they were studying Foundation Phase Life Skills.

A participant said:

“I’m studying this because there is scarcity of job, and I hope to get job with this.” (participant 6).

This student’s reason of choosing this module is personal interest, to earn income. She believes that she could easily get employment with the certificate when she eventually graduated.

Another participant gave her reason:

“I want to become an effective and a better teacher to young learners.”

Similarly, another participant said:

“To acquire more knowledge about the contents in Foundation Phase, I want to develop myself so that I can impact relevant skills to learner.”
(Participant 10).

The participants have set goals to achieve from their responses. They have vision for Foundation Phase and seek to see how their dream can be actualized. Some of the participants are parents and are willing to learn more about valuable skills to pass on to their children and others. For some, they want to effect positive change in the society, hence they opted for Foundation Phase to acquire more knowledge on child development. Participant five categorically stated that she wants to be an agent of change and she believed that effective change and transformation is best imparted when children are in Foundation Phase. However, participant 10 and 11 have different opinions for choosing Life Skills Foundation Phase; they believe they could easily get employment in Foundation Phase. Their responses led me to find out from them whether the learning goals and outcome are clearly stated by the lecturers to address their rationale. The answer they gave led to the next category as presented below.

4.2.1.2. The clarity of the course outline, learning goals and outcome

Majority of the participants unanimously agreed that the course outline was clearly stated and read to them before the commencement of the module.

A participant commented that:

“The module outlines and the learning outcome are read to us before the commencement of the teaching.” (participant 1).

According to this participant, the lecturer gave the students the course outlines and further explained what they are expected to do.

Another participant supported the first participants as he stated that:

“The course outline is very clear because it states everything that the module lesson needed to cover before the end of the periods. It also states the activities that needed to be done in the module.” (participant 3).

However, participant 19 has something different from others as she declared that:

“The learning outcome are not clear, although they are stated, but how to achieve the outcome are not clearly stated, many of us could not achieve the learning outcome.”

This participant went further by explaining that the course outlines read to them by the lecturers are not effectively taught and hence achieving the goals was not feasible. She stated that the implementation strategy is more of lecturing- or teacher-centred, that is reading of the slides to them in the class.

There was no dispute concerning setting of learning outcome and objectives, the students agreed that the lecturers usually read the course outline to them at the beginning of every module. However, they uniformly complained that they were not guided on how to achieve the learning outcome. The compliance here is tailored towards the implementation strategies of the lecturers. The students believe every lecture be made as practical as possible by the lecturers in their teaching activities. The lecturers are to employ suitable teaching methods relevant to Foundation Phase learners in addressing the contents that will lead to the achievement of the set goals. Also, they believed that activities to cover in the module should not just be read to them or be left to themselves, but series of examples on how to go about solving the activities should be provided by the lecturers.

4.2.1.3 Time allotted for curriculum implementation and students' reflection on the curriculum

Another important area of emphasis derived from the data is on time. Time for both curriculum implementation and students' reflection on the curriculum. Findings revealed that there is too much content to be covered within a short time, hence time was insufficient. The student complained that in trying to cover the syllabus, the lecturers rushed them with little or no time to reflect.

These are students' voices on time:

"The time allotted to the module is not enough because there was part of the module the students are expected to complete on their own, just because there is no time." (participant 4).

This student mentioned that the syllabus is not usually completed due to lack of time. Certain contents that are sometimes useful are left unattended to, especially if the contents are towards the end of the semester.

This view was supported by participant 5:

"Time is not enough, too many topics within a short time and at times, crisis on the campus distract us."

As for this participant, she stated that the topics to be covered are too many for the semester, and the constant students' demonstrations on the campus make it impossible for them to cover the syllabus. On this point the researcher asked the students if they had ever expressed their displeasure to the authority. They responded that a professor had just come to the department and they believe that something will be done. However, some participants believe that complaining means reporting their lecturers and could bounce back on them since the lecturers mark their scripts.

This student particularly lamented that:

"We are not even given enough time to reflect on the curriculum because of shortness of the time." (participant 16).

This student also complained about time and even added that she believed the lecturer should create time for them to reflect on the curriculum to point out the areas they are not satisfied with.

Many of the participants complained that the time allotted to the Life Skills module is insufficient, hence the lecturers resorted to the teacher-centred method in a bid to cover the syllabus within the short space of time. This teaching method does not cater for all the students' needs, it benefits only those who are cognitively privileged. The students mentioned insufficient time allotted to the syllabus as one of the problems that leads to their ineffective performance during the teaching practice. Some important topics were left for students to cover on their own. They opined that certain redundant content be removed from the syllabus to enable them to concentrate on contents that will lead to the achievement of their goals.

When they were asked reasons for not expressing their dissatisfaction about the syllabus, some stated that a new professor had just come to the department and they believe she will see to the adjustment - while others are sceptical about expressing their views about the curriculum.

Issues from the data listed under this theme are students' rationale for studying Foundation Phase Life Skills module which from findings, are society, learners and personal interest. Majority of the participant agreed that learning outcome and course objective are clearly stated, but the implementation method is not systematically done to help in achieving the set goals. Also, the students lament insufficient time in achieving the learning outcome.

4.2.2. Theme two: Students' experience of their curriculum: The implementation processes

This theme addressed the students' reflection on the implementation processes. They narrated their experiences on the reflective essay and during the semi structured interview about how the curriculum was implemented to assist them to achieve their learning outcome. Their responses were discussed under the following categories: the educators' implementation strategies, availability of teaching resources to aid teaching and learning activities and assessment task with feedback.

4.2.2.1 The educators of Life Skills module implementation strategies

The finding from the participants under this point shows that they are not satisfied with some of the educators' teaching strategies. They gave various reasons for their

dissatisfaction with the implementation strategies. The students believe that some of the contract educators are not qualified to lecture them because they do not have an educational background; poor implementation method, that is, they just read from the slides without explanation, lack of varieties of teaching methods that could cater for all the students' cognitive ability. Below are participants' voices on this issue:

Participant 16:

“the educators need to improve in their implementation strategies, they need to employ varieties of strategies rather than just slide. The strategy of implementation is usually not interesting because they are not creative in introducing the module.”

The major complaint of the student participants was on the implementation method of the educators. They believe that coping and just reading the slides in the class is not helpful; or applying the same method of teaching to all the contents cannot benefit the students. The lecturers need to upgrade their teaching by learning varieties of strategies in implementing the curriculum in an interesting way.

Another student stated that:

“the teaching method does not cater for all the student, it benefits only those who are cognitively strong.” (participant2).

This participant complained that the implementation style of some lecturers only favours those who are good academically. According to her when slides are being read in the class, students from well-resourced high schools easily grasped whatever the lecturer is saying. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are left out.

Participant 14 stated that:

“Some of the teaching strategies used are not well suited thus we ended up not concentrating in class.”

Another student confessed that they deliberately stay away from classes when the lecture is not interesting. The researcher asked the participants asked if they do ask questions in the class on the areas they are not clear on Their responses revealed that some of the students do not ask questions during the lecture period.

“They use teacher centred, they teach from the slide without detail explanation, in fact they ended up talking to themselves.” (participant 12).

As for this participant, she declared that in most of the lectures the lecturers talked to him- or herself. According to her, detailed explanations are not provided hence most of the lectures do not benefit them. Moreover, they were prepared to teach foundation phase learners and not higher education students or high school learners. It is of great importance to adopt relevant teaching strategies during the teaching practice. She further stated that lecturers should try other methods such as using video, grouping the students for interactive discussions and giving students the opportunity to do presentations in class.

A participant said this with pain during the focus group interview:

“The lecturer should stop just reading the slide to us, there should be detail explanation, we are not from the same educational background.

“At time some people are not willing to come to the class, since the lecturer is just reading the slide; you know when a lecture is not good we feel tired and uninterested, because I know that when I arrive my room I can read it on my own there is no need of me to concentrate.”

(participant 19).

This participant added to what participant 12 said that uninteresting lectures make the classroom boring and hence they choose to stay away and read the module by themselves.

Participant 17 supported:

“To me the implementation strategy is not very okay, they have the skill, but presentation is poor. The third-year module lecturer is more experienced than the person teaching us now.”

This participant agreed that the lecturers have the skills but lack effective implementation strategies. To her, certain lecturers are more experienced than others. She particularly mentioned that the lecturer that took them in their final year lacks implementation strategies. However, she commended the third-year Life Skills lecturer for her skill in implementing the curriculum in a comprehensive manner that enabled the students to achieve their goals.

However, few participants gave positive comments concerning the implementation strategies of some of the lecturers, especially the third-year Life Skills lecturer.

Example:

“The module is implemented effectively, because we can engage with our peers in discussion.” (participant 7).

“The teaching method is okay, they engage students in discussion and we can contribute our ideas on the subject matter.” (participant 6).

A few participants commended a lecturer’s teaching strategies, they confessed that she implemented the module effectively by ensuring that all the students maximally participated and benefitted. The lecturer operates a democratic class where students could engage in the teaching and learning activities.

The implementation strategies of some of the lecturers were poorly rated by the students, among the 20 participants only five had contrary opinions of the teaching method. They stated that the lecturers organized them into groups to discuss their ideas with their mates. However, most of the participants lamented that the teaching strategies adopted by the lecturers are not the best; the major complaint is the coping and reading of the slides in the class without detailed explanation. Another cogent point raised was on the inefficiency of some of the contract lecturers. Some of the participants even mentioned a lecturer without educational background which they believed may be part of the reasons for their ineffectiveness in implementing the curriculum. Two of the participants buttressed their points on lecturers’ experiences by stating that the third-year module lecturer is more experienced than the one who took them in their final year. The students also decried lack of varieties of teaching strategies to cater for all the students in respect of their cognitive level. Students from disadvantaged areas do not benefit from most of the lectures due to a one-sided method of teaching.

4.2.2.2 Resources for aiding teaching and learning activities

Resources for supporting teaching and learning activities were discussed under this point.

Below are the students’ voices:

“The teaching resources used, were mainly slides that were copied from Moodle and is read to us by the lecturer. I wish that videos were involved in the lectures.” (participant 16).

Participant 19 supported and stated:

“Just slide, only slide.”

Participant 1:

“We have never been told to source for information from the net by ourselves in Foundation Phase, only power point, I think there should be varieties.”

This student complained of the lecturers’ lack of creativity in implementing the curriculum with varieties of resources. She believed that asking them to source for information on the internet will give them better understanding of the content.

However, a student mentioned that at times, a video is used as one of the teaching resources.

Participant 3 stated:

“Projector, videos and course outline are the resources.”

The student also talks about materials used to aid teaching and learning activities. They mentioned slides, textbook, chalkboard as the major teaching resources used during facilitation. From findings the students desired that educators use varieties of resources such as videos, giving assignment to source for information from the net rather than just limiting themselves to PowerPoint.

4.2.2.3 Assessment task, feedback and alignment

The strategies employed by the lecturers in carrying out assessment tasks was also discussed. The data reveal the participants’ responses on how they experience assessment practices during implementation. According to the student the assessment task is partially fine because they loved to be involved in the choice of forms of assessment. They talked on feedback which is only written and not well explained to them. The assessment feedback is not consistent, at times is given and at other times is not. On the aspect of alignment of the components of the curriculum, they all agreed that there was alignment in the curriculum.

The following are some of the comments made by the participants:

“The assessment task aligns with the content as well as the criterial also teaching and learning activities are guided by the specified assessment,

because assessment given links directly with the learning and teaching.”
(participant 11).

Participant 14 supported:

“There is alignment between the assessment task and the content.”

One of the students added that:

“The teaching and learning activities were guided by the specified assessment task with feedback, but the feedback given was not well explained.” (participant 15).

Similarly, another student declared that:

“Sometimes they don’t give feedback neither do they explain to us reasons for our score.” (participant 14).

“Absolutely, the assessment tasks are always in line with the content, but the assessment feedback not clear or understood by all.” (participant 4).

Virtually all the students agreed that there is alignment between the assessment tasks in Foundation Phase Life Skills modules with the contents and is well understood by them.

However, there are a few complaints from students that they are not carried along in the choice of assessment strategies. Some examples are stated below:

“The assessment must be made explicit, there must be detail explanation about our assessment, we are only taught types of assessment and not practicalize.” (participant 10).

The students decried poor assessment feedback on their activities.

A student spoke with intense feeling:

“But I think is better they give us feedback on what we did so that our mistake will not be repeated. Another big challenge of assessment feedback is that what a lecturer condemned may be accepted by others and this leads to confusion, I wish we are involved in our assessment.”
(participant 2)

According to the students the assessment task is partially fine as the assessment rubric was read and explained to them. However, the students loved to be involved in the

choice of forms of assessment tasks. Another point I depicted from the data is that, the lecturers gave more written feedback than oral of which some of the students complained that it was not well understood by them. Furthermore, the assessment feedback is not consistent, at times is given and at another time it is not. A participant felt feedback should be taken seriously to enable them to see and rectify their mistakes. Also, assessment feedback should be read to the class, explaining to the students how they came about the marks they scored as well as any weaknesses - which would be better for students. This method would enable the students to ask questions on areas that are not clear to them about the assessment feedback.

On the aspect of alignment of the components of the curriculum, they all agreed that there was alignment in the curriculum. The assessment tasks and the content are aligned.

4.2.3 Theme three: Students' experience of the curriculum as it prepares them to perform their teaching roles

In this team, students' voices on how the curriculum has assisted them to carry out their teaching role during the teaching practice were presented. Under this theme, the following points shall be addressed as it emerges in the study. Students' teaching practice experiences, disparity in teacher education language and Foundation Phase language, challenges encountered in the field and students' evaluation of foundation phase life skills module.

4.2.3.1 Students' teaching practice experiences

There were mixed responses from students concerning their experiences during teaching practice.

Their responses are as follows:

"I think the curriculum partially prepares us, we learnt different types of theories that help us to understand the way different children behaves, but I encountered problem of writing on the chalk board for Foundation Phase learners. we are not taught on how to write on the chalk board, but rather we are taught education courses that are not relevant to us."
(participant 1).

This participant shares her teaching practice experience. She agreed that the curriculum contains different theories on child development which help her to understand developmental milestone of children and how to teach them in every stage of development. However, she discloses that the curriculum does not prepare her on how to write on the chalk board for Foundation Phase learners. In addition, she condemned some irrelevant contents that do not help her during teaching practice. Teaching of handwriting should be included in the Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum as this will enhance effectiveness in performing their teaching roles.

Another participant stated that:

“...what we met during teaching practice does not correspond with what we are taught on the campus, even lesson plan, the lesson plan template they gave was different from what we met out there. And some of the supervisor do not take time to watch and observe what we are teaching, they just collect the form and fill and leave, no correction.”

(participant 3).

For this student, the curriculum needed to be reviewed and be designed to correspond to the foundation phase learners' needs, the lesson plan, teaching methodology, lesson plan template used on the campus must be in line with what is obtainable in foundation phase. Also, the Foundation Phase lecturers should be assigned to supervise the foundation phase students so that any error detected can be corrected. This student mentioned that the supervisor only signed the forms and left without monitoring the students teaching or offer any constructive correction. If there is going to be an improvement in the Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum, then all the components must be re-examined.

Another participant voiced out her own experience as follows:

“The skills received here is not sufficient to make you perform, you need to struggle, research on your own before you can teach, some time we help ourselves by organising discussion group. We just go to the class to just sign our name and leave.” (Participant 4).

This participant resorted to personal studies before he could perform his teaching role. He also formed study groups with other students to discuss any difficult content. He

believed he gained little or nothing whenever he attended the lecture, hence it resulted in him going to the class to sign the attendance register.

A participant recounted her ordeal with intense feelings:

“Oh, no I encountered a big problem with adjustment, when I got to the lower grade, I found that I could not speak with them properly, being used to a higher level of language, I found it difficult to speak to a young learner. I wish we are taught what will benefit us in the classroom, they need to revise the curriculum, and let them teach what is going to help us. Many of what they are teaching us here are not relevant to us.”

(participant 6).

Concerning this participant, she lacks a teaching method suitable for Foundation Phase learners, she could neither speak or teach them during the teaching practice. According to her she has been receiving her lectures through lecturing methods, therefore she could not teach at foundation phase level.

Another participant declared that:

“What we are learning does not prepare us to be a teacher, it doesn’t provide me with content. I basically spend four years for a degree that never help me during teaching practice. The skill does not prepare me to stand in the class and teach those young children. In fact, if you go outside there and ask any of the fourth-year student of how the curriculum prepares them, they will tell you they gain nothing.”

At this point the researcher asked the student a few questions to be sure they are not blackmailing the educators. I asked how often they attended classes and whether they have been to the lecturers to register their displeasure. She said the problem is a general one and she was scared of expressing herself to the lecturer to avoid being termed as a rude student.

One of the students responded that:

“The problem is with the curriculum and implementation; if I come to the class and you are not appealing to me but you are just speaking to yourself, I’m no longer coming to the class. I stay back.”

On meeting the lecturer to complain one of them responded:

“No, because they are marking our work, they will collect my name.”
(participant 7).

This is another student:

“The training was not enough, what was done does not prepares us to teach learner, I ended up researching by myself, so I could teach.”
(participant 18).

However, few students that taught in an English-speaking school agreed that they could teach Life Skills module to some extent. See below:

“The training enables me to teach Life Skill, but during my teaching practice I used both English and IsiZulu because foundation phase learners understand better when taught in IsiZulu.” (participant 11).

“I was able to teach Life Skill in my school because they followed the CAPS and, so it was easy for me.” (participant 19).

This is participant 20:

“The training received helped me to some extent, but the module is offered in English and you are expected to teach in home language. None of the lecturers from ECD/Life Skills ever came to access me so that I could complain to.”

Participant 15 is of the view that:

“The Life Skills module should be improved by being expanded into more than only being taught in one semester it should be included in at least three years of a Foundation Phase student’s course of study so that we would be equipped with enough skill to teach Foundation Phase learners. The irrelevant modules should be removed.”

Some agreed that the training received help them to teach Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners while the majority complained of having difficulty in implementing Life Skills module. They stated the importance of being well equipped before impacting skills into learners, as they cannot give what they have not learnt. Participant one, three,

four, six, seven, and 20 stated similar issues about the curriculum not preparing them to teach. These are the problems stated: there was no practical training on teaching practice, disparity between what was taught on the campus and what the students met on the field in terms of lesson plans and implementation methods; The mode of implementing the curriculum using lecturing method is not the best for Foundation Phase students, the curriculum should be implemented the way the students are expected to teach it to Foundation Phase learners. Some of the students complained that they ended up researching for more information on their own before they could teach Life Skills to learners. Absence of Life Skills lecturers during supervision, two of the participants declared that no Life Skills lecturers visited their school for them to share their challenges with. The data shows that majority of the students are not satisfied with the training received and thus could not effectively teach Life Skills module to Foundation Phase learners.

4.2.3.2 Disparity in teacher education language and Foundation Phase language

The data glaringly shows that there is discrepancy between the language of teacher education and foundation phase learners. At the university, the language of medium of communication is English while in most of the foundation phase schools, indigenous language is recommended.

These are students reporting:

“We don’t have the vocabulary in IsiZulu, here on the campus they do not considered that we came from different background. And teaching the learner is a big problem for me because when you write on the board they would tell you that no this word is not spelt like that, that is the big challenge we are face with here on the campus.” (participant 1).

This student speaks about the difficulty in teaching the life skills module due to disparity in the language of communication. Lecturing was done in English while the students were to teach in IsiZulu. The language of communication used for lecturing only favoured those that attended school in the rural areas, while those that went to English-speaking schools could not teach the learners effectively. This student felt dissatisfied and unfulfilled to see herself being corrected by learners she was supposed to teach. The language issue is a big challenge.

Another student believes:

“I think they need to add teaching of the basis of IsiZulu, vowel and consonant. So that we will be able to give our best when we go out there to teach.” (participants 3).

This point was buttressed by participant 5:

“Another big challenge is language issues, in Life Skill module we are taught in English while we are expected to teach the learner in home language. How do we teach effectively?”

Another participant declared that:

“.... being used to a higher level of language on the campus, I found it difficult to teach to a young learner. I struggled throughout the teaching practice.” (participant 7).

Participant 8 supported this:

“language on the campus is high, to simplify it to learner’s level becomes a challenge.”

Another expression of a student:

“The language is really challenging because most children do not understand English, but their home language IsiZulu and we are taught in English here on the campus, eish! there was a problem in translating the curriculum to IsiZulu.” (participant 2).

Participant 4 related his own experience as follows:

“The language is not that relevant frankly, here at university I am being taught in English fully, while during my teaching practice I was practicing in deep rural area where the setting and historical background dictated I should use both English and their mother tongue to explain some concepts.”

For participant 15, she was not experiencing a language challenge. However, she raises a point:

“We were taught the content of the Life Skills module in English on the campus, and the school I did my teaching practice is an English medium school. However, this Life Skills module and other such Life Skills module fails to include the possibility that we may have to teach Life Skills in an African language or the mother tongue.”

From this study, it was discovered that the participants have difficulty in implementing the curriculum effectively due to inconsistency in language used in the university and the language of teaching foundation phase learners. Majority of the students did their teaching practice in rural areas where they were expected to teach in IsiZulu, and only few could implement the curriculum effectively in Isizulu. They complain of their inability to effectively translate English to IsiZulu; hence they are advocating for inclusion of teaching of basic IsiZulu to foundation phase students in the university. However, about six of the participants did their teaching practice in English-speaking schools, hence they do not encounter the language challenge. There is need for including teaching of Isizulu vocabulary in the syllabus. Also, teaching the students with higher level language on the campus is a challenge, as they could not simplify the curriculum to foundation phase learners' level. The curriculum implementer could do better by introducing practical teaching methods. They are to implement the curriculum and guide the students on how to implement the same in a simplified language suitable to foundation learners.

4.2.3.3 Challenges encountered in the field and students' evaluation of Foundation Phase Life Skills module.

Furthermore, the students narrated their experiences encountered during the teaching practice and their opinion of the Foundation Phase Life Skills module.

A participant suggested that:

“I think Life Skill module needs to be improved, firstly the lecturers teaching the module should adopt a variety of effective and innovative teaching strategies. The Life Skill content within just a semester is not enough to make us effective Life Skill teacher.”

This participant believes that the solution to the challenges faced during teaching practice is in reviewing and improving the curriculum to meet the standard of Foundation Phase students and learners. Life Skills is a broad subject that touches many

areas of life, especially the adolescents and children. Hence allotted only two semesters to it is not sufficient; one, the curriculum cannot be covered within these semesters and secondly the students need more skills to enable them to teach effectively. Another important issue is that the lecturers need to upgrade themselves to become innovative in implementing the curriculum.

Another comment from participant 20:

“Life Skill is an interested module, but it needs to be taught by an experienced educator.”

Yet another student stated that:

“I think they need to look at what is happening here and design curriculum that address our needs rather than adopting international idea that is not relevant to us here.” (participant 6).

This participant raised an important point during the interview by suggesting that the curriculum is more on foreign ideas that are not suitable to the students' needs. Thus, the curriculum should be designed and implemented to address the needs as it relates to South African context. Adopted curriculum from other countries should be reviewed to suit the needs of those for whom it is meant.

A participant has this to say:

“The problem is with the curriculum, the curriculum does not benefit me, you know I was in grade 5 long time ago, and then I was in OBE, and now I'm expected to teach CAPS without being adequately equipped. I need time, preparation to teach.” (participant 19).

The participant here has a similar experience as participant 6. She suggested that the educators must be mindful of CAPS document in their implementation strategies. The reason was that they learnt OBE curriculum at age five and she is to teach the same age using another curriculum. She opined that the curriculum in use in the Foundation Phase should be used as guideline during implementation process to enable them to understand the strategies before going out there to teach.

Participant 1 gave another problem below:

“Another thing, they don’t take Life Skill serious in some of the school, they are focusing on mathematics, science and IsiZulu. I think something must be done to make the public aware of the importance of Life Skill to Foundation Phase learners. And look at the curriculum on the campus there are things that we should not be learning which they are teaching us. I want to suggest that the curriculum be made more relevant to us.”

There is an issue raised by this student, she declared that Life Skills subject is relegated by many schools, these schools seem to give more attention to science subjects than Life Skills subject. She believes that the sanity of society depends on the effective teaching of Life Skills. Hence, she opined that urgent action be taken to correct this error because a Life Skill subject features in the CAPS document.

The above opinion was supported by this student:

“What we met during teaching practice does not correspond with what we are taught on the campus, even lesson plan, the lesson plan template they gave was different from what we met out there, there is need for review.” (participant 4).

Lastly, the participants narrated their ordeals during the teaching practice. The data reveals that most of the students are advocating for review of the curriculum to include contents that will prepare them to teach Life Skills to Foundation phase learners. All the irrelevant contents to Foundation Phase students should be changed. In addition, many of the schools do not know the value of Life Skills hence the focus was on science subjects, thereby forcing the students to teach something other than Life Skills. Another point discovered is that teaching Life Skills for just two semesters is not enough to equip them to teach Foundation Phase learners. The participants want Life Skills to be extended from first-year to their last years of studies to enable them to acquire sufficient Life Skills needed in Foundation Phase. Besides, the participants desired that the curriculum be implemented in an innovative and interesting way to guide students to construct their learning. They emphasized that the lecturers’ styles of just reading slides to them in the class is boring. However, the participants commended the lecturer on alignment of the curriculum and setting of clear objectives and outcome of the module.

But there was complaint of non-practical implementation of the curriculum to guide them to achieve the stated outcome.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter reported the findings and presentation of students' reflective narrative essays and the focus group semi structured interview. The data analysis was presented as themes and categories generated from the study. The report consists of the researcher's and students' voice. In addition, students' voices were quoted verbatim to ensure that there is no distortion of their information. Findings about how the students experience the curriculum, their view as to how the curriculum prepared them to carry out their teaching role was presented. The next chapter will address the summary, recommendation and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, the data collected were analysed and findings were made based on how students experienced the curriculum in one of South African universities. In this chapter, the findings that provide answers to the key research questions are discussed and the summary of the research work is given. Furthermore, some vital recommendations the university can adopt to enhance the curriculum to meet the students' need are made. Lastly, limitations of the study are also stated as well as areas for future research.

5.2 Discussion of findings

Presented in this section is the report of the findings that answered the three major questions this research study hinges on:

- (i) What are the students' reflection on their experiences of the curriculum in Foundation Phase Life Skills teacher education?
- (ii) What are the students' reflection on their experiences of how Curriculum in Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme is facilitated to enhance their performance in teaching Life Skills to learners?
- (iii) What are the students' reflections on why they feel the way they do in Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme?

5.2.1 Discussion of findings on students' reflection on curriculum alignment in Foundation Phase Life Skills teacher education

Curriculum alignment is explained as organisation of all the curriculum components to support students to achieve the set learning outcome. These curriculum components begin with rationale which other components such as learning outcome, content, teaching activities, resources, teacher role, accessibility, location, time, assessment task hinge on. The findings revealed that the students deliberately chose foundation phase life skills curriculum for various reasons. These reasons were personal interest and development, concerns for society and to gain more knowledge of the content. The

students' reasons are in line with Sidhu, (2006) and Van der Akker (2009) who stated that teaching and learning is a process and for us to focus on that process, we need a precise rationale to avoid wasted energy, time and resources. From the findings, the students declared that they love children and were interested in working with them. Some of them confessed that working with Foundation Phase makes one feel relieved, relaxed and satisfied. The findings also revealed that students chose foundation phase life skills module with intention of impacting desirable skills into learners. They stated that there is decadence in the society and believe that the remedy can begin at foundation phase. They unanimously decried high rate of crime in high schools, hence their choice of foundation phase learners. To effectively achieve this rationale, they stated that they needed more information on child development and how to effectively pass the information to learners.

Thus, their stated rationale aligned with certain curriculum professors such as Van der Akker (2009) as well as Khoza (2013), that described motivation for engaging in any educational activities as personal, subject content and the society. Hence Biggs (2003) theory of constructive alignment suggested clearly stated learning outcomes before commencing learning activities. It was also discovered that the learning outcomes were clearly stated. However, the students complained of not being guided with effective implementation strategies on how to go about achieving the learning outcomes. The method of reading from slides to students is not helping them to construct their learning. This contradicts Biggs' (2003) theory of constructive alignment which stated that the blueprint for effective teaching and learning depends on describing the objectives, integrating assessment to those objectives and supporting students to be involved in appropriate teaching and learning activities to achieve the set learning outcome.

Furthermore, the participants also mentioned time as another issue in curriculum implementation. They complained that the time allotted for curriculum implementation, achievement of learning outcomes and students' reflections on the curriculum was not sufficient. The students complained that they ended up working on some of the content by themselves because there was no time to finish the syllabus. According to them, there is too much content within the short time and some of the contents are irrelevant to them. These findings are in line with Gillies and Boyle (2011) that pointed out time as one of the challenges to effective implementation of the curriculum. To support this

evidence, Bennie and Newstead (1999) also observed that educators tend to be mindful of their limited time to cover the syllabus, thereby leaving little or no time for students to reflect on their learning. Thus, students who are not cognitively strong are left without achieving their learning outcomes. This idea is refuted by Akker's (2009) curriculum spider web concepts where he specified that time be distributed evenly to all the components of the curriculum to enable learning to take place.

5.2.2 Students' reflections on Foundation Phase curriculum facilitation

Under this theme, the findings revealed that students are not satisfied with the curriculum implementation strategies of the lecturers. According to them, the reasons for their dissatisfaction are that: firstly, some of the contract lecturers' lack teaching qualification and this made the students believe that they are not qualified to lecture them. Secondly, poor implementation methods by Foundation Phase lecturers. The students stated that the lecturers just read from the slides without detailed explanation; thirdly, lack variety of teaching methods that could cater for all the students' cognitive ability. Thus, in the bid to cover the syllabus within the limited time, the lecturers stuck with teacher-centred approach that does not profit all the students. Finally, they further complained that some of the lecturers lack the charisma or creativity to make the class interesting and appealing to students. As a result, many of them came to the class, signed the attendance, left the class and engaged themselves in self-studies.

The finding was in congruence with Meadows, Soper, Cullen, Wasiuk, McAllister-Gibson, and Danby (2016) who reported that students complained that certain lecturers just read from the slides rather than engaging the students in discussion that will help them to construct their learning. Educators who are well experienced and knowledgeable in their subject matter are those that can benefit students and lead them to achieve their set learning objective (Brownell, Hirsch & Seo, 2004). Biggs' (2003) theory of constructive alignment declared that students will learn the desired outcome in a reasonably effective manner when educators efficiently organise the classroom setting to get students to engage in learning activities. Hence, the theory refuted the poor curriculum implementation of the educators of this study.

The study also delved into assessment strategies which is viewed as integral to teaching and learning. According to the students, the assessment task was partially fine,

however, they complained of unclear and inconsistent feedback. Feedback on assessments was not always given by some of the lecturers and where it is done the information is not clear to guide on how to rectify mistakes. Moreover, the students preferred to be involved in the choice of forms of assessment that will be used by the lecturers. This is in line with Waldrup, Fisher and Dorman (2008) who argue that good assessment is one that involves students while setting goals and criteria for assessment and performing tasks that measure meaningful instructional activities.

From the findings it was evident that there was alignment between the assessment task and the content. The students testified to alignment of the subject content and appropriate assessment task. This is consistent with Martone and Sireci (2009) who described 'curriculum alignment as the degree to which expectations or standards and assessments agree and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system toward students learning what they are expected to know and do'. These findings on curriculum alignment disproved some scholars such as Boud and Falchikov (2008) as well as Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009) that stated that learning outcomes, teaching strategies and assessment methods in higher education are in disarray. The findings are in line with the theory of constructive alignment and curriculum spider web that admonished lecturers to ensure alignment of all the components of the curriculum during the implementation process (Biggs, 2003; Van der Akker, 2009).

Another important finding is the usage of limited teaching resources. It was discovered that the lecturers limit themselves to slides and hardware such as textbooks and course outline to facilitate learning activities instead of employing other teaching resources. Van der Akker (2009) in his curriculum spider web concept, postulated that learning activities should be carried out in an interesting manner, inspiring with adequate teaching materials that expose students to modern media access. This method of teaching promotes critical thinking and creativity in students.

A remedy to this challenge is the usage cinematographic (movies, films, etc.), pictorial (moveable pictures) and acoustic resources (listening activities) as suggested by Nakpodia (2013). The goal of South African Council of Higher Education is to raise her citizens to keep pace with 21st century educational demands at global level. Hence to meet this demand, Darling-Hammond (2014) suggested that teaching and learning

activities should be aided with rich and inspiring educative resources. Moreover, this one strategy learning activity is refuted by Akker (2009) in his concept of curriculum spider web.

5.2.3 Discussion of findings on students' experience of the curriculum as it prepares them to perform their teaching roles

The students in this study had gone to the field twice to practicalize the experiences acquired during their four-year study in a South African university. The findings revealed that many of the students lacked implementation skills during the teaching practice. In fact, majority of the participants affirmed that they could not implement the life skills curriculum effectively during teaching practice. The participants lamented the incoherence of what was learnt at the university and what they were expected to teach foundation phase learners. Others stated that they resorted to researching for more information before they could teach. They suggested that Life Skills should be taught from their first year to final year to enable them to get enough content knowledge to perform their teaching role. The participant further disclosed that the curriculum contents learnt in the university are not relevant to the needs of Foundation Phase learners. They suggested that the curriculum be reviewed to include teaching hand-writing, Isizulu vocabulary, using language suitable for young learners and principles of teaching.

These findings agree with the results of Mooi (2010), Hennemann and Liefner (2010), as well as Rasul and Mansor (2013) that reported that university graduates are not well equipped for the world of work as there exists a gap between the skills acquired in schools and globally required skills. Similarly, Dos Reis (2012) revealed in his study that the student teachers confessed that their content knowledge was insufficient to meet the learners' learning needs. This finding is refuted by constructive alignment theory and concept of curriculum spider web that suggested four quality curriculum criterion which are relevance, consistence, practicality and sustainability (Biggs, 2003; Van der Akker, 2009). Relevance - curriculum that prepares students for local life, continuous education and the world of work. Consistency - the curriculum must be in line with the students' learning outcome and rationale. Practicality - the curriculum is realisable for local context, achievable for students and easy to implement by educators. And lastly,

sustainability that states that curriculum be relevant in the current setting and future focused.

Another important finding was on language of communication. The students pointed out that the medium of communication in the university is English, whereas they are expected to teach foundation phase learners with indigenous language. Hence many of the students that are not grounded in IsiZulu had difficulty in implementing the foundation phase curriculum. However, few of the students that did their teaching practice in an English-speaking school did not encounter a language problem. According to Dippenaar and Peyper (2011), when an educator lacks language aptitude which is termed as integral to learners' success, the possibility of achieving teaching and learning outcome is minimal. To further establish the necessity of using relevant language in teaching and learning activities, teacher education programmes in South Africa are instructed by the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) framework to ensure that students can converse proficiently in one of the indigenous languages (Mayaba, 2015). Van der Akker (2009) in his concept of curriculum spider web, declared that countries differ culturally, hence curriculum content be implemented to meet both the local context and global.

Also, the students voiced out their evaluation of Life Skills module. Majority believed that they were not adequately equipped to perform their teaching role effectively. The students felt unfulfilled and dissatisfied with the Foundation Phase Life Skills modules. Hence, they are advocating for improvement of all the components of the curriculum as stated by Van der Akker (2009) in his concept of curriculum spider web. Akker advocated that educators give equal attention to all the components of the curriculum to achieve the desired outcome. The scholar also encourages learning activities that foster acquisition of valuable skills, self-motivation and independent thinking.

5.3 Summary of findings

Biggs (2003) proposed constructive alignment theory imploring educators to define the learning outcome, integrate relevant forms of assessment to the set objective and guide students to actively participate in the learning processes. Van der Akker (2009) improved on Biggs' constructive alignment theory by adding the content, teaching activities, resources, teacher role, accessibility, location, time and assessment. He

emphasised the importance of equality among the components of curriculum during development and implementation. Figure 5.1 shows an example of balanced curriculum.

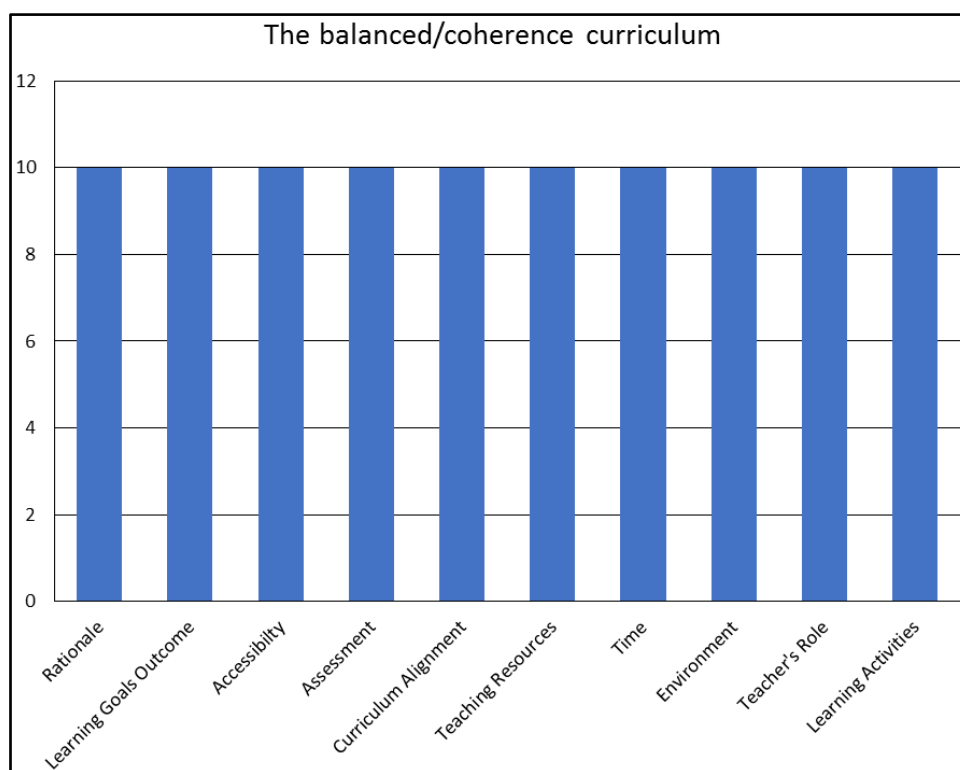


Figure 3. The balanced/coherence curriculum

The diagram above is an example of a complete curriculum showing all the components suggested by Van der Akker. According to Akker (2009), there must be rationale for choice of learning; coupled with clear stated learning outcome. Additionally, the curriculum must be accessible and beneficial to all the students and that educators should employ a variety of assessment and teaching strategies. Also, enough time to achieve the set learning outcome must be given to the students. It is of importance to ensure that learning is done in a conducive environment with relevant teaching and learning resources. And lastly, he emphasized on making the teaching and learning activities interesting and appealing to students to enable them to construct their learning.

However, our findings revealed that some aspects of the curriculum were not given full attention, and this led to the inequality among the curriculum components as shown in

Figure 5.2 below. This agreed with the claim of Kuiper and Bervkens (2013) regarding the vulnerability of curriculum spider web, that tampering with one component leads to the rupturing of the web.

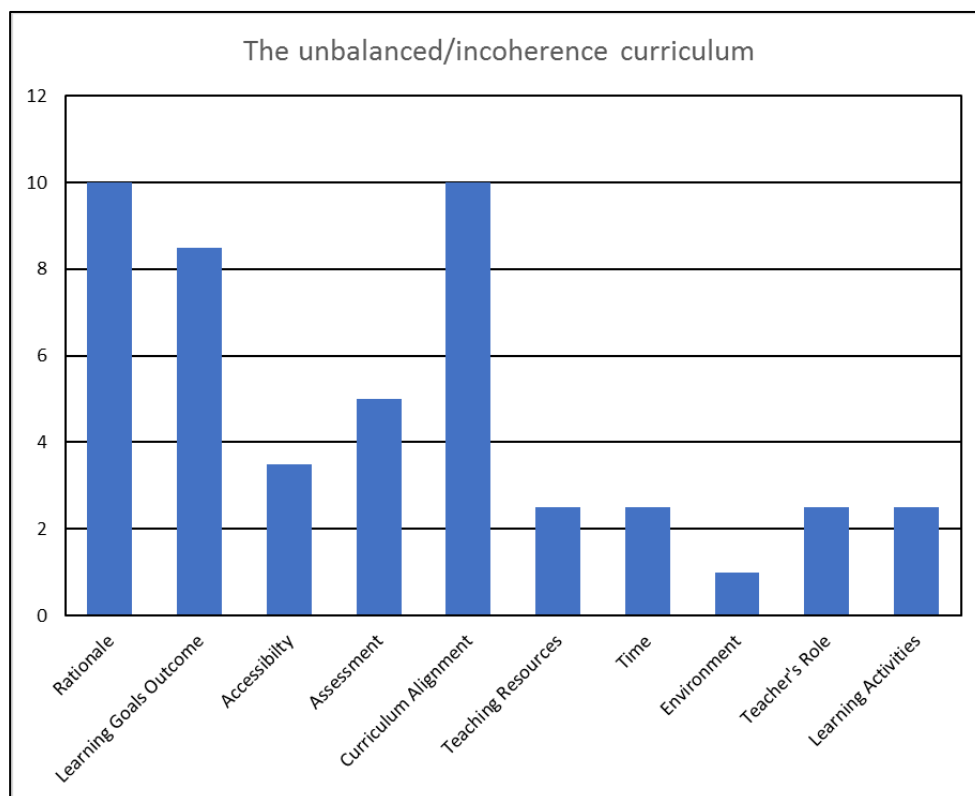


Figure 4. Unbalanced/incoherence curriculum.

From Figure 5.2, it is evident that the students chose Foundation Phase Life Skills module with high expectations as all of them have well stated rationale. According to the students, the learning goals were clearly stated but the implementation was not effectively done to support them to achieve the outcome. Similarly, the teaching activities did not cater for all the students because they are not equally endowed cognitively, hence majority could not achieve the set learning outcome. Thus, the learning cannot be said to be accessible to all the students. Furthermore, the students disclosed that there was alignment in Foundation Life Skills content and assessment task.

However, the implementation strategies were poorly rated because the educators were fond of reading the slides without detailed explanation. More also, the time allotted to the module was not sufficient, as some contents were left untaught. The learning

environment was neither interesting nor appealing to the students, hence many went to lecture classes to sign the attendance register and then left the class. Although some of the students confessed that the lecturers have the skills but lack pedagogical strategies.

Significantly, the students testified that in most of the schools where they did their teaching practice, Mathematics and Science subjects were appreciated, while they relegate Life Skills subject. This without doubt will rob the learners of the benefits they would have derived from Life Skills before entering high school. Against this background, much needs to be done in reviewing and improving the foundation phase Life Skills curriculum. In addition, there is a need to create awareness in both private and public foundation phase schools of the importance of Life Skills subject. This will help reduce social maladjustment and anomalies among the primary and high school learners.

5.4 Recommendations

It is glaring in this study, that the major actors and recipients of curriculum are students. However, they felt unfulfilled and dissatisfied with the foundation phase life skills module. Listed below are recommendations the university can adopt to enhance the life skills curriculum to meet the needs of the students.

- (i) Redesigning and implementing curriculum relevant to the students' needs, especially in the South African context, Foundation Phase Life Skills students should be relieved of every irrelevant module.
- (ii) The department should create micro teaching centres where the students will do internal practice before going to the field.
- (iii) The university should consider establishing Early Childhood or Foundation Phase centres within the university.
- (iv) More training/workshops for the lecturers to improve their teaching pedagogy.
- (v) Enhance the teaching and learning activities by including variety of teaching aids such as cinematographic (movies, films, etc.), pictorial (moveable pictures) and acoustic resources (listening activities) to improve students' learning and make teaching and learning appealing to students.
- (vi) Inclusion of the basis of IsiZulu, vowel and consonant in Foundation Phase curriculum.

- (vii) Creating avenue of educating the public on importance of Life Skills education in Foundation Phase.
- (viii) And lastly, encouraging students to take active part in their learning so that they can acquire critical thinking skills.

5.5 Suggestions for subsequent research

There are various ways this research work can be extended. Suggested below are areas for future researches.

- (i) Exploring how Foundation Phase students construct their learning of Life Skills curriculum with a greater number of participants.
- (ii) Exploring Foundation Phase students' teaching practice experience on their various teaching practice locations.
- (iii) Exploring foundation phase lecturers' implementation strategies with elaborate data generating strategies, such as reflective essay writing, interviews, observation and data analysis.

5.6 Research limitations

According to (Rule & John, 2011), all research work has its limitations. This study has its own limitations based on the following reasons:

- (i) *Study Location.* This research study was carried out in just one out of the numerous South African universities which the researcher found suitable and relevant for the study.
- (ii) *The study sampling size.* This study does not include all the South African Foundation Phase students taking Life Skills module. Only 20 fourth-year Foundation Phase life skills students in one of the South African universities were considered. The sample size was taken because the study is a qualitative research and does not require a large sample size to gain the needed information.
- (iii) *Lack of sufficient prior research studies on the topic.* Previous research studies normally form the basis for literature review and source of inspiration for any research study, but for this study much has not been done and the librarian could not help because of limited information on the topic.
- (iv) *Issues of generalisability.* This study is a qualitative case study limited to a small group within a context, thus the generalisability of the study may not be feasible. However, the theoretical/conceptual framework upon which this study hinges

(constructive alignment/ curriculum spider web) were used to structure the study and as guide for data generation, data analysis and the interpretation to avoid unsubstantial claims. Hence, findings and lessons from the students' reflections on Foundation Phase Life Skills curriculum may be applied to universities which prepare teachers for young children.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the main purpose of this research has been addressed because the research questions appear to have been answered by the participants. Findings specified that the constructive alignment of Biggs which are learning outcome, teaching and activities that are further expounded into ten concepts of curriculum components designed by Van der Akker (2009) to serve as guide for effective curriculum implementation are not strictly adhered to. Thus, the research study revealed that foundation phase life skills students are not fully equipped with the required skills they needed to carry out their teaching role. They gave reasons that most of the curriculum contents are redundant and are not profitable to either the students nor the foundation phase learners. Hence, the need for re-examining and reviewing of the curriculum to include relevant contents. Therefore, in this study, the researcher maintained that, as recipient of the curriculum, students are the best source of information about the curriculum and what transpires during teaching and learning activities. As a result, their contribution and opinion should be considered valid. However, it is recommended that future research be conducted to explore Foundation Phase Life Skills lecturers' implementation/ facilitation strategy to get detailed information on curriculum alignment.

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APPENDIX A: Ethical clearance



18 May 2017

Mrs Deborah Arasomwan 216074145
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Arasomwan

Protocol reference number: HSS/0460/017M

Project title: Exploring students' reflections on Curriculum Alignment in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme: A case in a South African University.

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 4 May 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have 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)

/px

cc Supervisor: Prof JN Mashiya
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr SB Khoza
cc School Administrator: Ms P Ncayiyana, Ms K Khumalo & Ms C Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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APPENDIX B: Gatekeeper



5 May 2017

Mrs Arasomwan Avosuahi Deborah (SN 216074145)
School of Education
College of Humanities
Edgewood Campus
UKZN
Email: 216074145@stu.ukzn.ac.za mashiyaj@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Mrs Deborah

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Exploring students' reflections on Curriculum Alignment in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme: A case in South African university".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with fourth year foundation phase life skill students on the Edgewood campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville



School of Education,
College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-
Natal,
Edgewood Campus,

Dear Participant,

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Arasomwan Avosuahi Deborah I am a Master candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. The research study currently undertaking is for the fulfilment of M. Ed degree in Curriculum studies. I am interested in exploring your reflections on your engagement with Curriculum in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Programme. This research aims at exploring how the curriculum equip you to teach Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners during your teaching practice.

To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion and using a pseudonym.
- The focus group interview may last for about 45 minutes to 1 hour.
- I will also request that you write a reflective essay of not more than three pages about your experiences of Foundation Phase Life Skill modules.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

Equipment	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: 216074145@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Cell: 0612376431

My supervisor is Prof. Mashiya Nontokozo who is located at the School of Education, Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: mashiya@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 07312604276

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Ms P Ximba (HSSREC Research Office)

Tel: 031 260 3587

Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

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

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio record my focus group discussion
Video record my focus group discussion
Use of my photographs for research purposes

Yes	No
Yes	No
Yes	No

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

APPENDIX D: Data generation source (Reflective essay)

TOPIC: REFLECTIVE ESSAY ON THE CURRICULUM FOR FOUNDATION PHASE LIFE SKILLS MODULES

Dear student

You are requested to write a reflective essay on your experiences of the Foundation Phase Life Skills programme. The reflective essay will give you the opportunity to reflect and comment on how the module is delivered, assessed and most importantly, on how the module has prepared you to teach Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners. You are requested to write three (3-page long essay (approximately 1,500 Words). The reflective essay is divided into three sections. The essay is structured as follows

Section A:

The first section will focus on your experiences of the life Skills modules in general. Please note that this covers the 3rd year and 4th year life skills modules. This will cover the materials that are given to you such as course outlines, the readings if any, the duration of the programme, the language in which it is offered as compared to the language you use to teach it in the Foundation Phase, the resources.... etc. this will also include integration (outcomes relate to content, content relates to assessment)

Section B:

The second section will focus on how the module is delivered, this includes, how the module is taught, assessed and how the feedback is given to you

Section C

This section will focus on how the module has prepared you to teach Foundation Phase students.

Template to guide

Section A: My experiences of the Life Skills modules (500-600 words)

1. What are your rationale/reasons for studying Foundation Phase Life Skills modules?

2. How clear or comprehensive is the course outline?
3. Are the modules learning outcomes or goals clearly stated, how were you able to achieve the goal?
4. Is the time allotted for the module enough for student to achieve their learning outcome?

Section B: how the module is delivered (500-600 words)?

5. How is the module implemented, does the teaching strategies suit the content?
6. Does the assessment task align with the content, are the criteria for the assessment stated and understood?
7. Are the teaching and learning activities guided by the specified assessment task? Is feedback given and explained?
8. What are the teaching resources used in aiding teaching and learning of the life skill module?
9. What are the lecturers' mediation approaches to students' challenges during teaching and learning activities?

Section C: How the module has prepared me to teach Life Skills to Foundation Phase Learners (500-600 words)?

10. Was the training received sufficient to help you in teaching Life Skills to Foundation Phase learners during your teaching practice?
11. How relevant is the language in which the module is offered as compared to the language you use to teach it in the Foundation Phase?
12. What are the challenges encountered during teaching practice?
13. Are your lecturers accessible to attend to your challenges or difficulties encounter in the module?
14. Which aspect of the curriculum did you think needs to be improved, is there anything else you will like to add?

APPENDIX E: Data generation source (Focused group interview Schedule)

A. OPENING

1. Introduction of participants
2. Purpose of the interview
3. Purpose of the study
4. Explanation of ethical issues and the rights of participants
5. Timeline.

B. QUESTIONING

1. Students' reflections on Curriculum Alignment in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Program.
2. Student reflection on how Curriculum Alignment in Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Program is facilitated to enhance their performance in teaching life skills to learners,
3. Student reflections on why they think Curriculum Alignment in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Program prepare them to teach Life Skills to learners or why it did not.

Theme one: Students' reflections and experiences of Curriculum Alignment in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Program.

1. What are your rationale/reasons for studying Foundation Phase Life Skills modules?
2. Tell me about your experiences as you engage with foundation phase Life Skills curriculum, what are your learning goals as a student, are your goals achieved if no state the reasons
3. What do you intend to achieve from Life Skill curriculum in Foundation Phase department?
4. What is your understanding of the curriculum content as its being implemented by the lecturers? is it well comprehended by you?

Theme two: Student reflection on how Curriculum Alignment in Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Program is facilitated to enhance their performance in teaching life skills to learners,

5. Are the learning goals and outcome clearly stated by the lecturer before commencing teaching and learning activities?
6. What is the teaching strategies to the curriculum, is it learner centred, and does it address the set learning outcome?
7. Are the assessment tasks clearly stated and understood? are there feedbacks from the lecturers?
8. has the curriculum assisted you to achieve your goals of studying Life Skill curriculum?
9. Is the time allotted for the module enough for student to achieve their learning outcome?
10. Does the Life Skill curriculum taught in the school align with what you are expected to teach the Foundation Phase learners?

Theme three: Student reflections on why they think Curriculum Alignment in the Foundation Phase Teacher Education Life Skills Program prepare them to teach Life Skills to learners or why it did not.

11. What are your teaching practice experiences and how has the curriculum enhanced your performance in teaching Life Skills to learners? What are your challenges?
12. Are your lecturers accessible to attend to your challenges or difficulties encounter in the module?
13. What are the lecturers' mediation approaches to students' challenges in the course of teaching and learning activities?
14. Which aspect of the curriculum did you think needs to be improved, is there anything else you will like to add?

APPENDIX F: Certificate of editing and proofreading



STEVENS EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Charlotte Stevens : BA (English; Industrial Psychology)

Sole Trader

e-mail: ajc.stevens@gmail.com

Language Editor & Proofreader

Membership: PEG (SA)
IPEd (WA)

THIS IS TO CERTIFY

That I have language edited a dissertation titled *Exploring Foundation Phase students' experience of the Life Skills Programme* for Mrs. Arasomwan Deborah Avosuahi, Master of Education - Curriculum Studies, School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: Email: 216074145.

The scope of my editing comprised:

- Spelling
- Tense
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Word usage
- Language and sentence structure
- Checking of in-text referencing style
- Checking of list of references

It was a pleasant experience working with this student who is obviously very committed and portrayed unquestionable integrity throughout our communication.

My best wishes for a successful career accompany Mrs. Arasomwan.
Charlotte Stevens (Ms) (Signature withheld for security purposes)

Stevens Editing and Proofreading

E: ajc.stevens@gmail.com

20 December 2017

APPENDIX G: Turnitin Similarity test

EXPLORING FOUNDATION PHASE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME: A CASE IN A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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